# CHARLES BAWDEN

Charles Roskelly Bawden

22 April 1924 – 11 August 2016

elected Fellow of the British Academy 1971; resigned 1980; re-elected 1985

by

VERONIKA VEIT

Charles Bawden, Emeritus Professor of Mongolian Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (in the University of London), was born in Weymouth on the south coast of England (Dorset), on 22 April 1924. Scholar—Poet—Man of His Word: in such terms may be characterised the three vocations which were to guide and form the life celebrated in this memoir.

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CHARLES BAWDEN

## The scholar

Born of parents who were both school-teachers—the father at the local elementary school for boys—Charles himself describes his home as a modest one. 'There were few books at home,' he recalls, 'but important among them were the pre-first world war edition of Arthur Mee's *Children's Encyclopaedia*, and the *Harmsworth Encyclopedia*, which between them served as my childhood library.' In the late 1930s, however, Charles' father bought a wireless set, which the young boy calls 'his lifeline': from that set he was first able to listen to spoken French and German, which later were to prove his main academic interests, and even to hear music—another of his future lifelong interests—for Weymouth itself was, in those days, 'a cultural waste', without even a public library available, as Charles remembers. A further step in what he describes as his, in some ways, 'contradictory upbringing', and which directed his interests more definitely towards what was to become his future career, might best be described in his own words:

> On the one hand my father, especially, was a real pioneer in some things. He saw that I was academically able, and did all he could to help me. He it was who found out how one went about winning a State Scholarship—my school seems to have been quite uninformed about the mechanics of such things. He found out how to go about applying for admittance to Cambridge University. He saw the advantages of visits abroad—something unheard of in those days for children of our social milieu—and saw that we both went abroad in individual exchanges. My brother (Harry, older by two years) went twice to France, while I went to France for five weeks in 1938, and to Germany the following year, just before the war. These visits were of untold advantage to me, not only in building my self-confidence, but in the resulting improvement to my knowledge of the two languages.

The other side of what Charles calls his 'contradictory upbringing' was the fact that his parents were both very religious, devoted low church people. 'So, although my father wanted me to enlarge my outlook through foreign travel and university, I was expected to conform to strict low church ideals and mental limitations,' Charles recalls. Religious principles demanded church twice on Sundays, as well as scripture learning before the service; they further forbade the use of the family's boat on that day. Certainly this kind of attitude not only accounted for Charles' gradual defection from the Church of England, but later also led him to look with disillusion on all forms of organised religion.

Nevertheless, Charles' youth, altogether, was not without pleasure—pre-war days were spent with the family's boat, with fishing, sailing and swimming. No summer holiday away was taken—as there was nowhere better to go! Charles' formal education first began at the local church schools—Holy Trinity Infants' and Holy Trinity

Boys'. From there, Charles went to Weymouth Grammar School where, too, the education was sound, though neither broad nor deep. Again, Charles was lucky in finding there a teacher of learning and ability, Miss Marjorie Mitchell, later Mrs Brand, who became a lifelong friend. She taught biology, but was also a skilled musician and had a first-class knowledge of German. The school did not teach German, which Charles needed to fulfil his ambition of going up to Cambridge to read modern languages. So Miss Mitchell took him on in her spare time for German. Although he did not start the language until the autumn of 1938, and had only about two years to get to Higher School Certificate standard and then to Cambridge scholarship standard, he still managed it—thanks to his holiday in Germany and Marjorie's help and encouragement. There was one good thing about his school: it at least drilled its students well for examinations. Charles was exceptionally successful in the School Certificate exams of 1938 and the Higher exams in 1940 and 1941. On the strength of his performance in the latter, and his father's earlier prudent reconnaissance, Charles was awarded both County and State Scholarships.

The next step—Cambridge—also required money and, once again, he was lucky, as he calls it, to be awarded a minor scholarship at Peterhouse at the end of 1940. Charles had his own special view of what he calls 'being lucky', which he describes as follows:

> Luck, I would say, has played a large part in my life, and I believe that luck counts more than merit. I was lucky in my educational career, lucky not to have been killed in air raids when other people in the same town were, lucky to have kept my health, and lucky to have had a good marriage and four children of whom I can be proud.

Cambridge was a new experience, for which the young Charles, at first, must have felt completely unprepared. He stuck to it, however, and got a first in Part 1 of the Modern and Mediaeval Languages tripos in 1942.

As it was war time, call-up intervened, and in early February 1943 Charles joined the Royal Navy at HMS *Excalibur* as an Ordinary Seaman. Even before being called up, luck (in the above Charlesian sense of the word) or, one is tempted to say in this instance, 'fate', had once more intervened: Charles had been selected to learn Japanese. He was transferred to Bedford to join No. 4 Military Intelligence School and settled down to six months of Japanese under Captain Tuck RN and his assistant, Eric Ceadel, then a lieutenant in the Royal Corps of Signals and, until his early death, Librarian of Cambridge University. The group of eight young people—three girls among them—acquired a knowledge of written Japanese within the six months. Charles was then commissioned and underwent a two weeks' OLQ (Officer-Like Qualities) course at Portsmouth. Later he joined the staff at Bletchley Park, working on decoded Japanese messages. After a few months, together with two young colleagues (George Hunter, future Corresponding FBA, and Wilfred Taylor), Charles was

appointed to HMS *Lanka* in Colombo, where they arrived in the summer of 1944. The stay only lasted until December 1945. Charles recalls this as perhaps the most formative period of his life, giving it words in a moving testimony, both professional and personal:

