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INTER COMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

MAGAZINE / REVISTA



VOL. 4 - Núm. 4 - SUMMER / ESTIU 1995

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

THE BOARD OF THE CLUB

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COFFEE MORNING IS HELD EVERY WEDNESDAY (10.30 - 12.30) AT THE HOTEL PARIS-LONDRES, ESCALDES, COME ALONG FOR A PLEASANT MORNING.
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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.

LES OPINIONS EXPRESSES PELS EDITORS EN AQUEST BUTLLETÍ INFORMATIU, O PELS LÍDERS DE GRUPS EN ELS SEUS INFORMES, NO SÓN NECESSÀRIAMENT LES DE LA JUNTA DEL C.I.A.

COVER PHOTOGRAPHY 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 MAGAZINE - SUMMER 1995

EDITORS: Jacquie Crozier and Tony Hooper

EDITORIAL

This issue marks the completion of four years of the publication in its present form, although a Newsletter has been produced since the first year of the Club's life. This issue also marks a number of changes. The sharp eyed members may have already noticed that the front cover carries the title MAGAZINE/REVISTA, a term which we have been using for some time within the pages. Now we have a weekly publication which is effectively a newsletter so we felt it was time to differentiate between the two.

We are also marking the retirement of Jacquie Crozier from the position of Co-Editor. Jacquie has been involved with the «Newsletter» since the first issue, a single duplicated sheet. She is still going to be involved since she will continue to produce the «Andorran News Weekly», and I am sure that we will also enjoy further articles from her in the Magazine. Thank you, Jacquie, for all your hard work.

In the Spring edition we asked if anyone was interested in helping to produce the Magazine. We are very happy to report that we got a very positive response with the result that a new Editorial and Production Board has been formed. The members are Clare Allcard, Margaret Shaida, Peter Dunkley and myself (Tony Hooper). While some change is inevitable we hope that the basic format of the magazine will continue. The biggest

problem is financial since we have always tried to cover the costs of publication through advertising. We would be very pleased if any member could bring in extra advertising, or introduce us to anyone who might be interested. Remember that we are always ready to receive your input, articles, reports of events, short stories, letters, in fact anything you care to submit since this is your magazine. The telephone numbers of the new Editorial Board are as follows;

Tony Hooper	836154
Clare Allcard	836269
Peter Dunkley	842318
Margaret Shaida	860043

Any items for the Autumn issue must be with them by July - on a 3.5 inch computer diskette with a print out as backup if possible.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD.

As we hope you will all know by the time that you receive this magazine, the Annual General Meeting of the Club is to be held at the Hotel Paris Londres, Escaldes on Wednesday 7th. June with the first convocation at 19.45 (7.45 p.m.) and the second at 20.15 (8.15 p.m.). This is an opportunity for you to

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meet with the Board and to take a full part in the life of the Club. Prior to the A.G.M. the Board are hoping to meet with representatives from all the Groups which operate under the umbrella of the C.I.A.

Recent meetings of the Board have been concerned with formulating Club Rules and Rules of Procedure for meetings of the Board and any committees.

The Board was very pleased to receive, on behalf of the Club, a donation from St. George's Church (The English speaking church in Andorra) of some of the moneys raised at the Annual Christmas Fayre. The Church requested that we administer these funds to assist any of our members who was in need. This was a task which the Board was very pleased to face through the existing Helpline. This donation has already allowed the Club to provide assistance to two members, enabling them to enjoy a better quality of life.

Whilst mentioning the above we must not forget the sterling work done unheralded by some of our members in providing «meals on wheels» to sick and injured members. This is another aspect of the life of the Club which together with the Group activities, the Social activities, the weekly coffee mornings, the Magazine and the Weekly Newsletter tries to provide something for everyone. However the Board realises that there is always room for improvement. Any ideas, suggestions or offers of help?

NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

THE INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

Since New Year we have kept going as best we could, despite our lack of a stand-in pianist. Then Ken Law returned for a short visit and we had three great practice with him. Now we are happily settled back in our permanent home under the gentle guidance of dear Binnie.

Last week ten singers turned up to practice which was wonderful but we are always looking for more voices. So, please, if you love to sing, do give us a try. Next week we'll be practising: You'll Never Walk Alone, Edelweiss, I Talk to the Trees, This Land is Your Land, Strawberry Fair and Simple Gifts (a Shaker tune). Shortly we'll be ordering some new, more modern music to add to our repertoire. Anyone even vaguely interested in joining us do ring **Clare Allcard 836269, Sheila Hooper 836154 or Binnie Segal 836296.**

SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

On April 30th an era came to an end. We said good-bye to John Gill our brilliant teacher for the past 3 years. We will miss him terribly. During his time, John taught us some 150 dances, several of them beautifully choreographed by himself such as Wild Flowers and La Massana. To thank him for all he has done for us we bought him the book 'Plenituds Andorra' which is a truly spectacular photographic record of Andorra by a young Andorran photographer/politician and an ideal present for a very special occasion. The presentation was followed by a surprise party organised by Sylvia Gill in their home - and John hadn't suspected a thing!

With John's parting for France we closed the season during which we had collected some 32,600 pts for charity. We will be starting again on Sunday, 1st October 1995 when we will need a new mentor. Is there anyone out there who would like to fill the gap? Perhaps someone who loves Scottish Dancing but whose knees are not quite what they were so that they'd rather watch than dance. We have the music and the books with the dances in them, we simply need someone to decide the order and remind us of the steps. Anyone interested please phone **Laura Fecanin 836869 Brenda Ross 836886 or Clare Allcard 836269.**



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NATURALIST'S GROUP

Eleven members of the Ornithological and Natural History Group set off on Friday, 10th March for a long week-end in the Camargue arranged by the Group Leader, Jackie Crozier. For the few who may not know it, the Camargue is a national reserve situated in the Rhone Delta in southern France and is famous for its birds, wild horses, and bulls.

Arrangements had been made to lodge us in an hotel on the outskirts of Beaucaire, some miles north of Arles, which is itself some miles north of the Camargue. The reason for making our HQ so far from the site of the area that we wished to visit was that robberies both of and from cars are so numerous in the Camargue itself that the extra daily travelling distance involved was felt well worth while.

En route to Beaucaire we made a short detour to see the Roman Bridge and Aqueduct at Pont de Gard. This massive structure is in an excellent state of preservation and is well worth a visit. Whilst the sightseers in the party climbed up a path and took a stroll across the bridge others were looking at kingfishers, herons and egrets in and around the river.

Saturday was devoted to visiting La Capeliere and the new reserve at Salin de Badon on the Eastern side of the Rhone delta. Travelling in convoy with birdwatchers

is apt to be hazardous, since drivers frequently grind to an abrupt halt whenever they spot a short-toed whatnot or similar species. Bird-watchers cars can easily be identified by dented bumpers, front and back. On this occasion, miraculously, the trip was accident free.

