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# INTER COMM

## CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

NEWSLETTER/BUTLLETÍ INFORMATIU



**VOL. 3 - Núm. 1 - AUTUMN / TARDOR 1993**

# CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

## INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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Co-Editor, Intercomm & Group		
Co-ordinator :	Tony Hooper .....	36 1 54
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COVER PICTURE BY PAM LACK

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

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■ 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.

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# INTERCOMM

## CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

### QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER - AUTUMN 1993

EDITORS: Jacquie Crozier and Tony Hooper

#### EDITORIAL

Tony's being stranded in a Toulouse hospital gives the opportunity for a Board member to express another editorial viewpoint.

Perhaps the International Club has reached middle-age rather quickly in terms of years; it has settled down to a routine. The groups function well, with some ups and downs, and social functions are held regularly, though organisers are difficult to find sometimes. However, rarely do we have a rave function, to use the modern idiom.

Youth, of course, is the period of enthusiasm, but is often sadly lacking in balance and discernment, with its energy being misdirected. It can produce innovative and vigorous ideas and projects, but it also comes up with a lot of old rubbish, and controversy abounds. Maturity should select and develop the sounder concepts, but can also result in rigidity of thinking or plain inaction and boredom.

So what condition has our Club reached? Does our maturity enable the Club to continue development and growth, within our resources, towards sensible and balanced objectives or are we drifting towards stagnation? The Board often wonders what members think about the Club. There is no reason why any member should make any response, if he or she does not want to. Or to attend AGMs. Or to take part in functions. Or ultimately to pay annual subscriptions, small though they be. If all continues quietly, it must be assumed members are reasonably content; and if membership does not fall off too much, the Board will just continue doing the same as it has done for the past year or two.

But sometimes we wonder.

#### EDITORIAL

Aquesta vegada tenim el punt de vista editorial d'un membre de la Junta ja que en Toni es troba a l'hospital a Tolosa.

Potser el Club Internacional ha assolit la seva maduresa de manera bastant ràpida en termes d'anys; s'ha instal·lat en una rutina. Els grups funcionen bé, amb alguns alts i baixos i els actes socials se celebren amb regularitat, encara que de vegades és difícil localitzar els organitzadors. Tanmateix, poques vegades hem tingut un esdeveniment "tope guia", per utilitzar el llenguatge modern.

La joventut, naturalment, és el període de l'entusiasme, però, malauradament, sovint li manca l'equilibri i el discerniment perquè no dirigeix bé la seva energia. Pot produir idees i projectes innovadors i vigorosos, però també salta amb moltes ximpleries i abunda en la controvèrsia. La maduresa hauria de seleccionar i desenvolupar conceptes fermes, encara que també pot caure en una rigidesa de pensament o senzillament en la manca d'acció i en l'avoriment.

Quina és la situació assolida per nostre Club? La nostra maduresa ens permetrà continuar el desenvolupament i el creixement, dins dels nostres recursos, vers uns objectius assenyalats i equilibrats o bé estem anant a la deriva cap a l'estancament?

La Junta es pregunta sovint quins són els socis que pensen en el Club. No hi ha cap raó perquè els membres hagin de donar-hi una resposta si no ho volen fer. O bé assistir a les Assemblees Generals. O fins i tot, pagar la subscripció anual, per petita que sigui. Si tot continua tranquil·lament haurem d'assumir que els membres estan raonablement satisfets; i si no disminueix massa el nombre de membres, la Junta continuaria fent el mateix que ha estat fent durant els darrers un o dos anys.

Però de vegades, ens demanem...



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## NOTICIES DE LA JUNTA

En el darrer numero ja vareu llegir que els nous Estatuts han estat presentats al Govern per a la seva aprovació. L'estem esperant i per això en aquests moments encara no podem fixar una data per a una Assemblea General Extraordinària.

Ha arribat al coneixement de la Junta que alguns membres s'han quixat pels recordatoris sobre subscripcions impagades. Volem aprofitar aquesta columna per explicar a tothom quin és el procediment. Quan pertoca pagar la subscripció, s'envia un rebut. Si no es reben els diners en el termini de dos mesos, s'envia un recordatori. Després d'un altre parell de mesos, es trameta un altre recordatori suggerint al membre corresponent que pagui per Domiciliació bancària. Aquesta és la manera més fàcil per pagar una subscripció i no existeix cap problema en el cas que es desitgi cancel·lar. Aprofitem aquesta oportunitat per transcriure la redacció de la carta que s'envia per tal que tothom conegui el seu contingut.

"M'estalviareu molt de temps si estessiu d'acord en signar una carta de Domiciliació bancària. Estic segur que ja sabeu que no podem presentar els rubuts al cobrament fins després que us haguem comunicat, cada any, quin serà l'import de la subscripció anual. També us hem de comunicar la data en la qual enviarem les domiciliacions al banc. Al mes, si després de fet el càrrec teniu alguna objecció, encara hi sou a temps per demanar que us retrocedeixin l'import i ho faran amb la mateixa data del càrrec, de manera que no us carregaran interessos; si això no porta a cap resultat, s'envia una carta dient que no queda cap altra alternativa que la de demanar a la Junta que tregui el corresponent de la llista de membres.

Estem segurs que comprendreu que quatre cartes individualment adreçades és força treball per al Tresorer, i que sis mesos és un termini força raonable fins que es procedeix a l'anul·lació. Si voleu domiciliar el vostre rebut, poseu-vos en contacte amb en Brian Dore.

A la majoria d'actes socials hi ha hagut força participació, però per al proper any esperem que més membres organitzin algun acte. Si cada sis membres estessin disposats a organitzar alguna cosa, amb això tindriem ja gairebé la meitat del programa fet i s'alleugiria de bon troc la feina del Coordinador, feina que estem segurs que sabreu apreciar quan llegiu la relació de les activitats recents.

## NEWS FROM THE BOARD

As you read in the last issue, the new Statutes have been submitted to the Government for approval.

We are still awaiting this, so for the time being we have not been able to fix a date for the Special General Meeting.

The Board has heard that some members have grumbled about reminders for unpaid subscriptions. We would therefore like to use this column to tell everyone what the procedure is. When the subscription is due, an invoice is sent. If the money is not received within two months, a reminder is sent. After another couple of months, a further reminder goes out suggesting that the member pays by Direct Debit. As this is much the easiest way to pay a subscription and there is no problem if you wish to cancel, we take this opportunity to repeat the actual wording of the letter, so everyone can know what is involved.

