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CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

NEWSLETTER/BUTLLETÍ INFORMATIU



VOL. 2 - Núm. 2 - WINTER/HIVERN 1992/3

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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COVER PICTURE BY TONY HOOPER

Members are invited to submit seasonal photographs for use on the front covers of future issues.

■ Un Club per a gent de totes les nacionalitats que viuen al Principat. Actualment hi ha membres de 25 nacionalitats. En aquesta varietat de membres la llengua més comuna és l'anglès. L'objectiu principal del Club és reunir a gent en un esperit d'amistat i companyonia. El Club ofereix als membres l'oportunitat de conèixer-se socialment i/o a través de les diferents activitats que els Grups organitzen.

■ A Club for people of all nationalities living in the Principality. Membership now covers some 25 nationalities. With this diversity the major common language is English. The main aim of the Club is to bring people together in a spirit of friendship and comradeship. The Club offers members the opportunity to meet socially and/or through the many diverse activities to be found in the Groups.

■ Un Club pour personnes de toutes les nationalités qui habitent dans la Principauté. Actuellement il y a des membres de 25 nationalités différentes. Parmi cette variété de membres la langue la plus commune est l'anglais. L'objectif principal du Club est de réunir les personnes dans un esprit d'amitié et camaraderie. Le Club offre aux membres l'opportunité de se connaître socialement à travers des différentes activités que les Groupes organisent.

INTERCOMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER WINTER 1992/3

EDITORS : Jackie Crozier and Tony Hooper

EDITORIAL

En primer lloc, els Editors voldrien desitjar a tothom un Nadal ple de Joia i un Feliç i Profitós Any Nou. Havíem pensat fer-ho en la vostra pròpia llengua, però amb gairebé trenta nacionalitats dins el Club, a la millor hauríem omplenat tota la revista! De tota manera, sigui quina sigui la vostra llengua, accepteu si us plau, aquests bons desitjos.

Esperem que tots vosaltres ja us haureu assabentat del canvi de lloc de reunió per al Cafè Matinal de cada setmana. Hi ha més informació al respecte dins l'apartat «Notícies de la Junta», així com una crida a les vostres opinions. Esperem que responeu.

També hi ha notícies sobre un nou coordinador per a les Activitats Socials. Ens agradaria aclarir que la Pop és només la coordinadora i per tant, no podem esperar que organitzi totes les activitats. El que ella i la Junta necessiten són dues coses. En primer lloc, volem les VOSTRES idees i suggeriments. Si teniu suggestions, el que sovint vol dir que teniu una bona idea sobre alguna cosa que personalment us agrada fer i que creieu que també pot agradar els altres, penseu també en oferir-vos i ajudar a organitzar aquesta activitat. Si la idea és bona, la Junta us donarà tot el seu suport. Recentment heu estat informats sobre aquest suggeriment. Però si us plau, no espereu que els membres de la Junta ho organitzin tot. La Junta és aquí per encoratjar-vos i donar-vos suport. Membres, si us plau responeu donant el vostre suport a la Junta.

Estem contents d'estar rebent molt material per a la revista, però sempre hi ha espai per a més – i si no n'hi ha en farem.

EDITORIAL

First of all, the Editors would like to wish everyone a Joyful Christmas and a Happy and Friutful New Year. We thought of doing this in your own language, but with nearly thirty nationalities in the Club, decided that we might fill the whole magazine! However, whatever your nationality and language please accept these good wishes from us.

As we hope that you all know there has been a change of venue for the weekly Coffee Mornings. There is more about this in the News from the Board, and an appeal for your views. We hope that you will respond.

There is also news about a new coordinator for the Social Activities. We would like to make the point that Pop is only the coordinator and cannot be expected to organise every activity.

What she, and the Board, need, is two things. Firstly we want YOUR ideas and suggestions. If you do have suggestions, which often means that you have a good idea for something that you personally enjoy and which you think others would also enjoy, think also of coming forward and helping to organise such an activity. If the idea is sound the Board will give members their fullest support.

You have recently been informed about one idea from a member –Tea Dances– and the Board is supporting this suggestion. But, please, do not expect Board members to organise everything. The Board is there to encourage and support the members. Members please respond by supporting the Board.

We are pleased that we are receiving a lot of input for this magazine, but there is always space for more – and if there isn't we will make space.

Notícies de la Junta

Durant una recent reunió, la Pop Goldsteen va estar d'acord en coordinar l'organització de les Activitats Socials, ajudada pel Peter Parkinson i en Des Allen. Esperem que els membres hauréu rebut l'avis sobre el viatge proposat per anar a Tolosa el proper 9 de desembre i us hauréu adonat de que estem intentant satisfer varis gustos en una mateixa excursió.

Tal i com vam anunciar en el darrer número, el lloc de reunió per als Cafès Matinals Setmanals ha estat canviat per l'Hotel París Londres. Aquest canvi ha arribat degut a les queixes dels membres referent al servei dolent, al car (i tebi!) cafè, i a l'ambient en general, no massa acollidor. Alguns membres, quan se'ls ha demanat, han expressat una preferència per tornar a l'Hotel París Londres on l'aparcament és més fàcil. El número de participants des del canvi ha estat bo, encara que alguns membres pensen que és una mica lluny. Què us sembla si ens feu arribar els VOSTRES punts de vista sobre el tema, expressant la vostra preferència per l'Hotel París Londres, l'Hotel Valira (que ha canviat molt des que hi érem per darrera vegada) o alguna altra alternativa?

Referent a l'informe sobre el Grup de Dansa Escocesa, hauríeu de saber que hi ha hagut un canvi de Cap de Grup.

Perfils de la Junta

Peter Parkinson

En Peter, que va esdevenir membre de la Junta durant la darrera Reunió General Anual, va néixer a Lancaster, Anglaterra, on la seva família ha viscut durant generacions. La seva filla i els seus néts continuen aquesta tradició. Va estudiar enginyeria, economia i història a les Universitat de Cambridge i Londres, i s'ha guanyat la vida en el món del comerç, venent qualsevol cosa, des de menjar enllaunat per a animals fins a coure. Es va retirar l'any 1987. En Peter va anar a viure a França l'any 1972 i encara hi passa part de l'any. Tantmateix, va visitar Andorra per primera vegada l'any 1951 i va comprar el seu pis a Ordino l'any 1973.

En Peter s'interessa per moltes coses: la música clàssica, la història, la política, observar escultura i pintura, escriure (encara no ha publicat res d'important excepte en aquesta revista), la poesia i l'esquí. Ha estat membre del Club des dels primers dies i un membre actiu del Grup de Teatre, fent de Tresorer del mateix.

Ha estat casat i divorciat dues vegades a Anglaterra. I està força disposat a tornar-ho a provar si el convencen suficientment!

News from the Board

At a recent meeting Pop Goldsteen agreed to coordinate the organisation of Social Activities, assisted by Peter Parkinson and Des Allen. Members will have received notice of the proposed trip to Toulouse on December 9th, and will have noticed that we are trying to cater for various tastes in one outing.

As announced in the last issue the venue for the Weekly Coffee Morning has been changed to the Hotel Paris Londres. This move arose because of the complaints of members of poor service, expensive (and tepid!) coffee, and a general ambience which was not very welcoming. Several members when canvassed expressed a preference for a return to the Paris Londres where parking is easier. Numbers attending since the move have been good, but some members feel that it is a little remote. How about letting us know YOUR views on this subject, to express a preference for the Paris Londres, the Hotel Valira (much changed since we were last there) or another alternative?

In the report from the Scottish Dancing Group members should note that there has been a change of Group Leader.

Profiles of the Board

Peter Parkinson

Peter, who became a member of the Board at the last A.G.M., was born in Lancashire, England, where his family has lived for generations. His daughter and grandchildren carry on that tradition. He studied engineering, economics and history at Cambridge and London Universities, and made his living in marketing, anything from canned

pet-foods to copper, until retirement in 1987. Peter moved to France, where he still spends part of every year, in 1972. However he first visited Andorra in 1951, and bought his flat in Ordino in 1973.

