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INTER COMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

NEWSLETTER/BUTLLETÍ INFORMATIU



VOL. 3 - Núm. 2 - WINTER / HIVERN 1993

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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Chairman:	Peter Parkinson	35 3 94

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THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN THIS NEWSLETTER ARE THOSE OF THE EDITORS AND/OR THE CONTRIBUTORS. THEY DO NOT NECESSARILY EXPRESS THE VIEWS OF THE BOARD OF THE C.I.A.

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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 1993

EDITORS: Jacquie Crozier and Tony Hooper

EDITORIAL

Once again we are nearing the end of another year; how they creep up on one as we get older! Yes, Christmas is only a couple of weeks away, so let us take this opportunity to wish all our members a Very Happy Christmas. I find that this is a time for reflecting on the past year, and I would like to take this opportunity to recall some moments in the life of our Club during the past twelve months. We started the year about two hours before the end of the last one when a small number of members joined Andorran, Spanish and French celebrants at a New Year dinner in Arinsal. A riotous evening was had by all, enlivened by the appearance of one member in the kilt. He was never short of offers of dancing partners, although many of them were French men! The next event was a superb Buffet Dinner and Dance in Ordino which was fully booked (including the smokers table). Other events which have enlivened our life as the year has unfolded have included a luncheon at Can Pere, an excellent guided tour of Barcelona, the trips reported in this issue, another shopping trip to Barcelona, picnics, rafting etc. etc. Yes, a very full year and for much of this we must thank Pop Goldsteen and her excellent organising ability. But this is a time also for looking forward to the New Year. If we are to continue with a full and lively programme we must have more people coming forward to offer their assistance. How often have you read this plea in this column! How about making a New Year Resolution to make one positive contribution to the Club in 1994?

EDITORIAL

Una vegada més ens estem apropant al final d'un altre any. Com passen els anys en fer-nos grans! Només falten un parell de setmanes per a Nadal i aprofitarem l'avinentsa per desitjar a tots els nostres socis un Feliç Nadal. Trobo que aquest és un bon moment per reflexionar sobre l'any transcorregut, i m'agradaria aprofitar aquesta ocasió per recordar alguns dels moments que ha viscut aquest Club durant els últims dotze mesos. Vam començar l'any un parell d'hores, més o menys, abans que acabés l'anterior, quan uns quants socis ens vam ajuntar amb andorrans, espanyols i francesos en un Sopar de Cap d'Any a Arinsal. Tothom estava passant una bona vetllada i encara es van animar més quan va arribar un dels socis del Club vestit amb un Kilt. No li va faltar ballador ni un moment, tot i que la majoria eren homes francesos! El següent esdeveniment va ser un Sopar amb bufet lliure i ball a Ordino que estava completament ple (fins i tot les taules de fumadors). Altres actes que han alegrat la nostra vida, a mesura que ha anat passant l'any inclouen un dinar a Can Pere, una excel·lent visita a Barcelona amb guia, picnics, rafting, etc. Sí, ha estat un any molt complet i tot això gràcies a les grans capacitats d'organització de Pop Goldsteen. Però aquest també és el moment de mirar endavant cap a l'Any Nou. Si volem continuar amb un programa animat i ple d'activitats necessitem més gent que vingui a ajudar-nos. Quantes vegades heu llegit aquesta súplica en aquesta columna? Que en pensaríeu de prendre la Decisió per a l'Any Nou de fer una contribució positiva al Club durant el 1994?

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The Board are sorry to announce that Pop Goldsteen has resigned as Social Events Co-ordinator. She will be sadly missed. One of the factors which had an effect on her decision was the lack of members who came forward to assist her in a very difficult task. Peter Parkinson has agreed to act as Chairman of a Sub-Committee to be responsible for Social Activities in 1994. But if this committee is going to be able to provide a full programme of events it must have members. Peter is contacting various people to ask them to serve, but if you feel that you can offer anything please give Peter a ring on 35394. He will be very glad to hear from you. One innovation which has been available since the start of October is the Andorran News Weekly. This is a weekly round-up of local news in English, produced by Jacquie Crozier and available at the Wednesday Coffee Mornings at the Hotel Paris Londres at a cost of 25 pts. On average only 50 copies have been sold each week. The Board have decided to include a sample copy of this very useful source of local news with this issue of the magazine. We are sure that when you have seen a copy many more members will be coming each Wednesday to buy one.

NOTÍCIES DE LA JUNTA

A la Junta ens sap greu anunciar que Pop Goldsteen ha dimitit de la Coordinadora dels Actes Socials. La trobarem molt a faltar. Un dels factors que han influït en la seva decisió ha estat la manca de col.laboració per part dels socis en ajudar-la en la seva més que difícil tasca. En Peter Parkinson està d'acord en actuar com a President d'un Sub-Comitè responsable de les Activitats Socials per al 1.994. Però si aquest comitè ens ha de proporcionar un programa d'activitats, necessita socis. En Peter està parlant amb diverses persones per demanar col.laboració, però si creieu que podeu apartar alguna cosa, si us plau, truqueu al Peter al 35 394. Estarà molt content de parlar amb vosaltres. Una innovació que està al vostre abast des del començament d'octubre és l'Andorran News Weekly. És un resum en anglès de notícies locals, fet per Jacquie Crozier i que és a la vostra disposició, els dimecres en els Coffee Mornings a l'Hotel Paris Londres i que val 25 pts. Per regla general només se'n venen unes 50 còpies per setmana. La Junta ha decidit incloure una mostra d'aquest mitjà d'informació local tan interessant, junt amb aquest número de revista. Estem segurs que quan en vegeu una còpia molts més socis vindreu a comprar-ne un cada dimecres.



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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING GROUP

The new session of Scottish Country Dancing has begun in fine form. The dancing is held in the Parochial Hall behind the church in La Massana between 4.30 and 6.30 pm. every Sunday. All are very welcome. The dancing is simple and the enjoyment enormous. (Far more fun than aerobics and just as good for you) You don't have to be "Scots" or have ever danced before as full instruction is given to every dance. The charge is 100 pts. to C.I.A. members (this money goes towards a local charity for needy children) and 200 pts. for non-members. Although this dancing is celebrated all over the world as "Scottish" Country Dancing, its origins are far less Scottish than you might suppose. Much of the dancing is French in origin. During the 15th. and 16th. centuries there were many bands of Scottish mercenaries attached to the French Court. They watched the "Court Dances" and imitated them for amusement and eventually brought them home to Scotland where they were mixed with the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish traditional dances. Generally the long dances are English and the square dances are French. The very name of the steps and formations are French. such as the "Pas de Basque, allemande, pousette". You may also be surprised to learn that even the celebrated sword dances are in fact French and we all know that the bagpipes probably originated in Hungary. Who knows where "tartan" comes from - it certainly was not Scotland. Surely none but the Scots however could manage to assimilate all these traditions and make them so superbly their own. Fortunately the Scots also have a singular determination which caused the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society to be established at the beginning

of this century under the direction of Mrs Jean Milligan. This society has preserved, researched and promoted Scottish Country Dancing ever since. At our Sunday afternoon dances eight nations are represented though sadly at the moment not France. Instruction is given by John Gill, a Yorkshireman. All ages are present and no one is too old to join in. You will need a flat pair of light weight shoes preferably with leather or composition soles rather than rubber. We look forward to seeing you. For further information contact Marjorie Temple - 35655, Laura Fecanin - 36869, Clare Allcard - 36269 or John Gill - 37109.

INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

As you will see elsewhere in the magazine, we are planning another Festival of International Christmas Music. We do hope you will come. The news from the Group is up beat. We have three new members and a fourth has promised to join us soon. We are also very happy that some men with excellent voices have kindly agreed to sing with us for the Christmas Festival. Members of the group continue to benefit from the lessons with Teresa Vidal, and we also had the great privilege of going to Simon Estes' singing Masterclass. People had flown in from Mallorca and Paris and travelled up from Barcelona to listen to him. What a wonderful warm man he is. We look forward to Ken Law rejoining us for the winter though Jean Axten has done a marvellous job as substitute pianist in his absence. Any one out there who has not so far contacted us but loves to sing do please ring one of the numbers below as we always welcome new members. You do not need to be able to read music, you just have to enjoy singing. Clare Allcard 36269 - Sheila Hooper 36154 - Pop Goldsteen 35621.



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HELPLINE or is it BEETLEMANIA.

This was originally established to give help on health matters, and other information about Andorra, especially for new arrivals. Since then we have had some unusual requests for help. About a year ago I was asked if I could find a gardener, which I did about ten minutes and two phone calls later. But the strangest request is this one. I had a letter from a friend in Austria, who has a friend in Italy who wanted a specimen of a beetle which occurs only in Andorra. Did I know a "Beetle" man? Well, yes, I did!! I had heard that there was a "Beetle" man in St. Julia - one phone call confirmed this, with a contact phone number. I will keep you informed of the outcome of this call for help!!

Dinah Baxter.

INTERNATIONAL THEATRE

On Sunday November 14th. the Group held its first meeting for many months. It last got together for the rehearsals of "The Importance of Being Earnest", but due to Ron Richards' ill health rehearsals came to an abrupt end. The meeting, attended by 15 members, was saddened to hear that Tony Hooper wished to stand down from the position of Group Leader. This does not mean that he will be leaving the group but his work load with sporting activities prevents him from taking the full responsibility of the theatre. Rene de Knight has offered to take on the leadership, at least until the group is back on its feet again. Little could be achieved with so many members still absent from Andorra, but those present expressed their determination to continue its activities. They do not have the time to present an entertainment before Christmas but they are formulating plans for early next year. They hope these will include a lighthearted musical evening in January and a play in May. The Group continues to welcome anyone who wishes to join in any capacity. If you are interested contact Ron Richards on 35586

NATURALIST GROUP

There will be no meeting during December. The meetings in January and February will consist of slides and videos taken by members. The programme for 1994 is now available and can be obtained at the Wednesday Coffee Morning or by contacting Ann Matschke (41 2 79) or Jacque Crozier (35 9 31)

2ND. FESTIVAL OF INTERNATIONAL CHRISTMAS MUSIC.

23RD. DECEMBER 1993 ORDINO CHURCH AT 4.30 p.m. (16.30)

The International Singers are proud to announce our second Festival of International Christmas Music. Padre Roc has again very kindly allowed us to use his church in Ordino with its wonderful acoustics. As you can see, we have managed to book a date really close to Christmas in order to celebrate the warm Christmas spirit. The programme will include carols in English, French, German, Latin, Welsh and Catalan, and we also hope to have several excellent soloists for you to listen to, both instrumental and choral. Those who enjoy singing themselves have not been forgotten as we have lined up some of the great favourites for you to join in. So mark the date down in your diaries. We very much look forward to welcoming you. Like last time there will be a voluntary collection at the end, all profits going to Padre Roc for his own chosen local charity.

NEW YEARS EVE DINNER **PLEASE SEE PAGE 15**

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ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH CHRISTMAS SERVICES.

The Christmas services will be held at La Massana Church as follows:

Friday evening 17th. December Christingle Service

Saturday 18th. December at 11 a.m. Christmas Carol Service and Communion with Rev. Rolf Hijorth.

DO YOU ENJOY READING THIS MAGAZINE?

DO YOU WANT IT TO CONTINUE?

If this magazine is to continue at the same high standard of production, the Editorial team require help. We are looking for some one to take over full responsibility for obtaining

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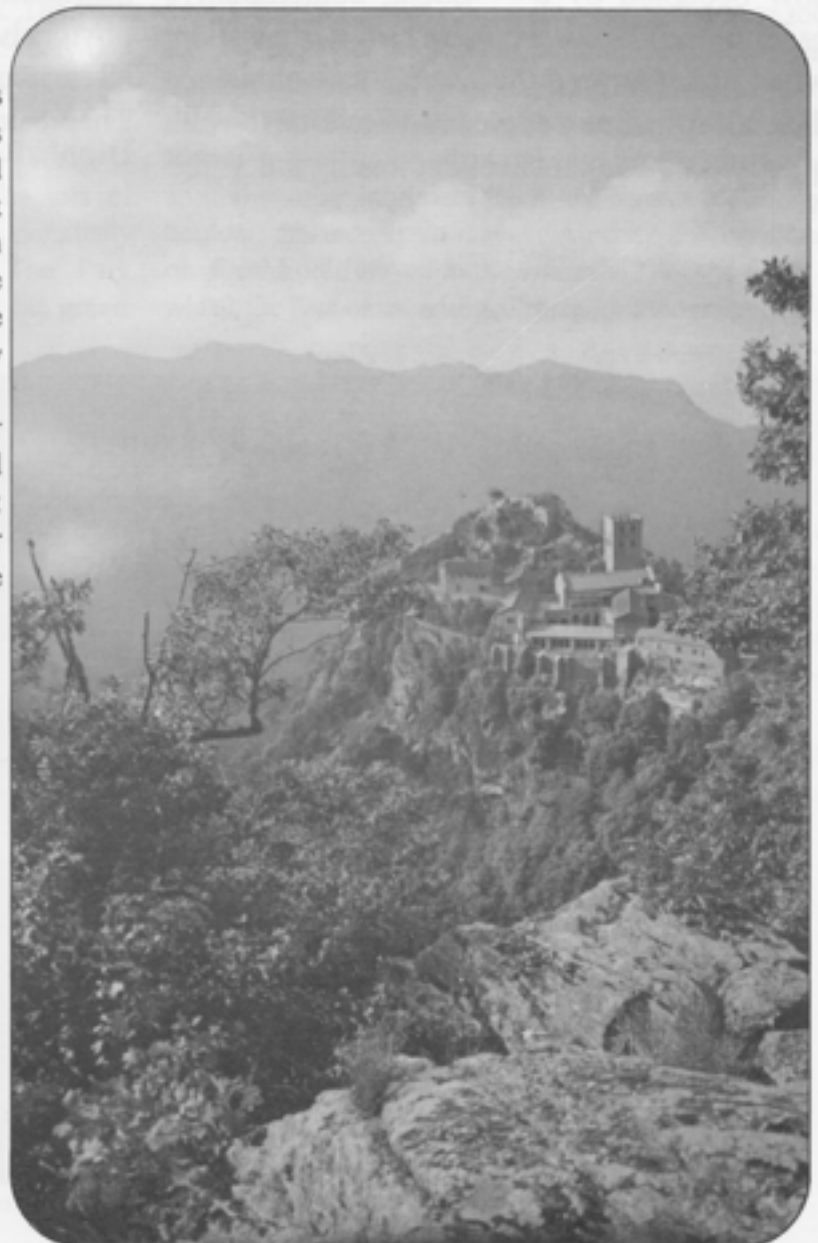
At the moment the cost of production is largely met by advertising revenue, but this is proving more difficult to find and produces a burden on the Editors. Amongst our members there must be someone with experience in the field of advertising - we need your knowledge and skills. Please contact Jacquie Crozier (35931) or Tony Hooper (36154)

