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13 February 2004

The Duke of Westminster  
Eaton Hall,  
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Chester CH4 9ET

Dear Gerald, ( By hand)

It was very kind of you to have spared me so much of your time over a delicious glass of Champagne on Wednesday. I found you looking extremely fit and barely changed since we last met and it was hard for me to imagine that almost 12 years have passed since you came to my help in such a generous way.

Your friendship and innate kindness made it easier for me to come and ask you once more for your help, this time with the selling of my French property, Fraytet dels Boscs ("Fraytet"). As promised, I attach a brief history and description of Fraytet, together with a copy of the last major valuation (in French), including photos of the property. I will send you , when I get it from my guardian, a piece I wrote a few years ago for paying guests whom I started to have stay at Fraytet from 1994 during the summer months in some of the larger 'out houses' beside the pool. It describes the whole region around the property, including information about key towns and transport facilities.

As for my reasons for wanting to sell Fraytet, I have come to the conclusion that at my age (83 next month) it just cannot make sense to be plagued by financial worries when I own such an asset, frozen in bricks and mortar, costing me in upkeep but unfettered by any mortgage. Because of my age and the total insufficiency of my income I have not been able obtain a mortgage, whether in France or in the UK, although Lord knows I have tried hard with several well-known institutions on both sides of the Channel. My own children, who have been exceptionally generous in the past, are themselves all strapped at the present and unable to help out in a meaningful way. It is therefore imperative that I sell Fraytet to give me freedom from my debts until such time as my boys can again contribute to my upkeep as before.

As I explained you, should I manage to sell the property at the c£1M price I am seeking, it would enable me immediately to repay the last £350,000 I still owe one old friend (who is now pressing me to liquidate his loan which, since it is US\$-denominated, would be most advantageous for me to do as soon as possible). I would also eliminate a further £150,000 of short term loans and spend approximately £250,000 on buying or building for myself a much smaller home in the same region where I have many members of my family studded

around the old medieval town of Monflanquin which is where I wish to retire to. I would then be left with some £200,000 to tide me into what is shaping up to be a ripe old age and to help in particular with the education of my 13 grandchildren, the youngest of whom is just 7 weeks old!

In order not to miss an advantageous sale, I would be prepared to forego my plans for this summer and in effect go to Fraytet simply to empty the property of what I would wish to keep - which is in itself quite a job - and to organise the storage of my effects (including the extensive family archives) while seeking to identify another smaller property round about. I am fortunate in having a Notary and lawyer - both based in Paris - who each have over 20 years of familiarity with Fraytet, which is held through an SCI (French property-holding structure) the shares of which I own as to 99.9%, with my sister holding the remaining 0.1%.

I would be quite prepared to sell the property as furnished, at a price to be agreed, but would of course remove "family heirlooms", by which I mean furniture and plate which has been in my own family for centuries and which I hope will remain in my family after my death and some pieces which belong to my children which they loaned me.

Needless to say, Fraytet is available to be visited and I would be more than ready to fly down myself to show people around if you felt that would be helpful or indeed necessary.

Should you need any further information, you have but to ask and I will of course let you have it to the best of my ability.

With renewed thanks for whatever form you help may take,

Yours ever ( *By hand* )

Betty ( *By hand* )

Dr Elisabeth Maxwell