

INTER COMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

MAGAZINE / REVISTA



VOL. 5 - Núm. 1 - AUTUMN / TARDOR 1995

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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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 PHOTOGRAPH OF THE NORD VALIRA NEAR TO ARANS BY PAM LACK.
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

Autumn 1995

CONTENTS

Club Editorial by <i>Tony Hooper</i>	1
News from the Board by <i>Tony Hooper</i>	2
Note from the Editor	2
Diary of Events	3
News from the Groups	3
Naturalists Group	4
Scottish Country Dancing Group	4
International Singers	5
The Art Group	5
The Dance Group	5
Helpline	7
Club Activities	8
News in Brief	9
Ordino Music Festival Programme	9
A Weekend in Madrid	10
Legend of Meritxell by <i>Clare Allcard</i>	12
Meritxell in the Fifties by <i>Ursula Ure</i>	13
An Endearing Life by <i>Clare Allcard</i>	14
Travessa Fever by <i>Peter Dunkley</i>	15
Travessa Day by <i>Kay Kay</i>	16
Passports for Pets by <i>Tony Hooper</i>	18
The (revised) Club Rules	19
Notice from Treasurer by <i>Brian Dore</i>	20

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CLUB EDITORIAL

by *Tony Hooper*

Welcome to the fifth year of this magazine. As announced in the last issue there have been changes in the Editorial and Production team. Let me take this opportunity to introduce you to these new members.

Clare Allcard will need little introduction to many members. With one book behind her, *A Gypsy Life* (an autobiography that should not be missed), she is working on a sequel (slowly, she says, but those who know her will wonder that she finds the time at all after all her other activities).

Margaret Shaida, a former journalist in Iran, has had two books published (her second one, *The Legendary Cuisine of Persia* won the prestigious Glenfiddich Award in 1993 for the UK Best Food Book of the Year). She already edits and produces a UK national quarterly magazine.

Peter Dunkley has only recently entered the field of writing but has already had many articles published, both in the UK and in Spain. We look forward to a long and happy relationship, and a steady raising of the standards of your magazine.

Club activities continue to provide varied experiences for members, including the recent trip



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to Madrid (see page 10) and the very successful annual Car Boot Sale (see page 9). You will have already received notification of the autumn activities which include a two-day trip to Carcassonne, Mirapoix and Montsegur (see page 8).

There are also plans for another autumn shopping expedition to Barcelona. Some of the groups have been taking a well-deserved summer break, but most will be in full swing again in early September.

NEWS FROM THE BOARD

The Annual General meeting was held at the Hotel Paris-Londres on 7th June. Once again, only a few members attended to hear reports on our financial position, the Group activities, the Social activities, and the Magazine. One major change presented was that, in future, the Club wants all members to pay their subscriptions by Direct Debit (see Page 19). Whilst cash will still be accepted, there will be a 500 pts. surcharge for anyone wishing to continue to pay in this manner (see page 20).

Prior to the AGM, a joint meeting of the Board and representatives of the Groups was held. At the suggestion of **Clare Allcard**, it was decided to hold an "Open Afternoon" for the Groups on Sunday, 22nd October in the Parish Hall at La Massana. This "show" will include demonstrations by the Singers, the Scottish Dancers, the Drama Group and so on, as well as exhibitions from the Art Group and the Naturalists (see page 5). It is hoped that the show will encourage more members to take part in group activities, and perhaps bring forward some other groups (if you have any ideas, contact **Jacque Crozier** or **Clare Allcard**). We also hope to attract people who are not yet members of our Club.

At the meeting of the Board on 12th July, we were very sorry to accept the resignation

of **Ralph Husband**, both as Committee Chairman and also from the Board. Throughout the last four years, Ralph has been a tower of strength in the background. As Chairman, his diplomacy and courtesy will be hard to match. All those who have worked with him wish him well in the future.

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

by **Margaret Shaida**

Despite the decline in the Club's activities during the hot summer months - which is in direct contrast to the increase in Andorra's activities - we have a full magazine. There is an endearing report by **Clare Allcard** in which she tells us of an unusual sighting in the meadows of Aldosa (page 14). And to mark the occasion of Andorra's national day of Meritxell on 8th September, we have two features: **Clare Allcard's** investigation of the legend of Meritxell on page 12, and **Ursula Simpson Ure's** recollections of the celebrations as they were in the fifties on page 13.

I wonder if you have ever tried the *Travessa*? This is a fortnightly cross-country (well, to be more precise, a cross-mountain) hiking race. We asked two Club members, **Peter Dunkley** and **Kay Kay**, who have been on *Travesses*, to give us the benefit of their experience. Their reports, appearing on pages 15 and 16, make fascinating reading, especially for a sedentary person such as myself. I know rather more about racing across computer keys than mountain chains. We also have a diary of activities scheduled for the autumn (on facing page), as well as details of the thirteenth annual Ordino Music Festival (page 9).

And have you ever had to decide, with some irritation and regret, against visiting Britain because you couldn't take your pet with you? Well, you may be interested in a new organisation, 'Passports for Pets', which has been set up in the U.K. to fight current British quarantine regulations. A full report by **Tony Hooper** is on page 18.

Throughout the summer, the Club Coffee morning continued to meet at the Hotel Paris-Londres. This is a very pleasant occasion. The fact that we are given the same private room each week and we can rely on a cooperative hotel staff makes for a very congenial gathering, and more than compensates for our lack of Club facilities. Members of the CIA committee are on hand each week to offer advice, take bookings and keep



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members up to date with Club activities. The invaluable Andorran Weekly News Summary (in English) is also available there at a mere 25 pts.

In this issue we have a new feature entitled *News in Brief*, in which we hope to publish brief news items concerning the activities of Club members. We should be delighted to hear what you've been getting up to so that we can let our readers know of your achievements.

One thing that is missing from this issue is the regular feature *Letters to the Editor* - because, yes, you guessed it, we didn't receive any letters. Well, there was one notable exception, but this relates to one of the Groups and we have placed it in the relevant section (see page 7).

I like to think that we didn't receive any (other) letters because of the uncertainty in the editorship. Now that this matter has been resolved, I hope that we shall have a full postbag and a lively column of correspondence in our next issue. We look to you to write lots of letters. The deadline for the December issue is 14th October. So why not sit down straight away and dash off a letter of praise, criticism, information or suggestion.