Remember, we still require your input for the magazine. Many members have led very interesting lives and we are sure that our readers would be interested in your stories. Don't be shy - sit down and write some thing for the next issue.

SEPTEMBER COACH TRIP TO L'ABBEYE St.

MARTIN-DU-CANIGOU

Our thanks to Pop Goldsteen for a well organised and very enjoyable outing. Everyone was on time as the coach collected us in Ordino, Andorra La Vella and St. Julia. Our first stop was a wayside cafe just outside Mont Louis, and then that awful journey down the gorge! Juan the driver, is so good and careful that no one was ill or uncomfortable. We were taken to the village of Castell where we got off the coach. The energetic members had a lovely walk through the woods on the unsurfaced road to the abbey. Some of those who went in the jeep thought that the walk would have been preferable as much of



the road had a sheer drop on one side, and at the many hairpin bends the jeep had to make a three-point turn in order to get round the corner. Our climb or drive up was well worth it. The abbey stands on its own cliff with only one approach possible. The original abbey was started in 1000 A.D. but little of this remains except some of the foundations. Most of the restoration has been done in the last 50 years. The site is spectacular; from the cloisters one has a wonderful view of the wooded gorges. The chapel is simple and unadorned, in the crypt is their 'Meritxell', a typical Madonna and Child. The abbey is now occupied by a silent, contemplative order of monks so we were asked to be silent when going around the abbey. It is obviously difficult for some people not to talk or to walk quietly! We had an excellent lunch, under the

trees in a restaurant in Castell. But all too soon we had to board the coach for the railway station at Villefranche to catch the "Little Yellow Train" for the journey back to Bourg Madame. It was quite chilly in the open carriages but the views were wonderful as the train slowly climbed the gorge to Mont Louis stopping at unkempt little stations several kilometres from the villages after which they were named. After Mont Louis the train meanders around the countryside to Bourg Madame where the coach was waiting for us, and we were on our way home, with an expensive stop at the Hotel Boix in Martinet. (The service was slow, they were obviously not geared for coach parties) We all arrived home safely, weary and happy.

Thank you Pop.
Dinah Baxter



VISIT TO AIGUES TORTES NATIONAL PARK, OCTOBER 14th.


A trip to Spain to see the autumn colours" was advertised. After the storms and flooded roads of the previous day I wondered if any mountain roads remained - let alone autumn leaves! However it was calm and dry as we left La Massana at 7.15 a.m., with Juan, our driver and guide, at the wheel, and as we travelled southwards and then to the west the sun came out in glimmers and we began to see some of the lovely yellows and reds which one always anticipates during this season. We had a welcome coffee break in Sort, but were disappointed to find the Tourist Office closed, so we were unable to get pictures and information of the region. We did know that we were headed first for the National Park of Aigues Tortes and the Lake of St. Maurici. The Park is one of nine National Parks in Spain, the only one in Catalunya, being set up by official decree in 1955. It is set high in the Pyrenees, in the province of Lleida, covering an area of 38 sq. miles. Water is plentiful in the province, giving way for lots of hydro-electric power which of course has eventually damaged the environment extensively. The Park produces no timber and the local livestock can graze

amongst wonderful features. There are excellent examples of glacial erosion, magnificent geological formations and wildlife and plants in abundance. Unfortunately our group had to be content with herds of cattle and flocks of sheep, though one party claimed that they had seen a group of seven chamoix from their jeep. We had boarded our reserved jeeps in Espot and made our way up rocky tracks, through streams and over stony pathways. The ride got bumpier and bumpier, the adventure had really begun. It began to drizzle, the drizzle turned to snow and we were soon well above the snow-line, having passed beautiful lakes and tarns, and were able to see jagged magnificent peaks rising majestically in the distance. It was breathtaking (So was looking down some of the drops below us!). Eventually the jeeps could go no further because of snow and ice; walking up the final lap to a refuge also proved impossible; we hadn't the right gear and it was too icy. I was rather hoping that there would be a St. Bernard waiting up there for us, with a barrel of brandy round his neck! We were really chilled. However, not to be daunted, we jolted our way around another mountain track - to be met by a huge boulder, so once again it was "All out" and continue on foot. Some stayed in the warmth (?) of the jeeps whilst the rest of us trudged through the snow, (a



level track fortunately), to turn a corner and to look way down into the valley onto Lake St. Maurici. The chill and damp feet were worth it. I do hope that some of the photos come out, but as the snow made visibility poor, I may have to rely on my memories. The views were incredible, the peaks dramatic. There are 50 lakes, streams, waterfalls and marshes in the Park. We saw many of them on the journey back down to the lake. The vegetation is mainly a forest of pines and firs, silver birch and beech which afforded spectacular colours as the sun came out during our descent. Eventually we could stand it no more and persuaded our driver to stop so that we could take photos. Many of the party walked the rest of the way down, the rest of us arriving at the lake and waiting breathing in the beauty and pure air. There are reputed to be eagles, ptarmigan and black woodpeckers in the region. Oh well, I did see one lonely chaffinch hopping in the snow. Re-united with the rest of the group, we made our way back to Espot, a pretty village, said farewell to our jeep drivers, and made for the local hostelry to a welcome relaxing aperitif and a delicious, warming meal. Refreshed we set off south again towards Tremp, travelling through the valley of Pallaresa. The village of Gerri de la Sal was fascinating. We saw where the surrounding fields had been exploited for the production of salt! The whole village was supported by this work until people began emigrating from the region. The salt water came from a natural spring! On through another picturesque region where the vegetation is recovering after a fire of three years ago, which lasted over eight days. It was one of the largest ever known in Catalunya. The next point of interest was as we got deeper into the river valley: cliffs rising majestically either side of us and the road becoming