> It was not for us a violent period, but the experience of working on current enemy messages, always incomplete and requiring emendation, the experience, that is, of applying text-critical techniques, learned on the spot, to practical warfare, was something never to be forgotten. It was, too, a period when lifelong friendships were formed. We were a compact and harmonious group of civilians, naval officers and Wrens, and the unique association we formed then has lasted, for some of us, ever since.[1]

With the end of the war in August 1945, the group's services were no longer needed, and in December 1945 George, Wilfred and Charles were sent to Hong Kong via Australia. They reported to an intelligence officer, but there was no real work to do, apart from some days at the Supreme Court supervising Japanese internees who were translating depositions for a war crimes trial which was in progress. Charles writes with great sympathy of Hong Kong in those days:

> Hong Kong was in those days a ravaged city. Most of the houses above harbour level had been looted, right down to the doors and window frames, apparently in the interlude between Japanese collapse and the British resumption of authority. The population was small, about half a million, and the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank occupied the tallest building in the city. As well as the British occupation forces there were US Navy vessels in the harbor, thousands of Japanese prisoners of war in camps, and a somewhat ragged and uninspiring Chinese army lounging around and waiting to be sent against the communists. But even then it was a bustling business and entertainment centre, and I have always been glad to have seen Hong Kong as a Chinese city before its development into an international market-place. Wilfred and I took lessons in Cantonese from an old gentleman called Sung Hok-pang who had been teaching since the beginning of the century. As it turned out, most of the teaching was done by his daughter Katherine, while he listened to us from behind a partition.

'I tell you two times,' Charles was fond of recalling Mr Sung, 'then you go and practice with my daughter!'

> Katherine Sung, many years later, who also worked as a civil servant and a dressmaker, came to this country and stayed two weeks with us. Before the fortnight was over she had taken a shop in Pont Street, where she became a well-known London dressmaker.

In October 1946 Charles resumed his life in Cambridge, reading for the preliminary exam to Part 2 of the tripos. Another first got him a wartime degree, after which he

[1] Wrens was the colloquial term for members of the Women's Royal Naval Service.

turned to study Chinese under Professor Gustav Haloun[2]—another lucky decision in the right direction towards his future career. A brief excursion, first, into the world of the Administrative Civil Service came to nothing—Foreign Service was missed, and Home Civil Service (being assigned to the German Section of the Foreign Office) did not last long. Nevertheless, while still in London one thing of great importance to Charles' personal life occurred—he met his future wife, Jean, younger sister of Margaret, Charles' Wren colleague in Ceylon. A group of the old Ceylon hands used to meet once a week in London for a meal, and on one occasion Margaret was joined by her younger sister Jean. It must have been love at first sight, for, as Charles says, 'we were married on 3 August 1949, less than a year after meeting, in the chapel at Shrewsbury School, where Jean's father, John Barham Johnson, was Director of Music'.

Still in 1949, Charles returned to Cambridge where, in the summer of 1950, he took his diploma in Chinese. In a subsequent curious interval, he was that year sent to Hong Kong again, en route to Peking, initiated by the Treasury committee. Nothing came of it—there was no academic programme, no introductions in Peking, in fact, Peking was never reached, but several rather frustrating months were spent in Hong Kong. Charles put them to good use, nevertheless, by learning as much Chinese as possible. Cambridge, as it was, had been entirely classical, and the adjustment to modern Chinese, accordingly, was not without problems.

Back home again, Charles started to work on his PhD. The theme, chosen by Haloun, was soon discarded, apart from the fact that Haloun suddenly died in 1951. By that time, Charles' interests had turned to Mongolian, a language he had started to learn earlier with Denis Sinor,[3] then teaching at Cambridge. No doubt as a result of the war experiences, Oriental Studies had seen a considerable promotion in some countries, Great Britain among them. At the proposal of Gustav Haloun, a post in Altaistic Studies had been established at Cambridge—the first holder of which was said Denis Sinor. Even while he was still in Hong Kong, Charles' interest in things Mongolian had started—not least through meeting some Mongols who were engaged in translating the New Testament. By yet another lucky occurrence, after he left Cheung Chau island off Hong Kong, Charles' room there was taken by one Magadbürin Haltod (1917–1977), a Chahar Mongol, who subsequently became lector at Bonn University and a good family friend. Back in 1954, having presented his thesis on the Mongolian chronicle *Altan Tobci* (a copy of the text having been in the University Library), Charles found himself at a loose end, with nothing to look forward to—but, as he puts it, once again luck played its part. In that year, the

[2] Gustav Haloun (1898–1951): see Franke (1952), 1–9.
[3] Denis Sinor (1916–2011): see Walravens (2011), 537–40.

