

MAGAZINE / REVISTA



VOL. 6 - Núm. 2 - WINTER / HIVERN 1996

CLUB INTERNACIONAL D'ANDORRA

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INTERCOMM

Club Internacional d'Andorra

Quarterly Magazine

December 1996

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NEWS FROM THE BOARD

by Tony Hooper

Once again another year draws to a close. A time to look forward to renewed vigour in the Club, but also a time to reflect on the twelve months of 1996. I, and the members of the Committee, believe that this has been one of the best years in our history. Every month has seen members enjoying activities of a widely varying nature. The work of organisation put in by a small number, Ann Price, Josefina Martinez and Caroline Colvin-Smith in particular, has provided members with some unforgettable experiences, from picnics to two- and three-day trips, from meals with speakers to a Car Boot Sale. All have been well received and well supported. One offshoot of these activities, and the appointment of Caroline as Publicity Officer, has been the increased coverage in the local media of the Club and its activitis, and a greater acceptance into the life of the principality. The work of members with A.D.N. and APAPMA has also been recognised, and the Art Show mounted by the Art Group, and the private show of Nina O'Brien were both well received by people both within and outside the Club.

But let us look forward. The Activities

Editor: Margaret Shaida 860043 Editorial and Production Team: Tony Hooper 836154 Peter Dunkley 867284



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ENGLISH GREETINGS CARDS

APARTHOTEL ROSSELL, AVDA. SANT ANTONI, LA MASSANA Tel: 838 301 Fax: 838 302 Organisers already have a full programme for 1997. (In fact, plans are in hand for a number of activities in 1998!) It is planned to hold an exhibition of members' crafts, hobbies and collections towards Easter. I have been very pleased with the response to a recent letter, but would welcome many more who are prepared to let us share their interests.

No report of the year would be complete without loud mention of Helpline. The early months saw the tremendous effort after the Arinsal avalanche, and many were very grateful for their involvement. Throughout the year, many members have been given some support, and the team is always ready to turn to in an emergency. I hope that by now you have all bought your copy of the Helpline Cookbook, proceeds from which go straight into Helpline funds. And thank you to those who continue to give financial support.

On behalf of the Board, may I wish all a Happy Christmas and a Prosperous New Year. And do not forget that you can celebrate Christmas at one of the Concerts of Christmas Music presented by the International Singers in Andorra la Vella, Ordino, and La Massana. In fact, why not come to all three?

EDITORIAL

by Margaret Shaida

The first heavy snowfall of this winter season and talk of the Christmas Fair served to remind me that the season of good will is once more upon us. A time to express our appreciation to everyone on the Board of the C.I.A. (and a goodly number who are not on the Board) who all do so much throughout the

year to give us a sense of unity and community here in Andorra. The Chairman of the Board has already referred to the sterling efforts of the leaders of the two major Groups, i.e. the Activities and Helpline. I think I speak on behalf of many of our members when I say thank you to all those Board members who turn up every week to organise the Coffee Morning - so that the rest of us can go if and when we feel like it. And then there are all the leaders of the Groups - the bridge, art, naturalists, wine-tasting, drama, dancing, tennis, computer, Scottish dancing, and Singers Groups who all do so much throughout the year to widen our interests and our circle of friends. And last, but absolutely not least, to Jacquie Crozier who puts out the weekly newsletter to keep us all informed of what's happening in Andorra. This is a major job of work that Jacquie does week after week. When she's away, she ensures that her small group of "guest editors" are on hand to keep the newsletter going. Incidentally, Estil Nordic, who photocopies the newsletter for us every week, is now in the capable hands of Jill Trewhella. She tells me their services are being extended. Anyway, the success of our Club depends on its many individuals: and it is unique in the scope of the interests, activities and assistance it offers to its members.

In this issue, we have a range of Christmas features. The Christmas Quiz is quite challenging, and the answers range from Nursery Rhymes, films, books and common sayings. Good Luck! In our next issue, we shall be giving another splendid article by Peter Dunkley, along with the second half of Jacquie Crozier's article on Uganda.

Merry Christmas, everyone!



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NEWS FROM THE GROUPS

ACTIVITIES GROUP

Proposed events and excursions for 1997

bout half of these are new this year, the remainder repeats requested from previous years. We aim to provide a varied programme of events, both in character and price range. More detailed information will be sent to members in advance of each activity.

January

Organya Sunday morning market, followed by lunch "off the beaten track".

February

"A Chinese Feast" at the Golden Dragon in Seutwenty different dishes, as last year, a chance to sample a great variety of Chinese recipes.

March

Another opportunity to visit Montserrat, a place of pilgrimage and a sacred site since pre-Christian times. Also this month, hopefully, the much postponed visits to various Andorran commercial enterprises.

April

Gardens of the Costa Brava. An overnight trip to Marimurtra and Pina de Rosa, both well established botanical gardens near Blanes.

May

Avignon and the South of France, last September's postponed four-day trip.

June

Villafranca de Penedes and a guided tour of the Torres vineyards. Another repeat from two years ago, including Villafranca's fascinating wine museum and colourful street market.

July

Santiago de Compostella. We have been asked if it is possible to organise an excursion following the Pilgrims' Route to Santiago. We would join the route partway, probably at Puente La Reina or Logrono. Any members who would like to participate - walk, cycle, drive support cars, organise food and drink or health (support?), etc. should contact Ann or Josefina before the end of January.

If there is sufficient interest, we will go ahead with the arrangements.

The alternative for July would be a four-day trip to Burgos and Segovia.

August

A guided tour of Seu - at last the answers to the questions which are asked every market day. Then a special lunch of those strange culinary combinations which occur in Catalan cooking - chocolate with meat, meatballs and calamares, prawns and chicken.

September

Craft Tour: visits to workshops and small factories throughout the Segre Valley - potteries, cheese makers, wood workers.



October

Egypt again. The 1997 tour of Egypt will last two weeks, four days more than last time, allowing for an extra two days in Cairo and time to relax in Aswan at the end of the holiday.