narrower and twistier. Looking to the rock formations to our left was like looking at Gaudi's Pedera house in Barcelona. These were the rocks which were the inspiration for much of his architecture; it was like looking at Gaudi in nature. Amazing. Even the suggestion of the balconies and windows was there. On by the Barranco del Inferno (Ravine of Hell), where we saw a deep cleft in the rocks, metres long, metres high. There were towering precipices above us. It was all very impressive and reminiscent of the Grand Canyon in America. Actually, some Western films were made in this region. We saw Polda, a village of "tejera" exploiters (tiles), a Military Academy where white points on the hills were placed for target practice from aircraft, no planes about thank goodness, and on to Tremp for our final pause and coffee. Beyond Tremp we had pointed out to us the richest area of Catalunya for pig rearing, olives and almonds. It was a very productive region until, climbing higher, it became more sparse and desolate. Houses were pointed out which until recently had no electricity or telephones. We saw one tiny new school in the stretch of about 30 kms. The houses were used mainly by shepherds. There were many caves apparently which had been used by the military during the Civil War as they awaited their enemies. "Quite a few dead in the region", Juan reported to us. The going was laborious, the road extremely twisty, the edges unprotected. "Look to your right", Juan called. I whispered "I'd rather not", for dropping down for hundreds of feet was a precipitous cliff, the view really was breathtaking, but as I'm not one for heights, I found myself moving involuntarily towards the centre of the bus and onto my companion's knee! This fantastic valley, we were told used to be a lake, as was La Massana in Andorra, until the


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ARINSAL

waters gradually eroded a path through the cliffs and onto the valley below. Once over the Col de Baixols we descended into Organya and the route home was on familiar roads. We arrived home on schedule: our thanks to Pop and Juan never ending after such an interesting and memorable day.

Val Cruickshank.


A VISIT TO BETHLEHEM

Our tour was almost over and I was brownd off. With nothing specific in mind, I had seen this trip to the Holy Land in the nature of a quest, a search for knowledge or understanding, a moment of spirituality, a sense of God. Whatever it was I had so far failed to find it. There had been no time as we rushed from one famous Biblical site to another. I had managed to steal one moment of peace beside the little church of St. Peter's Primacy which stands, poised, right on the edge of the Sea of Galilee. It was from here that Jesus was thought to have walked across the waters to rescue his disciples. Now sitting alone on a rough stone wall, I looked out over that selfsame lake, still and silver in the sunlight, and watched, silent, as a kingfisher swooped low through the ancient reedbeds. Peace, too, was found in the hot, open-air mineral baths of Tiberius, gazing up at a night full of stars. Until, that is, a friendly fellow bather launched into a popular Hebrew song. This had followed swiftly on my telling her where I was from. Freely translated the chorus went - "Oh, it must be wonderful to be an Andorran, Confident enough to have a defence budget of \$9.50 a year." From Tiberius we drove south to Bethlehem. The first surprise was to find that a mere six kilometres separates it from Jerusalem. Bethlehem is a thriving town of some 32.000 inhabitants, many of whom are Arab Christians. The town's heart is Manger Square, a place which seemed to symbolise rather neatly my

jaundiced impression of the country so far. As you look back on the square you have, on the far right, the Church of the Nativity complete with separate chapels for separate Christian denominations. At the centre right stands an Israeli look-out tower, its armed guard staring far left to the slender minaret of the Arab mosque while, between the two, a huge hoarding advertises Bethlehem souvenirs. My own favourite advertisement read - "Holy Shop! A New Bargain Every Day!" Crossing an outer courtyard of the Church of the Nativity our group leader stopped before a statue of St. George. Informed that on the following day, on the other side of the Mediterranean, The Church of St. George in Andorra was to be inaugurated, she now asked everyone to pray that our church might grow in fellowship and love. To which I offered a heartfelt Amen. The present Church of the Nativity dates from 530 A.D. and, from the outside, looks somewhat like a fort. One of the few churches to survive the Muslim conquest, its low wooden entrance door is said by some to have been designed to keep out mounted raiders. Others claim it was built thus so that everyone who entered had to bow their heads. Once inside and upright one stands, wreathed in the incense of Orthodoxy, gazing down a wide expanse of nave which is flanked on either side by a profusion of golden lamps interspersed with cinnamon-tinted marble pillars. High on the wall a few memorable mosaic portraits of the apostles remain, each face individual and watchful. While on the floor, uncovered for us to see, was the richest Byzantine mosaic so far unearthed in Israel. (The richness of the mosaic is measured by the number of different colours of stone it contains. This one had 17 colours in a 20 cm. square.)

Moving to the far end of the nave we joined a crowd who, in exchange for a few pesetas, received slender tapers made of pink wax from the hands of a

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benevolent Orthodox priest. From there we mingled among a press of pilgrims waiting to descend into what is called the Grotto of the Nativity. At last our turn came and we stepped down, single file, on the curved steps to the grotto of the birthplace itself which was, momentarily empty. The walls and low, vaulted roof of the tiny chapel were smoke-blackened from the scores of candles of a million past pilgrims. Near the simple altar the stone floor was polished like marble, the result of centuries of devout believers pressing their foreheads to the ground before the niche in the cave which is thought to be

the original manger. Standing back so all could see, some slightly stooped to accommodate the low ceiling, we sang together "Once in Royal David's City" followed by that beautiful international carol "Silent Night". Then, as we paused to contemplate in awe the fact that we were indeed here, in Bethlehem, at the birthplace of Christendom, a tiny boy-child dressed in long black robes ran laughing into the grotto, the lighted taper in his hand reflecting the sparkle of joy in his dark shining eyes. Happy Christmas.

Clare Allcard



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POETRY IS FOR EVERY DAY

PART TWO. [The 1st part of this article appeared in the Autumn issue]

3. Ann Akhmatova 1893-1966. Tall, splendidly beautiful in her youth, proud of her descent from Genghis Khan. There are several pre- Revolution paintings and drawings of her, one of which was shown at the "Twilight of the Tsars" exhibition in London in 1991. Possibly the greatest modern Russian poet, in her later years a friend of Nobel Laureate Joseph Brodsky. spent all her life in and around St. Petersburg. Translated by Lain Coffin.

*I drink to the house, already destroyed,
And my whole life, too awful to tell
To the loneliness we together enjoyed,
I drink to you as well,
To the eyes with deadly cold imbued,
To the lips that betrayed me with a lie,
To the world for being cruel and rude,
To God who didn't save us, or try.*

[1934]

[And I understand one's deep pessimism, too]

4. Twentieth Century Somali, another Poet and translator not known to me.

*Woman lovely as lightning at dawn,
Speak to me even once.
I long for you, as one
Whose dhow in summer winds
Is blown adrift and lost
Longs for land and finds
Again the compass tells
A grey and empty sea.*

5. Charles Baudelaire, published 1857. Translated from the French by Joanne Richardson.

To a Creole Woman.