International Congress of Orientalists met in Cambridge. Charles made the acquaintance of Walther Heissig,[4] whose work he already knew and had used. Heissig later was to become a close and lifelong friend of Charles; he was to be elected a Fellow of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London (1983), and a Corresponding Fellow of the British Academy (1988). At the time, Heissig was much taken with Charles' thesis and agreed to publish it in the series *Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen* (founded by Heissig—and continuing today as *Asiatische Forschungen*). At the same time in 1954, Professor Kaare Gronbech,[5] the eminent Danish Orientalist, also interested himself in Charles' work, and from these meetings his academic career truly began.

In 1955, Bawden's first edition and translation of the said 17th-century Mongolian chronicle was published (Bawden, 1955). The work on the *Altan Tobci* proved significant in several respects. It marked the beginning of a long and fruitful scholarly co-operation with Walther Heissig, then Privatdozent in Göttingen (later appointed Professor and Head of the Seminar für Sprach- und Kulturwissenschaft Zentralasiens an der Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität zu Bonn). It further led towards what was to become one of Bawden's main fields of research—traditional Mongolian historiography. Since Hartmut Walravens (2017), in his excellent essay in memory of Charles Bawden, also published a complete bibliography of Charles' scholarly work—monographs, brief studies, articles, reviews—the present memoir will forgo a repetition. Nevertheless, explicit mention will be made of major works representing Bawden's main fields of research. The *Altan Tobci* was followed by another pioneer edition, the biographies of the Khalkha Mongolian incarnation, *Jebtsundamba Khutukhtu* (Bawden, 1961).

This, furthermore, led to a follow-up step in Bawden's career. He was offered a lectureship in Mongolian at SOAS, a position he took up on 1 October 1955. SOAS was to remain 'his congenial academic home', as he called it, until his retirement in 1984. His further career at the School developed as follows: in 1959, he was accepted as a Recognized Teacher by the University of London, followed by the appointment as Reader in Mongolian, in October 1962; he became Professor and Head of the Department of the Languages and Cultures of the Far East, in October 1970; and Pro-Director of the School, in October 1982. To begin with, however, Charles felt rather isolated at SOAS. As he recalls:

> I was a member of the Department of the Far East under the headship of Professor Walter Simon, and though he received me most kindly I felt something of an outsider faced with the overwhelming preponderance of Chinese and Japanese research and

[4] Walther Heissig (1913–2005): see Walravens (2012); Veit (2018), 285–96.
[5] Kaare Gronbech (1901–1957): see Krueger (1957), 1–5, 13–18.

> teaching in the Department. To begin with I had no students, a fact which, however, was soon to be remedied.[6] Also Mongolian itself was a very marginal subject. We had no relations with Mongolia and I did not even know the names of more than one or two academics there, let alone have any contact with them. There were no books to be bought until the end of the 1950s. Fortunately, Mongolian began to profit from the new interest in Altaic studies as a whole which was generated and promoted by some influential scholars at the 1957 International Congress of Orientalists at Munich, and with the founding of the PIAC (Permanent International Altaistic Conference) and its early meetings in Mainz one began to feel a member of a genuine group. Also, I had (continued to have) the sympathy of Walther Heissig, which meant a great deal in those early years.

The appointment to London had also led the Bawden family to move—at the end of 1955 they bought a house in Iver, where they lived until shortly before Charles died. Another fruitful scholarly co-operation Charles established was with Kaare Gronbech. Not only had he allowed Charles to make use of the *Jebtsundamba* manuscript, which he had brought back from Inner Mongolia, it also led to the Bawden family being invited to Copenhagen in 1956. Before, in 1953, the committee for a new catalogue of the Oriental collection in Demark had agreed upon entrusting Walther Heissig with describing the works of the Mongolian collection in the Royal Library, Copenhagen. Charles was called in to describe the sixty-seven divinatory and medical works. Professor Gronbech, adviser to the Royal Library on matters concerning the newly established Mongol collection, praised Bawden's 'extensive knowledge of literary Mongolian, sound acumen and untiring energy'. He attested to him never falling prey to arbitrary hypotheses or convenient shortcuts. The catalogue was finally published in 1971 (*Catalogue of Mongol Books, Manuscripts and Xylographs*, by Walther Heissig, assisted by Charles Bawden: Heissig, 1971).

Apart from the continued cataloguing of further Mongol collections (Walravens, 2017, 181–201), Charles' work in the Royal Library in Copenhagen opened an additional field in his truly pioneering scholarly activity: research on the linguistically as well as substantially difficult—albeit important—subject of Mongolian folk religion. Reports claim that Charles' scholarly enthusiasm, indeed Sherlock Holmesian meticulousness, led him to experiment himself with burning sheep shoulder-blades in the home fireplace—to the somewhat limited pleasure of the family—yet essential, when dealing with the Mongol tradition of divination by scapulimancy and the interpretation of the bones. The result was a number of outstanding studies in the form of articles, the likes of which have not been published since (Walravens, 2017, 181–210).

[6] To name but some: Veronika Veit (born 1944), at SOAS 1966/67, at present Professor Emeritus of Mongolian Studies at the University of Bonn; also Craig Clunas FBA (born 1954), at present Professor Emeritus of the History of Art (Ming China) at the University of Oxford.