"It would save a great deal of work for me if you would agree to sign a direct debit form. As I am sure you know we are not allowed to activate the Direct Debit form each year until we have told you what your annual subscription will be. We must also tell you the date we propose to ask your bank to pay your subscription. Furthermore, if you object after the debit has been activated you can still ask your bank to obtain a refund. This will be backdated to the date of the original entry so there would be no loss of interest to you." If this has no result, a final letter is sent regretting that there is no alternative but to ask the Board to remove that name from the membership list.

We are sure you will appreciate that four individual letters is a lot of work for the Treasurer and six months is a reasonable period to wait before action is taken. If you would like a Direct Debit form, please contact Brian Dore. Most social events have been well attended but we are still looking for more members to organise events next year. If six members undertook to organise one event each, that would be almost half our programme and would relieve the Co-ordinator of a great deal of work, which I am sure you will appreciate when you read her account of recent activities.

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### NATURALISTS

**August 19th:** Montaup-Coll d'Arenes - the more rare Alpine Plants/Mountain Birds 10.00 Coll d'Ordino

**September 16th:** Els Cortals - Marmots and Raptors. 10.00 Els Cortals Restaurant (sign posted right at Canillo end of Encamp)

**October 21st:** Cortals d'Anyos -Fungi Collection and Identification. 10.00 Jacquie Crozier's house.

**November 18th:** Castellciutat, Spain - Winter birds. 9.30 Spanish side of customs post.

Carry-Your binoculars, a waterproof, hat, sweater, your lunch and a drink, passport for trips outside Andorra. Wear boots or walking shoes. Don't forget sun lotion, insect repellent and antihistamine cream if the season and/or region demands them. Any more information contact Jacquie Crozier or Brian Dore.

### SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

I'm sorry to say that we had to cancel the July bus trip because of lack of bookings. We held a "bring it yourself barbecue" instead with great success.

The picnic in August will also be cancelled, because no-one answered my plea for help in preparing dishes.

On the positive side, there will be white-water rafting in August. These impromptu outings will only be announced on the bulletin-board of the coffee mornings.

In September we are going to France, visiting an abbey in Casteil and taking "the yellow train". I hope everyone will be back from holiday then, because I need a minimum of 25 bookings and I would hate to cancel again.

October is not an overnight trip, but driving around and looking at autumn colours. In the last Intercomm I asked for people to come forward to (help) organise trips. So far I have only had one reaction, so please give me some help, otherwise next year's social activities will be a disaster and not the monthly event you have grown accustomed to.

## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

### NATURALISTS

Participation in the Group's monthly outings has been slight during the summer months. Isn't ANYONE out there interested in flowers? Details of the rest of the year's programme is under coming events.

The Group's link with ADN, the Assocacio per a la Defensa de la Natura has continued on various fronts. Group members help to guide field trips, carry out research for the Breeding Birds Atlas of Andorra and assist with ADN's natural history publications.

The second season of Atlas surveying - the compilation of breeding bird observations across Andorra - finished on 15th July. The Naturalists' team, responsible for a 135 sq. km. section, did a great deal of walking and made a useful contribution to this five year research project. Some interesting behaviour patterns are beginning to emerge and small, but none the less important observations have been made. A new edition of the book The Flowers of Andorra has been printed, together with a new booklet Orchids of Andorra. Both should be available from local bookshops but as these sources are not always well supplied, copies may be obtained directly from ADN or members of the Naturalist's Group; phone us on 41279/42849/35931. You can also get a copy at Coffee mornings. A long researched book Birds of Andorra is shortly to be published.

### ART GROUP

The Group, which continues to flourish, has been meeting sporadically throughout the summer months but will return to its regular Tuesday meetings in the Studio at the beginning of September. Although the Group is full, anyone interested should contact Barbara Melville (36380) or Val Cruickshank (35606) to be added to the waiting list should a vacancy occur.

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## NEWS FROM THE GROUPS Continued.

### SCOTTISH DANCING

The dancers officially took a summer break at the end of June but a small group of enthusiasts continued to meet, thanks in large part to the hospitality of Judith and Michael Scott.

The Group plans to start again on the first Sunday in October and will then continue to meet every Sunday between 4 - 6 p.m. in la Massana Parish Hall.

Phone Clare Allcard (36269) if you are interested.

### INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

The women's singing group took a summer break from mid-June but they hope to start again in September. So do please give Sheila Hooper (36154) a ring if you are interested in joining. All new members will be cosseted and made most welcome!

### PETANCA

Whilst laid flat on my back in hospital, dreaming of physical activity, I came upon the following article, first published in 1973. I was most intrigued to find that the game I enjoy owes so much to a handicapped player.

"To most Englishmen it's simply a very unsophisticated form of bowls. But at least five million Frenchmen take it pretty seriously. As one of them has said: 'It's not really a sport, but it's much more than a game; it's an institution.' It's called boules; or nowadays it's generally Petanques. It's a skilful, strangely satisfying pastime, in which the hazards and uncertainties of the terrain add a vital element of chance. As a national sport/game/pastime, it is probably unique in that it can be played anywhere and by anyone, regardless of age or sex.

Until the first world war there was only one recognised form of boules. It was called La Provencale. The greatest player at that time was a Marseillais called Petoulet. He was the undisputed national champion until he became paralysed in the legs following an accident. Petoulet, confined to a wheelchair, was determined to play boules again. La Provencale, however, made physical demands which Petoulet recognised were beyond him - the player took three rapid paces forward before launching his boule towards the jack, between 15 and 20 yards away.

Petoulet decided to modify the rules. The jack would be thrown out only between 6 and 10 yards and the player would keep both feet firmly on the ground at the launching pad. The Occitan for "feet together" is feet "tanques". Hence, in recognition of Petoulet, the new game was called Petanque.

There are, of course, very strict regulations in the serious games where money is involved. But, for the most part, games of Petanques are a fairly light-hearted, social affair. And in these the practice of various forms of gamesmanship is by no means unusual. There is much lively denigration of one's opponent and many ways of trying to demoralise him or disconcert him at the time of launching.

It is not always taken in good part. Only recently one such incident in the course of a game at Nice cost a player a broken skull.

The Petanca Group certainly enjoy the social aspect and I think that we can promise that no-one will run the danger of physical injury. Why not join us on Thursday afternoons at 3 p.m. at the Parc Central.

Tony Hooper.

### HELPLINE INFORMATION

Did you know that there is a private nursing home in Andorra la Vella? It is Residencia Clara Rabassa, Avda. Princep Benlloch, 26-30. Tel. 65 9 55.