Please send your letters to:
The Editor,
Box 291,
Credit Andorra, Escaldes.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Every Wednesday morning

CIA Coffee Morning
10.30-12.30 am at Hotel Paris-Londres

Every Sunday afternoon

Scottish Country Dancing
4.30 pm at La Massana Parish Hall
Clare Allcard: 836269

Every Monday evening

Drama Workshop
Rene de Knight: 835627

Every Tuesday afternoon

Art Group Workshop
Valerie Cruikshank: 835606

Tuesday, 1st September

Sheep Dog Trials and Dinner
Stanley or Joyce Jones: 836972

Friday-Sunday 15-17th September

Naturalists' Group "Bird Watching near Lourdes" *Jacque Crozier: 835931*

Thursday, 21st September

Day Trip to Theme Park *Port Aventura*
Stanley or Joyce Jones: 836972

Sunday, 22nd October

CIA Groups Meeting (see next page)
Rene de Knight: 835627; Clare Allcard: 836269; Jacque Crozier: 835931

Saturday-Monday, 14-16 October

Weekend Visit to Cathar Country
Anne Price: 836653



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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

THE NATURALISTS GROUP

A few members have been very busy all summer working on the *Atlas of the Breeding Birds of Andorra*, now in its fourth and penultimate year. As all the remaining tetrads to be covered are very high and the weather has been poor, this task has not been easy. Our two summer meetings were given over to this work but the autumn season starts off with a week-end break.

On 15-17th September, members are going to Organbidexka in the French Pyrenees, near Lourdes, to watch the southward migration of birds over the mountains. Last year some twenty-two thousand birds of prey and thirty-three thousand pigeons flew over this pass between August and October.

This is a very beautiful part of the Pyrenees and the scenery is spectacular. The Group is staying at the Hotel Depouey at Larrau, about ten

kilometres from the observation point. The cost will be 190 francs per person per night demi-pension. If anyone would like to come, phone **Jacque Crozier** (835931) to see if there are any last minute vacancies, a chance of a lift or full directions if you want to drive yourself.

The October meeting is again in France, at the Orlu Reserve near Ax. Marmots and chamois are easy to see here and the beech woods should be turning their beautiful autumn colours.

A Day Trip

The last outside meeting of the year is to Sant Lorenc Lake near Balaguer. There is usually the possibility of a place in someone's car if you would like to come but do not feel like driving. We have picnics and can always lend new members binoculars.

Come on one of these day trips and see if you enjoy them.



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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After Christmas, we will have two indoor meetings, so if anyone has any wildlife slides or videos they have taken this summer, from anywhere in the world, we would love to see them. For further information about the Group, please call **Jacque Crozier** (835931).

SCOTTISH DANCING GROUP

Our summer break is almost over. We start dancing again on Sunday, 1st October, at 4.30 pm in the La Massana Parish Hall. We very much hope that everyone who can possibly come will turn up, as we have to put in some hard practice if we are to achieve our ambition of putting on a short display for the Club Show on 22nd October. We are still keenly interested in finding a new leader to replace **John Gill**. Anyone interested, please telephone **Laura Fecanin** (836869) or **Clare Allcard** (836269).

INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

We have continued to sing throughout the summer, thanks in great part to our pianist,

Binnie Segal. Right now, we are preparing several songs for the Club Show on 22nd October in the La Massana Parish Hall. We hope to see lots of you there, and maybe some people who have shied away from joining us till now will feel encouraged to sign up then, in time to start work on our Christmas music festival.

For further information, please ring **Binnie Segal** (836296) or **Clare Allcard** (836269)

THE ART GROUP

The Art Group meets regularly every Tuesday afternoon - for 3-4 hours, depending on individual needs and inspiration.

Normally we don't meet during July and August, but a few keen members have been braving the heat and the traffic this summer to gather and continue work on their masterpieces, some working towards the annual Ordino competition.

During the winter months, we have expert guidance. There is plenty of room for new members. No experience required. Call **Val Cruikshank** on 835606 for more information.

THE GROUPS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CLUB OF ANDORRA

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- * Discover what the other groups (Art, Nature, Bridge, Wine-tasting, Philately, Helpline) are all doing when you're not there
- * You may decide you want to join them, or even start a new group of your own.
- * Representatives from all the Groups and the CIA Board will be there to help you.
- * Wine and nibbles will be served at the bar

Anyone offering to help at the bar or with food
would be most welcome.

Please contact **Rene** (835627), **Clare** (836269) or **Jacque** (835931)

THE DANCE GROUP

This group, which some members will have seen perform in *Una Nit de Musica i Dansa* in May, was born out of the Dancercise classes which **Jacky Richards** taught for the C.I.A. a few years ago.

The founder members of the group (Maite Castro Cinsted, Lone Oehlenschlaeger and myself, Jacky Richards), continue to work together with the aim of performing dances of varied techniques and also of creating new choreography.

We therefore welcome anyone who has had a professional background or a high level of training in one or all of the techniques of classical, contemporary or jazz dance.

We hope from time to time, to invite as guests other dancers or dance groups in the country such as **Esther Esteve**, who you will have seen perform in 'Una Nit' and who not only runs her own ballet school here but also allows both the C.I.A.'s Drama and Art Groups to use space in her studio.

The Dance Group, together with the Music Group, is hoping to mount another Evening of Music and Dance within the next year, so watch out for the dates! Further information from **Jacky Richards** (835586).

THE WINE-TASTING GROUP

Some members will remember that we had

a very popular wine-tasting group but it stopped when the leader left the country. Well, we are now making a new start on Wednesday, 6th September. If you phone **Ivan or Diana Stansby** on 836210 you can exchange ideas.

THE STAMP GROUP

How about starting up a philatelic group in Andorra? If there are any stamp collectors out there who would be interested in joining us in regular meetings for swaps, talks, displays and exhibitions, call **Solveig Feilberg** on 837118.

HELPLINE

Helpline was started by **Doreen Woolton** soon after the International Club was established. The original idea was to have an English-speaking resident in each parish who would be able to answer questions about health care: which doctors speak English, and which hospital, clinic or chemist could best help.

The idea was great, but the comings and goings of most of us meant that, in practice, it did not work as well as it had been hoped. Now, however, we have a better network. I am usually the first one to be called, and if I can't help, I put the caller on to others who may be able to. These days, the calls are often about non-medical matters, such as recommending an English-speaking handyman, painter, plumber or electrician, or, even a gardener for the summer.

However, our main work is in the field of health care. Helpline runs a Meals-on-Wheels service, with volunteers who cook and deliver a meal on Saturdays and Sundays to an elderly lady in La Massana, and to others on an occasional basis. Arrangements are also made to help people who need nursing or medical care over a period of time, in an emergency, but more often than not on a temporary basis. Recently, **Lynn Ayres** and I



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made an emergency trip to take milk and money to a Club member who was in a special hospital in Toulouse, and who had no relatives to visit her. I am hoping that the Board committee will agree to pay our expenses for that unexpected trip.