Peter pursues numerous interests, classical musical, history, politics, viewing sculpture and painting, writing (nothing important yet published except in this magazine), poetry and skiing. A member of the Club since the very early days and an active member of the Theatre Group, acting as its treasurer.

Twice married and divorced in England. Willing to try again if sufficiently convinced!



NEWS FROM ANDORRA

«Austerity» Budget

The Government recently produced proposals for their 1993 Budget; so perhaps next year the new year and the new budget might coincide! The Finance Minister, Josep Casal, said that the yardstick was to be austerity. The aim of next year's budget was to reduce the country's debt as much as possible and to try and balance income and expenditure.

The former is estimated at 18,003,325,958 ptes., which represents an increase of 3.3% over this year, while the latter remains fixed at 23,690,146,725 ptes. The deficit for the coming year is therefore estimated at 5,686,820,767 ptes.

The principal sources of income continue to be the consumer tax and the tax on merchandise, which together account for 76% of all normal income.

The Government has aimed to cut down on its administration expenses and has only increased these by 15 million ptes.; that is some 0.11%. Net investment is to be reduced by 10.71%, since only those investments that cannot be postponed will be completed.

There have certainly been cuts. The sum allocated to Education, Youth and Culture has been cut by 41.3%; Agriculture, Commerce and Industry have taken a 86.2% cut; Social Welfare and Health is down by 23.7%

and, Sport has had its budget slashed by 100%. Only Public Services has had its budget increased by 64.3% for the investments necessary to improve roads, etc. Over two thousand million has been budgeted for this and almost two thousand million for educational equipment and new school buildings.

In spite of all the «cuts» proposed (and which are being discussed by the various government departments at the moment), 1993's budget will be some 31.73% up on 1992's because of the 2,102 million ptes. relating to credits voted for this year.

Nationality Law

Although it is unlikely to be of practical use to the majority of readers, they may be interested to know what is being decided. For, unlike the Constitution, this is one Law that seems likely to be ratified quite soon. However, controversy still rages about one or two points: double nationality, the naturalisation of long-standing residents and Andorran nationality for those born and living outside the country but of Andorran parents.

The Code of Nationality, recently drawn up and circulated to the parishes for comment, states that children born here to foreign parents since 1975 may opt for Andorran nationality when they are 18, on condition that they have lived permanently in the Valls (education outside the country is excepted).



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The second section concerns residents who have lived in the Principality since before January 1, 1960. If their residence here has been permanent, they may apply for Andorran nationality but only if they officially renounce their original nationality. This is a strict condition without exceptions.

These two sections concern about 8,000 people, almost the same number as all the native-born Andorrans in the country. There is another innovation.

By 28 votes to 19 the General Council voted to award the title of «honorary Andorran» to foreigners who merit it by reason of their services to the country.

Article 22, however, points out that this acquired nationality can be lost if the newly naturalised Andorran does not then stay in the country, exclusively and uninterruptedly, for at least ten years afterwards.

J. Crozier

GROUP REPORTS

Ornithological and Natural History Group

The Group takes a break in December but will continue meeting throughout 1993 on the third Thursday of each month. Both the January and February meetings will be held indoors, at Brian Dore's flat in Sant Julia. Videos and slides taken by members will be shown and the January meeting will be followed by a «bring a dish» buffet lunch at Ann and Horst Matschke's. The wildlife of South Africa and Venezuela, Hungary and Israel, European Orchids and a Mystery Quiz (with prizes!) are some of the items on the programme. Non-regular members and their friends are welcome but please phone Brian (42849) beforehand to check that there is still enough room and Ann (41279) as well if you would like to come to the January lunch.

In March a long week-end to the Camargue in France is planned, staying near the old walled city of Aigues Mortes. This is the best time of the year to see flamingoes and much else besides. Anyone interested

should phone Jacquie Crozier (35931) as soon as possible.

The summer issue of the quarterly bulletin is being completed by Maurice Pilington; anyone who would like a copy should contact him. Next year's programme will be sent to all regular members within the next month. There are spare copies for new members at the Wednesday coffee mornings.

Scottish Dance Group

When I first thought of joining this group, I saw in front of my eyes those highly acrobatic dancers jumping over crossed swords and doubted if this is for me.

To my relief, I found out that it is just another type of folk dancing that many people including myself enjoy so much.

So, if you had any doubts, I hope they are no longer there.

Please come and join us. Its a lot of FUN and the more

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the merrier! We meet at the Sala de Comu in La Massana which is opposite the Parc Infantil every Sunday from 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m. this leaves enough time for any one who wants to go out in the evening to do so.

We have new office bearers;
Gerry Vardi (with Rina as backup)
is the group leader.....(Tel. 35998).
Clare Allcard secretary(Tel. 36869).
Laura Fecanin treasurer(Tel. 36869).
Hope to dance with you,
Backup leader, Rina vardi.

International Singers Group

The International Singers continue to meet every Tuesday from 7 to 9pm. Under the baton of Sheila Hooper the group has become less formal. While still enjoying the challenge of harmony songs, we also join together in unison pieces and there seems to be more time for laughter too.

Our dedication to improving the quality of the group is still strong. We very much appreciate the individual singing lessons which most of us take with Teresa Vidal. She has led us from simple voice exercises to glimpse the glories of the Italian arias.

In fact all the group now needs is a few more enthusiastic recruits and we can again think about putting on a show for you. Meanwhile we hope to help the Drama Group with their Christmas Music Hall. Sadly a Christmas Concert in Ordino is out of the question this year as too many of the group, including our excellent pianist Ken Law, will be away;

but we hope very much that, by 1993, the group will have grown enough to give another concert in that acoustic delight, Ordino Church. It is up to you!

If you would like to join us or want more information please phone Clare Allcard on 36269. I promise you a very warm welcome.

Art Group

The Group has been launching out enthusiastically on oil painting under the expert eye of Nighat O'Brien, with room also for those who prefer to continue working in their own medium.

We have managed to have a full house every Tuesday, in spite of the inevitable comings and goings - those going away for a week or two to the plea «keep my place, I'm coming back!».

Such has been the interest aroused by Nighat's unobtrusive guidance that beginners and «old hands» alike have felt a sense of achievement, even in this short space of time.

In addition to the weekly meetings in the Studio the group has gone with Nighat to various exhibitions at galleries in Andorra la Vella and Escaldes-Engordany and enjoyed seeing what the experts are doing, to the accompaniment of much earnest discussion (and not so earnest criticism) of what we have seen.

Some members of the group have this year exhibited at the exhibitions in Encamp, Ordino and the 8th. Annual «Mostra d'Art» in Andorra la Vella.

Barbara Melville - Group Leader

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Teatre Internacional d'Andorra

The Theatre Group of the C.I.A.

The Group has had a fairly traumatic time since the last report. Readers may remember my plea for help with obtaining storage space for our scenery and props. Unfortunately this brought no response from members, but an interested friend of the Group came forward with the offer of a garage to rent. Now we have made the move and are able to breath easy, we hope for some considerable time. Thanks must be expressed to others for arranging or providing transport.

These are Peter Hancock for the use of his lorry on three occasions, and the Meritxell Special School for the use of their bus, and helpers, on another.

As I write this, rehearsals, are already under way for our next production. We will be presenting another «MUSIC HALL» at the CENTRE CULTURAL, ESCALDES on FRIDAY 11 th. DECEMBER at 9.30 p.m.,

SATURDAY 12 th. at 8.00 p.m., and SUNDAY 13 th. at 4.30 p.m. As all those who saw our previous «Music Hall» in January can tell you, you will be in for an evening of song, dance and, we hope, wit. We, the Group, enjoy presenting entertainment for you, but please respond by coming and giving us your support. All the work would seem worthwhile if we were able to perform before three full-houses!! Tickets will be available from mid-November at the the usual places - The Centre Cultural in Escaldes, the weekly Coffee Morning at the Hotel Paris Londres, from Viatge Relax in the centre of Andorra la Vella, and from Roc Propietats in La Massana. Do make this a date, and tell your friends.