*Her skin is pale and warm, enchantress brown,
She holds her head with nobly mannered ease,
She walks tall, slender like an amazon,
Her smile serene, assurance in her gaze.
If you, Madame, went to the very scene
Of glory, by the green Loire or the Seine,
To animate some minor ancient.
Shadowed by those retreats of shadows full,
You'd sow a thousands sonnets in men's souls,
Made by your eyes, like slaves, obedient.*

6. Ann Stevenson, published 1982.

Swifts

*Spring comes little, a little.
All April it rains.
The new leaves stick in their fists.
New terms, still fiddle heads.
But one day the swifts are back.
Face to the sun like a child
You shout, "The swifts are back!"
Sure enough, bolt mocks bow to carry one
sky-scyther,
Two hundred miles an hour across full blown
windfields.
Swreeee. Swreeee. Another. And another.
It's the cut air falling in shrieks on our chimneys
and roofs.
The next day a fleet of high crosses in ether.
These are the air pilgrims, pilots of air rivers.*



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7. Po Chu I. Written about 831. Translated from the Chinese by Arthur Waley.

On being sixty.

*Between thirty and forty one is distracted
by the five lusts,
Between seventy and eighty one is prey to a
hundred diseases,
Between fifty and sixty one is free from all ills,
Calm and still - the heart enjoys rest.
I have put behind me love and greed,
I have done with profit and fame.
I am still short of illness and decay, and far from
dreadful age,
Strength of limb I still possess to seek the rivers
and hills
Still my heart has spirit enough to listen to flutes
and strings.
At leisure I open new wine and taste several cups.*

And there, being sixty something myself and feeling often like Po Chu I, I rest my case, that poetry is for everyday.

Peter Parkinson.

A SENIOR CITIZEN DEFINED

A Senior Citizen is one who was here before ball point pens, credit-cards, frozen food, television and the pill. For Senior Citizens time-sharing meant togetherness not computers, and a chip meant a piece of wood or a piece of fried potato, hardware meant durable, software did not exist as a word. Porn meant going to "Uncle's" for a loan, and teenagers never wore jeans. (Come to think of it, I don't think that the word teenager existed either). Senior Citizens were before panty-hose, drip-dry, dishwashers, tumble dryers and the electric blanket. They got married first and lived together afterwards.

Girls wore Peter Pan collars and thought that cleavage was something that the butcher did. They were before Batman, vitamin pills, disposable nappies, pizzas, instant coffee and Chinese take-aways. In their day cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was for mowing, pot was a cooking utensil and a gay person was the life and soul of the party and nothing more - while AIDS just meant beauty treatment, or to help someone in trouble. Senior Citizens must be a hardy bunch when one considers how much the world has changed and the adjustments they have had to survive. However I am glad that when I am "old" I shall be a Senior Citizen, and not just an Old Age Pensioner like my Grandpa!

Joan Spiller.

FESTA MAGNA.

29th. October was designated as the Festa Magna for the Jubilats and the Andorran Government entertained us all royally. We were invited by our local Comu in Ordino and free transport was provided to the special lunch at the Poliesport hall in Encamp. As we arrived dozens of buses were unloading hundreds of the privileged, the disabled with helpers and the Red Cross much in evidence. We watched the school children planting a tree; this was happening in every Comu. There were over 300 people at the lunch and the tables looked jolly with bottles of wine and carnations. The service was provided by the Lycee School of Catering, and the young students were very well trained and helpful to all. Four course meal, plenty of wine, and with the sinful chocolate ice-cream gateau they served champagne. All this was for the princely sum of 500 pts. It was a very happy occasion and will be remembered by the five of us from La Pleta. We felt honoured to be invited and to be so well entertained by Andorra - and we all received a commemorative gold pin.

Barbara Davies.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITORS.

Dear Editors,

I find the article "The A.B.C. of Cleaning Hints" amusing, almost straight out of Mrs. Beeton, but also quite useless. Can one get methylated spirits here, camphor oil or peppermint oil? Who uses writing ink any more, and if one does, what is "salts of lemon"? If available we need to know what it is in French, Spanish or Catalan! Can one get glycerine here? I am sure carbon tetrachloride is not available (Only in your fire extinguishers - Ed.) But, in many shops tubs of cleaning liquids and/or creams are available for a particular stain. Let us move into the 20th. century (While there is still some of it left)

Dinah Baxter.

Dear Members,

Now that I have stepped down as your social activities' organiser, I would like to thank everyone who joined in on them. You were wonderful guests and by always being on time, you made it so much easier to make a success of it. My thanks also go to our bus driver, Juanito Martinez from SOL i NEU. He not only is an excellent and careful driver, but he also contributed with a lot of interesting local knowledge about things we passed on the way. So once again, thank you very much for your enthusiasm, kind words and letters of appreciation. They sweetened all the hard work that went into the organising.

Pop Goldsteen

Dear Editors

This week I was contacted by the Churchwarden of the Anglican Church in the south of Tenerife. He was visiting Andorra with a view to living here. I arranged to meet him at the International Coffee Morning where I realised he would also meet some of the members.

When I arrived I think his wife was ready to get on the first plane back!

They had spoken to several members and only one person had anything positive to say about living in Andorra. The picture you painted wasn't good. I think to say that all kinds of taxes could be levied is rather vague and to say we cannot get out of the country for several months each year is quite untrue.

If people aren't happy living here why do they stay? Thinking of the average age of the International community we have at the most, a third of our life expectancy left, why live in a place that makes you unhappy?

We are all aware of rising costs but that is world-wide not only in Andorra. Think how very fortunate we are to live in a virtually crime-free country which at the moment is free of direct taxation. The health care is excellent, no long waiting lists if you have a problem, it is dealt with immediately. Whatever our income we can buy ourselves a decent standard of living. I would also like to say that health and happiness cannot be bought but both can often be achieved by personal effort.

Sorry if I seem pompous, but as members and I like to think my friends, you didn't do Andorra the justice it deserves when you were speaking to prospective residents.

May I take this opportunity to thank the Board for their continuing efforts in running the Club and to wish them and you all a very Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year.

Yours very sincerely,

Doreen Woolton.



NEW YEAR'S EVE DINNER DANCE

Once again we have been able to reserve 30 Places at the New Year's Eve Dinner Dance at the Hostal Poblado, Arinsal. There we will join Andorran, Spanish and French Residents to bring in 1994. Final arrangements (i.e. menu, price) have not yet been made, but I am assured that the price will be about the same as last year - 6000 pts. This is totally inclusive of a superb dinner, all drinks (which flow freely), small gifts, and breakfast - French style - at about 4 a.m. If you want to go see Sheila at the Coffee Mornings or contact Tony Hooper on 36154; all bookings must be accompanied by the full (provisional) amount and must be received by 22nd December.

CHRISTMAS IN CATALUNYA.