We received 162,000 pts from last year's Christmas Fair, and this has been used, in part, for the services of an English nurse who makes visits at home to give nursing care. We are always looking for volunteers (to help with meals on wheels, visits and so on) as well as donations to help us. If you can help, please contact me, Dinah Baxter on 836980.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Many of the members reading this (excellent) magazine will know of the wonderful work the Helpline is doing. Dinah Baxter, being the guiding light and tireless worker bringing order in chaos when anyone within our community meets with problems due to health, age or both. I am sure we are all very grateful to know that this Helpline exists, as the greater part of the ICA members are retired and "getting on a bit" and we may all be in need of help at some stage.

The Helpline is able to offer professional nursing service when required, but this costs money. From the proceeds of the last Christmas Fair in La Massana the Helpline has received a donation of 162,000 pts. The going rate for professional help is 2,000 pts per hour, auxiliary help costs less. Therefore, a total of eighty-one hours is available. Of course, in many cases, people can pay as they go along, but if only three people need two hours help per week and are unable to foot the bill themselves, this fund will be exhausted in four months.

If the Helpline has to wait until the next Christmas Fair for further donation, some people who may need care in October/November are going to be very unlucky and to avoid this

(after all, it might be me!) I have arranged for a standing order for a donation of 1,500 pts per month (the average cost of one hour help) to the Helpline.

Helpline is opening its own account from September, so anyone wishing to follow this example or wishing to make a one-off donation, should contact Dinah Baxter for the new branch and account number: Make Cheques/Standing Orders payable to Helpline.

Name and address supplied

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CLUB ACTIVITIES

Club Activities for the autumn start off with the promised "September Surprise". This turned out to be two "surprises" organised by Stanley and Joyce Jones.

Sheep Dog Trials

The first is to go along and watch the sheep-dog trials on the high slopes between Canillo and Ordino on 1st September. Apparently buses are on hand to take people up, and Stanley and Joyce would like to have an idea how many people wish to attend, as they hope to arrange a dinner, possibly at Canillo, when the trials are finished. For further details, please call Stanley or Joyce on 836972.

Visit to Theme Park

The second surprise is a day visit to *Port Aventura*, a theme park near Tarragona. This will be on Thursday, 21st September, and will entail an early start, and return at about 11 pm. For bookings and further details, please call Stanley or Joyce on 836972.

Christmas Shopping Trip to Barcelona

It is hoped that the annual Christmas shopping trip to Barcelona will be arranged. Information will be circulated in the next month or so.

A Visit to Egypt

Anne's arrangements for the trip to Egypt next year are well in hand. A meeting will be organised in September or October to discuss final plans, and at that time she will want a small non-refundable deposit. At present there is no firm price but the majority of enquiries have been from members who prefer quality to economy. Anne will advise members of the group about the autumn plan-of-action meeting. For further information, call Anne Price (836653)

Andorran Industry

In the last programme, it was announced that a tour of Andorran industry would be organised by several people with local contacts. It proved a popular idea but unfortunately the Andorran industrialists were not very keen and with Desmond in hospital and Ann in England, it never got organised. Sorry about that. We plan to try again, but next time, Desmond will make the arrangements personally and in advance.

REPORTS ON ACTIVITIES

Car Boot Sale

Do you remember last year?

Yes, it snowed at last year's Car Boot Sale which was held at the same time at the end of July.

This year, however, it was such a glorious summer's day, that, as the morning wore on and the sun rose higher in the sky, one of the most crowded spots at the Sale was in the shade under the tree in the centre of the car park. Desmond Allen's stand selling ice cold drinks

was also very popular.

The event was, as always, a very enjoyable morning, and this year a sunnier success than in previous years. It sometimes seems as though it is one of the best meeting spots in Andorra, quite surpassing the Coffee Morning.

Everyone seemed to know everyone, and the whole event was as much a social occasion as a fund-raising one - though, undoubtedly, funds were raised, and a number of splendid bargains were found.

For those more interested in facts and figures than social comment, it seems that there were some twenty-three "stall-holders" who between them welcomed more than 400 visitors, who contributed to a number of worthy causes.

PASSIVE RESIDENCIES

Over the past couple of months, there have been numerous rumours concerning a new law affecting foreign residents in Andorra. In this regard, Club Board Member, **Desmond Allen**, organised a meeting for all (English-speaking) foreign residents which was due to be held at La Massana on 10th August. Prior to that, he had met with government officials as well as with representatives of other groups of foreign residents. He also wrote to the press, and then translated the new law to enable Club members to make their own assessment. If you were away at the time, you can call Desmond (842169) for a summary of developments.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Have you done anything unusual recently? Why not let us know.

It seems that CIA member **Gerald Kay** along with **Ali Guilanpour**, 70, won the Veterans *Travessa* Cup in the first *Travessa* of the summer. Having just read the reports by **Peter Dunkley** and **Kay Kay** of the effort required simply to complete the *Travessa* course (see page 15), I was filled with wonder at their achievement.

We have just learned that **Clare Allcard** has recently published her second book. "Living Afloat" is a lively look at what to do, what to take, what to expect and how to cope on board a yacht, whether for a weekend or for a year.

I was fascinated to learn about **Joyce Jones'** interesting visit to the Slovak Republic last July. Apparently she went with an American Folklore and Dance Group, and during her two-week visit, she stayed in remote villages, attended a number

of folk dance festivals, visited museums and studied local choreography with a professional Slovak dancer.

Overheard at the Coffee morning: a gentleman, whose wife had been away for a couple of weeks and was due back the next day, was musing as to whether it would be better to make a stab at clearing up the house or to concentrate on coming up with a worthwhile excuse....

Several members of the Club joined **Marc Fome** on the annual 'Friendship meeting' between the Valleys of Ordino in Andorra and Auzzat and Videssos in France. This year, the meeting was held in France, where a 'dejeuner' was served in marquees five kilometres down the track into France, followed by dancing and entertainment. Next year, the meeting will be held in Andorra.