We shall include several new visits and events. As before, pick-up from home in Andorra, direct flight Barcelona-Cairo, de luxe hotels and cruise ship. Visits include the Pyramids, the Archaeological Museum, the Islamic, Coptic and Jewish areas of Cairo and the souks of Khan al Khalili.

A five-day cruise, taking in the Kamak and Luxor Temples and 'Son et Lumière', the Valleys of the Kings and Queens, Esna, Edfu and Kom Ombo. Four days in Aswan including a visit to Abu Simbel.

N.B: The Egyptian government has doubled most taxes and also the entry fee to all historical sights.

Will members who wish to join this holiday please make their provisional booking by March at which time a detailed itinerary and approximate costings will be available.

November

Dinner with a speaker - Margaret Shaida talking about "Her Life in Iran".

December

Christmas Shopping Trip - we'll decide later whether we should go to Barcelona or Toulouse.

NATURALISTS' GROUP

he Omithological and Natural History Group (better known as the Naturalists) have been meeting regularly both inside and outside Andorra since the International Club was formed. We walk, or sometimes drive, not to get anywhere in record time but to enjoy the countryside. Some members also like to photograph the scenery and the flowers. You do not have to be an energetic walker or a knowledgeable naturalist to take part in Group activities, but if you have difficulty identifying Andorra's flowers, trees, birds or butterflies, there is usually someone in the Group who can help (or at least produce a field guide). On the other hand, do not be put off if you cannot tell a daisy from a buttercup, or a robin from a blue tit, as there are plenty of others in the same position.

Members do not have to come to every meeting, just turn up when you like at the time and place indicated or phone one of the leaders if you need a lift.

Since most of our members have lived in Andorra for many years, we propose to introduce more trips to France and Spain for 1997. These will normally mean that we shall have to stay at a hotel for one or more nights.

If newcomers would like extra fieldtrips within Andorra, this can easily be arranged, just call one of the leaders below.

Some members of the Group (well, the three leaders, Jacquie Crozier, Brian Dore Ann Matschke) visited the rain forests of South America during October/November.

Jacquie has said she will give us a report on this excursion which we hope will appear in the March issue.

December 1996

We shall arrange an extra meeting - a morning walk along the Segre followed by a lunch at Arfa to discuss the draft programme for 1997.



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PROPOSED 1997 PROGRAMME January 16th

Videos and CD/Slides: 11.00 at Cortal de la Solana, Anyos (Weather permitting). Drinks and light refreshments will be provided for lunch. Numbers are limited, so please phone beforehand if you are proposing to come.

February 15th/16th/17th

Long weekend trip to Casa Guilla in Spain. A chance to see wintering Red Kites and Wallcreepers in a spectacular gorge as well as a large Griffon Vulture colony.

March 22nd/23rd/24th

Long weekend in the Belchite and Aragonese Steppes for nesting Storks, with a good possibility of Sandgrouse, Little Bustards and other Steppe birds.

April 17th

Foothills of the Cadi. Spring flowers and migrating birds. Meet at the Spanish frontier at 9.00 am.

June 1st/5th

Trip to Jaca (including Riglos and Ordesa National Park). Plenty of Alpine flowers, nesting Lammergeier and Wallcreeper together with Scops Owl. All this in the area of Northern Spain famous for Birds of Prey.

July 4th

Vicdessos valley (France): orchids, alpine flowers and birds. Meet at the French frontier at 8 am.

August 27th/September 3rd

Week in Gibraltar to watch the spectacular

migration of Storks and Raptors. Opportunities for dolphin watching etc. and visits to the fame Cadiz lagoons for White-headed duck etc.

September 19th (or one day during last two weeks of September)

We'll try again to visit to the Cadi Park Headquarters to see the ringing of migratory birds. Full details when final arrangements are made with the ringing station.

October 17th

Orlu reserve near Ax-les-Thermes France for Marmots, Isards, autumn woods and fungi. Meet at French frontier 9 am.

December 6th/8th

Long weekend birdwatching in the Camargue where amongst the wealth of birds we shall make a special effort to find Eagle Owl, Spotted Eagle and Wallcreepers.

CARRY your binoculars (or ask to borrow a pair if needed), a waterproof, hat, sweater, your lunch and a drink; your passport for trips outside Andorra. Wear boots or walking shoes, and don't forget sun lotion, insect repellent and antihistamine cream if the time of year and region demand them.

For further information, please contact one of the leaders listed below:

Jacquie Crozier :835931; Brian Dore: 835931; Ann Matschke: 841279

CIA SCRAP-BOOK

s some of you already know, we started a scrap-book in September, mainly for our social and cultural activities. This will contain press cuttings, members' photos and extracts from reports in the magazine.

It is on display at the coffee mornings,

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and the first item is the article about our picnic and the CIA in general, which appeared in *Informacions* on 6th September 1996. Contributions of photos taken by members of various C.I.A. activities and events will always be much appreciated.

INTERNATIONAL SINGERS

e've been working hard since October on our fifth Festival of International Christmas Music.

None has worked harder than our pianist, Binnie Segal, and our director, Sheila Hooper, who, poor love, not only has to try and keep us under control and in tempo, but also has to stand up throughout each two-hour rehearsal! She's doing a magnificent job, and we very much look forward to welcoming you all to one of our three evenings of Christmas Music. This year, you'll have the chance to join in five of the carols.

We are very pleased to have as our special guests Gisele Pereira from Brazil, the Sant Antoni Coral from Andorra and the choir of els Petits Angels from Japan.

Once again, we want to thank Stella Madden and her helpers in advance for preparing refreshments for after the Ordino concert and the Club itself for financing the enterprise.

The Christmas Concerts will be held as follows:

Saturday, 14th December at the Santa Maria de Fener Church at 10 pm

(across the road, towards the car park, from the Andorra fire station, under a block of offices)

> Sunday, 15th December at the Ordino Church at 4.30 p.m. (followed by wine and cake)

Sunday, 15th December at the La Massana Church at 9.30 pm

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SCOTTISH COUNTRY DANCING

cottish country dancing is in full swing but we welcome new members. No need to have ever danced before. We'll take you in hand and in a month you'll be dancing with the best of us. So come along for a fun afternoon 4.30 to 6.30 every Sunday in La Massana church hall (just below the church). Great for the body and the mind. Club members pay 100 pts, non-members 200 pts towards heating the hall and to help local charities. We are still looking for a "caller". It's very easy, all the moves are written down and just need to be read out. The job might suit someone who loves the music but whose legs can't cope with two full hours of dancing!