December brings us to the Christmas cycle, which ends and starts the year with rich and prolific customs. Christmas is the winter solstice, the time of greatest darkness after which the days begin to get longer. Festivities mainly take place at home with the family but there are some exceptions. Generally, it is in the home that people make their Nativity scenes, an ancient tradition which involves recreating, in miniature, the countryside, surroundings and figures present at the birth of Christ, according to the

Catholic tradition. The ritual of the caga tio (inciting a tree trunk to yield presents and chanting traditional verses) also takes place at home and is probably a pre-Christian rite appealing for abundance and the protection of the forest gods. This very ancient custom still exists. At Christmas carols are sung and the whole family sits down together to eat traditional dishes; escudella and cath d'olla (types of casserole), poultry, neules (rolled wafers) and torrons (nougat made of honey and almonds). Around this time, the most important performances of Catalan folk theatre also take place - El Pastorets, a staging of the mystery of Christmas incorporating local traditional elements. Between Christmas and Epiphany similar versions of the play are performed more than 3,000 times in the whole of Catalunya. The Christmas cycle closes on 6th January with the festival of the "Kings from the East". These evangelical figures are of considerable importance to the Catalan Christmas tradition and are similar to the "Father Christmas" of Saxon traditions. The arrival of the Kings on the evening of 5th January, is celebrated with cavalcades and processions in nearly every village and town in Catalunya. The following morning all the children find presents which these figures have brought and finally, the whole festive period is brought to a close.

From "The Spirit of Catalunya", a poster published in English and Welsh(!) by the Generalitat de Catalunya 1993.



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PHYSICIAN HEAL THYSELF.
MEDICINE THE CHINESE WAY DINGLE
SPENCE RELATES HER FIRST HAND
EXPERIENCE

The summer months in Beijing are sweltering, the air is laden with moisture, the skies more overcast than clear, and the trees filled with huge transparent winged insects that screech from day-break to dusk. One of the more unusual sights is that of a man standing beneath the many popular trees that line Beijing's streets, wielding a very long stick. Atop this stick is a large lump of black, sweet, sticky substance. He hoists the stick high into the branches whereupon the greedy insects - cicadas - become stuck to the sugar and easily caught. Down below, attached to the bars of an ubiquitous and usually ancient bicycle, will be a small cage filled with fat summer cicadas. These will then be sold, carefully killed and dried in preparation for inclusion into some obscure medical prescription. The small boys one sees leaping about in the parks waving oversized butterfly nets are catching dragonflies for the same purpose. The Chinese derive their traditional medicines from a vast array of animal, vegetable and mineral sources, the effects of which can be very powerful, as I was to discover during my stay.

I was fortunate to be able to travel to Beijing in 1991 to spend 3 months studying Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) and acupuncture at a well established college in the city. The course consisted of 2 months theory followed by a month gaining clinical experience in a hospital which only offered traditional medical treatments. The lectures were all delivered in Chinese, and we were rescued at appropriate intervals by an able translator. As a

Westerner steeped in Western logical thought and scientific dogma, I had to be prepared to suspend my disbelief in order to fully embrace the concepts of traditional Chinese medical theory. The tenets underlying TCM are based on the Chinese view of the universe, and by extension the human body, as an essentially harmonious and balanced organism that is in constant flux. No change can occur to a part of the organism without affecting the whole. Whereas the Western physician is concerned mainly with isolable disease categories or agents of disease which he zeroes in on and tries to change, control or destroy, the Chinese physician tends to be less reductionist in his approach. Attention is paid to the complete physiological and psychological individual, and all their patient's symptoms as well as their general characteristics are collated and "woven" together to reveal a pattern of disharmony particular to that individual. The pattern describes an imbalance in the patient's body and hence provides a guideline for treatment. It is not possible to separate the disease from the patient. In their words, one does not ask "What X is causing Y?" as we do in the west, but rather "What is the relationship between X and Y?". I found this approach very refreshing. How often does one take a history from a patient who tells you about a myriad of strange symptoms most of which we must ignore because they seem irrelevant or unhelpful to the central diagnosis at hand. We are expected to elicit histories that fit well known pictures, and often people's complaints can't be pigeonholed in this way. In TCM a symptom tends not to be traced back to a cause but is looked at in relation to other symptoms in order to describe a particular bodily landscape.



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In China, Western medicine and TCM are practised both together and separately as deemed appropriate. The majority of large hospitals are Western in their orientation, but most doctors will have had training in both disciplines, and one may just as well be prescribed an antibiotic along with a herbal antipyrexial. There are other hospitals and clinics that only administer TCM, places where acupuncturists, medical herbalists and specialists in Chinese massage can be found. The choice of which type of medical approach is appropriate for a particular condition seems to be as much the patient's as the doctor's.

My own experience of taking Chinese herbal medicine has been extremely rewarding. For years I have suffered severe, incapacitating dysmenorrhoea which necessitated the intake of large quantities of ibuprofen for two or three days every month in order to function or the oral contraceptive pill, an option which I rejected early on. In China I took the plunge and consulted a traditional herbal doctor accompanied by a Brazilian-Chinese woman as translator. A long and in depth history was taken, my pulse felt in each wrist and my tongue closely examined. I left with a prescription written in incomprehensible Chinese on a very thin piece of paper. Innocently I filled it at the nearest herbal

pharmacy. I carried my small brown paper packages back to my room, keen to start my treatment, but was horrified to discover that in amongst the expected roots, barks and leaves lurked a selection of whole dried scorpions and centipedes! Taking my life in my hands and medicine pot I duly boiled the stuff, strained it and drank the thick, disgusting, black, bitter medicine twice a day for five days. Since that time I no longer have dysmenorrhoea, and if I do have an occasional twinge it is seldom severe enough to warrant taking a pain killer. Somehow an underlying disharmony in my "bodily landscape" has been reharmonised or rebalanced in a way which makes sense in terms of TCM, but which would be sneered at by most Western practitioners. But the treatment worked, whatever the explanation, and I think in the West we would be hard pressed to find such a relatively simple effective treatment for what is an extremely common problem. Traditional Chinese Medicine is based on over 3,000 years of empirical observation and testing. One of our culture's biggest oversights is its refusal to recognise the diversity of other cultures, in particular their approach to health and disease. It is not too late to start to look.

Dr. Spence, the writer of this article is the daughter of Dinah Baxter.

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MOTORING IN AND AROUND ANDORRA IN DAYS GONE BY 1950 A JOURNEY THROUGH ANDORRA



Joseph Lowrey, having visited Luxembourg and Liechtenstein, set out in a Jowett Javelin to Andorra. "another of the little countries which have escaped absorption by their larger neighbours and have a charm of their own." He continued; "Andorra's road is of a roughness which is tolerable in a country where distances are short. Scenically superb, ablaze

with spring wild flowers, but incapable of being photographed without an electricity pylon popping into the picture. Petrol rationing seems forgivable when a visitor gets his daily 2-gallon coupon by visiting what is surely the world's tiniest baker's shop - a touch no musical comedy author would dare invent! With only two roads in the whole country two gallons seems quite a lot, but, having been roused from his siesta to serve us with our ration, the petrol pump owner would not dream of letting us head onwards into Spain with only a half-full tank".