La Capeliere is an Information Centre for the reserve, and in addition to the main building has hides dotted about its extensive property from which various species can be seen at close range. We took advantage of the picnic area to have our lunch, at the same time keeping an eye out for the Cetti's warblers which were kicking up a din all around us. Our next stop, at the Salin de Giraud proved to be a bit of a disappointment in as far as there weren't half as many birds around as on our previous visit two years previously. Checking the dates we saw that the previous visit had been made one week later in the month, which may have accounted for the difference in the number of migrant species which had arrived, but it was difficult to believe that the difference could have been so great.

On the Sunday we travelled down the Western side of the delta. Our first stop (if one doesn't count numerous pullings-off-the-road at a second's notice mentioned earlier) was to visit the centre at Pont de Gau which



Photographer Peter Wong missed the bird which the rest of the group were looking at.

cares for injured birds. In addition to a fairly extensive aviary, which must contain over a hundred different species including a large and impressive collection of raptors, the centre owns a large area of marsh with good paths and well-placed hides. Then on to the sea-wall from Saintes Maries where we were treated to a spectacular and colourful sight of about two hundred flamingos doing their mating dances, necks intertwined with their prospective partners. This continued for about an hour, and as we had three telescopes with the party we were all able to have a good look.

Prior to heading home the next day we went to have a look at the historic village of Les Baux which is famous from a touristic point of view for its medieval chateau and surrounding buildings, and from an ornithologist point of view both for the eagle owls which live in holes in the cliffs around the village and for the Alpine Accentors, which replace the sparrows in the streets of the village.

73 different species were recorded. Perhaps not quite as many as in 1993 due to the non-arrival of some migrant species but all the party returned home to Andorra quite happy with the result of the visit. Members of the group were most appreciative of all the hard work and planning that Jacquie had done to make the trip such a success.

Maurice Pilkington

UNA NIT DE MUSICA I DANSA.

Sunday May 7th. is a day that will be remembered by many, especially those who attended this gala evening in the Sala d'Actes of Andorra La Vella. Arranged by members of the Club it was a fiesta of music and dancing bringing together artists of many nationalities before an almost capacity audience who represented every facet of Andorran society.

The show was introduced by Simon Binsted in Catalan and English, and in his introductory remarks he commented that this international event was being held on the 50th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and showed the way in which all barriers of nationality could be overcome.

The success of the evening was the way in which a broad spectrum of dance and music was presented.

Those appearing were Mike Thompson on guitar joined in the second half by Australian singer Vicky Miller, Sheila Hooper singing in Welsh and English, accompanied by Binnie Segal, dancers Esther Esteve, Maite Castro, Lone Oehlenschlaeger and Jacky Richards presenting modern, classical and flamenco numbers, many choreographed by the artists, Gil Rossell, the Andorran pianist, who presented for the first time some of his own compositions, Rene de



The above photograph (by courtesy of Diari d'Andorra) was taken at the dress rehearsal

Knight with a programme of jazz piano including some of his own works, and the Andorran tenor Serafi Milan accompanied by Marina Vallcorba with a programme of well known classical numbers. The highlight of the evening was when Gil and Rene came together on the piano.

The impact of the presentation can be judged by remarks made after the show and in the Diari d'Andorra by Carme Sala i Sansa, the Minister of Education, who said that she had known the International Club for a long time, but what we have seen goes much further than anything seen before. The Club was achieving its task to be really international, because, on the one hand the performers were of different nationalities, and on the other, the music and dances that were presented were also international. She called for it to be at least an annual event, with the possibility of more than one performance. She pointed out that because of the quality of the show, so well presented and integrated, they would always encourage this kind of initiative.

Lluís Viu, Consul Major of Andorra la Vella expressed his great respect and admiration for anyone who presented cultural activities, and his pleasure and satisfaction with the evening.

To those members who conceived the idea the Club must offer its congratulations and appreciation, especially Maite Castro for all her organisation which made the evening possible. A truly International evening.

STOP PRESS: Plans are in hand for another musical evening(s) on 18th. and 19th. November.

CIA'S PERFORMING ARTS FIRMLY ON THE MAP

'Move Over Mrs Markham', following so swiftly on the heels of 'Una Nit de Musica i Dansa', has created a real tour de force of publicity for the International Club. Headlines in the cultural pages of national newspapers talked of 'Mrs Markham's great success as it played to packed audiences' in its new home of la Massana parish hall.

Ron Richards' cast, making the most of Cooney and Chapman's hilarious script, brought the house down with its performance of what is, from the point of view of timing, a very demanding play. Congratulations too, to the scenery designers and builders. Their work stood up valiantly to having its various doors flung open and shut at increasingly frenetic intervals.

I was slightly concerned that people for whom English was a second language might be lost in a script that depends so much on 'double entendre' but, from reports coming in, they, too, thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

Among so many excellent performances it is difficult, and probably unwise, to single out any one for special mention though it was good to see the ranks of regulars swelled with new actors Vicky Ellis, Liza Fowler and David Pitt. Let's hope, after this success, more still will come forward to join the group and that, after a necessary break to recoup their energies, Ron Richards and his troupe will be entertaining us again to equally packed houses and high standards.



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DRAMA GROUP.

Since the Spring issue of INTERCOMM lots of things have happened to our group - we have found our new home in the TEATRE PARROQUIAL, La Massana, thanks to Padre Joan and Mr. Antoni Bach. They have

given us the use of the place for our weekly WORKSHOP, plus for meetings, rehearsals, plays and shows. Those of you that came and enjoyed the play «MOVE OVER MRS. MARKHAM» have seen what



Pictures from Move Over Mrs Markham: Artists from Left to Right
Top; Liza Fowler, Simon Binstead, Ron Richards, Paul Ellis
Bottom; Simon Binstead, Val McInnes, Kay Kay, Ron Richards.

the Theatre looks like, and we think it fits our bill, and we are looking forward to a lot of activity there.

We would like to thank you for coming to the play on the 12th, 13th, and 14th. May and making it possible for us to continue. The future looks a lot brighter for us in our new home in La Massana, but to do what we are

doing at the moment requires more people - and we do not have them. We are a little flock doing all the work, but as we advertised in the programme of «MOVE OVER MRS. MARKHAM» - WHY NOT JOIN US??? - think about it seriously, we need more people to come and help us, you do not have to be an artist, if you are



More Pictures from Move Over Mrs Markham: Artists from Left to Right
Top; Jane Willet, David Pitt, Simon Binstead, Kay Kay.
Bottom; Ron Richards, Vicky Ellis, Paul Ellis

it is a bonus, but there are so many little jobs that need to be done and the more people we are the easier it all goes, and we do have fun.

Now you think, I am going away so often so it is no good! That is what our problem is all about, we all go away, but if we are enough people in the group, there will always be enough here when we are needed - does it not sound like logic to you???