BRIDGE GROUP REPORT

at the Bridge Club, particularly when members returned from their summer holidays. At the time of going to press, Pen and Harry Bind, Marilyn and Malcolm Duns, Henning Berthelsen and Bent Dorning, and

Marianne Smolders and Jane Jennings are still all in the running to win the annual Bridge Trophy, to be presented at the Christmas Party at the Llar on 2nd December. Watch this space!

Marilyn Duns and Maurice Pilkington as Directors, and Holger Hackenberg as Treasurer, have each offered to stand for reelection to office for 1997.

HELPLINE COOK BOOK

he Helpline Cookery book has finally hit the newstands. It was on sale at the Christmas Fair in the Church Hall at La Massana at the end of November.

If you were one of those who didn't get to the Fair and you would like a copy, please give Lilias Grassie a call on 838349. As you will recall, the book was compiled by Lilias, and includes contributions from many C.I.A. members from round the world. Typeset by Stella Madden and illustrated by Barbara Melville, it was proof-read by Oonagh Maclachlan. Advertising was activated by Ann Price.

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COMPUTER CLUB

he Computer Club of the International Club of Andorra now has a list of about thirty members who are using computers. There are eleven members who are active on the Internet, and most of the other members are thinking of joining Internet.

The Club was formed as 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, so that a problem might be solved between them.

The most common service, for those thinking of joining Internet, is to be put in touch with someone who is already on.

There are four local options:-

- Subscribe to Andomet which offers a competitive service with an annual fee plus a 4 pts a minute charge for use in addition to the local phone charge of 8 pts. This service is alleged to function in English.
- 2) Subscribe to Mypic which has a 5 pts per minute and the usual STA charge of 8 pts a minute, but whose charges are less than Andomet, and offer a bigger deduction when absent from Andorra. This is in Spanish.

3) The Andorran government still offers its free service except for the cost of a phone call at 8 pts per minute being the sole charge.

This offer does not include any service if or when difficulties arise, whereas the first two have a financial incentive to keep you on line. A consideration is that the free service of the Andorran government might change to the more usual fee service.

4) Subscribe to Compuserve and place a trunk call to Barcelona or Toulouse plus a per minute charge. There are always rumours that there will be a local number to call soon.

We have members who have experience with every service. Meanwhile you might like to remember to look around when you are in another country for literature in your language about Internet.

There is so much to learn. The satellite station CNBC has a two-hour programme Saturdays at 10:00 a.m. on the developments in Computer Services.

So if you are not in the club, and think we can help you (or that you can help us), give your telephone number to Stanley Jones on 836972.

ALLOSTOP

Stan Jones suggests a new way to travel

or over forty years the French travel system Allostop has matched up passengers and motorists with a spare seat on a particular journey. The British equivalent is Freewheelers, based in Newcastle, and a Canadian Autostop based in Montreal, Quebec. The recent loss of the direct coach service from Andorra to London has created an interest in these systems.

The basis of the system is that a car owner has to be registered by name, address, telephone, with a complete description of the car. This is free. The passenger has to supply complete personal details and a complex fee structure is invoked, which generally assume there is one passenger travelling, but more than one passenger is covered in the plan and also shared driving may be taken into account.

A pickup point and time is arranged by Allostop and the passenger is told the name of the driver, and a description of the car. The driver is told only the name of the passenger. Either could change their minds if the details do not seem to match, at the actual meeting point. In addition, Allostop records all the details. These precautions reduce the wellknown hazards of normal hitchhiking.

Before a match is made, smokers or non-smokers are identified, the sex of both driver and passenger is established, and if requested, these are taken into account in the match.

A LETTER TO THE CLUB

From: Fiona at the Hotel Restaurant Micolau

note to thank you for all the help and support you gave after the avalanche here in Arinsal in February of this year.

It took a little while to write to you five months! (written in July but received too late to be included in the September issue editor). But those of you who know me know why; always running off somewhere doing something - my apologies.

Anyway, an absolute machine went into action the moment the button was pressed and we all met each other. I was terribly impressed and extremely pleased to have much of the burden taken off our hands. We were a bit pushed finding a spot for forty people the first few days and had begun to think that we were totally alone with the problem up here, and that didn't please me or any of the forty either!

Unfortunately forty people were hanging about waiting to see what would happen to them. Most of them had dispersed or squashed in with others by the time I called the press seven days after the event, so the situation was sorting itself, but for a dozen or so desperate folks, it wasn't.

These are the people who were shocked, homeless and penniless that we kept close to us until they were scooped up by Dinah and Wallace Baxter, Caroline Colville Smith, Britt Nielsen and Ann Price, and all the other very selfless and generous people who donated to our friends funds at the Credit Andorra in La Massana.

With the money we were able to help ten young people who had lived in Peu de Pistes which was virtually destroyed that night. All their worldly goods, cars, money, passports, jobs - gone.

Three members of a rock band and one of their girl friends who lost a huge amount of unpaid-for music equipment and were really in a terrible way, physically and mentally, were pleased with their cheques - and more, that they were being thought about. Three girl instructors who lived on the sixth floor which was blown off in the front wind of the avalanche, and were never allowed back in to look over the rubble for their things as the building was so dangerous. They were terrifically pleased to be able to buy things for themselves. Three bar staff from Surf and Red Rock, homeless, jobless and carless, who had flats on the first and second floors which were totally crushed. With the help they received, they managed to stay on and get jobs.

They were all very grateful and deeply moved by everyone's efforts. Many would have liked to thank you all but left very soon after it happened with huge hangovers and tears in their eyes having been dispatched at one or more of the Micolau leaving parties, all wanting me to thank you for them. So thank you.

Please God we don't have another Big One for a long time yet, because I feel that this year we in Arinsal were more than lucky.