1950 "POSTAL RIVALRY"

"Adjoining post offices in the main square of Andorra



offer alternative routes for letters. 'Correos' being markedly cheaper than 'Postes et Telegraphes' for cards to England. The little Republic has a strange boom-town atmosphere with modern automobiles alongside the most primitive hand-ploughs, and with nylons and Paris perfumes in shanty-town shops. We stayed at Soldeu where the near vegetarian eating of one member of our party brought tears to the eyes of a hotelier taking pride in the huge 'vin compris' at his Hotel Bonell".

should be put off, the rest of Andorra is the perfect example of a little Ruritanian republic. The tarmac disappeared and white dust rose up around us as we rapidly completed the ascent of the La Casa with its succession of spiral bends. (My only companion was a vintage Bugatti saloon which seemed roadworthy enough but the rattles from the coachwork were enough to wake the dead). About three miles from the town of Andorra itself the road became miraculously better, up to that point it had been frankly rough with lots of rock outcrop on the pass itself and the road down the valley. Various nationalities were present in the town with the inevitable sprinkling of sleek American vehicles and intrepid baby

1952 ANOTHER VISIT TO ANDORRA

Renaults, the latter often with four up and luggage on the roof"



Michael Collier wrote this description of a journey in a 1951 Austin A.40. "This frontier appears a mere formality and we were across in a few minutes in Andorra itself with its motley collection of unglamorous huts just inside the border. However, no traveller

1955 SORT TO SEO D'URGEL



Not Andorra, but an interesting contrast with the recent road building on the road across to Sort. A Mr. Kay, who was working in Paris, drove his Daimler Conquest down through France and over the "Port de la Bonaigua". At Sort there was a signpost saying "Seo d'Urgel" and 100 yds. further on "Temporary Bridge - Weight capacity not guaranteed". Mr. Kay continued, "The road was completely unsurfaced, very narrow, extremely steep in parts and simply cut into the edge of the mountain with no protection at all. However, it seems the only way across the mountains is a 60 mile stretch of country and the landscape is magnificent. In the pine forests the road became no more than a bad track until it suddenly emerged into a fairy-like upland pasture with horses grazing and a forest-keepers cottage. We pushed on, once bellying the car with an awful rending sound. At last the main road came in sight still far below; there was no way of telling if we had come by the proper road - it had been very spectacular and, in parts, rather frightening. The distance was 32 miles and it had taken us three hours!". Mr. Kay returned through Andorra - "finding the road from the capital to the French frontier more continuously uncomfortable than anything encountered in Spain"

Thanks to Christopher Balfour for supplying the above memories. .

THOUGHTS FOR TODAY

Life is a jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces missing. You have to get the best impression you can from the few pieces that are given to you. From these fragments you can try and guess at the general content of the whole picture, but often enough your guess will be wrong. Your jigsaw pieces might fall together to show a corner of an open field. Ah! you say - "A pastoral scene of grace and tranquillity". How could you know that the rest of the field is full of French and English troops locked in the bloody conflict of Waterloo. Too many people are making too many guesses. Some of us have more pieces than others. But give a man the minimum necessary to represent a recognisable yet tiny part of a pattern, and his mind races to guess at the whole complexity of the broad canvas. Everyman has a train of thought on which he rides when he is alone. The dignity and nobility of his life, as well as his happiness, depend on the direction in which that train is going, the baggage it carries, and the scenery through which it travels.

Mary Eldridge

VEGETARIAN RECIPES.

Many hostesses get in a panic when they discover that one of their guests is a vegetarian. "Whatever shall I cook?" she cries. Do not despair, many vegetarians eat fish, and some eat chicken, especially when dining out as everyone can cook chicken.

Here are two recipes suitable for vegans as well as vegetarians Both are taken from Sarah Brown's "Vegetarian Kitchen".

SPICED ALMOND RISOTTO.

There is something rather luxurious about almonds and their subtle flavour goes very well with the sweet spices in this dish. I like to eat this with steamed green vegetables and a side salad. It is also delicious served with Gado-Gado Sauce (see below)

Serves Four.

3 tablespoons oil

1 onion, peeled and chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

6 oz. (175 g) long-grained brown rice washed and drained.

3 sticks celery

1 teaspoon cinnamon

1 teaspoon ground coriander

1 teaspoon fresh root ginger, grated. (I find grating ginger a messy business. Either chop it finely, or chop it roughly and put it through the garlic crusher, using all the left over bits as well)

1 pint (570 ml) boiling water

2 oz. (50g) sultanas

4 oz. (110g) mushrooms, wiped & sliced (optional)

1 red pepper, de-seeded and cut into strips

4 oz. (110g) blanched almonds

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

GARNISH

Wedges of lemon with the edges dipped in aprika.

Fry the onions and garlic gently in the oil until golden. Stir in the rice and spices and when well coated with oil, add the boiling water. Cook for 5 minutes, then add the remainder of the ingredients, continuing to cook, uncovered, over a medium-low heat for a further 10 minutes or until the liquid has been absorbed. Season to taste and garnish as suggested.

Note: The almonds may be fried in the oil first and then set aside to be added later if a more crunchy texture is preferred.

GADO-GADO SAUCE.

The inspiration for this recipe comes from Indonesia and it is extremely simple to make. I've found it a useful sauce for accompanying many dishes, e.g. plain Brown Rice, or more elaborate dishes such as Spiced Almond Risotto, or even whole wheat spaghetti cooked the usual way. Gado-Gado Sauce is based on peanut butter so it has a nutty flavour and a golden brown colour. This recipe makes a pouring sauce, but you can make thicker, richer versions if you use more peanut butter and substitute milk for some of the stock. Once you've tried this sauce I'm sure it will be a permanent feature of your repertoire.

Makes 1.5 pints (900 ml) sauce.

2 tablespoons oil

1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped

1 clove garlic, crushed

1 bay leaf

1-2 teaspoons root ginger, finely grated

1/2 teaspoon salt

6-8 teaspoons peanut butter

1 tablespoon honey

Juice of 1 lemon

1 tablespoon white wine vinegar or cider vinegar

1-1.5 pints (570-900ml) water

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 teaspoon soy sauce


Heat the oil in a medium-sized saucepan and gently fry the chopped onion, garlic, bay leaf and ginger, sprinkling in 1/2 teaspoon salt while frying to bring out the juices and make the onion more succulent. When the onion becomes translucent add all the remaining ingredients and mix together very thoroughly. At first the sauce will look fairly thin but as the water heats up the peanut butter will gradually thicken and the sauce will become creamier and thicker as it cooks. Bring to the boil, then simmer on a very low heat for 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Check the seasoning before serving. This sauce can be made much hotter by adding more cayenne pepper or use a chilli pepper sauce.