What obviously served Charles well once more was what he had learned from decoding Japanese messages—that is, applying text-critical techniques. Charles was sometimes criticised as being 'finicky'. But a true scholar cannot be finicky enough: the number of errors that have been transmitted in footnotes (sometimes over a century), originating in negligent scholarship, are not few!

A new era began for Charles in 1958 with his first visit to Mongolia. The invitation seems to have been promoted by Ivor Montagu—a man of many interests, who had been to Mongolia a few years before and had published a book about his journey, *Land of Blue Sky* (Montagu, 1956). The chosen visitors were Group Captain H. St Clair Smallwood of the then Royal Central Asian Society, and Charles himself. There being no direct flights between London and Moscow at the time, they travelled via Copenhagen. The journey was written about in the *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* (Smallwood, 1959). Two things of note which came out of the visit may be worth mentioning: Charles and his colleague met one or two survivors of the group of Mongol children who had been sent to school in Germany in the 1920s (see Wolff, 1971). As a result of that encounter, Charles succeeded in making contact with the late Serge Wolff, who had been the European advisor for that group as well as for a trade delegation which came to Germany at the same time.

In 1959 Charles went to Mongolia again, this time travelling by ship to Leningrad, and then by train to Moscow and across Siberia (Bawden, 1960). The occasion was the holding of the First International Congress of Mongolists, a small but highly significant gathering, Charles recalls. Most of those attending were from Mongolia itself and other communist countries, but there were also scholars from the USA, Canada, Finland, Japan and Britain. The holding of this congress marked a turning point, not only in international scholarly relations but also, almost more important, in the slow recovery of scholarship in Mongolia itself after some very bad years previously. On the occasion, the Mongolian colleagues had even succeeded in founding a number of academic series.

Although Mongolian Studies in the UK were still a one-man-band, as Charles calls it, albeit somewhat improved with the appointment of Owen Lattimore as Professor of Chinese Studies (and a strong interest in Mongolian Studies) at the University of Leeds, Charles himself succeeded in doing much to establish the field on the academic map of Britain, not least by spreading his research interests over as wide an area as he could. Two books, highlights of his fine scholarship and his talent as a writer, appealing to scholars as well as an interested public, may serve as evidence in the said context. Encouraged by Bernard Lewis FBA, Charles contributed his book *The Modern History of Mongolia* to the series he was editing (Bawden, 1968). Although this book dealt with, amongst other topics, the dreadful story of the 1930s in Mongolia—albeit in a moderate, though critical, and always impeccably scholarly

fashion—it was quite bitterly attacked both in Mongolia itself and by Ivor Montagu. Twenty years later, Charles had the satisfaction to see his book 'vindicated': where the political course in Mongolia had changed, Charles' book had not, and his Mongolian colleagues were praising it and longing for a reprint! This, indeed, came to pass in 1989 (Bawden, 1989). It still remains the standard treatment of the subject, surpassed by no other publication to date.

The second book to be mentioned is what Charles himself considers his most rewarding topic—the history of the London Missionary Society's mission to the Buryat Mongols in the early part of the 19th century (Bawden, 1985a). It seems worthwhile to relate Charles' own little background story to the enterprise:

> I had known something of this mission through reading James Gilmour's classic book 'Among the Mongols' many years before, but it was really quite by chance that I discovered, while reviewing another book, that the archives of the mission were not only preserved in the library of the Council for World Mission, but that this library was actually in the custody of our own library at SOAS.

The task of reconstructing the story of the mission was not only fascinating in itself, but brought new friendships, among them that of Professor Michael Stallybrass, a descendant of one of the members of the mission and an enthusiast for his family history. Charles' interest in the missionary activities among the Mongols continued, long after his retirement. Thus he came across the correspondence of the orthodox theologian (and Mongol scholar) W. A. Unkrig with the British and Foreign Bible Society[7] —to be transcribed in extenso in the three-volume Unkrig-edition. In connection with a documentation on the pioneer of Mongolian Studies, Isaak Jakob Schmidt,[8] a gap was discovered: two 'christliche Tractätgen' were mentioned in the literature, but they could not be identified. It took several years to discover them, and once again it was Charles who could be persuaded to deal with them. He took on this task with enthusiasm and carried it out in his precise and masterful way.[9]

In the autumn and winter of 1967–8, Charles had a long period of study leave in Mongolia, including a fortnight in western Mongolia, at that time almost unvisited by any foreigners. Political conditions limited the usefulness of the whole enterprise, as Charles relates, but nevertheless he thought it instructive—both academically and otherwise. Hence he not only gave his attention to traditional Mongolian historiography, but also saw the necessity to deal with documentary material concerning the social conditions in Mongolia during the Ch'ing period (1644–1911) and the period

[7] Wilhelm Alexander Unkrig (1883–1956): see Walravens (2003).
[8] Isaak Jakob Schmidt (1779–1847): see Walravens (2005).
[9] See Walravens (2017), 180, 197.

of the Mongol Autonomy (1912–1919), resulting in a number of fundamental articles.[10]