Tony Hooper

(To help everyone understand the tradition of Music Hall, Ron Richards has written an article which you can find in these pages).



BARCLAYS INTERNATIONAL FUNDS

John GWILLIAM, the Personal Finance Manager (France) of Barclays Bank Trust Co. Ltd. is now permanently based in Nice, Alpes-Maritimes. However, following a number of requests from customers in Andorra, he travels to the Principality at least twice a year. Alternatively, if you are ever in the Côte d'Azur region he would be very pleased to meet you in Nice.

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Some of the artists from the last production who will be appearing again in the «MUSIC HALL» in December.



MUSIC HALL

Last January the Andorra International Theatre presented «Victorian Music Hall». It proved to be great fun and enjoyed as much by the artists as the audience.

But why «Music Hall»? There is very little «International» about this form of entertainment. Far from it. The whole style is very English, and very «Cockney», from the heart of London.

Most of the songs are well known to Londoners but I am sure many of them have never been heard outside. Indeed, our Musical Director, René de Knight had never heard of most of the songs and much of the cockney words were a foreign language to him. He has now been won over and can't wait to get cracking on the next Music Hall.

For the beginning of Music hall we must go back well into the last century. There were Theatres and Opera Houses in London but these drew their audiences from «society» and the wealthy. For those with little to spend on entertainment there were taverns or pubs, where drink was cheap and they could sing, along with their friends, the popular songs of the day.

It was inevitable that in a bar full of singers, some would stand out as having bigger voices or more striking personalities. So they would be called upon to lead the song or sing the verses. This soon led to «Sing us a song, and we'll buy the next round of

drinks», and from there it was only a small step to the singers wishing to be paid.

The Taverns prime object was to sell drink and food, and as the more they sang, the more they drank, it was well worth employing the most popular singers, and the taverns were soon in competition for the star acts.

The landlord would preside over the evening himself and encourage the crowd to drink. He would introduce each of the singers and their songs and frequently threaten that the next singer would not perform until another round of drinks was ordered. This form of entertainment proved so popular that most of the taverns in London built special rooms for the purpose. These were the original «Music Halls». Rooms large enough to hold several hundred patrons at tables with a platform or stage at one end. By this time the landlord was so busy that he would employ someone else to run the evening. So was born the «Chairman». Music Hall became so popular that at the peak, about 1850, there were over five hundred such halls in London alone. However, they were not all devoted to lowbrow comic songs and melodramatic ballads. Some included more serious work including ballet and opera. Indeed the first performance in London of Gounod's opera «Faust» was given at the Canterbury Arms in Westminster.

Music Hall made the stars and the Stars, in turn, made the Music Hall. So many of the great names live on in the history of entertainment. Such names



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as Vesta Tilly, Little Tich, Dan Leno, Marie Lloyd, and so many more. Many of them came from nowhere, achieved fame and fortune, but died young and in poverty. They had not been used to money and it went out as fast as it came in. One of the greatest stars of that time, Marie Lloyd, died at the age of 52 with only one week's salary to her name.

The Stars of the Music Hall were soon in demand at other theatres, especially for the great pantomimes at Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. One thing led to another. Panto to Variety, Variety to the more modern Revue. Many of the original Music Halls became theatres including the «Old Holborn» which became the Holborn Empire, and the «Old Mo» which became the Wintergarden Theatre in Drury Lane. Incidentally this was the only theatre truly in Drury Lane. The more famous Theatre Royal has no real claim to that address as only the scenery workshops are in Drury Lane.

Not all the entertainment of the period was linked to hard drinking. The temperance movement was very strong at the time and many music halls were opened in Tea Rooms and Coffee Rooms. London's famous Old Vic was originally the Victoria Coffee Rooms.

All this was of course long before my time, but I was brought up in the days of the «Musical at Home» when friends would gather to sing and play

for their own entertainment, so, long before my teens I had got to know many of the comic songs of a bygone period. In the mid 1960's when I was working for Bernard Delfont, my year was mapped out for me. I would go where I was needed. One summer it was planned that I should direct the Max Bygraves Show at Torquay before joining Micheal Bentine to play a number of comic characters in his «Square World». However this left about three weeks at the start of the summer so I was packed off to the Wintergarden Theatre, Bournemouth, to stage a show with real old timers. It gave me the joy of working with artists who were stars when I was a child. Elsie and Doris Waters (perhaps better known as their characters Gert and Daisy), Leslie Sarony of the double act, «The Two Lesleys», «Hutch», Leslie Hutchinson, and Billy Russell, who was best known for his character based on Bruce Bainsfather's cartoon character, «Old Bill». The youngster of the troupe, apart from myself, was Ben Warris from the famous double act Jewet and Warris. I had a wonderful three weeks with little to do but enjoy their company and listen to their stories of their «Good Old Days». That is my only claim to first hand knowledge of Music Hall but my interest has remained, and that is one reason why we will be presenting our second «MUSIC HALL» on December 11th, 12th, and 13th. and with the help of yourselves we will make it an even greater success.

Ron Richards 1992

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THE 1992 SPECIAL OLYMPICS

When I participated, as a coach to the British team, in the closing ceremony of the 1988 Paralympics in Seoul it was a very emotive moment for me since I believed that, after many years of involvement with sport for the disabled, it was my final appearance on that kind of stage. But on Friday 9th. October this year I was once more entering an Olympic Stadium to take part in an Opening Ceremony, this time for the «Special Olympics», and very proudly walking behind an Andorran flag wearing an Andorran Olympic blazer. I believe that on this occasion I was even more emotional.

Readers may remember that I wrote about the various events for the disabled in the June issue. The Special Olympics attracted 3.500 athletes, many from Spain but also with teams from some 25 countries. Held in Barcelona and Vilanova all the events, over five days, were well supported by the public.

The team from Andorra of 31 athletes was drawn from the Meritxell Special School and Workshops.

We had been training since Easter, but after the summer holidays every day was set aside for a last effort. I had been involved in coaching certain individuals in athletics and swimming, the petanca team, and assisting with the gymnastics. The response from the athletes was excellent, and it was heart-warming to see them improving every day.

When we went we knew that we were ready and would not be overshadowed, but the results far exceeded our hopes. The team of 31 (this included a Football Team of 9) returned with a total of 27 medals (Athletics - 15, Swimming - 4, Gymnastics - 1, Petanca - 3, and Cycling - 4). An outstanding result which I do not believe could be matched by any other team. On our return to Andorra we were honoured by a Government reception where every athlete was presented with a commemorative medal by the Cap de Govern. Thank you, Andorra, for letting me be part of this superb experience.

Footnote: We are now looking forward to our next major event. This will be the 2nd. «Special Olympics» for the small nations of Europe to be held in Monaco in July 1993. *Tony Hooper.*

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SOME VIEWS FROM THE GAMES



The Team waits in the Olympic Stadium for the Opening Ceremony.



The entry of the Andorran Team.



During the ceremony.



The Special Olympics Flag is paraded.



Dancing at the Opening Concert.



The unbeaten Petanca Team.

Outside Andorra

As we have completed a year of what to look for in Andorra throughout the seasons, we are starting a series on places to visit nearby; say within a half-day's drive, either in France or Spain. Contributions from members would be welcomed.

It could be just a brief description of some good restaurants you have discovered, a nearby beauty spot or interesting old church or you might manage to write a longer article on a town or region - as here/ follows.

Arizona in Aragon

The eroded, ochre-red pillars rise almost sheer from the plain. Their colour, the tiny white villages nestling at their feet, the juniper scrub and pines in the foreground, even the distant views of high snow-capped mountains look like something in Arizona, Utah or Colorado - anywhere except where they really are: 70 km. into Spain from France and the highest mountains in the Pyrenees.