> Kind regards Fiona (a.k.a. Ms. Micolau!)



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THE THREE KINGS... THROUGH THE EYES OF THE HISTORIANS...

In the first of two features in this Christmas issue, Horst Matschke looks at the history of the story of the Three Kings, while on the facing page, Ann Matschke tells us about the celebrations marking the Day of the Three Kings in St. Julia

he first to tell us about the Three Kings is St. Matthew who, in the second chapter of his gospel, relates the tale of the wise men (Magi) from the East who were seeking the new-born King of Judea and were unwise enough to ask King Herod the way.

They were eventually led to Bethlehem by a star and paid homage to the God-Child. Having been warned belatedly about Herod, they left by another route, blissfully unaware of the terror the King was to unleash on the unfortunate town as a result of their visit.

St. Matthew wastes no further words on them, but other Christian authors felt that the story needed embellishing. By c200^{AD} the wise men had already attained royal status.

Their number had been fixed at three, possibly because of the number of gifts they brought, gold, frankincense and myrrh, or possibly because a greater gathering of royalty appeared unlikely in an age unaccustomed to summitry.

They were generally believed to have come from Persia, but, because of the frankincense and myrhh, Arabia was another possibility.

Not before the sixth century did one apparently know their names. These were found recently in a ruined church of that date in Egypt.

Later centuries were still willing to add to the tale. In the twelfth century the Kings became representatives of the three then known continents. Consequently one of them began to acquire Negroid features in the artistic presentations. For centuries the adoration seems to have been a popular motif for painters, possibly because of the stark contrast between the stable in Bethlehem and the pompous splendour of the Kings and their royal entourages.

They also acquired some residences. Remains of their bodies were discovered at Milan of all places, but in 1164, a resolute chancellor of the Holy Roman Empire, who also happened to be the Archbishop of Cologne, had them confiscated and transported to his home town, where they remain still.

Possibly the East had an even better claim. In Chapter XI of his travels, Marco Polo reports that the three Kings were buried in a fair sepulchre in the town of Saba in Persia. Strangely enough, although their names were known, nobody could tell him anything about them.

After a three days' journey, however, he reached a place called Palasata, where the natives, though they were Zoroastrians, told him a charming story about the voyage of the three kings and how they brought back from their trip the holy fire kept burning in their temple ever since.

As nowadays nearly everything the venerable Venetian traveller reported is considered to be doubtful, the reader may find that all of the above needs to be taken with a pinch of salt.



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LA MASSANA Principat d'Andorra

...AND THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CHILDREN

n a delightful mingling of traditions which have become village custom, our Kings ride in from the west accompanied by Father Christmas. Actually, they steal in from points west to assemble, mysterious figures, in the upper car park. One hundred plus villagers, most of them teenagers, manage the preparation and the ascent of Mas d'Olivesa with the utmost discretion. This is very much part of the spectacle.

Pui Olivesa is a farm set on a hilltop, dominating the access to St. Julia. Legend has it that Charlemagne spent a night here, but then, where didn't he? This ancient farm is historically

documented from 985. At 8pm, a single rocket announces the royal descent, and we throw down napkins, dash to the phone to alert the children, race

into coats, boots, hats, gloves and the lift, picking up brollies on the way. We of the ultimate storey have our responsibilities - and it will either be freezing, snowing or raining.

Breathless, we reach the bridge, together with all our neighbours and a mass of children. Out of the night sky above it will come: the star. All faces are turned to Olivesa. Over the crest, the bright comet appears and the children dance with impatience, the smallest silent in wonder.

And, soon, we can hear them, each float playing its own carol, all of them different, a dreadful cacophony. A slight hiatus before the final stretch as the vanguard of *urbanos* pauses to lift the neighbourhood's sole electric star out of reach of the inevitable destruction the comet would otherwise deal it. And then they are upon us, positively dashing around the upper bend in a flurry of hooves and scarlet capes; the body of escorting horsemen. And they do look dashing, hooves skidding on the ice, horses shying at cars and people.

William peers from around my legs, not absolutely certain about the steeds. I have to confess to a small stain on village pride, for the

> horse master is a foreigner, from Os. indeed! But his troop is ours, all village children, very smallest managing a headstrong Shetland with all the aplomb a five and a half year old can command on most important occasion. Our caballeros! Father Christmas is pulled by reindeer, well, naturally. His attendants wear white velvet, fine young people.

Caspar is enthroned behind camels, his entourage in dark blue jerkins with white breeches. Now, Melchior, with his harem of dark beauties in green brocades, black-veiled to the eyes. Finally, Balthazar, magnificent on his dais, attendants in red satin with white leggings.

As they cross the bridge, one shuts one's ears to the din, and watches, not the spectacle, but the faces of the smaller children. They don't see the comet as a battery of electric bulbs or the jeeps towing the floats - they see a great star, real reindeer, real camels and wonderful kings.

As the cavalcade sweeps onto the main road, the motorists' view is somewhat different - they are probably piled back to Seu. But for tonight, it's our village, older even than the Act



of Consegration signed by Seu d'Urgell in 839.

The cars jam, the horses shy, you hope mothers are counting their offspring. And it begins to

rain. Come under my umbrella, says Alexandra, once three and a half, now going on five.

THE CHRISTMAS QUIZ

Write down the ANSWERS to the CLUES

Example: Clue: SW and the 7 D Solution: Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

	CLUE	ANSWER
1.	3 B M	Toree Blind Mice
2.	A the W in 80 D	Around the World in 80 Days
3.	24 B B in a P	Four and theaty Blackbirds Baked in a Pie
4.	4 W and a F	***************************************
5.	7 W of the W	Seven Konders of the World
6.	J 4 is I D	July 4 is Ladepeadence Day
7.	26 L in the A	26 Letters in the Alphabet
8.	S W and the 7 D	Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs
9.	70 = 3 S Y and T	Three Score Years and Ten
10.	The 12 D of C	The TKELKE Disciples of Christ
	(Answers will appear in the March issuel)

W vialge/relax



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THIRTY-SIXTH TO FORTY-FIRST

The weekend trip to Figueres, Girona and Besalu was rumoured to have been another splendid excursion. Here R.W. tells us what they did on their activity

ntil 10th October `1996, Ann Price had co-organized and co-led between thirty-five and forty CIA Activities, from tours, trips, visits and expeditions. The exact number is not easy to ascertain.