Charles' interest in all aspects of Mongolian culture also turned to literature and the specialised field of Mongol epics, which Walther Heissig, in his later years, had made his special concern. In a series of international conferences in Bonn, he promoted the study, individually as well as comparatively, of this almost exclusively oral field of literature. Amongst other endeavours, the recorded Mongolian texts were to be made available through translations, towards which Charles also contributed one volume (Bawden, 1985b), apart from a number of articles dealing with other aspects relevant to the subject of epics.[11] Written though it was after Charles' retirement, mention here should also be made of a book, again appealing to scholars as well as an interested public, that was an anthology of Mongolian traditional literature (Bawden, 2003). The translations are selected from history, legends, didactic literature, epics, prayers and rituals, folk-tales, Sino-Mongolian prose literature, tales of Indian origin, lyrics and other verse, reminiscences, a modern short story—presented here for the very first time in an English translation. Charles' gift for language and his love of words make the anthology readable, giving pleasure in every line.

Charles' retirement from official obligations did not mean a withdrawal from his scholarly activities, as has been seen. Apart from the above-mentioned anthology, he also completed a true treasure of his heart—in fact he called it 'his pet project': an extensive dictionary, Modern (Khalkha) Mongolian–English (Bawden, 1997). He had worked on this project almost his entire professional life (and beyond)—reading, collecting, correcting, improving—meticulously, indefatigably, once more always searching for what is meant and not only said, an echo, perhaps, of the decoding of Japanese messages in his youth? The result is considered to be outstanding and has (yet) to be bested.

Charles Bawden retired from his post at the School of Oriental and African Studies in September 1984, having been made Honorary Member of the School in June of that year, in recognition of his services, and Emeritus Professor of Mongolian in July 1984 'in recognition and appreciation of services to the University and his subject', as it says in the laudatio. He was elected to the British Academy in 1971; resigned 1980; and re-elected 1985. For a while he was Acting Head of the Percival David Foundation, sitting also on a number of other SOAS bodies at various times, including the Library Committee, Editorial Board of the *Bulletin*, and the Governing Body. He was co-editor of *Asiatische Forschungen*, sat on the editorial board of *Central Asiatic Journal*, and was vice-president of the International Association for Mongol Studies. The

[10] Ibid., 181–210.
[11] Ibid.

'Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft' took his expert opinion on numerous occasions. Charles was a recipient of the (Mongolian) Friendship Medal (1997) and the order of the Pole Star (Altan Ghadasun) of the Mongolian Republic (2007). In 2013 he was awarded the Indiana University Prize for Altaic Studies. On behalf of the British Academy he gave an excellent account of the life and work of the eminent German-born scholar Ernst Julius Walter Simon, Professor Emeritus of Chinese in the University of London, on the occasion of his death (Bawden, 1981).

A final field in connection with Charles' scholarly activities ought not to be forgotten, although it only indirectly bears a relation to his chosen field—his interest in collecting porcelain, Staffordshire Chinoiserie, to be precise. For his private use, Charles wrote a beautifully illustrated essay on his 'Collector's Enthusiasm', as well as a few articles on ceramic themes (included in Walraven's, 2017, bibliography). The interest was initiated by two events—one a book review he had been commissioned, the other a persistent 'feeling of dissatisfaction', as he describes it, in the early 1970s:

> I had been feeling dissatisfied with the way my life had become dominated by rather abstruse academic pursuits. I was feeling out of touch with reality, and felt there was something missing in the way life was going. Ceramics and their history now suddenly promised to fill this intellectual and aesthetic gap, and they have done so ever since. The review was Oliver Impey's book 'Chinoiserie', and in doing this, I had drawn attention to the wealth of early 19th century china decorated in a pseudo-Chinese style to be found in antique shops and fairs. … Our (active) interest was really aroused when in 1971 Joe and Lucy Felstead opened a little antique shop in Thorney Lane, Iver, just round the corner from our home in Richings Way. Lucy had some bowls and saucers on display which she was offering us at 25p each. They reminded us of what we once had, and I bought the lot, also a blue and white tea-bowl with a pattern of a tall pagoda on it. This looked different from the Chinese ware, and I was unsure of what it was. But in the end I did buy it, and I am glad I did, for unless I am mistaken, this was our first piece of Caughley, though we did not know it at the time. That was how we embarked on a hobby which has now lasted for thirty years [written in 2001—in fact, it lasted throughout Charles' lifetime].

## The poet

Charles Bawden's gift for languages, his love of words and love for poetry led him to try his own hand at writing verse. The inclination towards such a fine pastime should surely not least be seen against the background of the first years in his academic career, when studying German and French at Cambridge. Poems he also saw in close connection with music, so it is not surprising that he particularly enjoyed Hugo von Hofmannsthal's lyrics written for the operas *Rosenkavalier* (Charles' favourite) and

*Arabella*. Another German poet he greatly admired was Heinrich Heine, some of whose poems he translated into English. The writer of the present memoir still has in her possession some letters written to her by Charles, in which the subject of poems was touched on. It seems worthwhile to quote a passage from one of them the better to illustrate what was important to Charles' mind, of literature in general and to Hofmannsthal/Strauss in particular:

> The Marschallin's great aria is one of the high points of literature, let alone the manner in which Strauss's music enhances it. What a chance it was that two men of genius in different fields should have been able to work together so productively. It is a pity that the stage performance hides so much of the intricacy of Hofmannsthal's words—one needs to see it.