Rates: Short stay (less than two months) 6000 pts per person per day, full board. Over two months, 4200 pts full board, 2 persons per day, two to a room.

They also have a Day Care Centre: the charges are per month, 2500 pts per day per person or for a short stay, 3000 pts per person, per day. If I understand their tariffs, these day care charges do not include meals. Lunch is 750 pt and supper 500 pts, in their restaurant.

Please note that this place has NOT yet been visited by anyone from Helpline. (If anyone has experience of the Centre, please let us know.)

If anyone is having financial problems, and unable to pay the pharmacy bills, it is possible to get CASS to pay the whole amount, especially if you are over 70. The person to see is Sr. Xavier Mora, at CASS, between 8.30-9 a.m. or 3-3.30 p.m. Make an appointment by calling 27111 or 20881. He does not speak any English, so you will have to take an interpreter.

There is an English woman, living in Sant. Julia, who is a fully qualified nurse. She would be willing to help with nursing care, in your own home, part time, day-time only. Fees reasonable. For further information, please call Dinah Baxter (36980).

## NEWS FROM ST GEORGE'S CHURCH THE CHRISTMAS FAIR

Are you happy here in this beautiful country of Andorra? If so, now is your chance to show your appreciation in a practical way. Last year the proceeds from the Christmas Fair went to the Red Cross, the Meritxell School for the Handicapped, the Centre for Neglected Children, ADN and Apatma conservation groups, and Caritas; all local Andorran charities. This year we plan to include the newly constituted St. George's Church of Andorra, which organises the Fair, and hope to raise even more money than last. So come on all you talented people. Don't hide your gifts, get working!

Are you good at knitting? Then Brenda (36886) at the KNITTED GOODS stall would love to hear from you. Or perhaps you enjoy COOKING? Cakes, home-made jam and marmalades, mince pies, bread, biscuits, anything you care to bake will sell like hot cakes on the day.

But maybe your talents lie elsewhere? For instance, it is rumoured that quite a few Club members actually know how to make money. Now there's a thought! Why not donate just a little of yours to this year's Christmas Fair? The RAFFLE and TOMBOLA are often the biggest money-spinners of the afternoon; the more exciting the prizes the better. A couple of Air Tickets to Mediterranean destinations, or a candle-lit dinner for two in a good local restaurant are both great ticket sellers. But let your imagination run free, use your business acumen to think up original, enticing ideas. Maybe tickets for an Ordino concert or the chance of a personal photographic portrait by one of Andorra's leading photographers, or a session with the latest laser hair treatment. Local businesses can have their names announced with their donated prize.

The TOMBOLA, too, is a stall where you can give generously. Here anything beautiful is welcomed from cut glass and china, to music stations, cassette players, cassettes, leather goods, quality pens and biros, new books, cuddly toys, sports wear et al.

Even if you are not quite such a high flyer there is still lots you can do. How about providing a BOTTLE of your favourite wine, ketchup or pickles for the bottle stall? Or browse through Pyrenees for something attractive for CHRISTMAS GIFTS: soap, pretty stationary, ornaments, head scarves, handkerchiefs, anything that would make a Christmas present. Or perhaps you have a talent for carving or sewing and can make something for the stall yourself. And don't forget Val needs lots of little things for the CHILDREN'S LUCKY DIP.

So you plead poverty? You've just lost your fortune at Monte Carlo and are down to bread and water? Never mind, there is always something to give. How about growing some plants for the PLANT stall or giving your home an autumn clean out? Clear your shelves of the BOOKS you'll never read again, turn out the KIDS' TOY cupboards and the kitchen cupboards and the garage. Everything that works or is useful is welcome at the WHITE ELEPHANT while there is always a thriving business in CHILDREN'S SECOND HAND clothes.

One final contribution that everyone can make is to collect STAMPS - any stamps provided they are not damaged. All you have to do is tear the stamps off every envelope you receive and pop them into a plastic bag. From the beginning of October bring the bag to the Wednesday Coffee morning or give Clare a ring (36269), up to two weeks before the Fair.

So there you are. Something each and everyone of us can do to help. And if you have any bright, money-spinning ideas of your own do contact Doreen (32175) and discuss them. But DON'T DELAY! Act Now! Before you forget. Please.

### SOME CONTACT NUMBERS

Doreen Woolton	32175
Brenda Ross	36886
Val Cruickshank	35606
Clare Allcard	36269

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## EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITORS

Dear Sirs

I thought the last CIA magazine was great; full of interesting articles and information. The "Rambling about our Valleys" piece is hilarious. Who is the anonymous writer? And I must really try the Fish and Chips with mushy peas at the Can Pere one of these days

Christine Munoz

Dear Sirs

Every time I open the Intercomm I read a request from the Editor to the Readers to give some feedback. So, now I'd better try to write...since I do like reading newsletters very much, even though I am not a writer by any means, I am just a housewife. I do think that the Intercomm should be more informative for those who are never able to go to the coffee mornings at the Paris-Londres and especially for newcomers. Ideally it should be published every month or at least bi-monthly and contain a greater variety of articles and information, such as Recipes, Information about all regular activities. It would also be useful to include free private adverts or news flashes such as for weddings, deaths, persons hospitalised, births, departures, new arrivals... and any useful announcements from the group leaders. To avoid misunderstanding, put everything in writing ... and Intercomm is the forum.

Anybody can become a member of the club but only persons living permanently in Andorra can become members of the Board. Renewal forms should be sent to all members to enable them to renew and pay the membership fee. A form should be sent to all members to be filled and to let them know it is a directory list of members to be sent all members and if anyone does not

want to be in the Directory, she or he can put a note on the bottom of the form. It is very important also for members to fill the form with Interests and Activities: so that others will know and can contact them, (more practical than some of the members keeping on asking me to play Bridge which does not interest me. I am interested in Scottish dancing only or maybe Square dancing, playing Scrabble, Cookery and Walking) There are 350 members! Again this is "A Club" for people with similar interests to identify each other, meet and talk.

Judith Scott

Ed note. Quite a lot of the above suggestions we try to implement. Are some of the others practical? In the past the Board has always refused to give our membership list to third parties but it might be a good idea to give details of everyone's Interests and Activities to other members. Most small ads are already free to members. We would welcome comments. As a matter of accuracy not anybody can become members of the Club.