FAMOUS QUOTES AND PROVERBS

- (1) "If only God would give me a clear sign! Like making a large deposit in my name at a Swiss bank"
Woody Allen
- (2) "Every adult needs a child to teach. It's the way adults learn." Frank A. Clark
- (3) "The closest to perfection a person comes is when he fills in an application form". Stanley J. Randall
- (4) "When I was young I could remember everything, whether it happened or not". Mark Twain.
- (5) "How beautiful a day can be when kindness touches it". George Ellison.
- (6) "The only joy in being imperfect is the joy it brings to others" Doug Larson.
- (7) "If you are patient in one moment of anger you will escape a hundred days of sorrow". Chinese proverb.
- (8) "Too much of a good thing is wonderful". Mae West.
- (9.) "When I'm good, I'm good. When I'm bad I'm even better". Mae West.
- (10) "On the whole, human beings want to be good, but not too good, and not quite all the time". George Orwell.
- (11) "It's not that I'm afraid to die, I just don't want to be there when it happens" Woody Allen.
- (12) "In matters of principle, stand like a rock, in matters of taste, swim with the current" Thomas Jefferson.
- (13) "Success is a journey, not a destination". Ben Sweetland.
- (14) "I'm a girl who lost her reputation, and never missed it". Mae West.
- (15) "When a woman goes wrong, men go right after her". Mae West.
- (16) "Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers". Alfred Lord Tennyson.

BIRDWATCHING

To most people Birdwatching is a dull boring pastime. There are, however, occasions when it can be just the opposite. My first incident happened in Turkey. I had gone with an organised group in 1980. There were two leaders and 21 members in our group. Our coach had taken us to a rubbish tip at the eastern end of the Sea of Marmara near the town of Izmit. Rubbish tips may be unattractive to humans but to birds they are an easy source of food. We had been there about an hour when a police car arrived and we noticed that they were using their radio. Shortly afterwards a lorry load of armed Turkish sailors arrived and rounded us all up at gunpoint. They indicated that we should all get back into the coach. Several armed sailors got aboard with us and we drove off. Eventually we turned into a large naval base. Here our driver and his assistant left us with our armed guard. Although it was September it was still very hot. We spent two sweltering hours on the coach until eventually our driver and assistant reappeared with a Turkish officer. Fortunately he spoke very good English. He told us that we had been arrested as suspected spies. Apparently the base to which we had been taken was an important Turkish naval base and the police had thought we were looking at submarines etc. with our binoculars. Apparently, although our driver had explained to the police that we were just watching birds, they were still suspicious. I find it somewhat ridiculous that anyone could believe that spies carry out their activities from a coach and in such large groups! The following spring I was in Morocco with three friends. We had driven a long way south to the edge of the Sahara close to the frontier of what used to be Western Sahara but is now claimed by Morocco. For some time the area was "off limits" because of the activities of the Polisario who were fighting the Moroccans for independence. This year we believed

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that the war zone had moved much farther south and that we could safely watch birds in the area. Our belief was, we thought, confirmed by the absence of military road blocks which turned back cars in previous years. Having found a likely spot for desert birds we started to walk across the desert. We had got about 200 metres from the road when soldiers erupted from nowhere about 500 metres from us. They were shouting and waving what seemed to be rifles so we stopped. When we stopped so did the soldiers, so we started forward again. At this the soldiers seemed to get agitated and there was a loud bang. One of the soldiers had fired his gun in the air. We beat a very hasty retreat to our car and drove off as fast as we could! We did not stop until we reached the nearest town where we all had a strong coffee. A whisky would have been better but there was no alcohol in this non-tourist area.

On now to the Gambia which is renowned for its beautiful beaches and pleasant winter climate. It is also a superb country for birdwatching. The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa and it offers a vast range of species in a small area. Well over 600 species occur. I had been on several previous occasions and I knew the best bird spots quite well. One of the highlights of any visit to the Gambia was a mini-cruise along the Gambia river. The "Lady Chilell" was a small cruise boat of some 700 tons with 23 air-conditioned cabins and space for about 200 deck passengers. It used to leave the capital Banjul at the mouth of the river every Tuesday and sailed 300 Kms. up river to Basse returning to Banjul late on Friday evening. The river was alive with birds for the whole of the trip so it was very popular with birders. On this occasion the boat had been thoroughly overhauled because Princess Anne had been on the trip 3 weeks earlier. Gone were all the rats and the air-conditioning in the cabins actually worked. We had an uneventful journey to Basse although on one occasion the boat veered to the left and collided with the bank. We were going slow over a shallow area so I dismissed the incident. Thursday afternoon we set sail on our return journey and by Friday morning we had travelled almost 200 Kms. (there were no stops on the return trip and it was much faster sailing with the current). About 10 a.m. we passed the ferry point where the Trans Gambia Highway crosses the river. Here the river widens dramatically to be over 5 Kms. wide. Since we were so far from the bank, birding was impossible, so I had gone to the bar which was at the rear of the boat for a coke. All of a sudden bottles started to crash to the ground and my drink slid off the table. The next thing I knew was that I was in the

water. Despite my efforts I could not seem to get to the surface. When I eventually came up I saw that the shore was a long, long way off. I did not think that I would be able to swim that far. Just as I kicked off my shoes a wooden chair floated by and as I grabbed it I saw that the boat had not in fact sunk but had merely turned upside down and was now sitting, hull up, on the river bed. All of the other passengers had climbed onto the hull so I swam back and clambered up to join them. I felt very guilty that my only thoughts had been for my own safety when I was told that three British birders had been lost, feared drowned (only one body was ever found). I later learned that two Africans had also been lost. There was no other boat in sight and the only "lifeboat" was upside down also. After about two hours the crew managed to right it and paddled off leaving all the passengers behind. All the oars had been lost so they had to paddle with their hands. Another four hours passed before the ferry from the crossing 8 kms upstream came to rescue us. All this time we had sat on the hull with nothing to drink in temperatures which must have been in the region of 45. Our ordeal was not yet over. The Gambia has never had a tragedy like this and there were no established procedures. The police demanded statements from everyone in turn and they insisted we all had a medical examination. It was another 8 hours before we were put on a coach and sent back to our comfortable hotels on the Atlantic coast. It was the 7th December 1984, a date which will for ever be etched on my memory.

In 1989 I was again arrested by the Military. This time it was in Israel, near the Gaza strip. I had gone with my son and his wife to a site which is known to birders world-wide for wintering Imperial eagles. It was about 5 Kms. from a big Israeli airforce base. We had not yet seen the bird when a jeep pulled up and told us we were under arrest. At that precise moment an eagle appeared, whereupon we told the soldiers we could not go until we had had a good look at the bird. Surprisingly they agreed. They took us to the airfield where we could see all the fighter planes lined up on the tarmac. "Stand looking south so you do not see the planes" we were told. Eventually the security guards arrived and after questioning we were released. I thought it hilarious that they took us to the best spot to see the planes which they were trying to protect from prying eyes.

I have now had 4 years free of trouble but I can't help thinking sometimes that the next problem is only just round the corner.

Brian Dore

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