Charles' wife Jean shared his enthusiasm, and since they were a couple of the most moving closeness they enjoyed a little game of words, taken from *Arabella*, for their private amusement. To quote from the same letter:

> When Mandryka comes on the scene with Waldner's hint to his now dead uncle to interest himself in Arabella, he says, (more or less)—'Wenn aber das der Fall gewesen wäre, dass mein Herr Onkel, der ein ganzer Mann gewesen ist, und in den besten Jahren? Gesetzt der Fall, es wäre so geschehen, dann hätten wir uns in einer unerwarteten Situation befunden'.[12] Jean and I used to use these words when we were faced with a dilemma—we might find ourselves in an unexpected situation.

When Charles had to move from his house in Iver in 2014, he became a resident at Cliveden Manor. He settled in very well, joining a poetry group and taking part in weekly quizzes. He took to writing more poetry and translating works that he enjoyed, particularly by Heinrich Heine and Betty Paoli—even Danish and Hungarian poetry he saw as a pleasant challenge to render into English. Unfortunately the writer of the present memoir has not kept examples of these enterprises, and it is only her memory which serves here as evidence.

Charles also rekindled an interest in 18th-century society, building up a small library of second-hand books that his son Richard was commissioned to purchase for him from AbeBooks. His own library he had donated, as early as 2001, to the Ancient India and Iran Trust, University of Cambridge. Although he used the common computer at Cliveden to scour the websites of his interest, Charles steadfastly refused to reinstate his own personal computer. He was particularly fond of the letters of Lieselotte von der Pfalz which he had a copy of in the German original. They appealed to his sense of humour, the true historian's curiosity in the small things in life, which

[12] But if that had been the case that my revered uncle—and a proper man he was—that that having been the case that it had all happened (in said manner), then we would have found ourselves in an unexpected situation.

tend to mirror much more accurately the conditions which form a society set in its time. When the writer of this memoir was about to leave for Mongolia, Charles sent her the following advice found in his copy of 'Lieselotte'—'always falling open at the same page', as he emphasised: 'Von einer Eiderdunen-Decke habe ich mein Leben nichts gehört; was mich recht warm im Bett haelt, seind sechs kleine Huendcher, so um mich herum liegen; keine Decke haelt so warm als die guten Huendcher.'[13] Similarly, Charles considered a word, ascribed to Heinrich Heine's uncle Salomon, as characteristic of the spirits of the contemporary times: when asked, on his deathbed, would he not convert and ask God for the forgiveness of his sins, Salomon was said to have replied—'No; HE will forgive, c'est son métier!'

Of the considerable number of poems left by Charles, a choice of only a few, in the following, may serve as examples of Charles' 'art of the word', his wit, his erudition, and last, though by no means least, his great love for his wife Jean.[14]

*Beim Schlafengehen (Hermann Hesse)*
*Going to Sleep*
Now that day has tired me,
my spirits long for
starry night kindly
to enfold them, like a tired child.
Hands, leave all your doing;
brow, forget all your thought!
Now all my senses
want to think themselves in slumber.
And the soul unwatched,
would soar in free flight,
till in the magic circle of night
it lives deeply and a thousandfold.

*Fish at Cliveden*
Carp in the safety of their shallow pond
Have no conception of the Great Beyond.
Contentedly and languidly they swim
Unconscious products of a creator's whim?
Lazily they glide along.
Not knowing they might have it wrong.
No wooden idol of a fishy god
Protects them from the angler's line and rod.

[13] Of covers made of eiderdown I have never heard in all my life; yet what keeps me warm in bed be six small doggies thus lying around me—no cover keeps me as warm as those dear doggies.
[14] The poems are taken from the obituary for Jean Barham Bawden, 1 February 2010, and from the service for Charles Roskelly Bawden himself, 23 August 2016.

The heron, stiff upon his rocky perch
Alert, with beady eye appears to search
For piscine prey, but knows he must
Observe the bye-laws of the National Trust.
They don't know the superficial line
Which separates their world from the divine.
They dimly apprehend there may be sky
For ghostly images confront their eye.
Protective gods have left them in the lurch
The green pagoda is no shrine or church.
The wooden fish, erect upon his tail,
Looms out of sight, a mystery, of no avail.
No violence disturbs their peaceful lake,
No churchy dogma from priests upon the make,
No class distinction and no discrimination,
No self regard, just aimless contemplation.

Jean and Charles never called each other by their Christian names—they had many changing ones, but the dearest to them were connected with cats:

*The Cat*
Observe my little concrete cat,
He cost ten pounds, including VAT.
Erect, on neat positioned paw
He guards the plot She never saw.
Tread circumspectly round my cat
Lest careless foot should knock him flat.
I would not like to see him fall
From his precarious pedestal.
May no intrusive dog or rat
Mar the composure of my cat.
Serene, his tail precisely curled,
Girl's Garden his allotted world.
Oblivious to sun and rain,
Exempt from illness and from pain,
Aloof, a feline autocrat,
Exemplar of a Stoic Cat.