THE 13TH ANNUAL ORDINO MUSIC FESTIVAL

Friday, 15 September, 10 pm

Jaume Aragall (tenor), Vincenc Sardinero (baritone) and Amparo Garcia (piano): Puccini, Verdi, Ponchinelli, de Curtis

Saturday, 16 September, 10 pm

Manolo Sanlucar (guitar): Tauromagia

Sunday, 17 September, 10 pm

The Swingle Singers: Classical & Modern Music

Friday, 22 September, 10 pm

National Chamber Orchestra of Andorra
Gerard Claret (concert director), Joaquin Achuarro (piano): Mozart, Turina, Elgar, J. Cervel

Saturday, 23 September, 10 pm

National Orchestra of France Jacques Mercier (director): The Folly of Rossini

Sunday, 24 September, 10 pm

National Orchestra of France
Jacques Mercier (director), Regis Pasquier (violin): Rossini, Paganini, Mendelssohn

Concerts of Young Talents

Sunday, 17 September, 12.30 (lunchtime)

'Isar Camara': David Marco (violin), Ana Galan

(violin), Carlos Seco (viola) Elena Solanes (cello): Shostakovich, Mozart
In Ordino Parish Church

Sunday, 24 September, 12.30 (lunchtime)

Big Band Communal

A mixture of music from the 20's, Jazz, Spanish

A production of the Institute of Musical Studies, Andorra and the Comu of Andorra la Vella.

In the *Jardins Prat del Call* - past the National Auditorium, the gardens are near the school and children's playground, Ordino

(If wet, in the National Auditorium)

All the above concerts will be performed in the National Auditorium in Ordino (except where otherwise mentioned). Tickets are available from any branch of Credit Andorra, 3,000 pts (10% for early booking with 'Tarja Magna' and Camet Jove).

More information from the Tourist Office (tel: 836963)

Reports on Activities

A WEEKEND IN MADRID

The following report was submitted by a contented participant of the Madrid Weekend but one who wishes to remain anonymous, because it's such "a very personal view".

The bus arrived almost exactly on time - and swayed rather a lot, to the discomfort of travel-sensitive passengers. It remained on time, at the door, for the whole five days.

Through fields brilliant with poppies to a well organised set lunch in the throne room of the castle of Sigüenza, now a Parador. The castle has seen Visigoths and Moors and though the Blue Guide tells me it is built on a steep slope rising like an amphitheatre above the Henares I wondered why so large a fortress was built on so visually poor a site.

Friendly and Courteous

Onward to Madrid and our very central hotel, watching Alec Guinness as Monsignor Quixote. I'd always thought, driving behind all those buses which advertise on-board videos, that they were provided to take the mind off the scenery. I realised, however, that they do offer a welcome diversion to a group which has become tired. Our hotel dealt in tour groups and it is a tribute to its staff that they had not become jaded by humanity, remaining friendly, courteous and helpful.

The really intelligent planning of this trip was to give its participants full freedom; we could join our guides on a variety of excursions or do as we wished. This suited a varied party extremely well and most joined one excursion or another. We were offered culture, dinner/dancing and a flamenco floor show, the famous El Botin restaurant, Madrid's flea market and a trip to Toledo. There was always one guide "on duty" to lead or to answer questions, and one felt cared for.

Madrid doesn't look Spanish. It is much younger than Barcelona and lacks Barcelona's character. Its streets

are wide, tree lined and reminiscent of parts of London. It was the fiesta of San Isidro and the city was animated. Tickets for the bullfights were unobtainable, but television covered the finest, the *rejoneadores*. Look it up for yourselves, you anti-blood-sports enthusiasts. The *rejoneador* is magnificent and is as ancient a Spanish expression as the flamenco: it is Spain. I had expected the flamenco to be a dreary tourist rendering. It was quite excellent flamenco-ballet, very well worth the price - and the meal wasn't bad either.

The excursion to Toledo left us free to wander through that lovely city, to catch up on El Greco and replenish those Toledo steel knives absolutely unobtainable elsewhere and without which no kitchen is complete.

But first, I think, we made for the Prado, the Museo Reina Sofia and the royal palace. It was fun to explore Madrid, to take its buses and metro - a very easy thing to do. To stand at the Puerto del Sol, kilometre 0, centre of Spain and from which all Spanish distances are measured.

The Prado is a joy. In order not to reach that saturation point all large museums engender, you do need to marshall yourself and aim for what you most want to see. The Durers, Brueghel's absorbing *Triumph of Death* (and who of us didn't stand for ages before it?) ... the Bosch. And the Goyas. Some will recall a memorable travelling exhibition of Goya's drawings which came to Andorra in the eighties: the paintings are wonderful.

The Reina Sofia is devoted to twentieth century art. I walked through it very quickly, and walked back again, sure I had missed something. I hadn't. It has very few non-Spanish artists and not all the Spanish either. I found Botero postcards in the shop and rushed out to



Plaza España, Madrid



Plaza Major, Madrid

find the Boteros, to learn, "no hay qui". Personally, Guernica leaves me utterly cold: if you seek the horror of war it is surely expressed in a single face - Goya's Third May. Thus I thought the Reina Sofia a huge expense of space, staff and outdoor escalators devoted to awfully little. Dali is a great deal more fun in Figueras.

So each of us did as he wished, ate where he fancied. We found the *Bajamar*, an excellent fish restaurant recommended in the Guide Michelin and a few steps from the hotel. Its urbane owner was hospitable and insisted on showing us his kitchen, the staff standing back with a resigned "Oh dear, he's at it again".

The Land which God forgot

To Aragon, through all those stretches of the Wild West: Aragon, the land which God forgot, all rock, barren waste, dryness. So that the Piedra river must have been quite a landmark before the dam was made.

I learned from the Monasterio's guide that the Piedra gained its name not from the rocks but from the propensity of the river to carry down the limestone, which helped build rocks ... have you discovered, too, that the Blue Guide gives you one line on wherever you happen to be, four pages on some church you haven't the least interest in, and **nothing** on what you are looking for - like the source name of a river...

I have a love-hate relationship with the Monasterio de Piedra, whose building is so lovely one should not appear for dinner unless sweeping down the staircase in one's crinoline, a la Scarlett O'Hara.

The garish cafeteria in the grounds, the lovely if (now) somewhat less-tended gardens,

and the contrast between the courtesy of reception and the surliness of the dining room never seemed to fit the place at all. Though I will admit that the dining room has improved - the service was friendly and the food so very much better than before. What really surprised me was that '95 individual rates had decreased by 2000 Ptas since 1991: never say prices don't go down!

Charming Spanish Guide

The Piedra river tumbles down natural scenic wonders beside the monastery and was aided in preceding centuries to tumble rather more poetically, creating a continuous garden of waterfalls and river, natural and exotic trees, ivy and vegetation, entirely worth walking through.