This part of Spain is amazing. The «mallos», as the rose puddingstone formation of this pre-Pyrenean range is called, are amongst the strangest of any European mountains.

Far from the conventional image of «costas», central Aragon appears to be not only a different country but one that lives in a different age. However with Spain's entry into the EEC it is changing fast - so go soon.

The nearest town of any size is Jaca, about 30 km. north. It has been a garrison town for centuries but today is becoming better known as a winter sports centre.

For this reason there are a number of hotels, from the modest to the more pretentious. Many of them are within the old centre with its maze of narrow one-way alleys. The Ramira, completely modernised inside, is opposite the old Church of Carmen, in the road of that name and within a few minutes stroll of the 11th century cathedral, the old houses, convents and small shops that make up

the old quarter. The 3-star Gran Hotel is near the town garden where at night nightingales sing and Scop's owls fly and call around the lighted bandstand. The old walled citadel is just up the road.

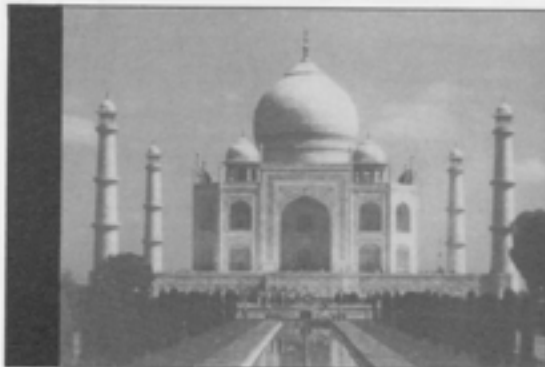
From Jaca, a good road (N-330) leads north to Pau in France via the Somport pass and Cadanchu ski resort. The N-240 running alongside the River Aragon leads west to Pamplona and south - east to Huesca. All this makes Jaca a good place to base yourself if you have transport and want to see as much as possible of the surrounding area.

If however, you want to truly escape from the 20th century, you could try seeking out some of the tiny hostals in the smaller villages along the N-240 south of Jaca. Murillo de Gallego has one beside the road perched over the River Gallego and looking across to the village with its magnificent 12th century church.

No swimming-pool here but you can climb down a steep stone path to a little beach beside a cool, shady stretch of the river that generations of village children have used. Agüero, 5 km. off the road, has a more modern hostel tucked right under the cliffs which tower above the village and beautiful walks in the vicinity. One of these leads to an unique Romanesque church on top of a nearby hill.

Neither of these hostals will offer you «en suite» bathrooms and the bedrooms are spartan, but clean, and the water is hot, even if you do have to walk down the corridor to the bathroom. However the food is excellent, local Spanish cooking at its best. Don't expect a menu though. The landlady will reel off the two first courses and the three main dishes of the day. If you cannot understand her rapid Spanish, it probably does not matter - everything will be good. Just ask her to bring «el mejor» - the best! Or go into the kitchen with her and choose.

Simple these small village hotels may be but the view is four star! Whether looking up at the vultures soaring above the rose-red sugar-loaf cliffs, watching colourful birds like bee-eaters, rollers and hoopoes from your



RESTAURANT HINDÚ TAJ MAHAL

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bedroom window or gazing across the timeless landscape at the tiny hermitages perched on distant hills, is an experience far removed from the frantic noise and rush of normal everyday life.

Life in the 11th century, when Loarre castle to the south, the Convent of Santa Cruz de la Seros and the monastery of San Juan de la Pena to the north were built, must have been violent and harsh. If you visit them mid-week, avoiding the week-end picnickers, some idea of its austerity can be conjured without much effort of the imagination, they are still so remote and unspoiled.

Loarre Castle is 4 km. from Ayerbe, the nearest small shopping town just south of Agüero and Murillo. Each hairpin bend that twists up to the castle increases the peace and spectacular beauty of the site. Built by Sancho Ramirez, King of Aragon and Navarre, in 1096, the view from the walls stretching from the Ebro depression to the highest peaks of the Pyrenees cannot have changed much in eight centuries.

The convent of Santa Cruz de la Seros was founded almost a hundred years earlier and richly endowed by royal princesses. The wife of the first King of Aragon bequeathed it all her worldly wealth when she died in 1095. Nowadays only two old Romanesque churches and a few small houses are all that remains of its former splendour. The houses, each with their typical Aragonese chimney, cluster around the church while behind them the sheer cliffs of the peak of San Juan echo the colour of the rose tiled roofs.

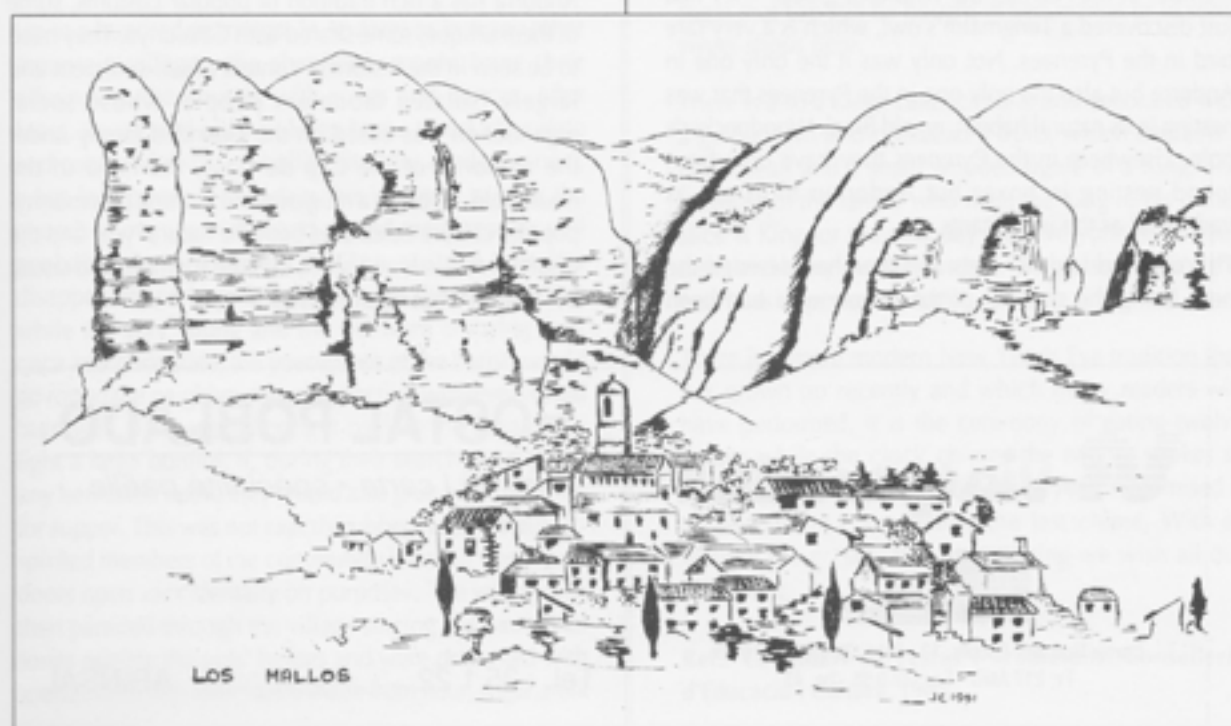
The old monastery of San Juan de la Pena is tucked right under the rock wall half-way up the mountainside. It was the burial place of the early kings of Aragon and Navarre and a resting place for many pilgrims crossing the Pyrenees on their way to the shrine of Saint James of Compostella.

Much of the church and the cloisters have been hollowed out of the cliff face and nowadays seem almost part of it. The rock overhang forms a roof for the nave of the church which crouches below, tiny and seemingly embedded in the rock. In the 17th century, the monastery was rebuilt on the top of the mountain. It is worth driving on up to the upper building for the walks through the pine woods and the magnificent view across to the Pyrenees.

