

INTER COMM

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

MAGAZINE / REVISTA



VOL. 5 - Núm. 4 - SUMMER / ESTIU 1996

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

INFORMATION / INFORMATIU

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INTERCOMM

Club Internacional d'Andorra

Quarterly Magazine
June 1996

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD

by Tony Hooper

The Annual General Meeting was held on 8th May, and it was very pleasing to see so many members attending. Unfortunately, our President Sue Downham, was unable to be present since she had to travel to Madrid on business at the last moment.

Prior to the AGM, a meeting was held between the Group Leaders and the Executive Committee which led to a lively exchange of views. Later the Group leaders were able to give their individual reports to the AGM.

Elected to the Board were Brian Dore and Peter Parkinson (re-elected), and Caroline Friis-Pedersen and Lillias Grassie. As acting President, I explained to the meeting the distinction between the Board and the Executive Committee, which is charged with the day-to-day running of the Club. The Board, elected by the members, appoints, from amongst its own members, the Executive Committee. This is normally all the Board members, with the exception of the President. The Executive Committee then elect their own chairperson.

As was obvious from the meetings, the Club continues to thrive, with new Groups and a

Published by Club Internacional d'Andorra
Typeset by Margaret Shaida
Artwork by Hassan Shaida
Printed by Impremta Envalira S.L.,
Carrer Bonavista, Edifici Sol-i-Neu (Baixos), Andorra

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very extensive programme of Social Activities organised by **Ann Price** and **Josefina Martinez**.

One appeal to make - we are looking for someone to organise adventure and/or sporting outings, e.g. White Water Rafting, Walking Expeditions, etc. Any Volunteers...?

EDITORIAL

by **Margaret Shaida**

In this bumper issue, we have a number of reports on trips to Organya, Egypt and Seu d'Urgell, all organised by the active CIA Activities Group. The (very ambitious) trip to Egypt went off so well that **Ann Price** is planning another visit for next year.

We also have a very brief report on *Una Nit de Musica i Dansa*. Unfortunately, we went to press too early to do justice to this magnificent evening but we hope to have a comprehensive report in our next issue. This will look at the background to the organisation of the evening as well as reviewing the wide variety of entertainment.

As promised, we have a splendid article on *Castles in Spain* by **Peter Dunkley**. Peter looks at the history of these fascinating human towers as well as the traditions of competition in this informative and (as always) very readable feature.

We also conclude the two-part article on Golf by **James Shearlaw**. He explains the meanings of all those strange golfing terms (birdie, eagle, and so on) for the benefit of those who, like me, have no experience of golf other than an irresponsible round on the putting green.

And thanks to **John W. Tanner**, we are also able to reprint the Temporary Rules of the Richmond Golf Club drawn up in 1940 - a startling reminder of the determination of golfers to continue playing in the face of some very serious "hazards".

Following the article by **Tony Gee** in our last issue on what to do if we want to leave Andorra, we have received a request for an article on what we should do if we *never* want to leave Andorra - except, eventually, on a trip to the next world. Despite an understandable reluctance to address this problem, such a feature on what should be done in the event of someone's death might well be avidly read by many of us in the privacy of our own homes! Is there anybody who would be prepared to write such an article for Intercomm? If you have access to such information, please get in touch with **Tony Hooper** (Tel: 836154) or **Margaret Shaida** (860043).

STOP PRESS

Una nit de MÚSICA I DANSA

Another wonderful evening of varied entertainment enthralled us all last month when the Club once again organised a Night of Music and Dance. The international nature of the Club shone through the acts which ranged from classical ballet and modern dance, Spanish flamenco and a Japanese fan dance, and songs from Iberia, Korea and Wales as well as from British and American musicals.

The piano (a grand and a couple of electronics) featured large, with several original compositions of modern music vying with favourites from Ravel, Porter, Ellington and Chopin that thrilled us all.

We hope to have a full report of this marvellous evening in our next issue. The list of names on the back of the programme testify to the enormous amount of skill, talent and plain hard work that go into the organization of such a splendid show, and we, the public, are grateful to everyone who made the evening possible. We understand that *Una Nit* may become an annual affair - we certainly hope so!

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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

NATURALIST GROUP

Winter is a quiet time for the Group but video shows of members' trips and professional films were shown in January and February. In March, eleven members enjoyed a weekend trip to Aiguamolls d'Emporda. This is an exceptionally well laid out reserve on the coast near Rosas with good tracks and plenty of hides from which birds can be seen at very close quarters. The reserve always produces a wide range of birds particularly water birds, which are extremely rare in Andorra. This year we were lucky to see a Black-shouldered Kite. This small bird of prey is quite rare in Europe, there being only about 100 breeding pairs. They are normally only found in Extremadura and in adjoining areas in Portugal. The species is not migratory so the bird we saw was a long way from its normal range and presented quite a puzzle as to why it turned up so far from "home".

Anyone interested in joining the Group should call **Brian Dore** on 835931. The Group's planned programme for the year 1996 was given in the December issue of *Intercomm*.

WINE TASTING GROUP

The Group held its third meeting at Restaurant Can Pere in Anyos. There were eleven different wines to taste. Some wines were made in the traditional oak casks whilst some were made by more modern methods. They ranged from full bodied reds to more subtle flavours and covered a wide price range. The prize for guessing the mystery wine was won by **Patricia Wheatley**. Many participants stayed on after the tasting to enjoy a fine meal at the restaurant. **B.D.**

The group plans to hold its next meeting in early June - date will be confirmed to members by post. Meetings are also planned for September and December.

Those members who would like to participate in organising wine tasting activities are being keenly sought. For further details, telephone **Ivan and Diana Stansby** on 836210.

INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

Well, we haven't stopped working for a moment since last Christmas. First there was the Ordino Church concert with the Orpheo. Despite the ghastly hour, 10pm, many of you valiantly turned out, for which many, many thanks. Many thanks, too, to **Rene de Knight** for accompanying us both during some practice sessions and for the concert itself. We have been asked to do another concert with the Orpheo next year.

In the middle of April, **Binnie Segal** rejoined us and set to work polishing up our performance for *Una Nit de Musica i Dansa*. It is always wonderful to have her back.

New Singers Required

The more members a choir has the merrier, so we are most grateful, not only to the men who sang with us at the Ordino Concert, but also to the nine new women members who have joined us and who have practiced so regularly over the past few months. If any women singers would like to come along, please give us a ring. We are also urgently looking out for more men singers. We start work on our Christmas music next autumn, so men, do please give us a ring now to let us know you're joining us.

Further information from **Binnie Segal** 836296; **Brenda Ross** 836886; or **Maria Teresa Raurell** 836123.



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SCOTTISH DANCING

Despite being a bit thin on the ground this year, we have continued to enjoy ourselves at our Sunday afternoon dancing sessions.

We are now closing for the summer but plan to be back in action in the autumn when we hope more members will join us.

This season, we raised 17,800 pts for Mossen Joan's funds. The money will go towards the new youth centre.

TENNIS GROUP

The recently-formed tennis group now has some eighteen members. For the moment, this is still run on a "contact" basis - that is, we put interested people in touch with each other - but if more people joined, we could arrange tournaments and/or round-robin competitions.

So if you would like to join us on the tennis courts, then please call Ivan Stansby, 836210.

ACTIVITIES GROUP

The Activities Group goes from strength to strength, with a total of 350 participants, ranging in ages from six years to eighty plus, all having been on one or more trips since last October.

Ten of them went to Egypt in March - a report of this ten-day trip is given on page 11. A report on the day trip to the Sunday Market in Organya can be found on page 8, and another on the Chinese Meal in Seu d'Urgell on page 9.

There has been a change in the proposed plan given in the last magazine - the (June) trip to Avignon will now take place on 20th to 24th September, while the trip to Aiguestortes National Park will take place on 15th June.

Details of these and other trips will be sent to all members - indeed, you may even have received them by the time you get this magazine.