Part of the original monastery is now open to the public and we were guided by a charming Spanish girl through areas which one should see in order to understand the place better.

Back onto the bus to drive through the rest of Aragon, Llerida, and so on, a journey much lightened by Ann's showing of Laurie Lee's "A Rose in Winter". Others too must have thought this so delightful a portrayal of their own views of Spain.

A final set dinner at Pons (to absolve the housewives among us of the need to cook at 11pm plus) and our delivery to wherever we lived.

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THE LEGEND OF MERITXELL

As the Eighth of September marks the Festival of Our Lady of Meritxell, Andorra's patron saint, Clare Allcard looks at the origins of the legend, and Ursula Simpson Ure, a long time resident of Andorra, recalls the celebrations as they were in the 1950's

The first written reference to the village of Meritxell, or Mother of Heaven, appeared on 8th January 1176, when three hundred and eighty-three Andorran heads of family signed a concord with Bishop Arnau de Preixens. One of the signatories was that of Johan Arnau de Merechel. Since then, the name has undergone many changes: Mirigel, Mirixel, Merixell and, finally, Meritxell.

There is no actual date for the foundation of Meritxell's first church, but the original statue of the *Mare de Deu* was thought to be twelfth century.

At about the same time, a great battle was taking place for the hearts and minds of the Mediterranean

peoples, with the cult of the Virgin fighting for supremacy. The legend of the discovery of our own statue of the *Mare de Deu* (Mother of God) was mirrored throughout the region, but most especially in the Pyrenees where some eighteen of these statues appeared in miraculous, and very similar, circumstances; and, most conveniently, almost always in an area where witches or fertility goddesses had formerly held sway.

Thus, the Sanctuary of Meritxell stands not far from Prats de Canillo where one can still see the *Roca de les Buixes* or Witches' Rock, with its

Devil's nail marks. It was here that witches were said to foregather.

It was not long before this cult of the Miraculous *Mare de Deu* filled the Pyrenees. *Santa Maria de Metixell* was the most venerated, and took over from the Verges del Remei as a major centre of pilgrimage, though the hamlet of Meritxell never grew large.

However, Meritxell had three church sacristans to administer the distribution and sale of houses, land, crops and livestock.

Much of our knowledge of Meritxell's past comes from three fascinating books of accounts kept by these sacristans and held today in the parish archives of Canillo.

Over a thou-

sand pages long, and, due to Andorra's dry climate, exceptionally well preserved, the books cover four hundred years of the Sanctuary's history from 1500 to 1900 AD.

Among many other things, the books record donations of oil and payments for candles, tapers and a bell rope. In 1639, the Sacristan paid the painter, Michel Adelah twenty-nine *reals* for painting the altar to Saint Martin.

The Virgin is purported to have worked several miracles at Meritxell and, during times of epidemic, the General Council would call on all

The Legend of the Statue of *Mare de Deu* or *Santa Maria de Meritxell*

It was mid-winter, the day of Epiphany, when some villagers from Meritxell took the bridle path to Canillo to hear mass. On their way, they noticed with astonishment a wild rosebush in full bloom. Going closer, they discovered, hidden among its thorny branches, a statue of Mary holding the child Jesus. Filled with wonder, they carried the statue with them to Canillo and left it locked inside the church. Next day, the statue had gone. They looked everywhere for it, and finally found it back in the rosebush. This time they took it to the church in Encamp. But, again, it returned to the rosebush

That night, there was a heavy fall of snow, almost two palms deep. But, miraculously, an area of land some fifty paces from the bush remained quite free from snow. So then the people knew that the Virgin wanted a chapel built on that very spot.

Other versions of the Legend tell of similar finds in different parts of the Pyrenees, often by a shepherd boy looking for a lost sheep. Finding the statue in a cave, a tree, a bush or a cave, he would take it to his church. But, again, after the statue had thrice returned to its original hiding place, the people finally built a chapel on the spot.

heads of families to go to the sanctuary and pray for the health of the Valleys. In 1873, the General Council of the Valleys declared *Santa Maria de Meritxell* the country's patron. In 1914, Pope Pius X granted a canonical promulgation of patronage.

Finally, on 8th September 1921, the *Mare de Deu* was crowned at the Meritxell sanctuary, and the first performance of the Andorran National Anthem was given, its words written by the much loved Bishop Benlloch with music for Father Marfany.

Since then, Andorra's national holiday has been celebrated on 8th September, and the Sanctuary of *Santa Maria de Meritxell* has become the symbol of Andorra's nationality.

When the original Sanctuary was destroyed by fire in 1972, the people of the valleys were filled with deep foreboding. Many forecast the end of Andorra as a nation and the destruction of her heritage. But within two years, the General Council of the Valleys commissioned a modern sanctuary.

Originally, it was intended to unite both sides of the valley with a bridge over-arching the eastern Valira river, but not enough funds were raised. Bofill's cathedral is a sculpture in black and white, white for snow, black for the woods and rocks of Andorra. Inside it is full of space and light. The extensive use of glass allows distant views of trees, mountains and sky, while, close by, fountains tumble in the Sanctuary's courtyards, giving an element of Moorish beauty to their stark, geometric design.

For more than fifty years, the chief Sindic gave the annual state of the nation address at Meritxell on 8th September, but in 1987 this tradition died.

In 1993, following the approval of Andorra's constitution, the annual session of the General Council at the Sanctuary was also abolished to comply with the new separation of church and state. With this, the festival of the *Mare de Deu de Meritxell* changed for ever - or did it just regain its true social and religious meaning?

Clare Allcard

THE FEAST DAY OF MERITXELL IN THE FIFTIES

The original sanctuary of Meritxell was then in use and the fields below the church took on the air of a real fete. Everyone took their picnic baskets and their firewood, and their meat and sausages for grilling. Without intending any irreverence, it always reminded me slightly of the Sermon on the Mount, with everyone scattered around with their families, from all the valleys, sitting on rugs or on the grass, cooking fires underway, and the pleasant smell of woodsmoke and barbecue.

The Sanctuary was too small for any but the leading notables to be within, but the Sindic would appear outside and make his speech about the past year and future year, what had been achieved, and any imminent changes. After the speech, people would drift from one group to another greeting friends, sharing food and wine. Later, they would start dancing *sardanas* on the less hilly places. It was a very natural way for the whole country to celebrate the day of their patron Virgin.