I cannot tell you about our future plans as we are having a meeting when this issue is going to the printer, but in the next issue we will tell you all about it, and in the meantime, please make up your mind and join us - as I said - WE DO HAVE FUN!!!!

If you want to have some more INFO please do not hesitate to call or fax me, my telephone number is 836892 and the Fax 838420 - and my name is **HANS KIAER**.

STOP PRESS: Following the meeting mentioned above, the next production is planned for the first weekend in December.

A CALL FROM THE SMOKERS!

(This article is from 'Vocabulaire L'Anglais Aujourd'hui', 1st. September 1994)

The hangperson's noose is unmistakably around the tobacco industry's neck. In Florida and Mississippi, state governments are attempting to force tobacco companies to pay some smoking related health care costs. In Washington D.C., the Environmental Protection Agency has claimed that «second-hand smoke» is a significant risk for non-smokers and the Food & Drug Administration is making noises about regulating nicotine as a drug. And recently the American Medical Association agreed, reasserting that nicotine is addictive. Smokers have already been driven from many workplaces into the street for a furtive puff. But further legal harassment, to the point of what an industry spokesman calls «backdoor prohibition», seems unstoppable.

Lost in this lynching frenzy, the fact that smoking might be, in some small ways, good for you. Hold on now! Let's be clear; The Surgeon General has indeed determined that smoking is dangerous to your health. Lung cancer and cardiovascular diseases are highly correlated with cigarette consumption. Annual smoking related deaths are commonly said to be over 400,000. But so is driving automobiles dangerous to your health - over 40,000 deaths a year. Yet people do it, because

it has rewards as well as risk. And they judge, as individuals, that the reward outweighs the risk.

This is called freedom.

Well, what are the rewards of cigarette smoking? Apart from the tangible pleasure, the most obvious is behavioural. A battery of studies, such as those by British researcher D.M. Warburton, show that cigarettes, whatever their other effects, really do stimulate alertness, dexterity and cognitive capacity. And alertness, dexterity etc. can be useful. Such as when driving. Or flying - as Congress recognised when it exempted airline pilots from the ban on smoking on domestic flights. These behavioural benefits suggest an answer to the Great Tobacco Mystery: why almost a third of adult Americans continue to do something they are told, incessantly and insistently, is bad for them. Smokers, according to numerous studies, are different from non-smokers. They tend toward depression and excitability. Current understanding is that nicotine is «amphoteric» - that is, it can act to counter both conditions, depending on how it is consumed. (Quick puffs stimulate, long drags calm). The implication is fascinating. A large part of the population seems to be aware of its significance although not pathological personality quirks, and to have discovered a form of self medication that regulates them. Of course, this explanation of the stubbornness of smokers is not satisfying as what Washington prefers to believe - mass seduction by the wicked companies and their irresistible advertising. Nor would it justify huge rescue operations by heroic politicians and bureaucrats. Beyond its behavioural effects, smoking seems also to offer subtler health rewards to balance against its undisputed risks:

Parkinson's disease. The frequency of this degenerative disorder of the nervous system among smokers appears to be half the rate among non-smokers - an effect recognised as long ago as 1964.

Alzheimer's disease. Similarly, the frequency of this degenerative mental disorder has recently been found to be as much as 50% less among smokers than among non-smokers.

Endometrial cancer. There is extensive and long standing evidence that this disease of the womb occurs as much as 50% less among smokers.

Prostate cancer. Conversely, smoking seems to raise oestrogen levels in men and may be responsible for what appears to be a 50% lower rate among smokers, although this needs corroboration.

Osteoarthritis. This degenerative disorder of bone and cartilage is up to five times less likely to occur among heavy smokers. Colon cancer, ulcerative colitis. These

diseases of the bowel seem to be about 30% and 50% less frequent among smokers.

Other benefits that have been suggested for smoking include lower rates of sarcoidosis and allergic alveolitis, both lung disorders, and possibly even acne. Smokers are also lighter - ironic, because obesity is a leading cause of the cardiovascular disease that smoking is also supposed to exacerbate. So you could quite smoking and still die of a heart attack because of the weight you put on.

None of these health benefits is enough to persuade doctors to recommend occasional cigarettes, in the way that some now occasionally recommend a glass of wine. But consider the theoretical possibility: should 60 year olds take up smoking because its protection from Alzheimer's is more immediate than its potential damage to the lungs, which won't show up for 30 years, if at all? A theoretical possibility, and likely to remain theoretical. Research into possible benefits of tobacco and nicotine is widely reported to be stymied by the absolutist moral fervour of the anti-smoking campaign.....

Why don't tobacco companies point out the potential offsetting rewards of smoking? Besides the usual corporate cowardice and bureaucratic inertia, the answer may be another, typically American, disease - lawyers. Directing the companies' defence they apparently veto any suggestion that smoking has benefits for fear of liability suits and of the possible regulatory implications if nicotine is seen as a drug. Which leaves smokers defenceless against a second typically American disease - the epidemic of power hungry puritanical bigots.

(As you can read this article is based on American experience. An interesting point - the article was submitted to us by a non-smoker!)

ANDORRA VIEWED FROM THE TWENTIES

An occasional series.

Part 2. SEX, CHILDREN, PRIESTS AND TAXES.

«I strayed one night down the Calle de los Canonigos (in Seo de Urgel). Squatting on a large stone, smoking a vile cigar, I found an old man. He was willing to talk and I found him interesting. Then I heard voices overhead, the old man broke off to listen for a moment. To my surprise I heard a young man's voice making protestations of love. I leaned forward so that three feet of starry sky became visible. There I saw a blue shirt surmounted by a swarthy face. Presumably the

«amorata» was in the room opposite. The old man winked and whispered that it was Juan and Luiza. I hinted that an advantage of a narrow street was that one could do one's courting without leaving the house, but in England we preferred to be still a little nearer, so we could impress suitable seals on our words. Ah, but the Catalans did that, exclaimed the old man, without leaving the house. He called up to Juan. The lovers were bashful, but the old man persisted. Then the girl leaned forward across the street. A pair of brawny shoulders darkened the sky, and two pairs of lips met. In such a manner is love made easy in the Calle de los Canonigas.»

Although Bernhard Newman, in his guide to Andorra published in 1928, wrote that, he viewed Andorra somewhat differently:

«The relations between the sexes in Andorra are vastly different from those prevailing in the Gallic or Castilian provinces. The Andorran is not amorous. He respects his women folk, but seldom spares them. The women of Andorra work as hard as the men, possibly harder, and, of course, have no political rights.»

«The Andorran courtship is a decorous affair. The initial advances are usually made by the parents, details of the dowry and marriage settlement are discussed, and then the couple may commence their courtship in earnest. It is a sluggish process; the man is invariably shy, and usually commences by showing his lady love some small extra favour at a village dance. At no time does his head seem to be carried away by his heart, and he seems to favour steady affection rather than passionate love.»