If there is anybody out there who would like to organise sporting activities - white water rafting, bungee jumping, hiking or fishing trips and so on, the Board would be very happy to hear from them. This would be quite separate from the "touring" activities on offer at present.

Oh, and please don't forget to think about how you can help out with the Club International Picnic which will take place on 29th August here in Andorra. Members with "foreign" cookery skills will be pressed to volunteer!

Further information available from Ann Price on 836653.

ACTIVITIES/HELPLINE DINNER

A dinner is planned, jointly by the Activities and Helpline Groups for July. It will be held at the Micolau Restaurant in Arinsal, and the Speaker will be Dinah Baxter. Members will be advised of time and date nearer the time. We do urge you all to support this event.

CAR BOOT SALE

Our annual Car Boot Sale will take place on Sunday, 23rd June in the Arinsal village car park, from 9am to 1.30 pm. If you have anything to sell, new or second-hand, here is your chance - and it is all good fun.

A Sales Pitch costs only 1,000 pts which goes to charity. For bookings and further details, please ring Caroline Friis Pedersen on 837457. Alternatively, you may wish to donate saleable items directly to the charities concerned:

La Massana Parish charities (Mossen Joan): Tel 836450

ADN - Environment (Ann Matschke): Tel: 841279

APAPMA - Animals: Tel. 828348

CARITAS - general charity, La Vells: Tel. 820709.



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COMPUTER ADVICE GROUP

The Computer Club of the International Club of Andorra now has a list of some thirty members who are using computers. The idea is to form a reference group of persons who have similar interests or computers and to make it possible for one member to refer to another similarly situated, thus a problem might be solved between them.

Stan Jones has a list of members and their "specialities". This is not to say that all these members are experts, but rather that they have some experience in certain aspects of the computer world - desk top publishing, word processing, scanning, Internet, etc. If you have any particular knowledge, please let Stan know. Exchange of information is important in this ever-changing world, so if you have up-to-date magazines or manuals that you would be prepared to lend to interested members, let Stan know.

The Internet

There are five members who are either on Internet or using Compuserve; many of the others are at present thinking of joining it. Up to quite recently, it was very expensive to use Internet in Andorra because the nearest telephone point was in Barcelona or Toulouse. This meant that everything was charged at long-distance rates.

This has changed with two local options: the first was Andomet which offers a competitive service with an annual fee plus a 4pts a minute charge for use in addition to the local phone charge of 8pts. Then, to our amazement and delight, the Andorran government became a free server for Internet with the cost of a phone call at 8pts per minute being the sole charge.

Two Internet users have had interesting experiences. One lady said that she now hears from her son in America, her daughter in England, and a niece nearly every day. She feels

she is more in touch with them now than when she lived much closer. The other, a man, says that formerly he was lucky if he heard from his son once a year at Christmas, but now he hears once and sometimes twice a day. A wag commented that it is easier to put cursor to screen than pen to paper.

The club organised a demonstration (in English) of these services last month. This was arranged by CEI, a computer company specialising in teaching Computer Science. They have a large screen for projection of the computer monitor. Sen. Augusti Boldu, a technician and enthusiastic user of Internet, demonstrated how to access E Mail, Fax and the resources of Internet.

If more members wish to attend another demonstration, please let Stan know so that he can arrange it for June or July. The cost is 1,000 pts for members (1,250 pts, non-members) for a two hour course in the morning.

Meanwhile, next time you're abroad, you might like to look around for literature about Internet, especially a directory of web sites, or manuals or other information on the Internet, for the information of our members.

Anyway, if you are interested in attending a possible future demonstration or in joining the computer club, or both, please call Stanley Jones on 836972.

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THE COFFEE MORNINGS

Between forty and fifty members (and not usually the same ones!) turn up each week to attend the Coffee Morning. The Club meets over coffee every Wednesday morning, 10.30-12.30, at the Paris-Londres Hotel. The hotel offers pleasant surroundings, ample parking, and a constant supply of coffee and drinks.

At least two members (usually more) of the CIA Committee are on hand to offer advice and guidance on what the CIA can provide and help. There is a notice board filled with information, offers of assistance, and requests for help, and up-to-date news of Club and Group activities. Bookings for the activities may be made at the Coffee Mornings, and the Weekly Newsletter is on sale (a bargain at 25 pts each), which means you get it at least two days (and often a week) earlier than by post. English-language magazines are often on hand for anyone to take. It's a pleasant morning, and entrance is ABSOLUTELY FREE! So do come along, meet other Club members, catch up with the news, and find out what's happening around town.

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HELPLINE

We should like to thank everyone who has been so generous: all those who have given a single large sum, all those who have arranged a standing order, and all those who give their help in so many other ways. Your assistance helps us to help others in time of their need.

During the avalanche crisis last February, Helpline was kept very busy helping all those whose homes in Arinsal (both temporary and permanent) were destroyed. We were able to come to the aid of residents and visitors, many of whom lost everything. We supplied emergency clothing and arranged for temporary accommodation. (One young man was so overcome with gratitude, he embraced me with tears in his eyes). We were delighted that Escala gave us a discount on some of our clothing purchases, and many CIA members were incredibly generous, giving clothing and food. Helpline was also able to help reimburse CIA members whose phone bills were more than doubled during the early days of the emergency.

Despite the extra work during the emergency, we were able to go on providing assistance on a regular basis - the expenses of a nurse to help an elderly lady, and our Meals on Wheels. In this regard, it has been agreed to offer our "cooks" 250 pts towards the cost of each meal.

We are also now able to offer to reimburse the expenses of anyone who takes a patient to hospital in Toulouse or Barcelona. Last year we organised an ambulance to take an elderly couple to Barcelona airport for repatriation.

And please don't forget - in the event of an accident or illness, Helpline has wheelchairs, Zimmer frames, crutches, walking sticks, bedpans, etc. available for loan in times of need.

Remember, we are not here just to ask for your help. We are also here to help you, in many ways. For further information call Dinah Baxter, 836980; Lillas Grassie, 838349; or Lyn Ayres, 843231.

TELEPHONE CONTACT GROUP

This is a Group that is already up and running - it is a support group for all those who live on their own and would like to receive or make morning calls. These are NOT hour-long chats (although the last one on your list may become that!!), but just a quick check-up call to ensure that all is well with the world! Further information from Lillas Grassie, 838349.

THE ART GROUP

Much of the work of the Group is now of a professional level and well worthy of a collective exhibition. This has been arranged, by courtesy of Ordino Comu, to take place in their hall (opposite the Topic restaurant). The art show opens Friday, 21st June at 7.30 pm with a cocktail reception to which all members are invited. It continues through 23rd June. Your support, in the form of attendance, will be very much appreciated.

The show will be of the sole efforts of the Group and its ex-members. The reception, publicity, organisation and supervision will all be taken care of by the Group members. Some of the art works are certainly worth collecting to grace one's home or office but the Comu has asked that any sale is arranged privately. Interested persons can contact **Nina O'Brien** who will be able to suggest a price and reserve items until after the show.

The Group is still interested in receiving dining-height chairs and tables for the studio. Illustrated magazines are always welcome for use as reference and inspiration in the weekly meetings, Tuesdays 1pm to 4pm in our studio in Andorra la Vella.

Illustrated magazines are always welcome for use as reference and inspiration in the weekly meetings, Tuesdays 1pm to 4pm in our studio in Andorra la Vella.

Any questions on the exhibition or more generally on the Art Group should be to **Nina O'Brien**, phone 837772.

INVESTORS' DISCUSSION GROUP (A Provisional Proposal)

Membership would be open to anyone who is a member of the CIA, who derives a significant part of his or her income from investment in stock exchange securities, and who plays a substantial part in the management of those investments. The Group would provide for the free exchange of information, but would not undertake to provide advice, or to make investments itself.

It is suggested that there should be an informal dinner, to be paid for by participants, at which the organisation and activities of the Group could be defined by those present.

Would anyone interested please get in touch with **Peter Parkinson**, Edifici Casamanya 2.2, Ordino, Tel: 835394.