On 11 October, twenty-four participants started out on the thirty-sixth to forty-first trip - this time to Figueres, Girona, Besalu and other places. The "Co-Cruise Director" was again the incomparable Josefina Martinez (Fina). The CIA owes a great debt to these two ladies for the trouble they take to give so much pleasure to so many people.

The Nadal bus, driven by the patient and competent Rafael made the rounds to collect us by about 8 am. Ann announced over the bus tannoy that Rafael had unusually been a few minutes late, but this was perfectly understandable as he was so newly wed!

We stopped for a cuppa y/i copa just past Martinet. From Bellver to Ribeds we appreciated the skill of Rafael as he negotiated the tight hairpins and narrow roads. After skirting Ripoll, we drove to Figueres via the Tunel(s) de Capacosta, passing quickly through the places at which we would be pausing on the return journey.

At Figueres we were delivered to the prestigious Hotel Duran. This hotel is given a good recommendation for food by the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy, in my 1987 issue of Plaza and Janes Guide to Catalonia. So your chronicler was looking forward to putting on another kilo or two in weight.

Saving ourselves for the hotel dinner, we had lunch elsewhere and then met up to visit the Dali Museum. On the bus we had been shown a video of (the late) Dali being interviewed by (the late) Russell Harty. The video gave our visit to the museum much more meaning and vitality, our having "been with" Dali just a few hours earlier.

The museum is specifically designed not to be taken seriously or logically; though the rooms are numbered, one could easily be left wondering if one has seen everything or not.

After dinner in the hotel (cannelloni, baked salmon, ice cream) we went with our bus to the Casino Castell de Peralada. The setting was beautiful and the castle had been fitted out in a no-expense-spared manner. However, Govern-ment rules and bureaucratic procedures meant that admission was tedious.

The gambling was comparatively modest (mainly 250 pts a chip) compared with say, Monte Carlo or Knightsbridge. But it was lifeless, remorseless. There was no excitement, no whoops of joy, no laughter.

The roulette wheel didn't seem to stop. New bets were being placed on as the old bets were being swept off and the white ball was about to drop yet again into a numbered slot. The players had intense, determined expressions on their faces.

Person after person, mostly women, lost all their chips. There was one exception: a woman who put the larger denomination chips she won into her handbag. These were not brought out again.

Blackjack was in the same vein. The dealers appeared to be under orders to deal as many hands as possible in a given time. Some of the girl dealers were so fast, the players didn't seem to know if they'd won or lost.

As we left the casino, after an interesting, but generally, non-participatory gambling evening, a woman won a jackpot on one of the scores of fruit machines. We were all thrilled for her as the coins kept rattling into the trough. She seemed slightly more embarrassed than delighted at being the centre of attention. It took several of the management-provided plastic pots to contain her winnings.

The next day, we were driven to Girona by Rafael. We met our guide, Margarida near a (mainly) 17th century pharmacy, which museum was part of a working hospital. The pharmacy was fascinating, but of particular interest were the complete sets of fearsome surgeons' tools and the library of two hundred appropriate, scientific books dated from the 18th to 20th centuries.

We were then driven to the old city. Margarida soon made many of us feel that we should have been in hard training for a few weeks before the walk (or climb) around old Girona. We were shown old houses in the Jewish Quarter, Arab baths, a museum and the Cathedral. There were ninety steps up and (according to Margarida), magically, ninety-one steps down. The Cathedral, with the widest nave in Europe (or the world?) was well worth the climb, both up and down.

After more sight-seeing in the old city, Margarida led the fifteen who had managed to keep up with her, back to the square, near where the bus was parked. There we had a good choice of places for lunch and for resting our weary legs.

Next on the itinerary was the Greco-Roman city of Empuries on the coast. Originally, it was a Greek Cort Ingles (Margarida) at which the Romans arrived by agreement to launch an attack on Hannibal's rear guard and lines of communication. Post-Hannibal, the Romans decided to remain and conquer the whole peninsular.

It was a fascinating visit, especially with such a knowledgeable and enthusiastic guide. However the party arriving back numbered only eight, the remainder having made their own way back shortly after Margarida left us at Empuries. We would have missed so much without her. Some of us were left wondering how she was so fit. And was she really old enough to be a grandmother?

After an unscheduled visit to the promenade at L'Escala, we returned to the hotel in time for a bath and change. Then before dinner, the Figueres Branch of the CIA met to toast Ian and Carolyn Sims with bubbly on their wedding anniversary. It was a very amiable celebration.

After dinner of stuffed courgettes, braised veal and "pudding of the house" there was some speculation about the Spanish Academy of Gastronomy. We had wholesome food, but did this reputable establishment really serve us re-heated braised meat, with tinned potatoes and carrots, as was thought by some? Most people were too tired after dinner to go either to the casino again or take the bus to the coast. Most turned in early, drank at the bar or watched TV (even though the Barca match was over). A few did however find some night life.

We checked out of the hotel at 0930 hours, on Sunday, and soon arrived at Banyoles, where the lake of Barcelona Olympic fame was the major attraction. Because it was raining, we viewed it from the bus.

However, we did disembark at Besalu, which dates from the sixth century. We saw the twelfth century bridge and the medieval streets and houses. Fina was our Cruise Director in Besalu.

At Castellfollit de la Roca, we walked through the tiny town - on a ridge with a sixty metre precipice at the end. This time we kept very close to Fina! Our other leader, Ann, became very concerned about the number of identical yellow plastic bolsas, containing goodies from the town - biscuits, coconut meringues, and sausages. Could everyone identify their own? One felt that this was the voice of experience not wanting to go round the same buoy twice.

The lunch stop was at Sant Joan de les Abadesser. Here, the twelfth century monastery church was lovely in its simplicity and well worth the visit. Val was given the guide sheet in English, was lumbered with the job. Aided by Ken, she did very well. Most people also enjoyed the adjoining ecclesiastical museum.