«The system works out extremely well. It is not nearly so mercenary as the French style, for the fathers are almost invariably certain of the trend of feelings of their children before the first overtures are made. Members of the family have no secrets from each other, and it is very easy for the «cap de casa» to find out his children's wishes in regard to marriage; marriage without parental consent is unknown.»

MAGALI RAGOT

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«The Andorran husband is an excellent husband from the point of view of fidelity. There is no law to deal with divorce, nor is one necessary. Unofficial association between the sexes is rare, an illegitimate child is considered a disgrace to the State, and immediately after birth is hurried over the frontier to the foundling home at Urgel. Its maintenance there is the responsibility of the family, or, failing that, of the State. Under no circumstances can an illegitimate child enjoy any civil rights in Andorra. Prostitution is unknown throughout the State.»

«Andorra has another distinction - it is a Gretna Green for Spain and France. To get married you have to find a priest and do the business in the best American film style. The little church in the square of Andorra la Viella has seen many runaway marriages.»

«I like the children of Andorra. The boys and girls are athletes from the time they walk. They are mountaineers by the time they go to school. The heights have no terrors for them. The precipitous path is a joyous adventure, the steep climb a great romp. They must make their own pleasures. There are no sweet shops in Andorra. Pennies on Saturday are unknown. Children play less in Andorra than in other countries, their life is

too hard. There is hardly a ball to play with in the whole country. Toys are almost unheard of, so the Andorran child plays the universal game of make-believe. I have seen them play at schools, a very popular game this, since schools are a modern novelty. They play at dancing, aping the manners of their elders with an incongruous charm. In a corner of a hamlet I saw not more than ten children. One had a concertina, another a pair of cymbals. Most of the notes of the concertina were dumb for ever, only a few emitted an asthmatic cough, but that did not matter. It was music, and the children danced to it. I have seen them play at General Councils, with a fresh cheeked Syndic in the chair; the speeches were refreshingly short. They play at funerals, they play at weddings. But most of their play is work. They help in the fields at the sowing and the harvest, they help in the woods in the accumulation of the winter's stock of fuel. Some of the valleys are utterly impassable for months in the year, then the Andorran child must spend many weeks continuously under its own roof.» «There are schools now in all the Andorran villages. Attendance is compulsory, which means that the children go to school when their parents do not require them for work in the fields. The children, of



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.

To arrange an appointment for his next visit, please telephone, fax or write to his office.

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necessity, receive nothing more than an elementary education, but they are taught both French and Spanish, and this is very important.»

«The parish priest is a man of great influence, but it cannot be claimed that Andorra is really priest ridden. I talked with several of the priests of Andorra and found them to be of a class infinitely superior to that which prevails over the Spanish border. They were all Andorran born, and very anxious for the welfare of their country - second only to the welfare of their church and the Bishop of Urgel. They are consulted by their parishioners on all kinds of details, from family matters to agricultural problems. The priest in Andorra must know a good deal about mountain farming, mule driving, and even smuggling, otherwise his influence would decline. The Andorrans are nothing if not practical, and the priest must be practical too.»

«The only taxes are on the commonly owned pastures, and on such measures of personal wealth as cattle and corn. Far from having a national debt, the Andorran budget shows a substantial credit balance.... The total of state salaries amounts only to a few pounds a year, for practically all offices are unpaid. There are rich and poor in Andorra, but there are no destitutes and beggars. There are some who by reason of age or infirmity cannot work and have no family to support them, these the village makes its special charge. Every morning the consul sees to it that sufficient food is sent to them, not as a charity, but as a right. This is no modern law, but a thousand year old custom.»

R.H.

LETTERS TO THE EDITORS.

We had to go to New Zealand for five weeks and the usual problem arose of what to do with the animals! Our regular house/cat sitter was fully booked for months ahead! However, a friend suggested LA BEDOUCHE CHENIL 11410 Mezerville - not far from Pamier. We went to look, and were welcomed by the

owners David and Moira Nicol, who are English, and have a charming house and registered kennels for about 25 dogs and a few cats. The pens are large with a warm inside sleeping area and a large private outside run for each animal. All was spotlessly clean and fresh. Needless to say we were delighted to have found these kennels and booked our two cats in for the five weeks. We have just picked up the two cats who look healthier than when we took them, and who actually seemed to have enjoyed their time away - thanks to David and Moira.

We cannot recommend this establishment more highly, and feel it might benefit readers to know of its existence. The evening following our return home with the cats Moira called to check the cats had settled back home again. What consideration!

For anyone who wishes to contact here are the full details:

David & Moira Nicol,
Chenil La Bedouce,
11410 Mezerville.
Tel: 68 60 37 10

James Glover.

The Editors,

With so many people taking properties in France, I thought the following might help with the settling in process:

- 1) Always carry an electricity bill for proof of residence. Especially useful when completing formal paperwork e.g. identity card application. Without an electricity bill you do not exist.
- 2) Never stand in a queue - push your way to the front and interrupt the current proceedings.
- 3) Greet your friends with 2 kisses (1 on each cheek), really good friends get 3.
- 4) When driving NEVER use your indicators. In the unlikely event of doing so leave them switched on for the next 10 km. and keep the other drivers guessing.

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- 5) When driving, gesticulate as much as possible, with both hands off the wheel, so as to entertain the car behind.
- 6) Give way to traffic on your right (yes, even if you are on the main road or a roundabout).
- 7) Your annual road tax is paid at the Tabac in November.
- 8) Visit the doctor whenever possible and obtain as many different prescriptions as possible, the French are fascinated by other peoples' ailments and cures.
- 9) Always have a 10 franc piece with you when you go to the supermarket - for your trolley!
- 10) Arrive for meetings, appointments, lunches 15 minutes late, this is normal and very «French».
- 11) Fruit, veg. and bread are wonderfully fresh and ready to eat within the next 4 hours; don't buy them for next week.
- 12) Drink wine, play boules, and relax!

Brenda Ross.

(Editor's comment: I think that Brenda culled this from an English magazine, and submitted it tongue in cheek)

WHAT YOU GET FOR YOUR CARNET D'OR.

The Comus of Andorra jointly organise several outings every year for all possessors of the Carnet d'Or, irrespective of nationality. These are all at subsidised prices, and represent excellent value for money. They range from, for example, day trips to Barcelona to week-long coach trips into France and Spain.

To my surprise and disappointment, very few members of the International Club take part in them, four in fact - myself, Stan and Joyce Jones of La Massana, and Pop Goldsteen of Anyos. There are some French and Spanish participants, but still few in proportion to their numbers in Andorra. On a typical day trip there will be five or six coaches, altogether 200 to 250 people. The week-long coach trips obviously attract fewer numbers and I have not been on one myself, but Stan and Joyce

Jones have taken part in a visit to Paris and another to Benidorm. Even if you don't speak Catalan (I don't), you will be able to get by with a little French or Spanish, but you should not expect the natives to speak English.