Dear Sirs

I see from the last Intercomm that there have been suggestion that to increase attendance at AGM's these should be held in La Massana. Whilst it is true that a large proportion of our members live there or in the close vicinity it is also true that more than half live "South of the Tunnels". Several members do not drive and getting to La Massana by public transport from - say Soldeu or Sant Julia involves a long bus trip and a change of bus in Andorra la Vella.. It seems to me that a central location is more convenient to many members.

Brian Dore



### HAVE YOU HAD A BELLYFUL?

Of wild valuations? Of waiting? (Is it months now since you offered your property to the market?) High commissions and lousy service? Are you tired of chasing for a reply to your numerous messages or letters? Or, are you left wondering what response there has been to recent viewings of your property? Well! We can help you. ROC PROPIETATS is situated in the centre of La Massana with a wide window frontage to the road. A computerised register of properties enables us to quickly match buyers to sellers and vice versa. If there is anybody on our books who might be interested in your apartment, we'll get to them - quickly. We'll advise you of comments made when viewing. And you won't have to chase us. Too good to be true! Well, why don't you try us. We are actively looking for more properties to offer to the market. Contact Guy Griffiths, Su Downham or Toby Ball on 35346 or 38169. Or drop in and see us.

## IBERIAN BARBERS 2

The pursuit of a barber, this side of the Pyrennes, where I want to return, continued. On my return from Portugal to the Costa del Sol I tried again in Gibraltar. Going to the bank a week before, I had noticed a clean and new looking establishment down near Casemate's Square. It billed itself as "Vincent's Ladies and Gents Hairdressers".

It was new. In fact it did not seem to have been finished yet. A carpenter was busy putting up a partition halfway down the salon. The barber himself was seated on a chair near the door dressed in a crisp new white jacket. He was reading a newspaper and smoking a cigarette. My entry obviously surprised him, but to his credit he jumped up immediately and nodded me to a chair. Since the point of being there was to control proceedings in English, I spoke to him in English. This produced a blank stare. So I tried again in Spanish, but with the same result. He replied in the thickest sort of Andalusian patois I have ever heard. Discouraged, I got up to leave, when the carpenter broke in "You want an 'aircut mate?"

"Yes. If you can do some translating for me."

"'ow do you wannit then?"

"Oh, sort of medium, a centimetre above my ears, and the same above my collar. Thanks."

Chippy speaks to clippy in rapid Spanish, I think, and returned to his sawing. But clippy was not happy at all. He did a bit of combing, then stood with his scissors poised indecisively. He went over to the carpenter again, and asked him something. The carpenter replied. But the barber shook his head.

Together they approached the chair. The carpenter gave his saw to the barber in return for the scissors, with which he rapidly removed a large chunk of my hair one centimetre above my left ear.

"Sabby?" He said to the reluctant barber, and repeated the process at the back of my neck. Then they exchanged the tools of their trades and the real barber started on my hair.

It turned out to be another rough job. Even I could tell that. Did I dare try for some refinement? If so, who would do it?

I left without giving a tip because he didn't deserve one. Then I felt mean, and thought perhaps it would be a good joke to tip the carpenter instead. So I turned back and paused for a moment in front of the door to find the right money. Looking through the glass I saw the carpenter sitting in the chair by the window, wearing the smart white jacket, smoking a cigarette and reading the paper. My "barber" was busy screwing the partition to the wall!

There were a number of good reasons for not returning to Gibraltar that summer. It was also a season for laying terraces in Portugal, and sea-bathing, which demands short hair. Another visit to Concepcion's parlour? Even had I dared they were ladies only now. I wonder why?

I found a splendid old fashioned barber's shop on the cliff road just short of Estorill station. A beaming little man in a grey linen suit was snipping attentively at his client's head. I joined two others waiting, with the sole purpose of observing his competence, before committing myself to his hands another day. There was no doubt he was doing a fair job, and his client soon left the chair with murmurs of approval.

The barber next approached me with the cape. It turned out that the other two were friends in for a chat. I rose to my feet and towered a foot and a half above the barber, which can happen frequently in Portugal. I sat on the splendid chair just occupied by the previous client. An extravagance of wrought iron and pale green leather rising high from the floor. Too high. There was some activity behind me. A jerking of levers and jumping on pedals. But whatever was stuck, stayed that way. The second chair was attacked similarly by the friends, but apparently suffered from the same problem.

Initially he had some difficulty getting the cape over and around me. finally he swung it into position, to the accompaniment of an "Ole!" from the friends behind. "Que boa veronica"

The tucking -in procedure found him slightly below me on an eye-to-eye basis. The preparatory combing showed that, though he could reach the top of my head, he could not see it. On the next chair was a

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wooden box with a cushion on it, so that a small boy could be elevated to a convenient height. One of the friends took it and put it on the ground behind my chair. The old barber was clearly embarrassed, but he stepped onto it in the end. It was certainly a help to him. However it did not last long before collapsing and reducing him to ground level

He did the sides and back quite neatly enough but he had to leave the top largely untouched. He dared not cut what he could not see. A laughing stock once more, I can't remember whether I preferred "Wurzel top" to "Prussian Sergeant-major"!

In Andorra a new friend, who shall remain nameless, recommended a good cheap-n-cheerful establishment, where students practice their chosen trade. It seemed an unsound idea. But he did infallibly know where to buy the cheapest gin. (Excluding those brands one wins at charity tombolas; which should be re-donated next year, overlabelled CAUTION for external use only)

I should have known better. I knew it as I paused on the threshold, but why not live dangerously! I entered at about 12.15, was welcomed graciously, wrapped and offered up to the dread backwash basin. Nothing happened until a small crowd had assembled. The novice elected to wash me was thorough but slow.

After ten minutes on this modern version of Procrustes bed, I was more in need of a physiotherapist than a haircut. In transit to the barbering chair I did some neck mobility exercises

that seemed to "throw" the next trainee. She waited a long time to see if there would be any epileptic recurrence before starting some very tentative snipping. The crowd gathered closely round to watch. The cutter, lacking both confidence and elbow room nibbled on at the same area. The San Pedro de Alcantara syndrome, I recognised. Fortunately for both of us, she was "tagged" by a partner with a bolder approach. He worked on the back briskly until suddenly stopped by the teacher. I didn't know why, but could guess.

Number three student found the untouched pasture on top and performed a skilful and wristy duet for scissors and comb. The one where the hair is backcombed, and you score for each strand of hair snipped before it disappears through the teeth. Like in Ski Jumping, there are points for length and style. He went on and on until he realised he was running out of raw material, and so was I.

