



A STRANGER IN PARADISE
DAVID CANNADINE

Sir David Cannadine is Dodge Professor of History at Princeton University. He has also held positions at the University of Oxford, the University of Cambridge, Columbia University, and the University of London. He is the author of more than a dozen books and the editor or co-editor of numerous volumes. His scholarly interests range across the economic, social, political, and cultural history of modern Britain and its empire, capitalism, collecting, and philanthropy in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America. His books include *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*; *Class in Britain*; *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire*; *Mellon: An American Life*; *The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond our Differences*; and, recently, biographies of King George V and Margaret Thatcher, but also a volume on Churchill as an artist. He is the Editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the Editor of the *Penguin History of Britain* – for which he wrote the volume *Victorious Century: The United Kingdom, 1800–1906*. He was also Vice-Chair (2001–2018) of the Editorial Board of *Past & Present*. He is a member of a large number of learned societies and academies and served as President of the British Academy in the years 2017–2021. – Address: Department of History, Princeton University, 129 Dickinson Hall, Princeton, NJ 08544-1017, USA. E-mail: dcannadi@princeton.edu.

For various personal reasons, I arrived late at Wiko, towards the end of October 2021, which meant I missed the initiation briefings and induction rituals of the previous month, and it took a while to settle in. But my fellow Fellows were very welcoming, the staff were superb, and the facilities were excellent. Negative liberty meant no teaching, no departmental meetings, and no committees at my home university (although graduate students continued to

require attention); positive liberty meant encountering many clever people working on hugely interesting subjects, learning a great deal from them at the Tuesday Colloquia and in conversations over lunch and dinner, and meeting a colleague from another department from my own university on the other side of the Atlantic, whom I doubt if I would otherwise have encountered. As a result, I soon came to realize that Wiko is a special place for enjoying conviviality and for making connections, and that these two activities are mutually reinforcing in stimulating and supporting the life of the mind. Truly, it is an earthly academic paradise, I am still trying to adjust to no longer being there, and I wonder how long that will take.

I came to Wiko with one major objective, which was to get as far along as I could with writing the history of the Ford Foundation, a project on which I had been working intermittently for the previous five years. During that time, “working” had meant overseeing a project manager and supervising a research team of three; making clear the topics that I wanted the researchers to work on in the archives of the Foundation and elsewhere; discussing with them the former Foundation employees in the United States and overseas who should be interviewed; doing as much secondary reading as my other responsibilities allowed (in addition to teaching at Princeton I was President of the British Academy from 2017 to 2021, and that took a lot of time); trying to get clear on how I wanted to organize what was bound to be a big and complex book; and drafting ten out of a probable seventeen or eighteen chapters, along with a very tentative introduction. By the time I arrived at Wiko late last October, that was as far as I had got.

By the time I left Wiko, I had made a great deal of progress. I revised the ten chapters I had already written and got most of the footnotes sorted. I drafted the remaining seven chapters (I did not need an eighth, which came as a relief), which bring the history as near to the present day as is possible. I worked out what seems an appropriate expositional structure for the book, I re-drafted the introduction, and I wrote the first two parts of a four-part conclusion. With ample desk space and with unencumbered time, I was able to check each chapter to ensure that essential themes were followed through in all of them. Thanks to the support and efficiency of the Wiko library staff, I was able to borrow a large number of books for further essential secondary reading and to download an even greater number of equally indispensable articles easily and conveniently. This meant that by the time I left Wiko, I had what was virtually a full draft of the book, and to that extent, I am able to report “mission accomplished.”

I also went public with the project for the first time. I presented some findings at my Tuesday Colloquium in May, providing a chapter outline, setting out the themes of the

history, describing briefly some of the most important episodes, beginning with the creation of the Foundation in 1936, and seeking guidance and advice on how to evaluate the successes (and failures) and significance of the Foundation – the part of the conclusion I have yet to write. I also explained how an essential part of the Foundation’s history has been its changing relationship with academic subjects and with ideas more generally, among them development economics, sociology, area studies, “the West” versus communism, totalitarianism versus democracy, the “problem” of race relations, human rights, public interest law, community development, feminism and women’s studies, black and ethnic studies, reproductive rights, and so on. And I set out the challenges of writing the history of what became, from 1950 on, a global organization, concerned to award grants and prizes not only in the United States, but also via its overseas offices in Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America.