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Reports on Activities

MARKET DAY IN ORGANYÀ

Organyà is a small town you flash past on your way to Barcelona. But Caroline Friis-Pedersen discovered that there was far more to it than that.

The big bonus for this excursion was that it began and ended in daylight so that, instead of catching up on sleep during the short journey to Organyà, we were alert enough to enjoy the scenery. This was specially dramatic after weeks of torrential rain, with the unusually high waters of the Valira and Seyre swirling angrily through the gorges.

For most of us, Organyà had been nothing more than a transit stop, so Ann's leaflets and potted history of the town were much appreciated.

A Potted History

It seems that in the Middle Ages, Organyà was part of the sub-district of Custellbó (near Seo airport). The Viscount of Custellbó was also the overlord of Cubó, St Juan and Andorra. However, for generations there was friction and the monks of Organyà over the control of the town and its market.

In 1208, Roger Bernat, Count of Foix, married the Viscount of Custellbó's daughter, Aunaldeta and in 1232 managed to reach an agreement with the Prior of Organyà whereby the tithes and revenue from the town and its market were to be shared with the Foix-Custellbó family in return for protection. The weekly market has been held until this day.

A set of six sermons using texts from the New Testament were discovered in the monastery in 1904. These are among the oldest documents ever written in the local Catalan, as opposed to Latin, and are housed in the Catalunya Library, with copies on display in the Organyà Tourist Office.

Bustling Market

When we reached Organyà, the market, bathed in sunshine, was already bustling with its stalls spread neatly over the whole of the main square. For such a small country town there was a surprisingly varied display of inexpensive, high-quality fruit, vegetables, flowers and plenty of bargain track-suits, jeans and shoes as well as a huge barrow of herbs for every imaginable

ailment - even for 'curing' unfaithful husbands, the stallholder told me, grinning. It didn't take long for us to fill our shopping baskets. The locals were all extremely friendly and helpful, clearly pleased to have a coachload of foreigners among them, often stopping us to chat or to ask if we needed directions. A couple approached one of us and invited her back to their flat for a cup of coffee.

A Cheese-Tasting

As it was market day, many of the town's shops were doing a roaring trade. One of the busiest was the tiny *xarcuteria*, selling cheeses and sausages for which Organyà is famous. Goats' cheeses mixed with ewe or cow's cheese, plain, some with local herbs, pepper or garlic were the most popular and the beaming proprietress pressed us to sample as many of these as we liked before actually buying.

On my way to the old quarter, I passed a bakery where there was a tempting array of cottage loaves of different shapes and sizes, some really enormous, all made in an old-fashioned wood-fired oven. I succumbed, of course!

Arcades and Gables

The "ancient city" was quite well preserved with small, thick-walled houses, some arcaded and others gabled with carved oak. The tethering rings still in place by the front door confirmed this as a farming community.

Walking down the dark, narrow lanes you'd suddenly come upon a little stone arch leading nowhere but revealing glimpses of the beautiful plains below. However, one of these arches turned out to be the entrance to a bodega, a really old-fashioned wine-cellar where you could turn the tap of huge 500-litre barrels to fill the family flagon with *moscatel* brandy or *pinorat* wine or just have a little tippie before passing through into the newsagent-cum-supermarket section from which you could exit into the sunshine - onto the main road to Seo.

(Continued at bottom of next page)

Reports on Activities

THE IBERIAN OPERATION

Aubrey Weatherbe sent us this military report on a most unmilitary activity - a dinner at the Chinese restaurant in Seu d'Urgell

18:00 Hours: March 15, 1996 - **Generalissimo Price** completed the final briefing for the proposed attack - target: **Drac d'Or**. Forty-eight members of the elite International Brigade made their separate and pre-determined way to Seu.

19:10 Hours: March 14, 1996 - The Attack Group went to their assigned tables and, armed with a chopstick in each hand, napkins tucked under chins, they chanted in six languages: "food...food...food."

19:12 Hours: March 15, 1996 - The highly capable staff of the beautiful Chinese restaurant, **DRAC D'OR**, swung into immediate action. Soon the tables of the hungry invaders were creaking under the weight of sixteen different and delicious Chinese dishes, replaced up to saturation level. Wines from the sunny slopes of Spain made a welcome appearance; empty bottles followed very quickly by equally enjoyable replacements.

Each person had the choice of the following: Chinese salad, spring rolls, shrimp chips, fried won ton, fried rice, beef with oyster sauce, chicken with almonds, sweet and sour pork, deep

fried fish, chicken with almonds, sweet and sour pork, deep fried fish, chicken with Chinese mushrooms, shrimps with tomato sauce, fried duck, squid with mushrooms, Chinese vegetables, Chinese bread, and for the pure at heart, white rice. For the very few with eyes larger than their tummies, there were also: chocolate ice cream cup, mango flan, Chinese fruits in syrup, or any combination of the above. No one starved!

One British subject from Hong Kong, after sampling all the dishes, was overheard to say (I believe): "Yummy! Yummy! Yummy!" Probably a Chinese word... My very good Australian friend, Jim What's-his-name, elegantly described the banquet as "Goodies... goodies... moltes goodies." (I wish I'd said that!) There were so many wonderful dishes and in such copious amounts that my Scottish friend actually said: "Enough! No more, please!" (I have sworn statements to this most unusual remark.)

The food, excellent; the service, first rate; and the price was right. But the **BEST PRICE** of all - **Generalissimo Ann**.

We thank you, General Commander.

(continued from previous page)

The church also spans the old and the modern sectors of Organyà. It is still recognisably twelfth century Romanesque, pleasant and well proportioned with startlingly beautiful stained glass windows allowing the sunlight to brighten the nether dark interior.

After three hours of pleasant shopping and meandering, we all met up at the Casa del Portal restaurant. Then, mellow and lazy after an excellent lunch, we piled back into the bus for a leisurely drive up the lovely, barely inhabited valley which lies between the Sierras de Prada and San Juan.

The Purest Waters

After a short climb, through pine trees on the one side and olive trees on the other, we reached the gentle cascading spring of Font

Bordonera.

A notice bade us drink of this "best of the purest waters, which is what the most intelligent people do": so we did. It was delicious and not too cold.

A Fitting Climax

At this beautiful and peaceful picnic spot we had time for a stroll or just to sit, chat and enjoy the view.

We were lucky enough to see a magnificent golden eagle cruising round the large sugar-loaf rock just above us in the sunshine - a very fitting climax to a most relaxing and enjoyable day in the country.

Many thanks to Ann and Fina for organising this trip so well and at such short notice; also to Rafael for his careful driving and brilliant six-point turns on narrow rural lanes.

RESTAURANT REVIEW

THE MICOLAU

Generous helpings and reasonable prices don't always go together, but Clare Allcard discovered this magical combination when she went out for dinner recently with her husband Edward and her daughter Kate.

After witnessing her generous heart during the avalanche crisis, I decided to see whether Fiona, proprietress of Arinsal's Micolau restaurant, served an equally generous meal. She does.

Situated up the road from the Hotel Solana, the Micolau is a simple, cosy 'English pub' restaurant with a welcoming fire at the far end. In front of this stands a chef, his eagle eye scanning the meats grilling above it.

On offer are a selection of entrées, a wide range of grilled meat dishes all of which came with baked potatoes and fresh vegetables, and then a choice of puddings. A good trencherman's menu.

While waiting for our entrées, we were served with all the ingredients necessary for Catalan toast. Kate's egg Benedictine arrived with the cheese topping still sizzling over the eggs and spinach. Edward's 'pasta of the day' was a large plate of slender spaghetti with mince and cheese sauce. Both claimed them to be delicious.

I ordered Micolau salad, an honest goodness plate of vitamins: lettuce, tomatoes, olives and onions. On a return visit, I tried the 'cream of leek' soup. Simply superb! That 'cream' is no euphemism.

Always fearful of an indifferent steak, Edward next plumped for a pork chop. He regretted it. Not only was his pork a trifle tough but my fillet steak, big, fat, rare and juicy, was of that highly prized, melt-in-the-mouth variety. Nobly, I offered Edward a bite to prove it.