The ghastly event which ended all this and instigated the building of the present Cathedral, was to change the whole manner of the celebration. The fire which completely gutted the Sanctuary was at first said to have been caused by people careless with burning embers and the night wind, or else smoking within the church which was left open until late. It is now thought to be much more likely that the fire was deliberate. The original early romantic statue of the Virgin was burnt to ashes, we are told, but the effigy would have been worth a lot of money to collectors. None of the jewels were found in the ashes and jewels do not melt. If the Sanctuary of Meritxell was indeed destroyed for criminal gain, it is tragic.

For a long time, the ruins were left and a wild garden grew there, reminding me of bombed churches in London. Then a neater garden, now, an audio visual center is installed, a modern structure within the old walls which have been re-pointed and painted. I have been inside Bofill's new Cathedral for a baptism and a wedding, and have taken friends visiting the Valleys to see it.

I have, however, never returned for the celebration of Meritxell. I prefer to keep my own memories intact of the feast day we enjoyed so much years ago.

Ursula Simpson Ure

AN ENDEARING LIFE

Clare Allcard relates a tale of some unusual wild-life in the meadows of Aldosa

Her arrival caused pandemonium. Down in the field two full-grown horses took to their hoofs and fled. Above, looking out of our sitting room window, my husband Edward and I called excitedly to each other.

"It's a deer! I'm sure it is."

"Can't be. Maybe it's a goat?"

"Are you sure it isn't a deer?"

It was a deer. I rang the La Massana Comu, "There's a lovely deer at the foot of the Cami del Sola. I'm worried someone may shoot it."

Happily, as I write, our fallow deer is still with us. She stands about one metre high at the shoulder, her outsized ears pricking up from a fine-boned head, interested and alert. Coloured tan with white freckles, she's well camouflaged against the field's bare and flinty earth.

Originating in Asia Minor and on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, the fallow deer is thought to have been introduced to Britain and Northern Europe by the Romans.

Today in Europe, fallow deer are found almost exclusively in private parks and zoos where they thrive as semi-domesticated animals. According to Andorra's Ministry of the Environment, only a few deer live in the wild in Andorra, though there is a government-run deer reserve at the Pal Ski Station. We presume our doe somehow escaped from the reserve and found her way across the main La Massana road.

When she first arrived she was a fragile, timid little thing, bolting for the woods at the sight of each passing human, horse or car.

To start with we scrutinised every car that stopped, convinced each was driven by a would-be assassin. Now, we are all much more relaxed.

run to let the children watch the little doe as she feeds. A pick-up truck unloads a gang of workmen so that they can gaze at her, soft-eyed and sentimental. Gradually, the travellers of the *Carretera de la Credu Blanca* have adopted her as their own. As have the horses.

For her part, our doe is obviously content although her spindly white legs occasionally stumble nerve-wrackingly as she canters across the grass. Oh yes, there's no doubt about it. She canters! Watching her social evolution has been fascinating.

After five weeks living amongst a herd of horses, she doubtless thinks she's one herself. This very morning she successfully worked four hefty horses into a lather of excitement. First she pranced about them on her dainty legs, teasing them into chasing her. Then she hurtled off across the field with all four in hot pursuit. At the far end she spun around and led another stampede back to the top edge of the woods. Then she bounded off alone into the shadows of the pines, white rump flashing, heels kicked high. Then she careered back to rejoin her greatest friend, the grey. Approaching muzzle to muzzle till they almost touched, she stretched out her delicate neck, her little black tail wagging ecstatically. She is a coquette, devoted to the grey.

Today she seldom raises her head in anything but curiosity. Heavily laden lorries, thundering past, no longer have the power to frighten her. Nor do humans. However, she does like to graze flanked on either side by her friends, her equine bodyguard. Coquette that she is, the only time she really plays hard-to-get is when I try to photograph her.

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TRAVESSA FEVER

In the first of our two reports on the Travesses, Peter Dunklely tells us what it meant to him to go on a Travessa - and how he lived to tell the tale!

If a court sentenced you to a *travessa*, you'd probably want to appeal on the grounds that it was a 'cruel and unnatural punishment'. In Andorra though, people of all ages sign up for an entire season of these events - and cheerfully pay entrance fees to do so.

The summer *travesses* have been an institution for over a decade, ever since the *Federacio Andorrana de Muntanyisme* came up with the notion of an annual foot-race across the mountains. It soon developed into a series of races, every two weeks, from late June to early September. Working separately with the seven *comuns*, the *Federacio* designed routes that would take competitors through some of the most beautiful - and formidably challenging - parts of each *parroquia*. This year, there were six events; Andorra la Vella and Escaldes-Engordany rolled their previously separate courses into one.



Dawn on Sunday, at the start, poles in hand

To attract as many entrants as possible, the *Federacio* decided on six age categories. They range from *Infantils* - eleven to fourteen years old, who race an abbreviated course - to Super Veterans of fifty years or more; there's even a sprinkling of competitors in their late sixties-early seventies. Prizes are awarded in each class as well as for different categories of entrants; all-female, mixed, youngest, etc. The coveted top

prize is a Championship Cup awarded to the person who accumulates the highest number of points during the season.

For safety reasons, people compete in pairs, with both partners having to finish within a hundred metres of each other. It's not a good idea for husband and wife to enter as a team. Close finishes have been known to result in quite unforgivable insults being hurled by one party at the other, in the heat of the moment.

Travesses are not for everyone. Most of the sixty or so people who line up at dawn on a Sunday morning, poles in hand, ready to propel themselves up the side of a mountain are the same, immediately-recognizable types you see on TV at the start of a marathon: sinewed, wiry specimens with muscled thighs, calves of steel and an expression of grim determination. To be honest, *travesses* are not a whole lot of fun. At least, not until you're lolling around at the finish, watching the rest of the clapped-out field crawl in after you.

Why am I doing this?

A *travessa* always starts with a steep up-hill trek. It sets the tone for the affair and eliminates, almost instantaneously, anyone misguided enough to have signed up in the belief they were participating in an agreeable, Sunday morning doddle. The Encamp course launches you in an immediate seven-hundred metres up the *Pic de Montmalus*. Escaldes has a why-am-I-doing-this, one thousand metres to the *Collada de Prat Primer*. The most gruelling start, though, is La Massana's, a hyper-ventilating, one thousand six hundred metres straight up the side of the country's highest mountain, *Coma Pedrosa*. The figures are 'verticles', of course; total distances vary from fifteen to as much as twenty-two kilometres.

After the crippling initial climb, competitors are offered some modest relief; a partial descent of a few hundred metres. It's followed typically by a second up-hill segment of anything from three to four hundred metres. The final section is always a long slog down to the finish. "Down" isn't necessarily good news: the Escaldes descent,



Some of the most beautiful areas of Andorra

for example, includes three kilometres of sometimes wickedly-steep, ankle-wrenching, loose stones and boulders.