One party of us ended up in a restaurant where we had a good, simple, hot, four course lunch, with half a bottle of wine (each) for 1000 pts per person.

After lunch, Rafael started to drive home, initially in very poor visibility over the tight hairpins and narrow roads. As usual he drove very safely and we arrived back in Andorra in the early evening, being dropped off at mutually convenient places.

So ended the thirty-sixth to forty-first Ann-co-arranged function. Our thanks are due yet again to Ann and Fina for organising and leading our enjoyable, interesting, informative and economical weekend.

"A MINISTERING ANGEL"

Jacquie Crozier recently interviewed the British Honorary Consul in Andorra to find out more about him and his job in Andorra

onorary Consuls the world over must regularly curse the name of Graham Green. Ever since his novel appeared, Honorary Consuls have acquired a somewhat seedy image. "Well, they're not quite the same as ordinary Consuls," is the commonly held belief. "They can't help in the same way." But they are, they can, and they do. Any British Consul, whether Honorary or

not, is strictly proscribed; there are certain things he can do and many more he cannot. Ask Angel Guerra.

Angel, as many of our readers will know, is the British Honorary Consul in Andorra. He is Spanish but has lived in Andorra for over thirty years. He and his wife, Isabella, have seven children, fourteen grand-children and four stepgrandchildren.

Since the sixties he has acted as unofficial, unpaid representative of the Barcelona British Consulate here in Andorra and in 1986, was awarded the MBE for his services. Now he is our "official" Honorary Consul. His Consular Office is at Prat de la Creu 22, loc D, Atel Dos, Andorra la Vella, and he is there to help and advise any British citizen (and citizens of those Commonwealth countries with a High Commissioner) between 10 am and 1 pm. But his day is much longer than that.

When he arrives at the office, there are likely to be several faxes waiting for his attention. These are often from the Police to say that a British tourist has been detained or is otherwise in trouble. This means he must go at once to the Police Station. Often, he will already have had a phone call at home, most of them come in the small hours of the morning, and so he goes directly to the Station or the Hospital before setting foot in his office.

The police have an obligation to phone him, at home if necessary, any hour of the day or night, and to follow this up with a written

report or fax if a British citizen is in trouble. The Residents here are, on the whole, a law-abiding lot, so most of his summons to the police Station are for visitors to Andorra.

Many of them have been picked up by the Police because they are drunk, in which case it is hopeless to visit them until they are sober. Angel tells the police to give them plenty of black coffee and leaves them in police hands until they



have sobered up.

If they have been involved in an accident, then he will have to visit the victims, of whatever nationality, in hospital. Sometimes the Hospital call him direct: a skier has met with an accident and has no insurance cover and no money to pay for treatment.

Then Angel will have to discover and contact the next of kin and arrange for money to be transferred. If the accident should be fatal, the Consul is responsible for registering the death and discovering what the relatives wish done with the body.

I asked Angel how many of this type of call he had received since he became Consul, and he produced a fat folder and leafed through the forms dealing with each incident; they must run into hundreds.

Noting my startled look, he pointed out that Andorra receives about three thousand British visitors a week in winter. I asked him if there had been any amusing incidents when dealing with this sorry catalogue of alcohol abuse and accidents.

He said he didn't think so, then pondered a moment, and said, well, yes, there had been the case of the drunk with a stutter who had thrown a huge stone through a shop window in Andorra la Vella, for no apparent reason.

He was demanding to see his Ambassador, so the police put him on the phone to Angel at 2 am, but what with his stutter and the fact that he was extremely drunk, Angel despaired of getting any sense from him. He gave the police his usual advice and said he would be down at breakfast time

How did a Spaniard (and Angel is very proud of being Spanish) come to be decorated by the Queen and appointed Honorary Consul?

Well, it's necessary to go back a long way. Angel was born in the Philippines, the third generation of his family to live there. They were there throughout the Japanese occupation, in the mountains and in Manila. In 1945, Angel volunteered for the US Army, just after the invasion of Lingayen, partly because General McArthur had been a neighbour and known to his family, and partly to find his parents. He rose to become a sergeant in the 37th Infantry Division and only left when the war in the Pacific was nearing its end. This partly explains his command of English.

From 1950 to 1952, Angel had to do his military service in Spain, and then worked in Barcelona for a while. He had a friend in the US Consulate. The British Consulate shared the same building, and the staffs were friendly.

When, in 1962, Angel started to work for Ford Motors International as their representative for the whole of the Iberian peninsular and North Africa, he had a lot of contact with the two consulates and frequently helped them. Then, in 1965, he became Head of Sales for Ford in Andorra.

Once again, Angel helped both Consulates, not just over commercial matters or with trade missions but often he was asked, as he was living here, to take care of British subjects, whether visitors or residents. He became, in effect, our unofficial consul.

Today, he handles commercial matters only initially. He may pass the enquirer on to the Commercial Consul in Barcelona but this is a two-way exchange. He may be asked to help if prospective importers have already approached the Board of Trade and Industry or the Foreign Office in London, the Embassy in Madrid or the Consulate in Barcelona. He cannot insist that any British firm doing business in Andorra visit the Consulate here. If representatives of a British company do not want to discuss business with the Consul, that is their privilege.

He is still asked by the Consulate in Barcelona or the Spanish authorities to help British subjects who are in trouble in the Alt Urgell, because it's quicker for him to get to them than it is for someone to come up from Barcelona. It obviously helps all concerned. If he receives complaints that the Andorran authorities are not doing enough to help, he will contact the relevant departments.

In the Consulate in Andorra, a large official notice is pinned on the wall. It lists the services and the fifty-two different types of certificates that Her Majesty's Consuls are authorised to issue, with the charges fixed by the Foreign Office.

These range from registering births and deaths, administering an oath or receiving a declaration, supplying witnesses, translating and interpreting viva voce - which is charged for every fifteen minutes - making translations, issuing emergency passports, giving entry clearance to the U.K. for visitors or students from certain countries. Only the final section is unlikely to be needed in Andorra. I do not think Angel will ever have any call to inspect a ship's papers!