*Two Cats*
I have a fire, I have a mat.
I wish I had a little cat.
So I could sit and stroke her fur
And hear the little creature purr.
I have a house and everything

That life and love and marriage bring.
And there I live in disarray
Without my Cat. She went away.

*A Poem Too Late*
You are so tired, my love, your weary eyes
Gaze steadfast into mine, demanding answer.
Your poor clenched hand seeks mine but cannot keep it.
You clasp my head and lay it on your cheek.
What answer can I give, except "I love you"?
Pale words, how can they bring you peace and comfort?
Yet they have magic power. They embrace
That world, unknown before, that we created.
Think kindly of me in your narrow room
As in our empty house I long for you.
Against my will I had to let you go,
And disregard your last despairing plea.

It was not only poetry—be it German, French, Italian, Danish, Hungarian (or, to refer to his professional interests, Mongolian and Chinese)—that caught Charles' interest, fired his imagination and afforded him great pleasure. So too did the world of the declining Austro-Hungarian empire of the Habsburgs, so admirably, if not incomparably, depicted in the books of Joseph Roth, Charles' favourite among the authors who dealt with that subject. This world, now lost forever, is equally preserved and most sensitively kept alive in Salcia Landmann's (1962) superb treasury of Jewish anecdotes and jokes. Charles was so fond of this book (as the writer of the present memoir always has been herself), that a cue alone would put both of us immediately 'on the scene', so to speak. We had, however, not (quite) reached the stage portrayed in the original anecdote, in which a group of salesmen habitually travelling together had numbered their favourite jokes, so that, when one just called out the right number, everyone laughed. A newcomer, fascinated, soon grasped the system and joined in, full of enthusiasm—but no one laughed. Deeply disappointed, the newcomer wanted to know the reason, was it not an excellent joke?—'You can't tell it properly, was the answer.' Such spice enlivened our many regular and long telephone conversations, on God and His world, on the follies of politics, on books and music, on Mongolia and China and things professional, which continued until shortly before Charles died.

## Man of his word

Inspired by the title chosen for his much praised film on the present Pope, *Francis, a Man of His Word*, made by the well-known German film-director Wim Wenders in

2018, the author of this memoir believes this appellation also to be an apt depiction of Charles Bawden's character. 'A man of his word', as defined by the *Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary*, is a man of integrity, denoting people who do what they say they will do. Fine scholar, upright, truthful, modest, loyal to his academic calling and to his friends—all of this made up the man who was Charles Bawden, verily to be called a 'Man of his word'. Numerous instances, found in all matters that touched his life—official and private, in words or in actions—bear testimony to this quality.

The best known of these instances, perhaps, is the affair of the 'fourth man'. In 1979, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, named Sir Anthony Blunt, a former security service officer and personal adviser on art to the Queen as 'the fourth man' in the Cambridge spy ring. The announcement—given in a written answer in the House of Commons—ended a fifteen-year cover-up. Mrs Thatcher revealed he had confessed to the authorities in 1964, but under a secret deal was granted immunity from prosecution. Minutes after the Prime Minister's statement, Buckingham Palace said he was being stripped of his knighthood. Blunt had been part of a Cambridge spy ring made up of Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean and Harold 'Kim' Philby—who was in charge of British intelligence's anti-communist counter-espionage in 1944–6. Burgess and Maclean defected in 1951 following a tip-off from Philby; he defected himself in 1963. Professor Blunt became a Marxist under the influence of his Cambridge friend Guy Burgess. After the Prime Minister's announcement, Professor Blunt made his own statement to the media on 20 November, in which he claimed the decision to grant him immunity from prosecution was taken by the then Prime Minister, Sir Alec Douglas-Home. He said he had come to 'bitterly regret' his spying activities, but, at the time, he had done so out of idealism. Anthony Blunt died in disgrace three years later. Charles' own reaction to the affair is best described—in extenso—in his own words:

> In 1971 I was elected a Fellow of the British Academy. This could have been passed over in a single sentence, were it not for the fact that a decade later I resigned from the Academy as a result of my disagreement with the non-action of the Fellows of the Academy over the matter of Anthony Blunt, who had been exposed as a Soviet agent. I do not want to re-open here a question which is now closed, but I do wish to say a little in explanation of my action. At the time I myself did not publicise it, and it never received any publicity. What then was the good of it? The answer is that I did not intend it to have any public result. I resigned because I felt that I could not share an honour with a man who had behaved as Blunt had apparently done. The question most discussed was whether the Academy, a non-political body, should concern itself with Blunt's alleged treason. I knew little of happenings in the USSR, but I did know something of what had happened in the dreadful years of the 1930s in her satellite Mongolia. There, too, the truth and decency had been suppressed, individuals and

> families destroyed, and, worst of all from an academic point of view, honest scholars killed or imprisoned. Men whom I later knew and counted as colleagues and friends had been persecuted. Others, whose work I knew and respected, had been murdered. I did not feel justified in maintaining fellowship with one who had, however indirectly, connived at this, especially when he was under no compulsion to do so. So I left the Academy, to my great regret, though my section retained enough confidence in me to propose me once again some years later, and I was re-elected in 1985.