A hush fell. The crowd thinned and parted to let in the teacher. She spoke sharply to some, who went off to sweep up elsewhere. It was ten to one, and she had a testing job on her hands. Like a skier on an icy black run: there was no way to go but down. So down it was. Hair falling fast in the ultimate levelling-up rush. as with feet apart, knees bent, turns, sped smoothly through the moguls left by the others; and completed the course with a minute to spare. Pulling up with a final flurry of my hair on her boots.

**Michael Gale**



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## HOW SAFE IS OUR FOOD?

A Bill passed by the British Parliament in 1990 aims to clean up shops and catering premises, improve storage and provide more powers to ban suspect products. (Similar legislation has been passed in Andorra. Ed.) But is this enough in the battle against bugs with nice names and nasty habits such as Salmonella and Campylobacter?

### FACTS ON FOOD BUGS:

Salmonella enteritidis: is a virulent strain mainly found in poultry and eggs. The cause of egg contamination is still under investigation. One theory is that salmonella enters breeding flocks through their feed, which includes the recycled remains of slaughtered chickens, some of which will have been infected with salmonella. People who are poisoned by Salmonella can become carriers themselves; another reason for observing scrupulous personal hygiene.

Listeria monocytogenes: is in the soil and in the gut of many species, including human beings, and it can transfer to vegetables and milk. It thrives in warm, moist conditions and a particularly dangerous form develops its toxin at very low temperatures. People with impaired immune systems and pregnant women should avoid soft cheeses, pates and prepared refrigerated salads such as coleslaw.

Campylobacter: though relatively mild in its effects, causes more cases of food poisoning than salmonella. Very young children and young adults are most at risk. It occurs in poultry and unpasteurised milk and can cross-contaminate other foods from raw food. Undercooked food is a particular hazard.

Botulism: is a lethal toxin which comes from a soil bacterium and thrives in a warm, moist atmosphere deprived of oxygen. Hazelnut puree was the cause of the last outbreak but the unusual, though fortunately rare, source is tinned foods, mainly vegetables and fish. The cause is inadequate heating of foods during processing.

Bacillus cereus: is mostly found in rice. It can survive boiling for a few minutes and is commonly found in take-away fried rice, where the boiled rice has been kept for several hours in a warm kitchen.

Once upon a time we had a reputation for our food. It was awful. We did not know how to choose or cook the stuff, let alone enjoy eating it. Package holidays and television cooks changed all that. From garlic and avocados we progressed to ever-more rarefied tastes, and some of us became Foodies.


But what happened then? The past years have seen an appalling succession of scandals and scares about food. Eggs, pate, soft cheese, hazelnut yoghurt and apple pies have all fallen under suspicion.

The increase in food poisoning statistics could be due partly to the heightened public awareness which is leading more people to report their stomach upsets to their doctors who, in turn, are sending samples to be analysed. A lot of people are falling sick each year and those particularly vulnerable, such as the elderly and new-born babies, are dying.

In the prevailing atmosphere of accusation and counter-attack, with experts being dragged in from all sides, it is hardly surprising that consumers are feeling beleaguered, bewildered and bothered. Who are we to believe? What are we supposed to do? We have to continue buying and cooking and eating the stuff. No one seems to be able to give certain answers to the question: IS IT SAFE?

Not knowing what is done to our food is bad enough but worse is the fear that when things go wrong they are concealed from us. The food chain breaks down into five basic elements which are production, processing, distribution, retailing and consumption. But ironically, it is the consumers at the end of the chain who have no control over the way food is prepared before sale. Production covers the feeding and breeding of our meat and fish, the fertilising and growing of our grain, fruit and vegetables. There is

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plenty of scope here for contamination and intervention, as has been proved.

The scare about Alar (trade name for dominozide) is for real. It is a plant growth regulator used to make apples look better and last longer, but cooking breaks it down into a potent carcinogen. What worries the campaigners is that children, because of their immature immune systems, are even more vulnerable than adults to these invisible residues on so much of our food.

Professor Richard Lacey, the clinical microbiologist at the University of Leeds is sounding the alarm bells about the recent trials of BST (bovine somatotropin), the milk-boosting hormone, in cows. He regards them as questionable, both scientifically and ethnically. The trials, he says, are too small-scale to yield significant information about side effects, and the public have no idea when they are drinking BST milk.

Food is processed and distributed on a vast scale, and there is plenty of opportunity for things to go wrong before it gets to the shops. The Consumers' Association would like to see more prosecutions and penalties at the production end; farmers, for instance, who use fertilisers and pesticides irresponsibly.

In spite of the criticisms, no one concerned about food safety can quarrel too much about the proposed

areas of legislation in the Food Bill:

- (1) Tighter controls on food: suspect food can be inspected and withheld from sale before it gets onto the shelves.
- (2) Registration of food premises: shops, restaurants, cafes and take-aways. They will be rigorously inspected before they can be registered and a system set up to keep them under constant surveillance.
- (3) Training of food handlers.
- (4) Control of contaminants and residues.
- (5) Changes in legal defence: which means that blame will be apportioned more fairly - on the farmer and the manufacturer as well as the food retailer.

The Food Bill concentrates on obvious areas of food retailing and catering - but the earlier links are apparently not subject to the same degree of scrutiny, control and sanctions. The feed we give to our animals, the fertilisers we put on our crops and the methods we use for processing our food all need to be continuously monitored and constantly reviewed if we are ever to feel really safe about what we put in our mouths.

(Summarised from an article by Carolyn Faulden in "Women's Journal".)

SAMIA OMAR



## 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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## A-B-C OF CLEANING HINTS

### (continued)

**G** is for Grass. For stains on white fabric use household bleach. For others sponge with methylated spirits. Test rays on an inconspicuous place first.

**H** is for Heat. White heat marks on furniture can usually be removed by rubbing lightly with a cloth dampened with camphor oil, peppermint oil or turpentine.

**I** is for Ink. Writing ink stains will usually respond to oxalic acid or salts of lemon (1 teaspoon to half pint water). Both chemicals must be used carefully for they are very poisonous. Test on an inconspicuous part before using. Apply the liquid to the stain, leave for a few minutes and rinse very well. Ball point ink can usually be removed by rubbing gently with methylated spirit.

**J** is for Jewellery. Diamonds regain their sparkle if dipped into boiling soapy water to which a little ammonia has been added. Costume jewellery should be cleaned in lukewarm water, not hot. Pearls: real, cultured and artificial, should be rubbed with a soft leather. Acid, ammonia or heat will ruin them.

**K** is for Ketchup. Sponge tomato ketchup stains with cold water. The work glycerine into them. Wash again with soap and water. Rinse.