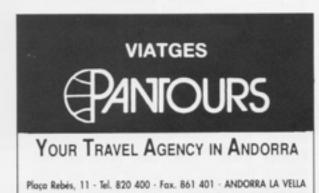
When I left his office, he intended, if the phone ever stopped ringing, to go and meet the Spanish Consul General and the French Vice-Consul for their regular monthly working lunch. A Consul's job is never done! The following list of what a Consul can and cannot do is taken from a leaflet issued by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and is available from the Consulate:

WHAT A CONSUL CAN DO

- 1) Issue emergency passports.
- Contact relatives and friends to ask them to help you with money and tickets.
- 3) Advise on how to transfer funds.
- At most posts (in an emergency) advance money against a sterling cheque for up to £100 supported by a banker's card valid for the appropriate amount.
- 5) As a last resort, and provided that certain strict criteria are met, make a repayable loan in exceptional circumstances for repatriation to the UK. But there is no law that says a Consul must do this, and the Consul will need to be satisfied that there is absolutely no one else you know who can help.
- Help you get in touch with local lawyers, interpreters and doctors.
- Arrange for next of kin to be informed of an accident or a death and advise on procedures.
- Contact and visit British nationals under arrest or in prison and, in certain circumstances, arrange for messages to be sent to relatives or friends.
- Give guidance on organisations experienced in tracing missing persons.
- 10)Make representations on your behalf to the local authorities in certain circumstances.

WHAT A CONSUL CANNOT DO

- 1) Intervene in court proceedings.
- 2) Get you out of prison.
- Give legal advice or instigate court proceedings on your behalf.
- Get better treatment for you in hospital or prison than is provided for local nationals.
- 5) Investigate a crime.
- Pay your hotel, legal, medical or any other bills.
- Pay for travel tickets for you except in very special circumstances.
- Undertake work more properly done by travel representatives, airlines, banks or motoring organisations.
- Obtain accommodation, work or a work permit for you.
- Formally assist dual nationals in the country of their second nationality.





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Restaurant Review

CAN PERE

Many of us feel superior to those "Brits Abroad" who seek out fish and chips when they are surrounded by wonderful local restaurants. But Margaret Shaida tells us why she loves having fish and chips in Andorra.

o sit in a pleasant restaurant and eat fish and chips, freshly cooked, and served with mushy peas, vinegar and tartare sauce is a rare experience - even in Britain, where so often the meal is greasy or reheated or wrapped in grease-proof paper. To find such a dish here in Andorra is nothing short of a miracle.

Can Pere needs little introduction to most of the English-speaking residents of Andorra. Its fame extends far beyond its size and its situation (tucked away in the village of Anyos). Bob, David and Sylvia are familiar figures in the world of Andorra's international gastronomy.

Can Pere is a cosy restaurant with a welcoming, homely air. Well, the homeliness for this particular "Brit Abroad" is due to the fact that the staff are mostly English, and they not only serve fish and chips every Friday, they also have liver and onions, curry and rice and a regular Sunday roast. AND they have splendid English Puddings that would lead the field in the famed Pudding Club of Great Britain.

The menu is extensive and international, with something for everyone. Dishes range from Chinese stir-fry, lightly grilled fish with delectable French sauces, Italian pasta dishes, sumptuous salads, sublime lobster or monkfish thermidor, warming soups and bisques.

If you just happen to hate fish and chips, you can dine on any number of other dishes. York hams are brought in from Great Britain, lobster and crab is specially ordered and shipped in weekly from Barcelona, the beef is carefully hung, and the rice is the best Basmati.

Can Pere also puts on some great parties. Just recently, an outrageous fancy dress party was underpinned (so to speak) with a cold buffet of roast beef, roast ham, sausage rolls and salads.

The year's festivals are marked with celebratory meals. Christmas and New Year are splendidly and traditionally celebrated with turkey, ham and all the trimmings, as well as mince pies, Christmas pudding and brandy butter. Easter sees Hot Cross Buns, which are made on the premises and the best I have ever tasted. Seasonal specialities appear throughout the year, with hand-picked mushrooms and ceps making an extravagant appearance each autumn.

If all this seems too good to be true, well, it isn't. The restaurant and the staff are completely without pretension: Bob and Sylvia in the bar are friendly and attentive, while David, the chef, produces nothing short of a miracle in his tiny kitchen. And if you can't find what you want on the menu, he will do his best to provide something to please you.



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A NATURALIST IN UGANDA

Jacquie Crozier tells us of her experiences during her visit to Uganda earlier this year

ell almost anyone that you are going to Kenya and the response is, "How lovely!" Tell someone you are off to Uganda on holiday and the usual reaction is a blank stare, then "Why?". Yet Uganda, the "Pearl of Africa", in Churchill's famous phrase, has as much if not more, to offer today's travellers as any of the better known East African destinations.

If you have had enough of game with parks more minibuses than animals, of watching dozen vehicles encircling some unfortunate cheetah or lion, while cameraclutching tourists hang out of the windows and roof, then consider Uganda.

There are few tourists in most of its National Parks, but then there are very few big cats; most of them were massacred by Amin's and Obote's retreating armies while poachers (probably the same men) wiped out the remnants, as well as most of the wardens. But that was in the past. Today, Uganda is one of the most stable, least corrupt and most friendly countries in Africa and with one of the fastest-growing economies. It still has a long way to go to rebuild its tourist infrastructure but it is getting a lot of help. In fact, most of the vehicles on the roads belong to aid agencies. There are very few private cars, and the main road south from Kampala is better than most

Kenyan ones, again courtesy of the UN which built a road

to get trucks and the Red Cross to Rwanda. In the west of the country, however, most of the roads are dirt tracks. Not too bad, except when it rains, when a four-wheel drive is advisable.