It is possible to stand on the cliff edge and see one of Europe's rarest birds, the Bearded Vulture or Lammergeier, fly past to its nest nearby. Another scarce bird, the Black Woodpecker, nests in the woods with crossbills, citril finch and firecrest while the open clearings are colourful with flowers and butterflies during the spring and summer.

Both these historic sites lie between Jaca and Ayerbe. Leave the N-240 Huesca road just after the artificial but beautiful lake of Pena and take the minor road to Bernues. Driving, stopping and walking through these unspoilt regions may prove to be the best part of your holiday - a true escape from the modern world.

Jacques Crozier



Jacynth Crozier (aged 13 when she wrote it) was shortlisted for the 1992 BBC Wildlife Magazine Awards for Nature Writing. She received an «Honorary mention» for this essay which, as it is about Andorra, might interest readers. Do we have other young writers among members' families who would like to get into print?

TENGMALM'S

I screamed, hanging on to the rung, as I scrambled for a foothold on the rope ladder. I regained my balance and climbed up the last few rungs until I was almost level with the round hole in the tree.

Josep called me and I looked down. I was about ten metres off the ground clinging to a rope ladder tied to a dead branch. I put my rubber-gloved hand rather apprehensively into the tree and prepared to pull out decapitated, mouldy, disgusting animals. I shut my eyes.

This, I thought, is what comes of getting involved with the «Defensa de la Natura», our local wildlife conservation group. Here I was, in imminent danger of falling to my death, having already climbed a very steep mountain slope, just to discover why a Tengmalm's owl had deserted her nest. And the dead animals? Not necessarily baby owls but their food. Tengmalm's owls store dead prey in their nest holes to feed themselves or their young if a snowstorm or bad weather makes it impossible for them to hunt.

Let me explain. I live in Andorra, a beautiful little country in the Pyrenees, between France and Spain. I am a member of the A.D.N., our naturalist group. They had just discovered a Tengmalm's owl, which is a very rare bird in the Pyrenees. Not only was it the only one in Andorra but also the only one in the Pyrenees that was nesting in its natural habitat, an old Black Woodpecker's hole. Elsewhere in the Pyrenees they have only been found nesting in boxes but Andorran birds are as traditional as the inhabitants.

This owl had laid her eggs and then had deserted the nest. Being the smallest of the people who had been

studying her, I was sent up the ladder to find out why. It was a great experience and since then I love Tengmalm's owls, especially when one sticks a tiny, round, feathery head out of a hole in a tree, blinking in the day-light and looking at you as if to say:

«Get out of my territory and let me sleep!»

This is how you discover the owls. Search for a Black Woodpecker's hole, scratch or tap the trunk and if there is an owl there, a sleepy face will peer out.

They are very interesting birds and were well worth all the very tiring treks up a mountain when I should have been fast asleep in a warm bed. The sight of one was worth shivering, half-asleep in a tiny hide on a slope below their tree for hours on end.

After having abandoned her nest «my» owl moved to another tree but she never laid again, perhaps because her husband had been killed. Or perhaps repeated predation by red squirrels or pine martens had discouraged her. Last year there was only a male in the area. He never seemed to find a mate.

It seems a pity because they are so rare. However ADN have been putting up nest boxes and this year four or five owls have been heard calling in different parts of Andorra. So hopefully they are becoming more numerous.

ANDORRAN CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

Andorra has a rich tradition of popular customs, some of them unique, some shared with Catalunya. They need to be seen in the historical context of self-sufficient and largely isolated mountain people, whose social organisation was based on the extended family under the authority of the Cap de Casa, the head of the household. As befits a religious and farming community, popular culture celebrates both the natural year and the Church's festivals and often, to more sophisticated tastes, has a somewhat earthy flavour!

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ARINSAL

Many readers will have admired the beautiful and often very elaborate nativity scenes that most families arrange in their houses, often in an empty fireplace, in the days before Christmas. Moss and twigs are gathered from the woods and a cave, rivers, farms and bridges constructed to make a landscape for the shepherds and kings to travel across. However, there is always one, to outsiders, incongruous figure among the traditional crib ornaments: behind a tree or rock, caught squatting with his trousers down, is a man in Catalan costume.

In front of the crib on Christmas Eve, the *Vigília de Nadal*, the children perform the special ritual called «Fer cagar el tió». The «tió» is a hollow log which the children hit with a wooden stick while singing the traditional rhyme: *Tió de Nadal, caga torrons, pixa vi blanc, no caguis arengades, que són salades, caga torrons que són molt bons*. (A literal translation, and there are no euphemisms to render it more polite, runs: «Christmas log, shit nougats, piss white wine, don't shit sardines which are salty, shit nougats which are very good»).

After vigorously whacking and thumping the log the younger members of the family go away for a moment, either to «say their prayers» or continue singing, which gives their parents a chance to put their presents under the log.

Later, at a quarter to midnight, the family would go to *Missa del Gall* - Mass of the Cock. But before leaving home, it was necessary to make sure a good fire was burning in the hearth and a low chair was nearby because the Virgin Mary might go there to warm herself.

Up to a hundred years ago, in Andorra as in many other mountain villages, the shepherds would bring their offerings to the church, with songs and dances. After Mass, young and old would go home to eat chocolate and coca and drink «vi bullit» (literally «boiled wine»), a hot fruit punch. Nowadays this is served outside the church in many parishes and a good many readers will probably have enjoyed it. One custom that has disappeared, perhaps fortunately, was the tradition that while the very young and the old were enjoying their coca and chocolate, the young men of the Parish would go round the neighbourhood collecting whatever would burn well. They would bring it back to the square and light a large bonfire. If, during their search, they found any henhouse open, they would also grab some fat fowls for supper. This was not exactly robbery as some public-spirited members of the community left their hen-house doors open «accidentally on purpose». The young men then paraded through the village singing old traditional songs outside the girls' homes and were presented with special «coques» deliciously made from flour, sugar, milk

and eggs. After this spree everyone drank more mulled wine. Some parishes put on a «Pessebre Vivent» - a living crib - a nativity mime where the parishioners acted the parts of Mary and Joseph in the traditional story. At Engordany, Saint Joseph offered this punch to all those who had brought offerings to the Christ-child.

With all this activity on Christmas Eve, it was hardly surprising that Andorran children did not find time to hang up their stockings or put out their sabots. In fact, present giving was left until the night of January 5, the eve of Kings' day or Epiphany. On this evening the three kings, attended by their followers, would parade through the villages and stop in the square so all the children could whisper to them what present they wanted. Then they would leave their shoes outside the door or under the window and in the morning find them filled.

Nowadays this custom has become very elaborate; the Kings set up a post box in the square days beforehand, they have pages to collect the letters, they usually travel on floats accompanied by bands, attendants on horseback and even fireworks. Toy shops stay open until midnight so parents can rush off to buy the desired object, once they know what their child wants.

In the past, when Andorran children had very little, their presents, eagerly awaited for days beforehand as they anxiously scanned the sky to see if the Kings were coming down from Heaven, would be something to wear (probably bought at the *Fira d'Organya*) and a few hazel or almond nuts and nougat. Bad children traditionally were given «carbó» (coal); lumps of black sugar that can still be bought in *Seo* market or in some sweet-shops here.

There is also a Kings cake, circular and decorated with a gold crown and crystallized fruits, which contains a dried bean and a small wooden figure of a King. The member of the family who finds the King in his or her slice is King for the next day and everyone must obey them and carry out their orders. The person finding the bean has to perform a forfeit.

There is a more modern New Year's Eve tradition that has grown up recently and which many readers will have performed. It is the ceremony of eating twelve grapes while the clock chimes the twelve strokes of midnight. A happy and prosperous year is promised if all twelve are eaten before the last chime. With or without the grapes, this is something we wish all our members!