Sadly, the vegetables were lukewarm and lacked flavour but the baked potatoes had good crispy skins and, garnished with garlic sauce - one of a selection from the sauce tray - tasted excellent.

Kate's entrecôte steak was quite the largest I've ever seen. Nevertheless, she took up the challenge, and almost finished it.

After the success of the fillet steak, I decided the Micolau warranted a final test: a crème caramel. To my mind, the very best crème caramels are not slippery-smooth but slightly bubbly and topped off by a smoky sauce. This had both, with a flourish of cream to support it.

Edward, who by now was feeling extremely well fed, ordered a simple chocolate ice cream, while Kate, despite her massive steak, voted for profiteroles in hot chocolate sauce. Could it be that I wasn't feeding her enough?

Despite the fact that my fillet steak, at 1,900 pts and Kate's profiteroles at 550 pts were among the most expensive dishes in their sections, our total bill for three meals and three beers came to 7,625 pts. With first rate service from Jill and Carol, our evening out was both enjoyable and excellent value for money.

(The Micolau is now closed for a well-earned rest, but will re-open on 15th June.)

*Do any of you have a favourite restaurant?
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From the Pyrenees to the Pyramids

The CIA's most ambitious activity to date took place last March, when ten members visited Egypt for a ten-day tour. Here, Margaret Shaida, and Ann Matschke tell us of their experiences in the land of the most ancient civilisation in the world.

There is a theory that a race of technologically advanced people once flourished on earth, long before any other known civilisation. In his book, *Fingerprints of the Gods*, Graham Hancock suggests that the conventionally-accepted dating of major archaeological sites around the world is incorrect. He cites Egypt as an example, stating that the Pyramids had been constructed exactly in line with the three belt stars of the Orion constellation, according to their positions more than ten thousand years ago. He goes on to say that the ancient Egyptians gleaned their sophisticated calculations from this race.

The Pyramids are indeed a massive mystery. The question as to how such enormous granite blocks used in their construction could have been moved by a people without modern machinery has remained unanswered for centuries, though suggestions of ramps appear to offer a solution.

The idea that the ancient Egyptians were a primitive people is absurd. They appear to have been a highly civilised and sophisticated society. They could write and had paper (papyrus); they understood astronomy, metal working, and were capable of moving single pieces of granite (of obelisk proportions) hundreds of miles down river. As early as 3,400 BC they had adopted a special symbol for the number ten, a system that remained unimproved until the introduction of the Arabic numerals we use today. The monuments, temples and tombs that have remained after more than 5,000 years are mighty edifices that tell us much of their lives.

What, we wonder, will remain of our own civilisation after a similar length of time? Modern paper and photographs disintegrate and fade within a few hundred years, and one

electrical storm could obliterate the computer and all its records in a single second.

A visit to Egypt leaves one awed and thoughtful, proud and humble.

But, first, it left us rather dismayed. When our small band arrived at Cairo airport, after a day-long journey, we faced an over-crowded, run-down arrival lounge. Delays and confusion seemed to bode ill. It was the only time our tourist agency seemed less than efficient, though we later wondered how much worse it might have been without them!

The hour-long drive across Cairo to the hotel did little to lift our flagging spirits. For those of us who weren't too tired to be nervous, it was a harrowing experience. We gasped and shouted warnings to our apparently deaf and blind driver, fingers whitening about the hand holds. That we reached the hotel at all seemed little short of a miracle. We collapsed into bed, wondering at our wisdom in coming on this C.I.A. "activity".

The next morning, we stepped out into the sunshine and cool air of the lovely gardens of the hotel with renewed optimism - immediately and richly rewarded by the sight of the great pyramids soaring above us, barely half a mile away. We each gasped in amazement, at the proximity and the size of them.

A close-up visit later in the morning was overwhelming. The pyramids are huge. You can't see the top from the bottom. Ahmed, our knowledgeable, patient and resourceful guide, said that, as a boy, he had climbed to the top - where he'd panicked at the great height and had to be helped down by older friends. We understood. We climbed up about six "blocks" via some sixty chiselled-out steps, and dared go no higher.



Nearby was a 130-ft long Solar Boat - one of the high-prowed boats thought to have conveyed the Pharaohs across the night sky towards the sun. This was housed in a plain modern building, and the entrance was alive with lads selling postcards, papyrus and head-dresses. They were the most persistent of all the street lads we encountered, and some actually unzipped waist bags and haversacks, grabbing at money. This was the only time we ever felt slightly threatened in Egypt. A pity, because the Egyptians appeared to be good-natured and pleasant. Even in crowded and poor areas, we never felt any resentment or intimidation. However, we did thereafter take great care of our bags and money - until, that is, three days later in Luxor, when one of us walked off leaving a wallet on a table of an open-air cafe - only to be chased by the owner who returned it intact. This was more typical of the friendly Egyptian people.

The Sphinx is magnificent. Backed by the Pyramids and a blue sky, it is far larger than I had imagined. The fact that the suburbs of Cairo lap at the very foot of the sphinx and the pyramids do not, surprisingly, detract from their splendour but rather emphasize the majesty of these ancient structures. The comparison of the ancient and modern can only leave the modern sadly wanting.

Later we went to the Pharoanic Island, a tourists' quick guide to ancient Egypt, a place where actors, somewhat reluctantly, play out the

roles of the ancient Egyptians, tilling the soil, making pots, papyrus and bricks.

By this time we had been made aware of the custom of giving *bakhsheesh*, so that we gave alms endlessly and to everyone: the driver and porter, the chambermaid who visited very frequently; stationery guardians at sites, gates, tombs, who really did nothing at all. There was over-employment, great poverty and many open hands. Fortunately, Ahmed protected us from most of these demands (no, not demands, rather, expectations), distributing tips and smoothing our way, so that we were often not aware of these requirements.

Later we visited the Mosque of Mohammad Ali which is a copy of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul, with atrium and inner Sanctuary. It became known as the Alabaster Mosque due to its inner and outer cladding. It has two minarets in the Turkish style. Four massive columns support the central dome and the original pulpit is of gold-plated, green-painted cedar.

A second alabaster pulpit was added later. The main dome is richly ornamented, this decoration repeated in the surrounding, half-circular ceilings. Entry to the Mosque requires the removal of shoes and for those wearing shorts, a long coat is provided to cover the irreverence of bare flesh. Carpets are spread throughout and the tourist groups sat with their guides. We sat with Ahmed on our carpet in the immensely restful atmosphere. It seemed a privilege to learn more of Egypt's main religion, told to us in a simple and moving way which earned our respect.

The Step Pyramid (shown on the front cover) is in the outer suburbs of Cairo. Said to be the oldest monument in the world (2,730BC), it is set in a vast funeral complex built by Imhotep, architect to the Pharaoh who founded the capital of Memphis. It was here that we first felt the stirrings of wonder and a deepening curiosity about the people who had lived here so many centuries earlier.



In front of the Mosque of Mohammad Ali in Cairo:

Top row, from left to right: Ann Matschke, Margaret Shaida, Joan Spiller, Lillas Grassie, Brenda Ross, Ann Bumpstead, Ann Price. Bottom row from left to right: Horst Matschke, Ahmed Fattah-Ramadan, Hassan Shaida, Sandy Ross

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We were also filled with wonder as Brenda and Hassan each took a ride on a camel. They were last seen disappearing over the horizon, crying "Hut, hut, hut" in true Lawrence fashion.

We spent two more days in Cairo, visiting a carpet factory, a perfumery, the Citadel (AD850), the Coptic Church, the bazaar and the Cairo Museum. Ahmed guided us to a few carefully selected exhibits in the large museum, giving us a brief history of Egypt (five thousand years) in a short space of time (an hour), "illustrated" with pharoanic exhibits, statues and antiquities.

He pointed out the Rosetta Stone, a decree by Ptolemy V written in three types of script, thus enabling a 19th century French Egyptologist to transcribe the hieroglyphs of ancient Egypt. And we saw the treasures from Tutankhamun's tomb - from where Ann Matschke had to be dragged, protesting at the shortness of time.