Apart from the trips, the Carnet d'Or confers other advantages, such as a significant percentage off the cost of tickets for concerts and recitals, and a monthly subscription to the Anyos Sports Centre at 2000 pts. for an individual or 2500 pts. for a couple.

In the month of May there was a day trip to Barcelona, including lunch at the Tip Top restaurant in the Poble Espanyol and attendance at the cabaret al Molino, for a mere 2700 pts. per person. In June there will be a coach trip to Cantabria, Picos de Europa, in Spain; 7 days and 6 nights away, all meals and hotel with entry tickets included, for 25.800 pts. per person. Among places to be visited on this trip are the fishing port of Sant Vincent de la Barquera, the city of Santander, the medieval town of Santillana de Mar, los Picos de Europa, the Parc Natural de Cabarceno, the sanctuary of Covadonga, the Monastery of Sant Toribio, and the building, «Capricho de Gaudi».

In March of this year I took part in a day trip to Vilanova i la Geltru, leaving Ordino by coach at 0600 and getting back at 2230, a full day out for 2200 pts. First stop was a visit to the Railway Museum containing a large number of locomotives and a few coaches, some dating back to the 1850's. Many of the earlier ones were manufactured in the United Kingdom, and in those dating from the 1940's and 50's I recognised some types that I had seen in my earlier visits to Spain. Those dating from between the wars included two with four cylinders and highly complex valve gear, of great interest to sometime engineers like myself.

Next a visit to the Museu Romantic, a spacious mansion of 17th. or 18th. century origin that gives one the sensation of having been simply abandoned by its owners at some time in the 1840's, everything being left just as it was, their books in the library, the hams hanging in the pantry, the food for their horses, their

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dinner plates, the implements for making their own wine and for grinding their corn, and so on. Then a very good lunch with plenty of wine.

In March 1994 I participated in a visit to Espluga de Francoli and Valls near Tarragona in Spain, a full day out for 2000 pts. The highlight of this trip was visit to the Rural Life Museum (leaflets available in the language of your choice, mine is in English). The museum occupies the ancestral home of the Corulla family, whose heirs have practised there as chemists since the eighteenth century, through six generations. The permanent exhibition brings together tools, utensils, furniture, clothes etc., belonging to a way of life and people that progress has either eliminated or deeply changed in Catalan rural villages. The vast number of inanimate objects are only part of the rich resources of this museum. They are brought vividly to life by the mural paintings of a contemporary artist Lluïcia Navarro, and still more by the numerous terracotta figurines of domestic scenes, professions, ancestral customs, works of art of considerable merit in their own rights. Afterwards, of course, an admirable lunch with plenty of wine.

In my opinion these trips for holders of the Carnet d'Or represent an excellent supplement to the International Club activities organised by Desmond Allen and Ann Price. Whatever our reasonable complaints about recent apparent hostility towards so called «passive residents» of Andorra, in this respect at least the Andorran authorities are making a substantial continuing effort to provide us with opportunities to integrate ourselves more into the life of our chosen country of residence. I hope that more of us will respond.

So how do you get your Carnet d'Or? I have had mine for several years, and so far as I remember, all that was necessary was to be over 65 and to have a Residencia. Maybe things are a little different now. Anyway, all you need to do is go along to your local Comu and ask. Hope to see you on a trip soon!

Peter Parkinson, May 1995.

THE SOUND OF MUSIC - IN THE PYRENEES

On the last Saturday night of July every year, the village of Arseguet hosts a party. Over a hundred musicians play for four hours to the crowd, crammed into the tiny plaza. The performers come from a dozen countries in Europe and as far away as South America,

but they're all there for the same reason; the accordion. Arseguet's Accordion Festival (its Catalan name is 'Trobada amb els Acordionistes del Pyrenees') dates back twenty years. In 1976, Sr Artur Blasco who lives in the village, invited a group of players to join him for an evening of music and entertainment. «That first night,» he recalls, «there were only about a hundred people. We even had room to set out dinner tables in the plaza. When it was over, we looked at each other and said, 'let's do this again next year.'»

What started as an informal party has now developed into a full-fledged, annual event. In 1994, three thousand people came; there were a hundred and twenty performers.

The accordion's history is surprisingly brief, considering how established it is in almost every country of the world. The first instruments, the 'diatonics,' were made in Europe only in 1830. You can recognise them by the 'buttons' on each side. The chromatic models came later. They have buttons on the left side and a piano-style keyboard on the other. Their supporters claim the chromatic is the more versatile instrument. Both types quickly attracted mass support, however, creating a new industry for their makers as well as fresh audiences for the players. Although the Arseguet festival continues to be an enjoyable, light-hearted party both for performers and audience, Sr Blasco had always intended it to have an extra dimension.

«In 1960,» he said, «I was in Reykjavik. I worked in the port and the canning factories as well as on the trawlers. I didn't play then, but I always enjoyed listening to the Eskimos and boat crews. The accordion is often called 'the sailor's instrument,' you know.»

After returning to Spain in 1965, he taught himself to play the diatonic and, as a hobby, started to research the instrument's history. He found that in the last fifty years, it had been increasingly replaced in Europe by the chromatic and had almost disappeared. «I decided to try and help revive it,» he said. «After all, it was part of the tradition of the people in Catalunya. How could we let it die?»

By bringing together performers from many countries over the last twenty years, Sr Blasco and his festival have inspired an entire generation of diatonic accordionists in Catalunya and the Pyrenees region. They've also contributed to preserving the repertoire of traditional songs.

The players of the diatonic in rural areas - farmers, shepherds, villagers - were musically illiterate. They played from memory and as the younger people left the countryside for the towns, there was no-one to take over

the heritage. However, as Sr Blasco said, «We were usually able to find at least one old person still left in a village who remembered the traditional tunes. Then we arranged for recordings to be made by a studio in Barcelona.»

The festival's success owes something to the village itself. To start with, you can only reach it by driving along what must be the most picturesque of all Alt Urgell's valleys - the Segre. As the road threads its way between the mountains either side, you catch glimpses of ancient farms and watchtowers planted among the 1500m high peaks.

In summer, the apple, pear and peach trees are heavy with fruit. The Segre river splashes over rocks, in and out of trout-rich pools, to join Andorra's Gran Valira river at Seu d'Urgell, eight kilometres away. Together they head south-west to meet the Ebro. Arseguel itself, two kilometres up in the foothills of the Cadi the Segre valley, has ambiance in spades. Centuries old buildings with tiled roofs and honey-coloured stone overhang narrow, cobblestone alleys that curve away from the diminutive plaza. Arched entranceways frame the shaded courtyards beyond.