Need more be said?

Similarly, in his career as a professor, Charles Bawden stood out not only through his scholarly competence, but also through his unwavering objectivity, his strictly pertinent criticism and painstaking accuracy and honesty, as witnessed by his voluminous oeuvre. In his private life, as a husband, as a father, and finally as a friend, Charles Bawden was—and always will be—remembered for his kindness and hospitality, his open mind and reliability, his sense of humour and his great gift for lasting friendship. A few examples should suffice to bear witness. In the years 1963 and 1963–4, Charles hosted two Mongolian colleagues, who lived with the family in Iver. The first was Magadbürin Haltod, a Chahar Mongol mentioned earlier, who worked with Charles for three months; the second guest was Mr Sechin Jagchid (1916–2009), a Kharchin Mongol, later to become professor in the United States, at Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah, who then served as a temporary member of the staff at SOAS. Charles was able to work with him almost daily. Similarly, the author of this memoir had the good fortune to enjoy the Bawden family's hospitality on many occasions over the years.

His greatest piece of luck, however (always in the Charlesian sense of the word, as defined earlier), was undoubtedly to have met Jean, his much-loved wife, his congenial companion and partner. It was most unfortunate that she should fall ill with Parkinson's Disease in the 1980s, by which illness she became increasingly incapacitated. In the initial stage Charles himself took care of her in an exemplary fashion, until it was no longer physically possible for him, and Jean had to be admitted to a nursing home. She died there on 11 January 2010. Some of the poems Charles had dedicated to his wife have been quoted earlier in this memoir. Perhaps also his last tribute to her should be added to them: 'Let Man be noble, helpful and good, for that alone distinguishes him from all creatures that we know'. 'That was Jean' (J. W. von Goethe, translated by Charles Bawden).

Richard, the oldest of the four Bawden children, has put together some 'Reflections from the Next Generation'. Charles, as a father, clearly emerges from them fully consistent with the image of his personality as depicted in his other walks of life:

> My childhood memories of my father are of him being a somewhat remote person—often shut away in his study hard at work. It was my mother who really provided family cohesion and supervised the day-to-day running of the home. Dad's attitude to

> life was a strange mixture of conservatism (born from his parents' low church adherence?), and academically inspired liberalism. He could be a strict disciplinarian and had a dim view of what he regarded as frivolities (television, sport, pop culture and riotous living), but equally was very relaxed with his offspring's love lives and could happily swap the most risqué of jokes and limericks. I don't remember his presence at childhood birthday parties and I think he was a reluctant attendee at school functions and the like. In his social life he related better to females rather than males. Although he was not one to push himself forward I think he was quietly proud of his achievements.

As has clearly emerged from many instances mentioned throughout this memoir, Charles also had a great gift for lasting friendships—witness his never losing touch with his old colleagues from his wartime activities, not to forget Katherine Sung from Hong Kong. Others are colleagues like the German scholar Walther Heissig, mentioned previously. In a brief memoir, Charles paid his friend a touching tribute (Bawden, 2012, 161–3):

> Walther Heissig was a man of extraordinary abilities. I assert this, not as a flattering eulogy of a departed friend, but as a fact. He was both scholar and an academic entrepreneur, two qualities which do not always coincide. He had a great capacity for friendship and was effective in promoting the interests of his students and younger colleagues. … Walther's life and mine were spent in different countries so that we only saw each other at irregular intervals. But it did not take long for an association to develop into a lasting friendship and indeed an intimate relationship between our two families. A group of friends grew up around the Heissigs, whose central point was Bonn, where we met on such occasions as the Epic seminars which Walther organized.

Veronika Veit, Charles' former student and later close friend, also belonged to that circle.

A final touching Charlesian piece of luck ought to be mentioned. Charles himself wrote:

> Some time after Jean's death in early 2010 my life was enriched by the re-entry into it of a dear friend, Patricia Adamson, after the passage of some 60 years. Pat and I had served in the same naval establishment, HMS Anderson, in Colombo, in the last stages of the Second World War. Her death, after only a few months of 'reunion' at a distance put an end to my emotional life.

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An apt farewell to the scholar who was—and will remain—Charles Bawden may be found in the following hexameter:

> Grammata sola carent fato, mortemque repellunt
> (Hrabanus Maurus, Archbishop of Mainz, AD 776–865)

Another apt farewell to the man who was Charles Bawden may be found in the following verse—it was chosen by himself, much cherished by both Jean and Charles, and recited at the Services held to celebrate their lives:[15]

> Remember me when I am gone away,
> Gone far away into the silent land;
> When you can no more hold me by the hand,
> Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
> Remember me when no more day by day
> You tell me of our future that you planned:
> Only remember me; you understand
> It will be late to counsel then or pray.
> Yet if you should forget me for a while
> And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
> For if the darkness and corruption leave
> A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
> Better by far you should forget and smile
> Than that you should remember and be sad.
> (Christina Rossetti)

In an equally apt conclusion to the celebration of the life of the fine scholar and dear friend, the Service ended with Strauss' 'Waltzsequence' from Der Rosenkavalier Suite.

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