Ref.: Calendari de Festes i Tradicions. Conselleria d'Educació i Cultura. 1983.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Sir/Madam,

My interpretation of the letter from Peter & Marie Dunkley in your Autumn '92 issue is that they consider the atmosphere of a typical Duplicate Bridge club session to be inherently more formal than that of the occasional «sociable» (friendly? neighbourly?) game, and consequently to be not to their taste. If so, fair comment. If, on the other hand, Peter and Marie intend the implication that our Monday duplicate sessions are

unduly formal, I can only assume that they have very little relevant experience since our sessions are (comparatively) very relaxed, with the very minimum necessary formal organisation and control. Club sessions are enthusiastically attended by members having widely differing skill levels, and its «sociability» index might be gauged from the fact that the Bridge Group is currently one of the most successful sections of the Andorran International Club.

Yours sincerely,

D.R. Madden, Sispony.

NEWS FROM THE CHURCH

On Tuesday, 27th October, 1992, at 7.00 p.m. at the Coma Hotel, Ordino, the Rt. Rev. Edward Holland, Suffragan Bishop of the Diocese, presided over the Inaugural General Meeting of the congregation of the English Speaking Church in Andorra, now known as St. George's Church in Andorra. The Bishop expressed his delight at being in Andorra for his first official visit and gave several addresses to the meeting which was well attended with about 50 people present.

It is very satisfactory to be able to report that the Church now has its own constitution as part of the 150 year-old diocese of Europe, in common with all the other Anglican churches and congregations. An Electoral Roll has been established and this is open for any Members of the Church to be enrolled at any time and application forms are available from the Church Council. The Inaugural General Meeting considered and approved its financial accounts and heard reports on the work of the Junior Church and other matters.

Elections were held for the new Officers and Council: the two new Church Wardens are John Gregory and Doreen Woolton and the Council Members are James Glover, Josephine Mills and Peter Wong, treasurer, and June Wong was coopted a Member representing the Junior Church.

Wednesday, 28th October, 1992, was not a typically Andorran sunny day but it was to be a very special day. Inside the church at La Massana, it was bright and warm and the atmosphere welcoming. There were baskets of flowers of autumn hues placed at the foot of the altar and at every corner. Shortly before 11 o'clock, when the doors of the church opened, a stream of people came in, all looking well and happy, and they had all come to the Harvest Festival Service. On this special day, which coincided with the 22nd anniversary of Bishop John Satterthwaite's, Bishop of Gibraltar in Europe, consecration, the Rt. Rev. Edward Holland had come to celebrate with us on the occasion of the adoption of the

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new constitution and to introduce to the congregation the new church wardens and members of the Council. He was assisted by our Chaplain Rev. Robin Sewell and Rev. Rolf Hjorth. There was a splendid attendance of more than 80 people.

The Bishop, in his gentle and captivating voice spoke of the importance of uniting with God and working with one another towards harmony and towards a goal we believe in - to be part of the church of God. It was a moving sermon and produced fruit for thought. The choir, as usual, sang delightfully, led by organist Ken Law.

Then, there was just a short period of hush and the doors of the church opened and in pattered little feet of lovely children bearing baskets of mouth-watering fruit, vegetables, biscuits and bottles of preserves to place at the altar in offering. Bishop Edward had a pleasant

surprise for them (although he almost forgot it) when he called them forward again and presented each of them with two specially printed books on the New Testament. It was nice to see that more children than expected turned up as Chaplain Robin Sewell ran out of books, nevertheless, those who did not receive their two copies will be getting their little gifts in due course.

The good news, finally, is that there will be a Christingle Service on the 15th December, 1992, and a Christmas Service on the 16th December, 1992, - so for all those who were unfortunate not to be able to attend this one, there will be a chance to try and make it on that forthcoming occasion in order to share the joy and in the endeavour towards promoting a happy community amongst ourselves. Please remember, everyone is very welcome.

Polly Gregory

THE HASH HOUSE HARRIERS

In 1938, in Kuala Lumpur, a group of people used to meet for Saturday lunch at a restaurant called the Hash House. They decided that in order to earn this lunch they should walk or run for an hour or two beforehand. They called themselves «The Hash House Harriers». Their idea - although modified - has now spread to many other countries throughout the world and our Andorran Hash House Harriers started up in 1986.

The Andorran Hash House Harriers celebrated their 200th «Hash» a couple of months ago. After the Hash that Saturday there was a picnic-cum-bar-beque at La Rabassa, attended by some 60 Hashers. On other Saturdays, however, the Hashers just meet and walk or

run and afterwards refresh themselves with a soft drink or a beer.

The Hash season is now drawing to an end and the last Hash will probably be at the end of November or early December, depending on the weather. Traditionally the Hashes begin again after the winter on the first Saturday in April.

So if you would like to join the Hashers this year there is still time. Anyone is welcome, whatever nationality or age. The Hashers meet on Saturday afternoons and the meeting place and time are posted at the Tourist Information hut in La Massana and often announced on the English language radio programme.

So come and join the Andorran Hash House Harriers!

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THE HASH

In Salute to the 200th Andorran Hash, Sept. 1992.

The path was narrow.

Cliffs above and cliffs below. Not a tree about.

The hot sun was beating on our heads.

Sweat was running down our foreheads.

Starting at 1500 meter above sea level and going up, we walked one after the other, in shorts and hats, from the young in age to the young at heart.

I belong to the young at heart.

Or am I?

My 60 odd years are only a drop in MY span of life!

Being from the plains and from near oceans, this mountain climbing became a real challenge;

Below, I saw the depth of the valley and my heart sank to its level.

It was a l-o-n-g way down. «Will I slip? or will I make it?».

«Do not look down» I encouraged myself.

Above, I saw the angled shear and wondered;

«Will some stones slip right on to me?!».

«Don't look up», I dispensed advise, «Just look where to put your foot. Make sure it grips».

Clinging my body to the rocks beside me, I took a big breath, my heart was thumping;

«Why on earth am I doing this?».

«Do I need this worry?» «Do I need the stress?».

«Shut up and keep Going!... Some hard words will not go astray!».

We belong to a world wide network of walters; «The Hash Harriot Club», Andorra branch. We meet every Saturday for a walk on the mountains.

Every walk is in another place, every walk is different, with or without hazards.

This ofcourse complicates thing. Should one worry or not?

Will the climb be steep? will it be long?

Will it be in sun or shade? on slippery rocks or roads?

I developed a love and hate relationship to this weekly Homage But, I will not miss it for the world, (may be once, or twice), I'll not miss it for the challenge, for nature and for the company.

Rina Vardi

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MICHEL BRARD EN FRANÇAIS

KAREN HADDEN IN ENGLISH

"This rolling hilly, varied land, blessed with southern sun and Atlantic freshness, is arguably the most exquisitely beautiful, rustic and satisfying region in France... The whole of the interior of this vast area, its rich rural heartland, remains almost completely undiscovered except by a few wise connoisseurs who, no doubt, would prefer to guard their secret." So writes Andrew Sangar in his introduction to his authoritative guide on South West France edited by Arthur Eperon.

Gascony starts south of the river Garonne and due west of the city of Toulouse. The climate is warm and dry and the countryside open and rolling. Bastide villages and hamlets hold the high ground giving immense views - often to the Pyrenees shimmering on the southern skyline. Perhaps more importantly, the Gers has avoided the weight of foreign ownership and tourism which is now a feature of discovered France. Here the sense is much more "la France profonde". As a consequence, the cost of living is low and eating out remains delightfully good value.

The Gers benefits from the same high standard of infrastructure that exists throughout France; excellent rail and air travel and impeccable telecommunications. City-life too is near when needed; the elegance of Auch and Pau, the bustle of Tarbes and the history and culture of Toulouse and Bordeaux.