The village was here before the 9th century - no one knows how long exactly. The cathedral records at Seu d'Urgell, dating back to 839, show the lands as belonging to the Counts of Cerdanya. «Until a few years ago,» said Sr Blasco, «Arseguel had always been a farming and agricultural village. It produced much milk. Then Spain joined the Community and there were quota problems. Now, only a couple of families are still farming and the young people go away to work in Seu or elsewhere.»

Tucked away in three rooms, down some stone steps near the square, is the Accordion Museum. Organised by Sr Blasco eight years ago, the collection of some 45 models spans a hundred and fifty years' history of the accordion. The items at Arseguel are irreplaceable. Many of them belong to Sr Blasco; others are lent. They include some early 'squeeze boxes' and mouth organs.

It's in character that this priceless collection is 'guarded' by a charming, elderly lady who lives in the house opposite the church, nearby. She has the key to the museum and waits, smiling and patient, while you browse and take your photographs. And if you understand Spanish, she'll proudly tell you some of the history of Arseguel and its accordions.

The festival gets under way at 10 pm and continues throughout the night, much to the satisfaction of Arseguel's only restaurateur whose establishment is off

to one side of the plaza. Popularised by the festival, it attracts business throughout the year. In summer, you dine on a patio, against a back drop of mountains. At weekends, the parking is often filled by luxury cars with Barcelona registrations.

As with other such events, there are 'fringe happenings.' Arseguel is not exactly the hub of Europe and players who've come a long way to perform there usually spend a few days in the neighbourhood. Many of them camp out in Sr Blasco's house and courtyard. A week after the 1994 festival, a group from Moscow was still providing entertainment in the village.

After so many years, several of Arseguel's performers are regulars. «About a third of them have been here many times before,» says Sr Blasco. «We like to keep it that way because it creates more of the feeling of a family party.» He seems to have the right formula.

Berit Lillevold came to Arseguel for the first time in 1991. She's Norwegian, 25 years old, and was touring with an acting troupe on the Costa Brava when someone told her about the festival and gave her Sr Blasco's phone number. An awardwinning performer on the diatonic in her own country, Berit was quickly invited to play at the 1991 festival. She returned in 1994 and was delighted to see a friend from Colombia she'd met three years before.

Another 'repeat' performer in 1994 was Steve Allen, 32. In the middle ages, he'd have been a minstrel. A self-described 'streetmusician' for ten years, Steve travels Europe in the summer, performing as a soloist at festivals or as one of a duet, covering parties and bars. He was playing the street one day when Sr Blasco heard him and invited him to Arseguel. Asked whether he expected to return next year, he replied in two words. «For sure.» Self-taught, Steve plays the chromatic accordion. In the best traditions of street music, however, he performs also on the guitar, tin whistle, pipe and tabour. In addition to his native English, he speaks Portuguese, French, Spanish and Russian. Wintering in Brazil, he says, «I want to write a book about my last ten years and the interesting people I've met along the way.»

It's not easy to make the platform at Arseguel. There's no shortage of talented performers and as summer approaches, anyone who's anyone on the accordion scene in Europe - and many other countries - starts to tune in. «By the end of May, my phone is very busy,» says Sr Blasco. «Unfortunately, I have to say 'no' many times.»

Once invited, the choice of what to play is the performer's, but Sr Blasco likes to hear something that's rooted in the tradition of the player's own country. The

potential, first-time performer's best chance to break in could also be to propose something new. In 1995, for example, Sr Blasco might be receptive to suggestions for something in the Cajun style.

Whatever the programme, however, people of all ages who enjoy the accordion will be making their way along the Segre valley on the night of July 29th for Arseguel's 20th festival - and another great party.

FACTFILE;

Arseguel is 10km from Seu d'Urgell, direction Puigcerda on the N260, then 2km up the signposted side road.

The official programme starts about 10pm, continuing until 2am. There are chairs in the plaza but only the early arrivals get them. Otherwise, it's the cobblestones, so take a cushion. Food and drinks are available from the Restaurant LLuisa. Expect to queue for dinner. The good news is that while you wait, you'll be entertained by the performers warming-up in the dining-room.

To contact Sr Artur Blasco, write to him at Cal Miro, Arseguel or call (973) 384087 at weekends.

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VIVE LE PETIT TRAIN JAUNE!

With its three platforms, a siding and some rather regrettable toilets, the station at Villefranche-de-Conflent is hardly in the same league as Victoria or the

Gare du Nord. Nevertheless, it's the starting point for a most memorable journey.

For two and a half hours, until you reach Latour-de-Carol near the Spanish border, you can settle back and enjoy, in slow motion, some of France's most captivating scenery; in turn, rugged and sylvan as the line snakes its way up the mountainous valley of the Tet, pastoral and serene as it crosses the open plain of the Cerdagne where the villages have names that sound like an invocation to Pyrenean deities; Estavar, Err, Sainte Leocadie and Osseja.

The narrow-gauge electrified track was designed to link the valley year around with its upper villages, often cut off for weeks at a time during the winter. «Work started in 1903,» said the regional director «and most of the line was open by mid-1910. When it was completed, our engineers had built a viaduct, a 250 metre wide suspension bridge, 9 other bridges and 17 tunnels, all within a distance of 63 kilometres.»

For half a century afterwards though, it seemed as though their efforts might have been pointless. Passenger income was below expectations. There were two wars and the depression of the 1930's between them. Business was thin through the fifties and sixties; regular service was frequently suspended in the seventies. By the end of the decade, the line seemed headed straight for the knacker's yard.

You don't usually associate railway bureaucracies with whimsy or marketing savvy. Faced with united local

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opposition to closing the line, however, SNCF came up with a solution. The train's mini-coaches had always been distinctively coloured - it was sometimes called 'The Canary' - and, over the years, people had got into the habit of referring to it as 'the little yellow train.' SNCF used this as the theme for a promotional campaign and focused all its efforts on the tourist market.

immediately had his famous military engineer, Vauban, build forts throughout the province. Originally an 11th century foundation, Villefranche got the full Vauban treatment, including a stronghold overlooking it from the peak behind the town.

In its time, Villefranche has dealt with many different invaders but none have been greeted with open arms



Le Petit Train Jaune waits at the station. Photo by Tony Hooper

«Now», according to the station manager, «the line operates twelve months of the year. In spring and summer, we have six trains in each direction; four at other times. Last year, we sold about 300,000 tickets.» While they wait for their train, most people look around the walled-town of Villefranche, a couple of hundred metres up the road from the station.

In 1659, the Treaty of the Pyrenees ratified France's seizure of the Roussillon from Spain. Louis XIV

like today's tourists who, summer-long, swarm through the gates, up and down the narrow lanes, making house-to-house sweeps of the artisans' shops and studios.