You'd think that a course of some twenty kilometres which took you past limpid lakes, alongside tumbling streams, through evergreen forests and flower-strewn meadows, would afford ample opportunity for meditation on the glories of nature, the eternal verities or the ruinous price of a good bottle of cognac.

Not a bit of it. With heart pounding, a red mist in front of the eyes and a gaze fixed on the next few metres of track, the only thing you're really likely to reflect on is your chance of reaching the finish before being stricken by a medical emergency. It's brutal. One - younger

and fitter - CIA member who competed in the La Massana *travessa* confided afterwards that her knees hadn't trembled quite so much since the time when she ... but we digress.

Despite the pain, or perhaps because of it - so perverse is the human condition - *travesses* can be habit-forming. The same people who totter into bed on a Sunday night, comprehensively knackered and swearing that THAT was absolutely and positively their last *travessa*, are usually among the first at the tourist office a few days later to collect their programme and sign on for the next one.

It's true that performance improves with practice. And by the end of the season, you're a different person. You're fitter. You've lost weight - and become intolerably smug about it - and you never miss an opportunity to steer the conversation around to the subject of mountains, so that you can name-drop the peaks you've climbed. But you'll probably never reach the form achieved by the people who regularly take the first few places.

The winners of the twenty-two kilometre Escaldes *travessa* covered it in an amazing two hours, seventeen minutes. The knee-trembled lady made it in just over four. The writer - a nice little mover along the straight, but hitherto unknown for doing mountains - took nine hours. He never intended to compete, though. He was just along for the ride, taking photographs and composing notes for his piece about the *travesses*. At least, that's what HE says...

TRAVESSA DAY

And now, Kay Kay tells us of her experience on a whole season of Travesses

I don't know how I ever became involved. I enjoy exercise, but not punishment. *Travesses* are punishing.

Travesses are mountain races organised throughout the summer by each of the Parishes, and I'm sure there is fierce competition to see who can set the most difficult and demanding course. They range from fourteen to twenty-two kilometres with several climbs along the route totalling, on average 1,400 metres of ascent, including the highest peaks in Andorra. The views are spectacular!

Competitors are classed by age and sex.

Groups range from juniors, sometimes as young as ten or eleven, to Super Veterans. This latter age group starts at fifty, and the oldest competitor is usually a Persian ski instructor who's seventy! One of the great things about the *travesses* is that both the youngest and the oldest competitors receive a trophy - simply for entering.

In my second race, the winners finished in under two hours, the average was between three to four hours, my husband and his partner (both Super Veterans at sixty and seventy respectively) finished in a little over three hours, and my partner and I sneaked in with a time of over seven

hours. A little embarrassing since the delicious meal at the end of the race will not begin until all competitors are safely in.

The events are well organised. Maps are provided and at certain points along the routes there are controls where the competitors check in. These serve several purposes. Firstly, the check-points are often on the peaks to ensure that no one takes a short cut and avoids the climb; secondly, it enables the Mountain Rangers to keep track of everyone so that nobody is lost on the mountain; and thirdly, it is where the *Creu Rioja* (Red Cross) provides nourishment, first aid and encouragement.

On my first race, I was crawling up to the peak of *Foree dels Soldats* (2,761 metres) when I found myself at the feet of a handsome young Red Cross worker. He kindly offered me, in English, some chocolate or a drink.

"How about a helicopter?" was my desperate plea. Little did I realise that in a real emergency, a helicopter would be on hand within minutes. A comforting thought.

Don't let me put you off. If you enjoy walking and thrive on a challenge, there is no better way to spend a Sunday. Everyone travels at their own speed. Some of the youngsters actually run a great part of the course, while others walk, and others merely stagger.

On one occasion, I went with a friend from England. We were soon at the back of the field, chatting to the police who 'sweep' the mountain behind the last competitors. Once or twice they pointed us in the right direction. Strictly against the rules, but it was patently clear that we weren't contending for the first prize.

We were treated to a round of applause when we finally made it for the celebratory meal at the Hotel Rosaleda in Encamp. The meals are usually excellent, nutritious and fun, ranging from al fresco barbeques to sit-down meals in local

hotels. The wine flows freely, as does the water for the more serious athletes.

The meal is followed by the Prize-giving. A Trophy is presented to the first three couples in each category, and also to the youngest and oldest competitors in the race. Many of the Parishes also present commemorative tee-shirts and some have a free raffle with such splendid prizes as mountain bikes or tennis rackets.

I have now completed my first full season of races. I've met some wonderful people, my Spanish, French and Catalan have developed beyond the mime stage, and I feel fitter and healthier than I have for years.

As the "Veteran Women" category is not very well supported, I've managed to win quite a few impressive Trophies to add to the family collection - and I've put them high up where no one can see the engraved, tell-tale word 'Veteran'.

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PASSPORTS FOR PETS

This report by Tony Hooper looks at a new organisation set up in the UK to modernise the British quarantine system

Passports for Pets is the name of a voluntary organisation founded in the U.K. in DEcember 1994, to press for early implementation of the recommendation of the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons that the archaic British quarantine system should be replaced by a modern system based on vaccination, antibody testing and approved identification. The Committee made this recommendation in November 1994.

Those of us from the British Isles who own pets know well the frustration caused by our inability to take our pets with us when we pay a visit to the U.K. It is very galling when we consider that our dogs and cats already have "passports" which give details of all vaccinations including anti-rabies, and that we can travel with

our pets, and their "passports", throughout Europe.

Some interesting statistics are given by the organisation. Between 1972 and 1994, some 160,000 cats and dogs were subjected to quarantine in U.K. More than 2,200 of them died during this period, but only two deaths were "suspected" of being caused by rabies, one from the USA and one from Zambia, and both had been injected with live vaccine, nowadays not used.

EU Countries

During that period there have been no cases at all amongst dogs imported from EU countries and equally no cases at all amongst dogs vaccinated with a modern inactivated virus.

There seem to be many anomalies in the quarantine rules. Whilst a guide dog has to go into quarantine, commercially imported dogs and cats, i.e. for breeding purposes, are excluded from the quarantine regulations.

Pressure has been put on the Government by the Ministry of Defence, so far without result, to allow pets owned by British servicemen to be excluded.

The report of the Agriculture Committee concludes with these words,

"Because these arrangements afford at least equivalent protection against rabies to quarantine, they should be introduced immediately..."