**L** is for Lipstick. Soap and water often recovers lipstick stains. If stubborn, sponge with carbon tetrachloride.

**M** is for Mustard. Rub glycerine gently on the stain on washable materials, then wash with soap and water. If non-washable, sponge spot with denatured alcohol diluted with 2 parts water. Test first on inconspicuous place in case dyes run.  
(Contributed by MARY ELDRIDGE)

## PET LOVERS - Did you know?

Small dogs grow up faster than larger dogs. Big dogs are not usually considered adult until they are about three years old. Smaller dogs reach adulthood by about 18 months.

It is against the law to name an animal as your heir. But an owner can set up a trust fund to ensure a pet is properly looked after.

The dog which turns mini-circles before lying down is saying, "Do not disturb me."

The name "Poodle" comes from "Pudel", an ancient German word meaning "Puddle". Poodles were originally used for water fowl hunting. "Caniche" in French means "duck dog".

The word "Husky" also means hoarse, because the dogs have a quiet bark. That's where the saying, "I've got a husky voice" comes from.

America has the largest number of dog owners in the world; about 22 of every 100 residents have dogs. Only one-tenth of the English people share their home with man's best friend.

That King Charles 1st's spaniel had its own seat in the Privy Council.

Research in Austria has shown that pet-owning children are generally brighter and more sensitive than non-pet owners.

Study showed that six-year olds are likely to become life-long animal lovers if given a pet to cherish at that age.

A dog has 78 chromosomes in its cells - a human has only 46!

The earliest archaeological evidence of man living with dogs was found in what is today Iraq.

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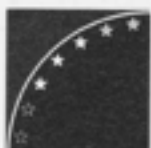
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Age	Monthly Premium	Duration in years	Capital foreseen *	Monthly retirement pension
25	5000	35	22388279	209711
30	10000	30	27583535	258375
35	15000	30	38694153	396499
40	20000	25	30319464	310684
45	25000	20	21518353	220499
50	30000	15	18496340	189532

\* Estimated with 9% return

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## THE SOUL BOMB

A few years ago, I started reading an article in a leading newspaper; it was called "The Soul Bomb". I did not know anything about the contents of the story but thought it sounded interesting. So I bought the paper. However, I did not have time to open it that evening.

That same night I had a weird dream. It was awfully confused but I seemed to be in a foreign country, Russia I think, and I was being blamed for a crime which someone else had committed. I knew who it was as I saw it happen. Before anyone else appeared on the scene, the culprit changed his shape and became a bouncing ball. I can remember seeing him step into it. To all intents and purposes there was on one else around to blame but me.

I was detained for further investigation and as in most dreams, just as you come up against an impossible situation, there it ended. Usually, one classes it as a bit of a nightmare and one forgets about it.

Until the next morning when I decided to read the paper I had not got around to the night before.

To my horror, it was all about someone putting his best friend's soul into a bouncing ball.

The conversation ran like this:

"Did he give you his O.K.?"

"There was no time for that, he was unconscious when his car hit the tree, but I am sure he wouldn't have objected. Why should I let all that energy get lost somewhere, out in space? What a waste!"

family's permission and he replies: "What do you think this is - a transplant?"

She says: "Such a quiet, polite little man. Look at him there, poor thing, bouncing up and down... trying to free himself..."

Then she goes on to At that point the man catches the ball, goes on to the balcony and throws it into the square. He sees a kid run after the bouncing object, then catch it. Nice pet for a kid, he thinks.

Well, is this very different from a jumping Mexican bean?

I can remember my brother showing me one as a child. It is because there is a worm inside the it twists frantically to free itself, making the bean jump. The idea is that if someone's immortal soul was locked inside a bouncing ball it was going to do the same thing.

It was all rather frightening.

What I want to know is why do people dream about things before they happen and in this case before reading about it.

Perhaps it is not so silly when you see all these films about stepping into another dimension in time. It would be more natural to dream after reading the article.

If I am going to get anymore nasty dreams like that, I'm glad it doesn't happen very often.

Now, why cannot I dream of some nice little race horse the night before Derby Day!

MARY J. ELDRIDGE

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## SOME VEGETARIAN RECIPES

The fresh asparagus season will be over by the time you read this but the green, bottled asparagus which is always available here, makes an acceptable substitute.

The pastry for the crust of the first recipe is the easiest method I have ever discovered, and even if you have a "heavy hand" with pastry normally, this method is "fail-safe".

### Asparagus Tart (Serves 6)

For the pastry crust:

*8oz strong plain flour or wholemeal, 1 tsp. salt, 5 oz. butter, 2 tsp. water.*

For the filing:

*1lb asparagus, 1 small carton of cream, 2 egg yolks, 1 egg, finely-grated rind of 1 lemon, nutmeg, grated (to taste), Parmesan, sea salt, black pepper.*

To make the pastry, sift the flour and salt into a bowl. Melt the butter gently with the water in a small saucepan and then add to the flour, a little at a time, stirring with a wooden spoon to form a soft dough. Press the warm dough evenly over the base and up the sides of a 25 cm (10ins. approx.) fluted flat tin with a loose base or an earthenware flan dish. Refrigerate for 1/2 hour or more. Meanwhile prepare the filing.

Cut any woody-looking stems off the asparagus and boil or steam until just tender. Don't overcook. Rinse with cold water and drain well on paper towels. The whisk the cream with the egg yolks and the whole egg until well mixed. Add the lemon rind and whisk and season with sea salt, black pepper and nutmeg (optional).

Heat the oven to Gas 7/220C/425F. The put the chilled pastry case unfilled in the centre of the oven for 10-15 minutes. Remove from the oven and lower the heat to Gas 5/190C/375F. Arrange the asparagus in a fanning-out pattern on the pastry case. Slowly pour on the cream mixture and sprinkle the Parmesan over the top. Put back in the centre of the oven for about 25 minutes until the filing is only just set to a light touch in the centre. Push the tart up out of the flan tin and serve warm. (Though it is just as good next day cold.)-

### Asparagus and Almond Risotto (Serves 4-6)

*1lb. rice, 1lb (1/2 kilo) asparagus, 2-3 shallots, 3-4 pints good stock, 2 oz. nibbed almonds, 2-3 oz. very coarse bread crumbs, a little butter, 3 tbsp. Parmesan cheese.*

Wash, trim and scrape the asparagus. Cut the tender parts into 1 1/2 in (3 cm.) lengths. Put them into the top part of a steamer (or a wire basket that will fit over your stock pot) and reserve.