Other nearby attractions are the Caves - Grottes Canalettes and Grandes Canalettes - and Vernet-les-Bains, a six-kilometre drive from Villefranche up the north side of the Canigou massif. It was once the most famous spa in the eastern Pyrenees. Queen Victoria and other European royalty visited; Kipling was there often.

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Much of the town was washed away in the floods of 1940, but it's still worth a visit if only to see the ornate exterior of the casino - designed by the same architect as its Monte Carlo big brother - and the Hotel de Portugal, adjoining it. The interiors of both have been converted, though. For the history-minded, to travel the Canary is like a trip through time as well as space. Trundling past Romanesque ruins, abandoned mining villages, obsolete fortifications and once fashionable spas, you seem to be watching a series of sketches portraying a thousand years of life in the eastern Pyrenees.

Like all good theatrical productions, this one has an overture three loudspeaker chimes and a frenzy of flag-waving that would do credit to the start of a major Grand Prix.

Minutes later, the train sways along minuscule ledges scraped from the southern side of the valley, past the old mining stations of Serdinya and Joncet, then Olette - built into the side of the mountain - to Thues-les-Bains. The spa here was one of the early casualties when 'taking the waters' ceased to be trendy and the grand old hotel in the valley below the railway station was eventually converted into a hospital.

After Thues-les-Bains and Thues village, the Tet is joined in the valley below by the Caranca river, tumbling from deep-slashed, tree-lined gorges on the left. Then comes the Sejourne viaduct. Looking back down the valley afterwards, you can view it profiled against the sky, floating in space - a spider's web in steel and stone.

Fontpedrouse, at just over 1,000 metres, serves the village of the same name and, below it, the spa of St Thomas-les-Bains. Here, as if to remind the tourists of the original purpose of the line, two black-dressed, elderly ladies push past them, shopping baskets loaded, baguettes protruding in all directions. They dismount and hobble off homewards. The conductor gallantly escorts them to the end of the platform.

On its way again, the Canary makes a right-hand curve around the mountain, then swings dramatically into space as the track crosses the Gisclard bridge over the valley, 80 metres beneath. There was a disaster here only days after construction was completed in 1909. An SNCF manager related the story.

«The engineers were carrying out stability tests on the bridge. They brought up four engines and some flatbeds from Villefranche, loaded with rails. After the tests were finished, one part of the train was to continue up the valley; the other was to return to Villefranche.»

«Earlier, there'd been some trouble with the brakes, so wedges had been put under the wheels. Someone saw the first section of the train move off up the line and thought the second section was ready to return to Villefranche. He knocked the wedges away. The brakes failed again and the train started rolling back downhill, faster and faster until finally, it crashed as it went around one of the bends. The people who'd stayed on board to try and control it were crushed in the wreckage.»

The tragic accident killed not only Gisclard himself, but five other railwaymen. There's a memorial to them by the side of the road, overlooking the bridge.

At 1,510 metres, the Canary reaches Montlouis, another of Vauban's forts - named for his master. The garrison here is the highest in the country and reputedly, the coldest. A visitor, seventy years ago, wrote gloomily, «...whatever the weather round about may be, one can be sure that at Montlouis, it will be worse.» His stay must have been badly timed, though. Montlouis is 'The Gateway to the Cerdagne' - France's sunniest area - and the country's first experimental solar reflector, installed on the ramparts over 40 years ago, still bakes the ceramics in a nearby potters' oven.

After Montlouis, the Canary emerges from its climb up the valley and crosses the Col de la Perche. The name is a reminder of the snowpoles planted here, to guide pilgrims and other travellers across the pass in winter. On the Col, at 1,592 metres, is the station of Bolquere-



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Eyne; the line has reached not only its own highpoint, but the highest of any station in the SNCF system in France.

Once over the Col, the track heads west towards the slopes of the Carlit massif. Here, at the beginning of the century, the Railway Company of the Midi decided to create a fashionable resort for the rich and famous - a Monte Carlo of the Pyrenees. They invested millions in the project.

The timing couldn't have been worse. Construction finished just as the 1914 war started. The opening was postponed for four years. When the war was over, Europe had changed for ever and the clientele for whom the resort had been designed was no more.

The Grand Hotel - the core of the project - enjoyed a modest success. Minor notables came; an entire floor was occupied for a while by a maharajah and his retinue. The building itself still dominates the landscape - you can see it from far away - but it's been converted to apartments. These days, the resort of FontRomeu is best known for its winter sports. Below the station at Font-Romeu is the village of Odeillo. The National Centre for Scientific Research operates a solar furnace here from the train, you can just see the reverse side of the concentrator together with some of the 63 mirrors facing it, arranged in banks on the hill. The Cerdagne area here has more hours of sun than anywhere in France - 3,000 annually, according to the records.

From the Carlit, the Canary drops 450 metres as it crosses the Cerdagne plain to Bourg-Madame. In summer, the wild flowers vivid yellow, white, violet, russet - almost overgrow the rails. Cattle graze; rivulets trickle through the grass, fed by the last of the melt from the surrounding mountains. Four rivers have their source here; the Segre, Tet, Ariege and Aude. In December, the hills wear their winter costume and the air is bright, crystal-breath cold.

Swinging north from Bourg, the line passes close to Llivia, a memorial to Spanish guile. The Treaty of the Pyrenees required Spain to cede '33 villages' in the

Cerdagne to France in order to safeguard travel between the Ariege and Tet Valleys. Tongue in cheek, Spain complied. Later, their negotiators produced documents showing that Llivia was a town not a village - and therefore excluded from the transfer. Landlocked in French territory, Llivia still belongs to Spain and its 6-kilometre connecting road with Puigcerda is noted on maps as 'neutral territory.'

Now almost at the end of the line, the coaches clatter through the old Roman spa of Ur-les-Escalades into Latour-de-Carol, international terminal and junction with the broad-gauge lines, north and south. People stretch, smile at one another. Some are returning to Villefranche, others changing for Barcelona or Toulouse; two backpackers are heading for Andorra, over the Puymorens.

For a while, though, all seem to have been suspended outside the space-time boundaries of their everyday world. A simple trip on a toy train has worked its magic once more.

IF YOU GO

JOINING THE TRAIN You can buy a ticket from/to any station, but the terminal points are Villefranche-de-Conflent and Latour-de-Carol.

TIMES/DEPARTURES Check at SNCF stations for summer timetables. The complete journey to Latour-de-Carol takes 2 1/2 hours.

BEST TIME End June-early September. The valley is at its best then and SNCF add an open coach for better views.

PRICE Return fare FF162.

OPTIONS Some people go only as far as Montlouis - 75 minutes - at the top of the ascent. You can catch another train back to Villefranche within an hour or so - or take longer and explore Montlouis before returning.