Four-Day Cruise

The next day, we flew to Luxor, on the banks of the Nile, a pretty, provincial town, once the ancient city of Thebes. Here, we joined the

luxury boat for our four-day cruise up the Nile to Aswan, and found ourselves out-numbered ten to by numerous large American tour groups.

Luxor is the site of a splendid group of temples (Karnak) extending over nearly three square kilometres. Built some 4,000 years ago, when Karnak was the centre of the Egyptian religion, it was the home of Amun and the supreme sun god of Heliopolis.

Everlasting Life

The Hypostyle Hall (where some of *Murder on the Nile* was filmed) is crowded with 82-foot-high columns which dwarfed us, and led us on into a narrow court where Queen Hatshepsut erected two splendid obelisks. Beyond was the sacred lake, used by the priests for purification. And it was by this lake that the moving *son et lumiere* show was concluded in the light of a full moon.

We were transported back in time, and began to comprehend that the setting sun (beyond the western banks of the Nile) promised not death but everlasting life in the sunlight beyond.



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Very early the next morning (Lilias can tell you the exact hour!) we set off for the west bank, crossing the Nile as the ancient Egyptians had done before us (though we went by motorboat). Our bus was waiting for us, as always, and passing by the Colossi of Memnon, we first hurried to the valley of the Queens - arriving before any other tourists! We looked at only three of the more than eighty tombs that have been discovered on this site.

We visited the magnificent tomb of Queen Hatshepsut, and then rushed on to the Valley of the Kings. This was Ann Matschke's dream, and she dropped to her knees to kiss the ground. There are hundreds of tombs here, but only a few are opened in turn to the public. "The Tombs are open, 6am to 5 pm" - an oddly modern time limit for such timeless treasures. The most famous is that of Tutankhamun, though the relics have been removed to the Cairo Museum.



The Valley of the Buses

Ahmed then took us to the "Valley of the Buses", where hundreds of late-rising tourists were pouring into the Valley of the Kings, and where our own mini-bus was waiting to take us on to the recently-discovered tomb at the artisans' village. Despite the fact that there was a temporary power failure, we were able to see the exquisite paintings that line the small tomb and which excel much of the painting in the royal tombs. Then back to look at and buy some of the finely-crafted gold, for which Luxor is so famous.

After so much sightseeing, we looked forward to a relaxing afternoon and evening on the boat, sailing up the Nile, watching rural Egypt as we passed by. The river is the longest in the world, and is one enormous linear oasis. It is the heart and soul of Egypt, the source of its life, wealth and culture. The land lining the shores is richly green, dressed with palm trees, and backed by the desert. As we gazed across to the barren Thebian mountains, we imagined five thousand miles of Saharan desert between us and the Atlantic Ocean. There appeared to be little development along the banks of the Nile, an occasional new building, a glimpse of tarred road, a straggle of telephone lines, and, as dusk fell, electric lights in some of the scattered houses.

It was easy to imagine that visitors, travellers and residents alike would have observed much the same scenes over the past five thousand years. But it was easy to imagine that visitors, travellers and residents alike would have observed much the same scenes over the past five thousand years.

The temple at Kom Ombo is situated on a mighty bend of the river, affording it splendid views. As we stepped ashore, it was bewitchingly beautiful, as the temple glowed in the golden rays of the setting sun. Later, the floodlighting threw into relief the walls of the temple, which stood before us, like open books, illustrating the life of the ancient Egyptians.

In the evening, on board, our party attended the fancy dress ball. Those who decided to participate more than made up for those who didn't! Brenda and Sandy were a magnificent sight in their Bahraini robes, while Ann Price looked mysteriously lovely in her Arab dress. But it was Hassan who stunned everyone in his attempt to look like a Pharaoh.

The next day we arrived in Aswan. We first visited the granite quarries, which didn't sound like an awful lot of fun, but which turned out to be fascinating. It was from a quarry such as this that the ancient Egyptians cut the stones for the pyramids, temples and obelisks, for

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shipment down river, far to the north. An unfinished 118-foot-long obelisk which would have weighed 1,320 tons, remained attached to the bedrock.

It seems that while they had been prising it out, it had split down the middle. They left it where it was, thus enabling modern archaeologists to discover how they had cut out such massive single pieces of stone: they chipped holes out along the line of the stone to be removed, into which were inserted wedges of sycamore. Kept well-soaked, the wood swelled and shattered the block of stone.

It lay before us, as though left only the day before, and one could only conjecture what language the foreman had used when he'd discovered that the obelisk was cracked.

We sailed across to the sacred Island of Philae where the Temple of Isis and Horus dominate the group of monuments clustered there. The surrounding water seen through the doorways and arches gave it an air of a Greek island.

We visited the dams (yes, there are two: one built by the British at the turn of the century, as well as the High Dam). It is neither the time nor the place here to tell the story of the international UNESCO rescue operation that saved the numerous temples from the flood waters. Suffice it to say that the more energetic among us (all except Ann Price, Hassan and Margaret) flew off to the great rock temples of Abu Simbel, saved from submersion.



ABU SIMBEL

What would induce seven weary travellers from Andorra to get up at dawn, make the bumpy ride to Aswan airport, join another Egypt Air flight full of tourists to fly to Abu Simbel? Maybe it was the thought that it could be the best part of the tour, and one mustn't miss it; or the memory of newspaper headlines of the gigantic rescue operation, completed in 1968. Whatever the reason, I personally was not expecting such a rich and awesome experience. Postcards and photos reproduce the majestic statues, but nothing can prepare you for the beautiful temple erected to glorify its constructor, Ramses II the Great. To think that the structure, with its pillars and beautifully decorated interior walls, still colourful, has endured over three thousand years. And then, starting 1965 the rock-cut temples of Abu Simbel were cut into 1,036 blocks weighing an average of thirty tons each and moved and rebuilt sixty-four metres higher up, above the waters of the new level of the Nile. The final miracle is that each February, the rays of the sun still shine on the three gods inside the inner sanctuary, just as they did on the original site.

Brenda Ross

We went to the Aswan bazaar, where the road had been surfaced many years before. As we picked our way through the streets, past rubbish, around puddles and matter in a melee of people, stalls, sellers, horses, donkeys, vehicles and bicycles, we saw a sign which read:

"Please endeavour to keep your city clean". g

But the tiny shops were bright and full of fascinating things, the people helpful and smiling. We had a meal in a local Egyptian restaurant, and went on a tour of a Nubian village via a *felucca* (a local Nile boat). This completed our sightseeing tours in Aswan.

The hotel was so luxurious and the weather so balmy, we were tempted to stay on for a few days of rest and recuperation.

But the next day, we were up and away for the flight to Cairo, and another busy day. Our arrival this time was calm and orderly, and we set forth in the afternoon to witness the making and painting of papyrus. We also bought some, of course, and were only slightly distressed on our return to Andorra to find framed papyrus pictures on sale in *Pont de Trobada* for rather less than we had paid in Cairo. Of course, the ones we bought are very superior in quality! A quick dash to a gold emporium, and our shopping was completed, along with our energy and money.

On leaving Cairo airport, Joan was detained because her passport had not been cancelled when she'd arrived. Joan remained calm, while Ann

THE BEST AND THE WORST

Ann Bumpstead: I was most impressed by the friendly, pleasant and honest staff at all the hotels and on the boat - they were delightful. The worst was when I saw two large bags of rubbish being tipped into the Nile from a passing cruiser.

Lilias Grassie: The Pyramids were the best (to see them was a dream come true) and also Abu Simbel; the worst part was the thousands of tourists - everywhere.

Ann Matschke: The most impressive was the Valley of the Kings; the worst was the Pharoanic Island which was kitsch and dirty.

Horst Matschke: The finest part of the tour was the Upper Nile; I had no "worst" - it was all splendid.