Throw away the tough bottom parts of the stalks or, if time permits, chop them finely after cleaning and cook them in the stock for about 20 minutes so they give their flavour to the

liquor. The stain the stock and discard the woody stalks.

Chop the shallots and soften them slightly in a generous lump of butter. Stir in the rice and when the grains glisten with fat, add a ladleful of the piping hot stock. Cook over medium-low heat, until most of the liquid has been absorbed. Then add more stock and continue cooking (always without a lid) for 15 minutes or so, stirring and adding stock as necessary, until the rice is creamily tender with a hint of bite in the centre of the grain.

While the rice is cooking, steam the asparagus over the stock and fry first the crumbs, then the almonds, in a little butter until crisp and golden. The asparagus will take about 10 minutes. When the rice is ready, season it with the Parmesan, salt and pepper. Mix in the asparagus, almonds and crumbs and serve straight away. (The almonds and crumbs add nutty sweetness and crunch; fresh peas can replace some of the asparagus, if liked.)

### Fresh Lemon Cake

Lemons and almonds are always available here. The juniper berries can be easily picked; junipers grow all over Andorra. Choose the ripe, dark purple berries.

This is a very light, easily-made cake, good with coffee or for Sunday teatime (or the cake stall of the Christmas fair!)

*Two lemons, 4-5 juniper berries, 1/2 lb granulated sugar, 1/4 lb. butter, 1/2 lb self-raising flour, 2 large eggs, 2-3 tbs yoghurt, 3/4 oz flaked and toasted almonds.*

Heat the oven to Gas 3/160C/325F. Grease the base and sides of a 7in (18-20cm) round cake tin and line the base with buttered greaseproof paper.

Thinly pare the yellow rind from both lemons. Put it into the blender or processor with the juniper berries and 1/114 lb sugar and process until the sugar is reduced to an aromatic powder flecked with tiny yellow and black specks.

Using an electric whisk, cream the butter with the flavoured sugar until fluffy and light. Beat in one egg, followed by one third of the sifted flour. Blend in the second egg, then another one third of the flour. Mix in a very generous table-spoon of lemon juice and the yoghurt. Finally, fold in the remaining flour. Spoon the mixture into the prepared cake tin, level the top and bake for 1 hour or until skewer comes out clean.

Let the cooked cake rest in the tin while you measure the remaining 1/4 lb sugar into a cup. Squeeze the juice of at least one lemon into the cup and stir gently.

Turn the cake out of its tin onto a shallow dish. Prick the top of the cake all over with a skewer and slowly pour on the sugary lemon mixture, then scatter the toasted almonds over the top. By the time the cake is cold the lemon juice will have seeped into the crumb, leaving a crunch lemon and almond flavoured topping.

(Perhaps some of the many good cooks among our members would send in their favourite recipes.)

## NEWS FROM ANDORRA

### Jacque Crozier

First, a correction to last issue's article. In spite of what the Comu may have told the writer, La Massana appears to charge 20,000 pts. for a house and 15,000 for a flat to residents of under 20 years' standing.

The two Co-princes are due to visit Andorra on October 26th; their first official state visit since the Constitution was approved.

The Bishop of Seu d'Urgell has been officially recognised by Spain as a Head of State. Spain's future Ambassador to Andorra is soon to be named and the Consul is likely to be Ferre de la Pena. Gerard Julien will be the first French Ambassador; at present he holds this position in Luxemburg. Jean-Yves Cullet will be the personal representative of the co-prince. The last viguer, M. Courtois moves to another diplomatic post. Both Ambassadors will present their credentials to the two Heads of State on October 26th.

CASS's last director, Sr. Ubach, has finally been dismissed and is now in prison, the auditors having been unable to approve the accounts for 1989, 1990 and 1991. It appears that the Pension Fund has lost 8,000 million pts under his management. However, the Government do not appear to be too worried as they say the 20,000 million left should be sufficient. They are keeping very quiet over the report on CASS's financial situation which is now in front of Parliament.

The Comu of Canillo have now terminated the lease

of a large part of the Incles valley which in 1971 was leased to Antoni Cornella and partner for 60 years to develop a ski resort. This never happened because, according to Cornella, the unmade-up road prevented construction work. Litigation has been going on for eight years to recover the land, which stretches from the bridge to Siscarosa.

Ordino has started its plan to remodel the village centre by closing it to traffic, making it a pedestrians precinct. This applies only until September 30th. This first remodelling has cost more than a million and a half pts.

The Health authority doubts that the new hospital can be open by September 7th and have asked to Minister of Health, Bibiana Rossi, to clarify the situation.

The Andorran Red Cross is to be internationally recognised. Spain has confirmed that it will support Andorra's application for membership as France had already agreed to do. The country's admittance as a full member has been made possible since the Constitution. Andorra can now join in international conferences, sit on the international committee which meets in Switzerland with more than 5000 delegates and become part of the Red Cross federation where representatives from different branches work together.

Andorra has just become the 184th member of the United Nations. For the first time in its history, Catalan was heard in the UN building.

La Massana will invest 1000 million pts. in Arinsal-Pal ski stations next season; they ended the 92/93 season with a positive balance.



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## VIEWS OF OLD ANDORRA



Photo on left. Typical road in Sant Julia.

Photo below. Road to the Envalira Pass circa 1946





## COLOURFUL AUTUMN BREAKS OUT AND ABOUT OUTSIDE ANDORRA

Here in Andorra we have some of the most beautiful and undervisited Parks in Europe on our doorstep, near enough for one or two day breaks in September and October. If you go midweek, it is easy to find a hotel without booking in advance and restaurants are much emptier.

Odessa, Spain's answer to the Grand Canyon, is arguably Europe's most beautiful National Park. Only half a day's drive away, late September or October is perhaps the loveliest time to wander up through the beech and silver fir woods. There are several undemanding walks on wide paths leading up to the spectacular waterfalls and out onto the Alpine meadows above the tree-line. Keep looking up above the cliffs to catch a glimpse of the Golden Eagles and Lammergeiers for which this Park is famous, as well as the rare Spanish Ibex in its last Pyrenean stronghold.

There is a n Information Centre at the Park entrance selling maps and guides; plenty of hotels and hostals in the nearest villages as well as a Parador at Bielsa.

Nearer to Andorra are two Natural Parks, the Cadi and la Garrotxa and another National one, Aiguestortes.