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LOGIC FOR BEGINNERS:

1. There is a row of 5 houses.
2. A Brit lives in the red house.
3. A Swede owns a dog.
- 4. The people in the green house drink coffee.
- 5. The Dane drinks tea.
- 6. The green house is to the right of the white house.
7. The man who smokes Winston is keeping birds.
- 8. In the yellow house the people smoke Marlboro.
- 9. The people living in the house in the centre of the row of five houses drink milk.
- 10. The Norwegian is living in the first house.
- 11. The man who smokes Camel is living in the house beside the house where the people own a cat.
- 12. In the house situated beside the house where there is a horse the people smoke Marlboro.
13. The man who drinks beer smokes Dupont.
14. The German smokes Chesterfield.
- 15. The Norwegian is living in the house beside the blue house.
- 16. In the house situated by the house where the people smoke Camel the people drink water.

All houses each have a different colour.
 All inhabitants are of different nationality.
 All inhabitants keep a different animal.
 All are drinking different beverages.
 All smoke a different brand of cigarettes.

The Question is:
WHO OWNS THE ZEBRA?

Please mail your solution to the problem to the Club before 31st October 1995 The solution to the problem will appear in our Autumn edition.

All correct answers will be collected and a name drawn. The lucky winner will be presented with a bottle of wine.

SUMMER SALADS

Salads are not only more appealing in hot weather, they are quick to prepare and few cooks want to spend hours in the kitchen on sunny, summer days. Here are four unusual salads, adapted from «The 30-Minute Cook» by Nigel Slater.

Warm Salad of Potatoes, Serrano and Parsley

For 2

- 12 medium, waxy potatoes, wiped clean
- 3 slices of serrano ham
- 2 teaspoons red wine vinegar

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons roughly chopped flat-leaf parsley
- 2 spring onions, finely chopped

Boil the potatoes in salted water till tender to a the point of a knife. Slice the ham into thin shreds, about 1 cm. wide and place in a salad bowl. Add the vinegar, oil, parsley and onions, and then season with salt and freshly ground pepper.

When the potatoes are tender, drain and cut into quarters. Stir them immediately with the dressing so that the warm potato soaks it up. Set aside for 10 minutes or so before eating.

(Smoked bacon, grilled till crisp and then chopped into small pieces, is a fine substitute for the ham).

Goat's Cheese and Fruit

For 2

- 2 handfuls of fresh fruits, see below
- 1/2 teaspoon of sherry vinegar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons olive oil or 1 each of olive and walnut
- 2 slices of baguette bread, cut 1 cm. thick
- 2 ripe crottins (goat's cheeses) approx. 5cm. high and across.

Strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, plums, peaches and nectarines are all good if fully ripe. Charentais melon is successful, so are pears, figs and grapes. Cut the larger fruits into large bite-sized pieces, halve large strawberries.

Mix together with the vinegar, lemon juice, oils and a little salt and pepper. Toss the fruit in the dressing and spoon onto two plates.

Sprinkle the slices of baguette with a little extra olive oil and then toast under a hot grill on one side till golden. Place a goat's cheese on top of each uncooked side and grill till the cheese is soft and melting inside, but try to catch it before it bursts. Place the grilled goat's cheese in the middle of the fruit and serve immediately.

Chicken, Orange and Watercress

Cold roast or poached chicken shredded and tossed with slices of peeled oranges and sprigs of watercress. Dress with an orange juice and olive oil dressing and chopped coriander leaves.

Broad Bean, Bacon and Feta

Cook the beans in salted water till tender, drain and toss with hot, crisp grilled bacon and roughly chopped and crumbled Feta cheese.

FESTES IN THE FIFTIES

(Another short extract from «The Road to Andorra»)

The annual festa or fair is one of the few variations in the pattern of village life, though it is a simple, even a staid, celebration, in keeping with the hardworking existence of the mountain people. Anyos had no fair, so those who could be spared shared in the festivities of their neighbours. We went to the fair at Ordino, walking across the mountains one Sunday evening with Maria and two of the boys from the village. It was a cheerful walk but a cold one, for the first winds of winter were whistling round the hilltops. Maria shivered bravely in her best print frock, refusing to wear a wrap which would, she said, spoil the effect. I shivered in a heavy sweater and an overcoat. The Anyos boys were very smart in the typical «best» suit of Andorran villagers - long trousers caught tightly at the calves and jackets to match. They kept our spirits up with sticky sweets which they produced one by one from their pockets with equally sticky hands. They skipped and ran with great excitement, and held long branches under the wheels of passing cars when we came at last to the main road.

The square at Ordino was gay with home-made paper streamers and flags, and the fair opened at six in the evening with a traditional shooting match. A complicated machine ejected a stream of black plates into the air, and the contestants shot at them, those who shattered a plate winning a prize. Afterwards there was dancing in the square to the «Monte Carlo» orchestra, an indomitable little band of musicians hired from Andorra la Vella, who tried not to let the fact that they were numb with cold interfere with their rhythm. By nine o'clock, in spite of an energetic turn or two with our old friend, the voluble driver of the El Serrat bus, I was so cold myself that I took the boys home, leaving a delighted Maria alone and unchaperoned to the excesses of the dance floor.

«I don't think she'll mind,» said Maria, when I enquired nervously whether her mother would be furious and her own marriage prospects ruined, if I deserted her. «After all, I've got the whole town here to be my chaperon.»

And indeed all the matrons of Ordino were sitting huddled in shawls and rugs around the square, their eyes glued hopefully on their young. For the fair is a marriage market as well as a cattle market, and takes the place of a debutantes' dance in more sophisticated communities. It gives the young people of the scattered mountain villages a rare opportunity to get together and take stock of each other, and so plays an important part in the life of the Valleys. Selection must be carefully made in a Catholic country where divorce is impossible, and where a frugal, hardworking wife is a man's greatest economic assets. From the girl's point of view, selection is even more important, for she is so dependent, both geographically and legally, on her husband that her whole life's happiness depends upon her choice.

Maria, in vigorous pursuit of a husband, danced on - she told me later - till 3 a.m., though she had been working in the fields all day, and bounded home, fresh and rosy, across the mountains, to milk the cows before breakfast. I returned to Ordino that morning to see the regional dances which were, for me, more interesting, as I didn't have to look for a husband in the Valleys. Again there was an orchestra, but this time a local one of accordions and drums. After the special mass was over, everyone assembled in the square and joined hands in one big circle for the sardanas. Up and down, round and round, they bounced like so many pink and healthy rubber balls - girls mostly, but a sprinkling of boys too, urged on to do their folk-duty by the tall, young priest, who sat and watched with a fixed, self-conscious smile upon his face, common to clergymen when confronted with their flock at play.

So the fair went on its decorous and supervised way for three days and nights, with very little drinking and no side-shows except for one battered shooting gallery. On the third and last day, the young people of the district were allowed to take their meriendas to the Font Roja about a mile from the town, and eat them there together, unchaperoned. It was a poor fair, said Maria, that did not produce at least one engaged couple by the sparkling waters of the Red Fountain.

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