In addition to my presentation at Wiko, I discussed the project with Yale faculty and students at the Jackson School of Global Affairs, where they cautioned that the book would be very dense (seventeen chapters of twenty thousand words each) and that I should try hard to “lighten” the narrative as much as I could (I still remain rather unsure how to do this). At the invitation of the Berlin Capital Club, I gave a talk on the Ford Foundation and the Cold War, with special reference to the support that the Foundation gave to the Freie Universität Berlin during the 1950s. And via Zoom, I addressed both the executive leadership team of the Foundation and the trustees, who seemed enthused and excited by what I said – though they have yet to read the book!

There is, of course, more to do, which means that the “mission” is still not entirely “accomplished.” I continue to fret about the two final sections of the conclusion. I have yet to complete all the secondary reading, as the bibliography grows ever longer as each new book or article I read contains yet more references I need to follow up on. There is a great deal of fact checking and reference checking to do. There are permissions to obtain from interviewees whom I quote in the text. And there are illustrations to select, which is both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because there is a danger that too many of them will be photographs of the white men who for so long dominated the Foundation’s board and staff; an opportunity because appropriate visual images will be one way of “lightening” the text. With luck, all this should be finished by early summer 2023, and I hope that Harvard University Press will publish the book in the autumn of 2023. I cannot wait to donate a presentation copy to Wiko.

Such was my main task and my near-full-time preoccupation while I was at Wiko. But I did do some other things that I ought briefly to summarize. I was the keynote

speaker at a conference to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates at Maynooth University. I gave the concluding remarks at a virtual colloquium organized at Humboldt-Universität to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of my book, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*. I delivered the address at the memorial service held at St Margaret's Church, Westminster, for Sir John Chilcot, the British civil servant who helped broker the Good Friday Agreement in Northern Ireland and who later chaired the (highly critical) inquiry into Tony Blair's decision to join the United States in invading Iraq. And I presided at a memorial meeting at the British Academy to celebrate the life and work of one of my presidential predecessors, the sociologist Viscount Runciman of Doxford.

There were other obligations, many of which I could discharge via Zoom. I attended meetings of the Wolfson Foundation, as a trustee, as chair of its arts and heritage panel, as a member of its nominations committee, and as chair of the judges of the Wolfson History Prize, and I wrote a commemorative essay to mark the golden jubilee of that award. I continued to be active as a board member of the Royal Oak Foundation in New York, the American partner of the National Trust. I chaired meetings of the advisory council of the Centre for Urban History at the University of Leicester. I began my term as President of the Birmingham and Midland Institute. As a trustee of the Gladstone Library, I was heavily involved in the appointment of a new warden. I chaired the newly established Heritage Committee of the British Academy, which oversees its archive, library, and art collection. And I was appointed a Governor of the Museum of London, which will be transitioning from its present cramped and unwelcoming quarters to new and much-expanded premises during the next few years.

As I write these words, I see in my mind's eye the spacious study in Wallotstraße 10 where I was able to get so much work done; I recall the outlines of the main building, with its beautiful spaces and the spectacular view across the lake; and I think of the music, the museums, the palaces, and the restaurants that (among many other things) make Berlin such a vivid, vibrant, and vital city to have lived in. I extend my heartfelt thanks and unstinted gratitude to everyone at Wiko – the Rector, the Academic Advisory Board, the Fellows, and the staff – who made my time there so productive, so memorable, and so special. And I cannot find the words to express how much I envy the new Fellows who will be entering this academic paradise in less than two months' time. I hope they will soon realize just how lucky they are!