There are two ways in to the last: via Sort to Espot where you can leave your car and walk up to Sant Maurici lake or drive on to Pont de Suert on the N-230 to explore the Boi valley with its Romanesque churches at Boi, Erill la Val and Taüll. This high mountain park has been shaped by glaciers so there are dozens of small lakes, streams and waterfalls. The Encantats, twin peaks over 2700 metres high, over look Sant Maurici lake.

There are restaurants and hotels in Espot, Sort and the villages between. In the Boi valley there are also plenty of restaurants, especially at Boi and two Paradors further along the Vall d'Aran, near Viella.

Garrotxa, which is a Natural Park, created in 1982, is the best example of a volcanic landscape in the Iberian peninsula. It is centred round Olot, almost midway between Ripoll and Figueres. There are about 30 extinct volcanoes, including one in the centre of Olot and 20 lava flows, all created as the result of a single series of explosions - but don't worry, it happened some 300, 000 years ago, with

volcanic activity recurring every 10,000 years or so. The last eruption was probably the Croscat volcano 11,500 years ago!

There is an information centre - the Casal dels Volcans - at Av. de Santa Coloma in Olot which will give you maps and brochures for the area. It is open 10-2 and 4-6 all year round.

There is also a beautiful beech wood alongside the GE-524 road from Olot to Banyoles via Santa Pau just before the Croscat and Santa Margarida volcanoes, with a bar/restaurant near the former.

There are several hotels and plenty of restaurants in Olot. One that has been recommended is the La Moixina, just off the Av. Santa Coloma.

And don't forget to look at Casteldollit de la Roca, a village perched on top of a basalt cliff, 6 km. from Olot and the medieval centre of Santa Pau.

The Cadi-Moixero Natural Park is nearer and better known. Its imposing, northern ridge can be seen from southern Andorra and can be reached from Martinet, where there is the excellent Boix Hotel. Take the minor road, first on the right after the hotel which crosses the river and drive to Estana, from where there are marked footpaths.

Baga, on the far side of the Cadi tunnel, is the best starting point for discovering the warmer, gentler southern slope of the Cadi range. From Baga, take the road to the Coll de Pal, about 20 km. away. Here you can stroll gently or follow a more strenuous footpath.

Finally, in France, there are beautiful beech woods in the Reserve of Orlu, near Ax les Thermes. If you walk through them up to the alpine meadows you will be able to see dozens of marmots and chamois (izzards in Catalan), very obvious in autumn after the breeding season.

There is a restaurant which also sells guides in the village just before the Reserve and well-marked paths and parking areas.

Another high mountain Reserve is to be found just above Olette between Mont Louis and Villefranche, on the way to Perpignan. This one is higher so the woods are mainly pine, but the views are beautiful and it is equally good for chamois and marmots, though you may have to walk further to see them.

And don't forget that the Club's October outing is to see Autumn colours.

## POETRY IS FOR EVERY DAY

For most of us music is something for every day. We listen to our favourite programmes on the radio or television, or sometimes we don't listen but just have it on as agreeable background noise. Some of us listen to "Top of the Pops" and can remember in details who produced which record and when. Others, myself among them, have more classical tastes and can recall the differing approaches of Pablo Casals and James Storka to Bach's cello sonatas, or the "Toscas" of Leontine Price and Maria Callas. Now there are round-the-clock programmes for all of us, a great blessing for insomniacs like me. This morning at 3.30 a.m. I can listen to Mahler's First Symphony, tomorrow at 4.00 a.m. there will be Berlioz' "Damnation of Faust".

-Yet for how many of us is poetry also something for everyday? Only a small minority, I believe. For those who are not among them yet, let me say plainly that you are missing something. In so-called primitive societies poetry is much more a thing for every day. Read for example Ruth Finnegan's "African Oral Literature" for a vivid impression of the place of poetry in many African societies. On my shelves now I have about two metres of poetry, ranging in size from a slim first edition of T.S. Eliot's "Little Gidding" (purchased for a shilling in 1944) to "The Odyssey": A Modern Sequel" by Nikon Kazantzakis (who also wrote "Zorba the Greek"), 33,000 lines on 820 pages. Most of it is in English as the original language, and there are also quite a few translations from Spanish, Greek, Russian, French, Italian, Armenian, Portuguese, Chinese, Finnish.

Of the European languages of the past six hundred years, I believe that English and Spanish are the best for poetry. Ask a Frenchman who is the greatest French poet, and you may get the conventional answer, "Victor Hugo, alas!" implying that he wishes there were someone better. A characteristic of Greek poetry is its feeling of continuity with the classical tradition, over 2,500 years of history, as witness the poem by Kazantzakis above. English and Spanish poetry generally read and sound well in the other language too. But there's something about Russian poetry that makes it extremely difficult to put into English verse; I don't know Russian but I have seen prose translations of such poets as Alexander Blok and I can understand the difficulties

of putting the thoughts into poetic form. I still buy new books of poetry, using the Times Literary Supplement as my source of information, buying what I like rather than what is said to be good; there is some coincidence between the two. Derek Walcott was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1992; I bought his long poem "Omeros" in 1991.

What can I do in this limited space to try to convey my belief that poetry is an everyday thing? Not much, and I am far from sure what is the best way of making the attempt. Not only poetry, of course, for the poets themselves are of equal importance. So what I shall do is quote poems, or parts of poems, that I like, written by poets whom I have found interesting as people. You'll have to do without technical discussions of the poems, or explanations of why I like them; and non of my own poetry, it isn't good enough.

1. Sir Walter Raleigh, found in his Bible after his execution in 1618.

"Even such is Time, that takes in trust  
Our youth, our joys, our all we have,  
And pays us but with earth and dust;  
Who in the dark and silent grave,  
When we have wandered all our ways,  
Shuts up the story of our days;  
But from this earth, this grave, this dust,  
My God shall raise me up, I trust."

2. Jorge Guillen, born 1893, died sometime after 1967, translated from the Spanish. This is from a poem published in 1967, translated by Julian Palley.

"No one takes leave of himself,  
Save, perhaps, a theatrical suicide.  
To be dead is nothing  
To die, that alone is sad.  
I will regret to leave you,  
You that continue here,  
And not participate in your living.  
The story is without end.  
Only the teller reaches his conclusion.

.....  
Being, living are absolute  
and sacred between two Nothings, two vacancies.  
It is worthy to be. I thus am worthy.  
I live. I still live!  
Earth beneath my feet,  
Sea and sky with us, together."

(I like Guillen's wild optimism, as much as Raleigh's calm acceptance.)

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE NEXT ISSUE.

PETER PARKINSON



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