Ann Price: The highlight was seeing Hassan at the Fancy Dress Party on board; the worst was hearing the detailed complaints of the American tourists on board who all appeared to be suffering from the "Pharaoh's Curse".

Brenda Ross: Abu Simbel was the best, really magnificent; the worst was when the urchins tried to grab at our money at the Solar Boat Museum. I found that quite upsetting.

Sandy Ross: My first sight of the Pyramids was the best; the worst was the Pharonic Island. I didn't like that at all.

Hassan Shaïda: The best part was the warm Middle Eastern atmosphere; the worst was the incompetent traffic police in Cairo, who could snarl up the traffic single-handedly.

Margaret Shaïda: The best was our visit to the Temple at Kom Ombo at dusk. The worst was trying to do too much in too short a time. We really needed two weeks to do everything!

Joan Spiller: I thought Cairo was the best - it was so interesting, the streets full of life, people, cars, camels, donkeys - it was full of character. It was also the worst - dirty and chaotic.

Price coolly sorted out the problem. (When we'd arrived, it had been **Hassan** who'd been detained - not bad going for ten people!) And then Egypt Air was not granted permission to enter European Union air space. Finally, two hours late, we took off. **Ann Price** slumped in her seat, overwhelmed with relief at getting all ten of us back on the flight to Barcelona. Her only worry now was whether **Rafael** would wait for us. He did, of course. And we immediately set off for Andorra.

One final point should be made: many of us suffered from a virulent strain of influenza on our return, making it appear that we had picked up some vile disease in Egypt. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we appear to have carried a nasty strain of 'flu to Egypt with us,

carefully nurturing it until we returned to Andorra. Then in the peace and comfort of our own homes, we submitted to its ravages!

This tour was one of **Ann Price's** finest achievements in the world of CIA Activities. The arrangements throughout the ten days were faultless, the mini-bus on hand to take us everywhere in Egypt. Our suitcases magically appeared in our rooms, and the schedule was nearly always followed, no mean feat in a country where so many things can go wrong. And go wrong things did, but it was never to the group's detriment. Between them, **Ann** and **Ahmed** always managed to resolve them. To be transported door to door, from our homes in Andorra to the finest sites in Egypt was indeed a remarkable feat.



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NOTES FROM THE 19TH HOLE

In this second part, we look at the terms used in golf. James Shearlaw continued with his informative report of an ancient Scottish game.

LANGUAGE/TERMS, (the printable ones, that is!)

A ROUND: Once varied from place to place but now officially consists of eighteen holes. A major championship is four rounds of stroke play.

TEEING GROUND: The starting place of the particular hole to be played.

"THROUGH THE GREEN": Nowadays the whole area of the course except the teeing grounds, the putting greens, and all hazards on the course.

HAZARDS: Any 'bunker' or 'water hazard'. Bunkers ('traps') are strategically placed 'through the green' or around the putting green at points where mis-hit or "off the line" shots suffer as a result. Mention of bunkers brings to mind two stories both involving the notorious HELL bunker on the fourteenth hole at the Old Course at St. Andrews.

The first (untrue) goes as follows: Player to opponent whose ball is still lying up against the very steep face of a bunker: "How many have you taken?" Reply: "I went in at 10.56. It's now three minutes past. Make your own bl...y guess!"

The other (true) involved an American entrant in a "British Open". He finally got his ball out onto the fairway, completing the hole for a total of ten strokes, thereby utting paid to his chances of winning the title. Later came a cable from his son in the States saying "Come home, Dad, all is forgiven." The competitor? Chap called Jack Nicklaus.

CASUAL WATER: This is any temporary accumulation of water on the course, normally caused by very heavy rain. It is not a water hazard, which can be any sea, lake, pond, stream and so on.

PAR and BOGEY: Originally both words meant the same thing, i.e. the number of strokes the average competent player might be expected to take for a hole of about the same given length. Later, in the U.S.A. bogey became the meaning of one stroke over Par, double-bogey two over Par.



Two under Par is an **EAGLE**; three under is an **ALBATROSS**.

SLICE, PULL, PUSHED: Used to describe a shot, which, when played, veers sharply in an arc to the right (slice) or to the left (pull). A pushed shot is a straightly hit shot but well to the *right* of the correct straight line.

ROUGH: The thicker grass, heather, scrub or any rough ground which borders the trimmed "fairway".

DOG-LEG: Any hole laid out in the shape of a dog's hind leg.

APPROACH SHOTS/CHIPS: Former nowadays mainly describes the final shot to the green. Usually played with a very lofted (face) club, resulting in a high trajectory flight. A ball struck just behind so as to produce a "back spin" which in turn produces little or no forward movement of the ball on landing. Some prefer to play "pitch and run" shots - low flight and lots of roll forward. Nature of the course often determines the choice of shot, in either case. **CHIPS** are very low short shots hit from just off the putting surface.

PUTTING: Most greens not being completely level, the "line" to the hole has to be "read", and where necessary, an allowance made for the "borrow" as it is called, i.e. a deviation from a straight line. A long putt made and which ends very close to the hole is said to be laid "stone-dead" or "stony".

The hole itself must be 4 1/4 inches (108 mm) in diameter and at least four inches below the green's surface. First-class putting or otherwise on the day makes the main difference in scoring. Always been so - "it's aye the puttin'." Every golfer knows the adage, "Never up, never in".

COURSES: Types are links, inland or park-land. The former are now taken to mean a course laid out in natural sea-side country with sand dunes around. By the way, each hole (and many of the bunkers) on the "Old" at St. Andrews has a name. 'BOBBY JONES' (the tenth). Bunkers include: 'The Beardies', 'Principal's Nose', 'Scholars', and 'Wig'.

ETIQUETTE: No Rules, as such. Each player is virtually his/her own referee. Streets ahead of all

other games in terms of chivalrous behaviour. So, happy viewing, or playing! (Thomas, my ten-year-old grandson, uses the Cortals above Encamp as his learning/playing "course" when here on holiday. Ideal place - and cost free! Try it!)

CORRECTIONS!

To the first part of the *From the 19th hole*

Page 12: Playing Equipment, line 5:

for "lightly" read "tightly"

Page 12: The Clubs, line 7:

for "brassiers" read "brassies"

Page 12: The Clubs, line 9:

for "clack" read "cleek"

We apologise to our readers and to James Shearlaw for these misprints.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Note from the Editor:

While we're on the subject of Golf, we received a letter from **John W. Tanner**, who most kindly sent us a copy of the temporary rules of Richmond Golf Club in 1940, which he thought we might find of interest. He's right! They are quite fascinating, and we should like to thank him for sending them in to us.

These emergency rules were drawn up during the Second World War in Britain, and reveal a determined dedication to continue playing golf in the face of some pretty frightening circumstances. It is clear from these rules that, come hell or high water, the Game Must Go On!

Apparently these rules were reprinted in the September 1995 issue of *Pell-Mell and Woodcote* (the RAC quarterly magazine for members), and we reprint them here for the amusement and information of our golfing members:

1. Players are asked to collect Bomb and Shrapnel splinters to save these causing damage to the Mowing Machines.
2. In Competitions during gunfire or while bombs are falling, players may take cover without penalty for ceasing to play.
3. The position of known delayed action bombs are marked by red flags at a reasonably, but not guaranteed, safe distance therefrom.

4. Shrapnel and/or bomb splinters on the Fairways, or in Bunkers within a club's length of a ball, may be moved without penalty, and no penalty shall be given if a ball is caused to be moved accidentally.

5. A ball moved by enemy action may be replaced, and if lost or destroyed, a ball may be dropped no nearer the hole without penalty.

6. A ball lying in a crater may be lifted and dropped, not nearer the hole, preserving the line to the hole, without penalty.

7. A player whose stroke is affected by the simultaneous explosion of a bomb may play another ball from the same place. Penalty one stroke.



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CASTLES IN SPAIN

Each weekend, throughout the summer months from the end of April through to November, human castles appear all over Catalunya. Peter M. Dunkley looked into the origins of these fabulous and skillful displays.