In summary, the appeal of Gascony is simple; the people, the climate and the feeling of space. In addition, history has endowed the region with a rich

FRANCE

INTRODUCING THE GERS

The Heart of Ancient Gascony



heritage of fine architecture and parkland. The attraction to own a property in France is seldom a matter of capital appreciation or investment return, although both are increasingly valid rationales. To own a home in France is much more an affair of the heart. And when the heart is touched by an entrancing old doorway, the magic of noble old beams or mellow "vieilles pierres", a new affair has already begun.

AUCH, ELEGANT CAPITAL OF THE GERS

West of Toulouse by 77 kms, Auch (pronounced "osh") is a classic French provincial town, also by tradition the capital of Gascony. Its population of just 25,000 are proud guardians of a remarkably well preserved heritage.

The wealth of architecture from the middle ages and 18th century give Auch its feeling of elegance and intimacy. The 15th century cathedral and prefecture buildings, floodlit at night, dominate the skyline and are linked with the river Gers below via the "Monumental Stairway" on which d'Artagnan's statue stands guard halfway.

Stroll in the narrow alleys adjoining the cathedral and past the half-timbered 15th century Syndicat d'Initiative. In summer visit the Maison de Gascogne displaying a cornucopia of regional produce, then relax in the pavement cafés by the ornamental fountains and when hungry treat yourself to the best of Gascon cuisine chez André Daguin, Claude Laffite, or one of their many confrères.

CLIMATE IN GASCONY

- Warm, sunny and temperate, 12° C yearly average.
- Long, hot summers, temperatures 20 - 35° C.
- Pure still air, absence of any prevailing wind.
- Exceptionally mild and sunny autumn season.
- Some winter frosts, rare snow.

• GOLF • THE PYRENEES • THE ATLANTIC •

The Gers offers all the usual country pursuits, tennis, walking, riding, swimming, windsurfing, fishing and shooting. Golf too, is well established in the department with three 18-hole courses and three 9-hole courses.

Further afield, the central Pyrenees has majestic mountain scenery for summer walking and in winter a choice of extensive ski resorts, scarcely more than an hour's drive away. At two hours' distance are the endless white Atlantic coast beaches around the fashionable resorts of Biarritz and St Jean de Luz.

GETTING TO THE GERS

By road :

channel ports, A 10 auto-route to Bordeaux, A 62 to Agen, N 21 to Auch.
eg : St Malo to Auch 480 miles, around 9 hrs driving.
Alternatively via N 20 to Limoges - Montauban, D 928 to Auch.



By rail :

TGV to Bordeaux, Agen and Toulouse. Local train to Auch.

By air :

Toulouse, 3 daily scheduled flights - BA & AF (HRW) and Dan Air (GTW)
Tarbes, Weekly flights - (Sat) Dan Air, (Mon) Arena Travel.
Bordeaux, 2 daily scheduled flights - BA & AF.



Ian Purslow started in property after a short service commission in the British Army. He co-founded a leading property company in Andorra in the Pyrenees. After twenty years of experience in taking care of the needs of British and expatriate clients, he moved to the Gers in South West France and now specialises in the sale of the fine old country houses of Gascony.

For further information :

IAN PURSLOW ASSOCIATES

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DISCOUNT OFFER

The Meritxell Special School as well as providing «normal» education for the mentally disabled, also runs workshops for the older «pupils». The Trànsit group - a group for counseling and development in the transition to adult life - has now commenced bookbinding on a commercial basis. If any members of the Club require this kind of service the «Taller» (workshop) are offering a 25% discount. More information can be obtained from the School on 21731. If you have any difficulty (language) please contact Tony Hooper on 36154. Members may also be interested to know that there is a very efficient car washing service at the school which is situated in Sta. Coloma.

NOTICE BOARD

Readers may be interested to know that in future there will be space on the Notice Board at the weekly Coffee Morning to place small adverts for needs. This is not intended to replace or supplant the For Sale and Wanted section in this magazine, but to give members the opportunity to advertise for answers to questions etc. which are troubling them. To put something on the board please see Dinah Baxter.

PETANCA/BOTXE/BOULES/ PETANQUE

These are all names for the same game! (In Spanish, Catalan and two French versions) Some two years ago a notice appeared in the Newsletter asking if anyone was interested in playing the game. There was little response then, but if there are any members who now wish to play I would be very happy to hear from them. It is a game which can be enjoyed by any age, or sex, and at many different levels of ability. It is certainly a very pleasant way of spending a sunny afternoon or evening. If you are interested please give me a ring on 36 1 54. Tony Hooper.

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FOR DETAILS CONTACT

JACQUIE CROZIER (35931) or TONY HOOPER (36154)

A Brief Stay in a Developing Country

Sometimes one hears expatriats referring to Andorra as a third world country. I wonder how many of these recently lived or stayed in a real third world country, and if there, NOT staying in an hotel, but coping with the daily round of shopping, getting about and with shortages of all kinds.

In March of this year, I spent two weeks in Jamaica with my son and daughter. I had lived there from 1955-75; the problems that we had then, were small in comparison to what goes on now. March is the end of the dry season; the previous October rains were poor, so the reservoirs were low anyway. I have never seen such bush fires, as those that were raging for those two weeks. Every day there were fires. I stood anxiously in the garden, watching to see which way the wind would blow. Fortunately for me the fires did not threaten the house, but at a nearby Guesthouse, trees a few feet from the house were burning. Where the fires passed, only burnt earth remained; no trees, no grass, just burnt earth.

Years ago, fire hydrants were built along the roads, with a huge water tank to supply the system, but inevitably, in a place where there are only one or two stand pipes to supply the village, someone found out how to get at the water, and the tank was soon emptied. Then with no maintainance, hydrants and pipes were vandalised; now the whole system is useless.

Apart from no water to fight fires, our daily supply of water was from 6 to 8am. The pressure was good for those two hours, but there were not enough containers to fill with water to last throughout the day. It was impossible to do much cooking-have you ever tried to wash a muddy lettuce in a pint of water, or to clean fish without running water? Fortunately the main part of Kingston had water,

so restaurants were open and we ate out most evenings. If one goes to Jamaica with US or UK money, eating out and food shopping does not seem too expensive; (JA\$40 to £1), but on an average Jamaican salary, prices of many things are exorbitant. One dares not ask how the poor people cope. Malnutrition is a common medical problem, especially among women and children.

Food shopping is an unpleasant chore, the quality of the fruit and veg. is poor, and the price for local people high. There are constant shortages; sometimes there is no rice, another time no cornmeal, or no bread, or no onions, and so it goes on. There are no regular bus services in and around Kingston. Overcrowded minibuses run all over the place at irregular intervals. If the driver does not feel like doing his route one day, then everyone is stranded. School children have a particularly hard time; by law they can only be charged a half-fare, so if there are a lot of children at one bus stop, the driver will just go on to the next stop! It may take one's domestic help two or three hours to get to work in the morning, and the same time for her to get home at night. For those fortunate enough to have a car, the driving is not easy; the roads are full of pot holes, are overcrowded and there are many reckless, and uninsured, drivers. Daily life is difficult and frustrating for the majority of people.

To my surprise, during this visit to Jamaica, there was not a single power cut; the telephone worked all the time, and I could dial direct to Andorra! (Four years ago, after Hurricane Gilbert swept over Jamaica, many people were without electricity for three months, and telephones for six months).

Let us be thankful that here the power cuts are occasional and not very long, the telephone usually works, we are rarely short of water and food is always plentiful.

Dinah J. Baxter

A SHORT, SHORT STORY

FITER'S FIVE COWS

The five cows knew their own way up and down the mountain; they could tell the time too. They know exactly when it was time to turn round and start wending their way downwards to the farm in the valley below; whether Fiter was with them or not. Usually he was still asleep under a tree. The old man plodding behind them was largely unnecessary but he had been climbing up this mountain every summer's day for almost seventy years. In the past it had kept him out of his wife's way, now his middle-aged daughter made it clear that she wanted the house to herself until the evening.

The cows would be safely on the homeward stretch before Fiter would wake, suddenly chilled, when the sun dipped below the mountain ridge and the comfortable shade turned to cold gloom. Then he would set off after them grumbling to himself as usual.

