



4 August 2011

Dear Tim, Rob and friends at Ingestre Stables,

Thankful Words Never Come Too Late

How are you? It has been almost three weeks since we left Ingestre and sorry for not being able to write earlier due to my trip to Eastern Europe and the busy work after returning to Hong Kong.

Saying thanks is, however, never too late, especially when I prefer saying it nicely and thoroughly. So I have given it some good thoughts and have gone through all my riding notes, hopefully not to miss anyone whom we came across at Ingestre.

First and foremost, we must thank **Tim** for receiving us and organising all the classes and activities during our training at Ingestre, including the exciting hacking out at Cannock Chase and watching the very interesting musical, "Children of Eden" at Stafford Theatre. I was both surprised and grateful for having Tim, such a senior coach, to teach novice riders like us for so many lessons, which honestly I did not expect at the beginning. Tim, thanks for your guidance, patience and encouragement when teaching us flatwork, hacking skills and lateral movements of horses, which to me were totally new and inspiring.

Thanks to **Rob**, again another very senior coach, for giving us an unforgettable lesson on our last day by allowing us the room and freedom to learn how to control, synchronise and work with our horses better by doing more transitions from one gait to another. And Rob, I'll always remember your reminder about opening and leaning back my shoulders when riding.

Euan, thanks for receiving us on our first day at Ingestre and for showing us around. Thanks for being such a humorous and fun-filled coach and for telling us to stay open-minded and not to be biased by what others say about a horse. Thanks for taking us on that very bumpy ride on the school's Range Rover to the grazing field to learn about horse behaviour and psychology. I will never forget how fascinating it was when the horses noticed us at a far distance and approached us after they assured we were not harmful to them.

Thanks to Alex for being such a positive coach, who have taught us so many different stable management and riding skills ranging from horse feeds, points of horses, flatwork, leg yielding (again first time for me), simple dressage to jumping. The day when we did pair riding as part of a dressage exercise was really fun and fruitful, as we also learned the importance of control, accurate and precise riding, as well as partnership with co-riders. The jumping lesson was truly stunning to me as it was my first but I managed to jump all the single fences despite failing a double. As always, Alex was very encouraging, boosting our confidence in ourselves and our horses. Alex, I will not forget the importance of planning our route well before approaching a fence.

I am also grateful to Giovanni for teaching me about horse feeds, tack and cantering at a safe distance with other horses in a circle as part of the BHS Stage I syllabus. With his guidance, I think I can now remember all these better and am more confident towards my BHS examination this coming November.

Thanks should also go to James, Jessica and Judith, who have given us stable management lessons on grooming and turning out, as well as to Auntie Liz, Vicky and Joe, whose splendid main dishes, omelettes, jacket potatoes and cheese on toasts had fuelled us with the energy we needed for our training. Special thanks to Andrew and Jessica for kindly accompanying us for the hacking to make sure we were fine and safe. And Jessica, thanks for the piece of very sweet and juicy cherry you gave me at the end of one of the riding lessons which quenched my thirst and saved my life!

And of course, thanks to all the apprentices, whom we may not be able to name one by one, for their friendliness and willingness to lend a hand all the time.

Last but not least, I wish to thank my favourite horse during this training trip at Ingestre - Rocky. While Rocky may not look as grand and stately as Chinese Kid, nor as sweet and lovely as Jumbo, he has been kind, tender and affectionate to me. Despite his relatively senior age, he remains young at face and heart. He is active and forward-going, intelligent and responsive to aids, making him a wonderful partner in riding. He enjoys being groomed, especially with a body brush, and will usually fall asleep during grooming probably because he feels so comfortable. He loves haylage and I often gave him some after a lesson as rewards. The greatest lesson I learned

from Rocky is to control the speed and rhythm of riding, as without it, he can be too fast for exercises like pair riding, or too close to other horses. Rocky is very understanding and I think he knew we were leaving that day and even said goodbye to me by rubbing his muzzle against my shoulders. I'll miss Rocky and hope to see him again soon. Please take good care of him and send him my regards.



As I keep telling myself and my friends, *bidding farewell is not the end, but the beginning of a new journey leading to our next reunion.* Until then, I'll hold tight to all the invaluable lessons learnt, all the friends (people



and horses alike) we have made and all the memorable moments we had at Ingestre Stables. A big thank-you again for everything and let's strive hard to make ourselves a better rider, and most importantly, a more loving and caring guardian to our friends - horses!

Best wishes,
Catherine Sing
The IRC Group visiting in July 2011