The performance was to start at midday but already by eleven o'clock, people were packing the plaza in front of Terrassa's town hall. The Minyons were going to attempt something that hadn't been achieved for a century, and everyone wanted to see the action.

The Minyons of Terrassa build castles - but with a difference. They're constructed not of bricks or stone, but flesh and blood; tier after tier of people who clamber on each others' shoulders to erect spiralling structures underpinned by muscle, balance and sheer determination.

Castellers is concentrated in Spain's north-east, in the coastal strip and hinterland between the cities of Barcelona and Tarragona. It's a region where old palaces, churches, olive trees and the vineyards of Penedes rub shoulders with sprawling, industrial enclaves. Its centre is Valls, a town respected as the birthplace of modern castle-building.

Ball of the Valencians

In the seventeenth century, groups of folk-dancers performed the 'Ball of the Valencians' in the area. Displays usually ended with the building of a mini-castle, three or four levels high. Eventually, the castles eclipsed the dances as a spectacle. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two groups in Valls were constructing six-tier castles. The first eight-high was recorded

in 1819.

Today's top teams build castles of eight tiers almost as a routine. Even nine are becoming common. "The important thing, though," says the Minyons' *cap de colla* - leader - Marc Roure, "is how many people there are in the tiers and whether they're reinforced. The fewer the people, the less stable the structure. But if there are a lot of people and no reinforcement, that's even more difficult."

On this, the final performance of their already record-breaking season, the Minyons' objective was a 4 of 9 *sense folre*. The last - and only - time it had been achieved was in 1881. Many consider it the most difficult structure ever built. In height, it's about equivalent to a four-storey building.

The Structure of a Castle

Castles have three parts: base, trunk and peak. The base, at ground level, counts as one tier; the peak as three. It's always composed of two youngsters, one crouched over the other, with both of them bracing their legs on the shoulders of two people beneath them. Between the base and the peak, the trunk consists of tiers, each with one to four people; occasionally, five or more. Properly speaking, the structure is only a 'castle' when there are three or more. When there are two, it's a 'tower', and one, a 'pillar'.

Because of their height and weight, eight or nine-tiered castles and towers are usually reinforced by extra people. Rein-

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Reinforcement at the second tier is known as *amb folre*; at both second and third tiers, *amb folre i manilles*. With no reinforcements, it's *sense folre* - without *folre*.

With a grasp of the basics, it's easy to follow the argot. The Minyons 4 of 9 *sense folre*, for example was to be a nine-high castle with each of the tiers in the trunk having four people. As it was *sense folre* there would be no reinforcement.

Last Minute Preparations

The Minyons made their last-minute preparations. Dressed in white cotton trousers and mauve shirts - the team colours - embroidered with their insignia, the members of the *colla* helped each other wind a five-metre long black sash around their waists and lower torso. It's designed to brace the back and provide a toe-hold for the climbers. At midday, they assembled in the plaza, together with their musicians - four *grallers* (pipes) and a *timbal* (drum).

Displays of *castellera* always feature other groups, as well as the home team. This time, the Castellers of Barcelona and Cornellà were also performing. The Barcelona *colla* completed a 2 of 7 and a 3 of 8. The Cornellà group failed with a 4 of 8, despite three attempts. They roused the spectators, though, with a special variation of a 3 of 7. Instead of the *castellers* climbing up and over each other, the entire structure was pushed up from underneath in an amazing display of sheer strength. The crowd was even more

delighted when the *colles* not only erected the castle but unloaded it as well.

The Traditional Salute

In *casteller*-speak, 'unloading' has a special meaning. "We consider the castle 'built,'" the Minyons' leader explained, "when all the tiers are in place and the youngster at the very top waves the traditional salute to the crowd. But getting everybody down is just as challenging."

"That's why, in the case of bigger castles, we give almost as much credit to unloading as to building. Actually, to equal the 1881 record, we have to do more than build the 4 of 9 *sense folre*, we've got to unload it as well."

Enthusiasm for *castellera* increases every year. The best groups draw enormous crowds and their performances are covered regularly by Spanish TV and press. The season used to open on the feast day of St. John on June 24th and close on St. Ursula's on October 23rd. Now, it starts early in April and continues to mid-December. In the last five years, seventeen new groups have been formed. In all, thirty-eight groups perform almost every week. There's interest in other countries, as well. The Minyons visited Berlin to give a display during 1995.

Prize Money

Every two years, the city of Tarragona hosts a marathon display. In 1994, despite bad weather, 18,000 people packed the arena for six hours to watch 23 groups. The Concourse is unusual because the *colles* compete against each other. Last year, the judges awarded some \$8,000 in prize money. The first group won \$5,000. It's not a large amount but for many critics, it's \$5,000 too much.

The Minyons, together with ten other groups, boycotted the Tarragona show. "We accept contributions to cover our travel and other



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expenses," says Marc Roure, "but we don't think it's right to commercialise what we do. It's part of our tradition and culture. We're not in this for the money. When we build our castles, we want to do better than before, not beat someone else."

To understand their feeling about this, you have to know something of Catalan history. A proud and independent people, the Catalans of northern Spain have always resisted integration with the rest of the country. They opposed Franco and for years were persecuted as second class citizens. Their language, Catalan, was banned from schools. Thousands fled over the border to resettle in southern France.

With painful memories like these, present-day Catalans are committed to protecting their language, culture and traditions - all the things that distinguish their race. When a Catalan writer said "These are our bulls", he was proclaiming *castellera* as a part of Catalunyan tradition akin to the cult of the bull in the remainder of Spain.

Unsurprisingly, he was also opposed to the principle of the Tarragona Concourse with its publicity. "Modern communications can help integrate a society by spreading knowledge of its customs, but when they convert them into commercial spectacles, those customs lose their roots in the people."

In the plaza, the Barcelona *colla* had just completed a 4 of 8 *amb folre*. It was a polished

performance, but the crowd of six thousand were waiting for the highlight of the programme.

Trouble Shooting

The Minyons leader assembled the members of the *pinya* - the base. Not part of the castle, himself, the *cap de coll's* responsibility is trouble-shooting; to decide if the *pinya* is solid and to spot any problems as the castle goes up. If he decides it's not going to succeed, he can call off the attempt any time before the fifth tier is in place. The *colla* is allowed three tries.

The *pinya* resembles a huge, circular rugby scrum and as in a scrum, its core members all have their places and functions. The result is an immensely solid wedge of interlocking bodies. The principles were worked out long ago and few changes have been made, despite experiments.

With the inner core in place, a crowd of supporters piled in to reinforce the foundation, huddling down, thrusting their chests and shoulders against the person in front, grasping each other with arms or hands. Members

of the other two *colles* added their weight as well. Later, someone estimated there were six people in the *pinya* that day.

The Finest this Century

The Minyons had been on a winning streak for some time. The season before, they had built and unloaded a tower of 9 *amb folre i manilles*, for the first time in history. A few weeks before, at a meeting in Barcelona, they'd given the finest single performance of any group this century. "It was two years ago when we made the decision to go for the 4 of 9 *sense folre* and we've been training for it ever since," said the group's second-in-command, Carles Feiner.

Exercise Programme

In their Terrassa headquarters, the Minyons practice four hours a week, ten months of the year. The people who compose the base, trunk and peak all have different tasks so their exercise



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programme is tailored accordingly. It's supervised by Carles and Marc Roure, the *cap de colla*, who also acts as coach.

Like other *colles*, the Minyons need new blood every season. Both the *anxaneta* and *aixecador* - the youngsters who climb, monkey-like, to the topmost and next-to-top tiers respectively - must be small and light-weight. It's in the nature of things, though, that they usually last only two seasons before literally outgrowing their positions; it takes three to four months to train their replacements.

"We go around to the primary schools in the area," says Carles, "and show videos of the Minyons. Then we ask if anyone is interested in joining us. If their parents agree, we do some tests and then enroll the best kids. At present, we have about thirty."