For Fiter felt aggrieved. Not at being turned out of the house, that was women's way, but because his son should have been looking after the cows and he should have been taking it easy, sitting and chatting with the other old men by the village fountain.

«What's your boy doing now?» they would ask and he could proudly relate the prodigal's (mainly imaginary) successes in the town on the coast. Like most of the other younger men, his son had had no intention of herding cows and scraping a poor living from the thin mountain soil when he could earn good money working for a building firm or in a shop.

As Fiter stumbled wearily down the narrow, stony track, he could hear, even though it was dusk, the continual noise of trees being felled, roads and houses being constructed. His country's new «invaders», as he thought of them resentfully, were certainly pouring money into the country. Which presented Fiter with a problem.

He had been approached time after time to sell some of his land. The sum offered would enable him to live comfortably for the remainder of his life without the back-breaking tasks of tilling the

rocky soil, rising in the bitter dawn and shovelling the snow from the cow-shed entrance, cutting the hay in summer and plodding up and down this mountain as he was doing now.

But if he sold his land, he could no longer keep his cows. There would be no pasture to cut for their winter hay, nowhere for them to graze except the communal mountain tops for a few weeks in summer.

Last winter had been a hard one and two cows and a calf had died. Fortunately the other three had all given birth to healthy calves in the spring and Fiter's herd was once again up to strength. This was part of the problem; Fiter loved his cows almost more than he did his land; having for this a peasant's deep-rooted avarice, which accounted for part of his reluctance to sell. But did his son share his feelings? Perhaps he would prefer the money to his patrimony. Fiter could not know since he had not seen his son for years. He could neither read nor write, so even if he had an address for his son, communication would have been difficult.

«To sell or not so sell», the words seemed to thump in Fiter's mind with the tired rhythm of his strides down the mountainside. One of the speculators was coming again this evening to see him. To sell or not? Who would look after his cows? Very few of his neighbours farmed any longer. Where was his son and what was he doing? Fiter refused to believe that he was dead but in his heart he knew that he would be the last Fiter to farm this land.

As he neared his home, Fiter saw a fat figure sitting on the wooden bench outside the door. He was looking both impatient and disdainful as his bored glance took in the untidy yard, the dung-heap, the few scrawny fowls pecking around it and the disreputable old tom-cat curled up on top. The visitor was clearly waiting for Fiter. Fiter sighed but he had made up his mind.

«Bon dia, Sheik Yusef Abul», he said as he approached. «Let me send for some wine and then we can discuss this matter...».

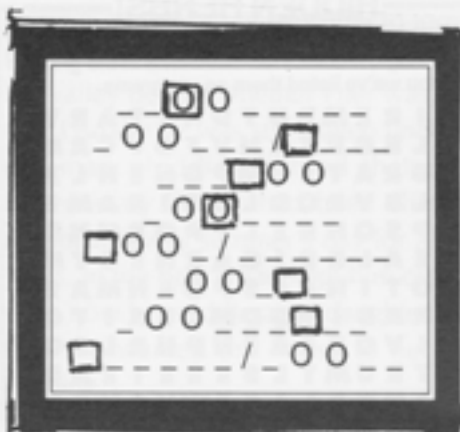
It was the year of Our Lord 992 and the Lord was not doing too well in northern Spain as the Moorish invaders pursued their seemingly unstoppable progress towards the Pyrenees.

Jacques Crozier

MORE PUZZLES & CROSSWORD COMPETITION

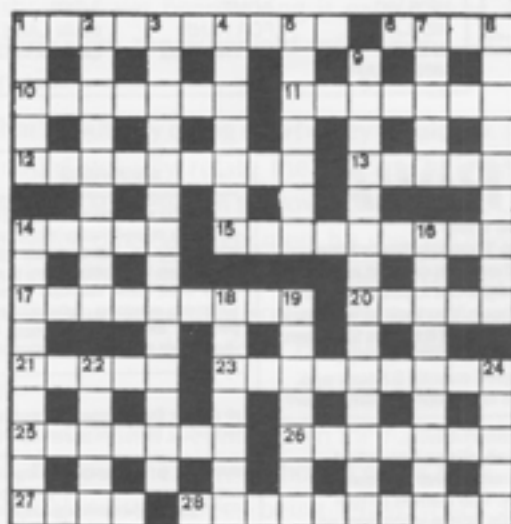
TO-WHIT TOO-WHOO.

A mind search set by and for the Natural History Group.



Fill in the birds' names, then rearrange the letters in the boxes to find another bird with «OO» in its name.

ANSWERS: SPÖNBL, HOODED CROW
CUCKOO, MOOR HEN, WOOD PIGEON
HOOPOE, GOOSANDER, CANADA GOOSE
= WOODCOCK.



Across:

1. One may have to pick one's way here (10); 6. It weakens one's spirit when trouble's about (4); 10. Stop the chorus (7); 11. Puts off one's retirement (5,2); 12. A rebel put in an awkward position turns respectable (9); 13. An inviting suggestion (5); 14. previously found in order (5); 15. Small gear-case on a bicycle (6-3); 17. Put into operation in grandiose fashion (9); 20. Shouts out names (5); 21. Achieve a rise by personal effort (5); 23. A Northerner brought back fish that's frightful (9); 25. Decrease one's difficulties? (4,3); 26. Is it sung in a deep voice? (3,4); 27. Blend of teas from the Orient (4); 28. Payment for one episode of a serial (10).

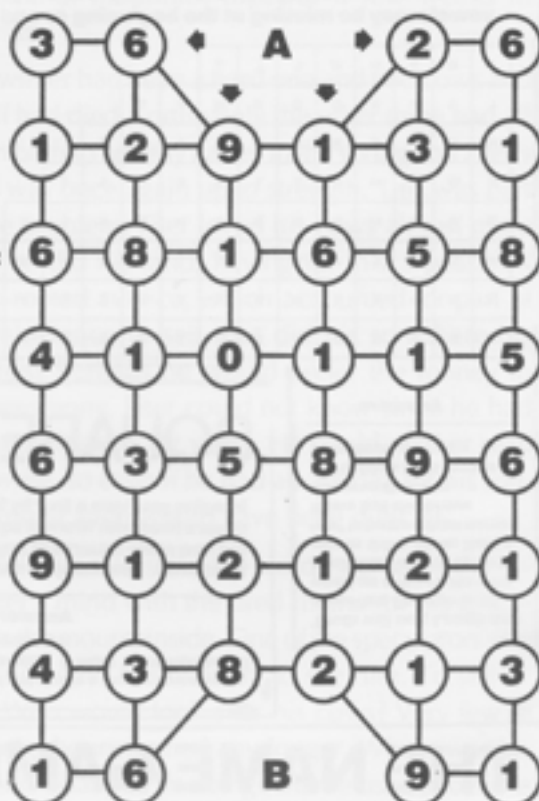
Down:

1. Fruit loses heart when cook uses it (5); 2. Bad time of the year for children (9); 3. Strike that does tremendous damage (10,4); 4. Book some public transport (7); 5. Finish after only half the distance and stretch out (7); 7. Stone used in making an attack (5); 8. Vegetable having a well inverted sugar content (9); 9. Drop into the pub to ring up a close friend? (4,1,5,4); 14. Ban a professional writer (9); 16. New male orbit in America (9); 18. Gins set up an intrepid fighter (7); 19. Security is lifted in the store (7); 22. Is about to study pictures (5); 24. American soldier obtained a leg of mutton (5).

SOLUTIONS TO THE CROSSWORD BELOW TO :
Tony Hooper, Comes de Rull - Sispony.

BRAIN TRACKED

From A to B, four roads are opened. Only one, however, will allow you to find a succession of 17 figures that, being added up or subtracted, will total 34. Follow this rule: you add going down or right, you subtract going up or left. No diagonal calculations!



SOLUTION TO SEPTEMBER CROSSWORD.



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