However, the issue does not appear to have been debated in Parliament, and perhaps "Passports for Pets" has been formed there is a great danger that this will be one more recommendation which will get lost on a dusty shelf.

I believe that, like myself, there are many people in Andorra who would like to lend support to this campaign - perhaps not only the Brits since I have heard many other nationalities bemoaning the fact that they cannot take "all" their family if they wish to go on holiday to U.K.

If you would like to give you support and require further details I will be very happy to supply them.

For more information on "Passports for Pets", call Tony Hooper on 836154.

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CLUB RULES

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

The Club Rules given below are the updated version - changes are shown in *italics*

1. Management of the Club

- a) The Statutes define the roles of the General Assembly (of all Members) and the Governing Board (elected by the General Assembly).
- b) Every two years at least half of the Governing Board will resign. Board Members may offer themselves for re-election. Each candidate for election must consent and be nominated by at least five Members two weeks before the General Assembly meeting. The List of Candidates will be notified to Members at the General Assembly or at the Coffee Morning in the week previous to the AGM. If there are more Candidates than vacant places there will be a secret vote at the General Assembly.
- c) An Executive Committee *appointed by the Governing Board* is responsible for day-to-day running of the Club.

2. Membership

Anyone with an address in Andorra may apply for Membership. By accepting Membership Members agree to abide by the Statutes and Rules of the Club. Members may resign from the Club by giving two weeks' notice in writing to the Club address but this does not avoid any liability arising during Membership. The Executive Committee of the Club has the right to deny Membership or to expel Members without giving its reasons subject to the Member's right of appeal to the next Annual General meeting.

3. Payment of Subscriptions

The Club prefers Subscriptions to be paid by Direct Debit. Payment by other means is subject to an extra charge of 500 Ptas per annum. Members who do not pay their subscription within three months of the due date will lose Membership privileges. They may rejoin the Club by paying overdue subscriptions and a penalty of 1,000 Ptas.

4. Activity Groups

- a) Each Activity Group shall elect officers as appropriate, draw up rules and keep accounts which will be audited by the Club Treasurer. Group Rules may require Group members to pay subscriptions and may allow support to other

c) Activity Groups may request financial help from the Club by grant or loan, in accordance with Rule 5.

- d) Activity Groups may hold functions which will give preference to Club Members as appropriate.

5. Financial Control

No Officer, Member or Activity Group may commit any expenditure by the Club without the prior authorisation of the Executive Committee, which may be given as a periodic budget or for an item. The Executive Committee will only authorise expenditure against a clear statement of what is to be acquired or achieved.

6. Payments for Activities

Payments made by Members for activities are not refundable except at the discretion of the organiser or if the activity is cancelled. Members have the right of appeal to the Executive Committee.

7. Liability

Neither the Club nor its Officers are liable for damage to the person or property of members or third parties howsoever caused. Each Member accepts liability for personal injury and for damage caused by or to him or her whilst taking part in any Club or Group activity. The Club advises Members to insure for their liability to third parties.

8. Commercial Activities

Members may not undertake any commercial activity at any Club meeting without the prior agreement of the Executive Committee in writing. If agreement is given the Member must make clear that the Club is not responsible for the activity concerned.

9. Membership List

From time to time the Executive Committee will prepare a Membership List showing only names, telephone numbers and membership expiry date. Members may withhold their telephone number from the List by telling the Club Treasurer. A copy of the List may be purchased by Members for 100 Ptas. (The Executive Committee may at their discretion give the list to commercial institutions which offer a discount to Members.)

NOTICE FROM THE TREASURER

Brian Dore, our Treasurer, urges us all to make things easier (and cheaper), and to pay by direct debit, a safe, efficient and money-saving way to keep our membership up to date. Here, he explains why we shall be charged 500 pesetas if we continue to pay by cash or cheque. If you have any queries, please call Brian on 835931

I am sure you will have read in the Club rules (see page 20) that from 31st October 1995 all those who pay their subscription by cash or cheque will have to pay a supplement of 500 pesetas. At the Club's Annual General Meeting, I promised that I would write an article for *Intercomm* explaining why this rule has been introduced and to explain the Andorran system regarding Direct Debit.

The Club has approximately 400 members, but the number of membership records is about 260, husband and wife being considered as one. Out of 260 records, I had to send reminders to 117 during 1994. In addition, some had to have second and third reminders. This involves a considerable amount of extra work.

Like all other members of the Committee, I am a volunteer and give my time to the Club. It is increasingly difficult to find extra time. It also costs money each time I send a reminder. My money!! It's virtually impossible to charge the club for a proportion of the cost for the use of my computer or paper. I frequently use the computer personally at the same time as it is being used for the club (e.g. while printing Club labels I use the computer for inputting some of my ornithological records). The toner cartridges for my printer cost just over £60 each and run out at alarmingly frequent intervals. It is impossible to keep one supply of paper for the club and one for myself since I would be forever changing the paper. I also waste a lot of time standing bank queues to pay in cheques, so please make my life easier.

Some members expressed their concern about any payment by direct debit. Your committee find this difficult to understand. We all pay Electricity, Telephone and Comu charges plus National Car Tax by direct debit. Why not your Club subscription?

The system in Andorra is better than in most countries. If we claim your subscription by direct debit and you do not wish to continue being a member, all you have to do is ask your bank to stop payment. This will be done at no cost to you; indeed, we have to pay bank charges should this situation arise. Furthermore we do not claim your subscription until you have been told we are about to do so. Everyone is sent an invoice about two weeks before their subscription is due to be renewed. Direct debits are claimed on the 15th of the month following the renewal date. The invoice will contain a prominent reminder that your subscription will be collected by direct debit, tell you the date it will be claimed, and invite you to tell me if you do not wish to renew. The exact form of the reminder is as follows:

Your direct debit will be claimed on 15th April 1995. Please contact the Treasurer (835931) if you do not wish to continue your membership.

One member expressed concern about security. My computer is a "Stand alone" system, i.e. it is not connected to a telephone system. No "hacker" can break into the system to transfer money electronically. Of course, a burglar could break in and steal the disc but this is no greater risk than a burglar breaking into your own home. Theoretically, you are at risk every time you issue a cheque.

However, the banks are extremely cautious about direct debits and usually carry out only those in favour of existing known customers.

All I need is the name of your bank, the branch address and your account number.

Thanks very much for your cooperation.

WHY NOT ADVERTISE IN THIS MAGAZINE ?

DO YOU KNOW ANYONE WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED?

If you do, please introduce them to us, and we will take it from there.

For your information the Advertising Rates are as follows:

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