The *castellers* of each tier are carefully sized to balance the structure. If there are unexpected dropouts or injuries during the season, it can create problems. It's one reason why the Minyons like to have a large group to draw on. Presently, there are six hundred, including over two hundred girls - particularly valued for places in the middle and upper tiers. With students, construction works, doctors, mechanics, lawyers, factory hands, architects and a score of other occupations amongst its members, the *colla* is a microcosm of Terrassa's society.

The noise in the plaza tapered to silence. The Minyons' *cap de colla*, satisfied that the foundation was solid, had signalled the second and third tiers to start climbing. Immediately, eight *castellers* clambered on the backs of the *pinya*, making for its centre, two metres away. Already, behind them, were another eight to form the fourth and fifth tiers.

From that point on, until the castle was either loaded and unloaded - or abandoned - that action had to be non-stop. "Speed is essential,"

Carles. "Our target is about two minutes to build the castle and another one to unload it. The longer we take, the greater the risk of failure."

As the fifth tier was placed, the *timbal* and *grallers* sounded across the plaza, announcing that the attempt was official. The sixth tier members were already on the shoulders of the fourth. Below them, the *castellers* of the peak - the *dos*, *anxaneta* and *aixecador* - were climbing the lower levels. The Minyons' *anxaneta* was a nine-year old boy, the *aixecador*, a seven-year old girl. Both members of the *dos* were young teenagers. Although it was only their first season, they were cool, determined players, but now, they were under enormous pressure.


As the *aixecador* tried to straddle the shoulders of the *dos*, she slipped. Opposite and watching her intently as she scrambled to recover, the *anxaneta* awaited his chance. If the *aixecador* could regain her position even for a moment, he might be able to clamber over her shoulders long enough to make the traditional salute from the top, before the structure fell apart. At least, the Minyons would get credit for building the castle, even if they weren't able to unload it.

It was too late. The *dos*, unbalanced by the frantic movements of the *aixecador* above them, started to sway, out of control. Within seconds, the castle collapsed, hurling some 24 bodies in all directions. The backs and shoulders of the *pinya* absorbed most of the impact - it's a hazard that goes with the job - but after a few minutes' investigation, the *cap de colla* decided to call off another attempt. Two key people in the upper tiers had been injured; one had a broken nose.

The show went on, though. Later, the Minyons built and unloaded a 3 of 9 and a 4 of 9, *amb folre*. The crowd gave them a huge ovation. They hadn't achieved their goal, but it was still a great performance. "We'll be back next season," said the *cap de colla*, afterwards.

The years from 1851 to 1889 are inscribed in the history of *castellera* as a golden age. They witnessed an amazing series of structures most of which have not even been attempted so far in our century; amongst others, a pillar of 8 *amb folre i manilles*, a tower of 8 *sense folre*, a 5 of 9 *amb folre* and a 4 of 8 wrapped around a pillar of 6 in the middle. If the momentum had continued, who knows what exotic constructions might have been built today. After 1889, though, *castellers* went into steady decline. People deserted the area in droves after phylloxera blighted the vines and

(continued on page 24)

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NEWS IN BRIEF

We were delighted to hear that one of our members, **Jan Hardie**, together with another Jan (Coles) between them raised 253,000 pts towards the funds for the Centre d'Acol·liment d'Infants - an Andorran organisation caring for deprived children. About half the money (124,500 pts) was spent on organising a happy Christmas party for the children (complete with presents), while the other half (125,000 pts) was donated towards educational and holiday trips during the current year. You will recall that last year, a group of children from Chernobyl (all suffering from respiratory diseases) came to the clear air of the Andorran mountains. This visit was such a success, it is hoped that a second visit will be arranged for another group this year.

Overheard on the trip to Egypt: "I brought sun tan lotion, mosquito repellent, anti-diarrhoea pills, penicillin powder, eye ointment and corn pads," she said, sneezing. "But I *didn't* bring anything for the common cold. Do you have any cough drops?"

Did you know that hand-made Greetings Cards are available at the Coffee Mornings (and at Estil Nordic). The cards are made with pressed flowers, and are suitable for all occasions.

If, like me, you've had trouble explaining (in non-existent Catalan or Spanish) exactly how you want your pictures framed, you will be pleased to hear that there is an excellent frame-maker in Avenue Meritxell who speaks English, and who works with graphics and originals. Details of "4 Ingletes" can be found on page 19.

And don't forget that **Stella Madden** runs a lending library of paperbacks and jigsaw puzzles. Anyone interested in borrowing books and/or puzzles for a small fee should call Stella on 837681. Last year, Stella donated funds to Apapma, ADN and Helpline as a result of money raised through her library.

(continued from page 22)

wiped out the wine-making business for three generations. Industrialisation siphoned further thousands from the countryside to Barcelona and other cities. There were few *castellers* left to continue the tradition.

Today, though, aficionados are referring to the decades of the 1980's and 90's as a second golden age. With new *colles* pushing the older ones to ever greater efforts to maintain their reputation as leaders, each year has seen more castles of 9 built than in the one before. Objectives are more ambitious. Training has become more rigorous and scientific. Perhaps it won't be long before the castles of Spain rise to ten tiers for the first time ever. © Peter Dunkley

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We do hope you haven't forgotten the Helpline Recipe Book. We urge you to let Lillias Grassie have a copy of your favourite recipe. She also needs some background to or history of the recipe or some idea of when and where you first ate it and why it's your favourite.

The following heart-warming report was sent to us by **Tony Hooper**:

Once again, I was pleased to travel with the Andorran team - this time for the first Special Olympics for the Small Nations of Europe held in Monaco on 10th to 12th May.

In addition to our own team, there were teams from Iceland, Gibraltar, Cyprus, Luxembourg, San Marino, and, of course, our hosts, Monaco.

The Games were held in the main stadium and were opened by Princess Caroline and Prince Albert of Monaco. The organisation was superb, and the results for Andorra were excellent.

I do not believe that *one* of the athletes, swimmers or footballers came back *without* a Gold, Silver or Bronze medal - and many of them had several.

One of the highlights of the event was when all the teams paraded in the Stadium during half-time in the football match between A.S. Monaco and Strasbourg. They were all given a tremendous reception by the fans, and everyone stayed on to enjoy the second half of the game.

The next Small Nations Games will be held in Luxembourg, but long before that, Andorra will be preparing for the Catalan Games, which usually attract teams from many countries all over Europe. This is due to be held at Reus at the end of October this year.

Overheard on the Nile cruise: 'Do you know the names of all the tributaries of the Nile?' After a long pause, the answer came. 'Well, I suppose it must be the Juveniles.'

And, finally, Brenda Ross sent us a copy of this Tourists' Prayer by Art Buchwald, which we reprint here (with, we hope, the kind permission of the *Los Angeles Times*!):

'Heavenly Father, look down on us your humble, obedient tourist servants who are doomed to travel this earth, taking photographs, sending postcards and buying souvenirs. We beseech you, O Lord, to see that our plane is not hijacked, our luggage is not lost and our overweight baggage goes unnoticed. Give us this day divine guidance in our selection of hotels. We pray that the telephones work, and that the operators speak our language.

'Lead us to good, inexpensive restaurants where the wine is included in the price of the meal. Give us the wisdom to tip correctly in currencies we do not understand. Make the natives love us for what we are, and not for what we can contribute to their worldly goods. Grant us the strength to visit the museums, cathedrals and palaces, and if we skip an historic monument to take a nap after lunch, have mercy on us for our flesh is weak.

'Dear God, protect our wives from "Bargains" they don't need or can't afford. Lead them not into temptation for they know not what they do. Almighty Father, keep our husbands from looking at foreign women and comparing them to us. Save them from making fools of themselves in nightclubs. Above all, please do not forgive them their trespasses for they know exactly what they do.

'And when our voyage is over, grant us the favour of finding someone who will look at our holiday snaps and listen to our stories, so that our lives as tourists will not have been in vain. Amen.

Overheard at the coffee morning: Have you ever wondered why they say Amen and not Awomen? I don't know, but it's probably for the same reason that they sing hymns and not hers.

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