In addition, Uganda boasts some of the loveliest scenery in East Africa. Lying

> astride the equator, it combines influences from eastern and central Africa: from savannah drv tropical rainforest. Being comparatively small country, it is possible see all this diversity in a short visit, to travel from Lake Victoria's papyrus-fringed shores to the snow-

capped Rwenzori Mountains, from the great Impenetrable Forest of the wetlands to the Euphorbia candelabra savannah and crater lakes of Queen Elizabeth National Park, and from the waterfalls and river systems of Murchison to the acacia woodlands and lakes of Mburo.

Uganda is now the only place in the world where Mountain Gorillas can be seen fairly easily and safely and it holds over half of the remaining population of this magnificent creature. At Murchison Falls, where the White Nile cascades towards Lake Albert, it is possible to see one of the most elusive and extraordinary birds in the whole of Africa, the one that is "almost a Dodo" - the Shoebill Stork. There are



rivers so full of hippos that it's impossible to count them, the biggest crocs in Africa, herds of elephants, Ugandan Kob and other antelopes by the thousands, Zebra, Lion, Leopard and hundreds of species of birds and butterflies, most of them large and colourful, offering endless photographic opportunities.

Do not go to Uganda if night-life, international cuisine and luxury hotels are holiday essentials. Do go, not just for the

wildlife, but to see the real Africa, far removed from the synthetic travel-brochure version that is all that most conventional packet-tours to East Africa offer.

There are very few "European-standard" hotels in the country and as there are also comparatively few tourists at the

moment, most other guests are Ugandan officials or businessmen, aid workers or missionaries on holiday.

After independence, the old colonial hotels with evocative names like "The Mountains of the Moon", "The White Horse Inn, "The Margarida" became a state-run chain, and are usually the only places to stay. But their attractive exteriors and gardens belie the somewhat squalid interiors, lack of hot water and dreadful service. They are gradually being privatised, and those that have been taken over are to be recommended: the Lake Victoria in Entebbe has a huge swimming pool, beautiful gardens and dining room which serves an excellent buffet breakfast at any hour, since many air crews stay here.

Mweya Lodge in Queen Elizabeth Park, an old safari lodge situated on the tip of a peninsular jutting out into Lake Edward has stunning views over the lake towards Zaire. Bought by an Indian, the generous breakfast and dinner buffets include Indian food. Sadly the swimming pool has still not been repaired.

On the south bank of the Nile, just twenty minutes drive from the top of the Falls, a new lodge, the Sambiya River Lodge, opened this year. It has a small swimming pool, all mod cons in the

> rondavels (thanks to solar panels and a generator), good food and wonderfully friendly American-Ugandan service.

In the southwest, on the very edge of the impenetrable forest, Abercrombie & Kent the Buhoma Gorilla Camp. Accom- modation is in large, comfortable tents (with flush

loos!) and with buckets of hot water brought to fill your shower whenever you want. There is no electricity, of course, but the meals in the candle-lit dining-tent are some of the best in Uganda. Spending several days in all or any of these is to be recommended, but for the others, just one night when travelling is probably enough!

(In our next issue, we shall give extracts from Jacquie's diary -Editor).



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JUST FOR CHRISTMAS

What is Christmas without good food? Well, to make sure this Christmas is a warm, food-filled festival, here are a couple of recipes from Stella Madden, and some household hints from Jean Axten, to help make this Christmas a relaxed and happy occasion.

WHITE TRUFFLES

30 grams slivered almonds
2 tbspns mixed fruit glace fruit,
finely chopped
3 tbspns thick cream
100 grams white chocolate,
finely chopped
1 tbspn brandy or kirsch
50 grams ground almonds
50 grams icing sugar

Brown the almond slivers in the oven, then chop finely, and mix with the glace fruits. Bring cream to the boil. Add chocolate, remove from heat, cover and stand until the chocolate softens. Stir until smooth, mixing in the rest of the ingredients. Cool in the refrigerator. When firm, make into small balls, and roll in a mixture of ground almonds and icing sugar.

Drawing by Barbara Melville

YULETIDE FUDGE

125 grams butter
180 ml milk
50 grams walnuts
50 grams almonds
50 grams raisins
4 tbspns cocoa powder
750 grams sugar
1 tbspn creme fraiche
half tspn vanilla sugar
1 tbspn liqueur of your choice

Melt the butter in a saucepan. Mix sugar and cocoa with a little milk, then add to butter and cook over a low heat until sugar is dissolved. Stirring gently, bring to the boil, and boil until a small piece, when dropped into cold water, forms a soft ball. Remove from heat and allow to cool, then beat until it is thick and glossy. Add creme fraiche and liqueur, nuts and raisins. Pour the mixture into a foil-lined and greased tin, pressing in firmly, and refrigerate for four hours. Remove from tin, cut into squares and store in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

HOUSEHOLD HINTS

 New bread can be cut very finely if you dip a sharp knife into boiling water for a few seconds before using. The base of a sponge cake can be loosened from the tin, by placing the tin on a damp cloth for a minute before turning out.

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COLD PICNIC - WARM FUN

We invited a couple of reporters to this picnic. They enjoyed themselves so much, chatting to everyone and sampling all the dishes that the few paragraphs they had planned turned into a four-page article. Some of you will have seen this in our new Scrap-Book, but below are some extracts, translated by Caroline Colville Smith, and a photo taken by Sven Ostergaard.

ast Thursday, in a beautiful spot...in the Ordino-Arcalis valley, the C.I.A. held a very special picnic lunch.

Around sixty Andorran residents from a dozen different countries met here, bringing

with them exotic dishes: Indonesian gadogado, some traditional French quiches, a hot Indian curry sauce, a selection of Scottish potato or tomato salads, others. among To follow there were delicious English pastries, including flapjacks and coconut delights. To wash all this down, soft drinks and beer were offered. with wine for those feeling the cold. For cold it was,

with the icy north wind very much in evidence....

This very relaxed and pleasant meal... was one of the many activities organised by the International Club of Andorra, which anyone here may join.

The main objective of this Club is to encourage people to meet in a spirit of comradeship. Caroline Colville Smith, responsible for the Club's publicity, explains that "it's a good way of meeting people, especially if one is new to the country. it is also a means of building a bridge of friendship

between Andorrans and those of us who come from abroad." Members meet during the coffee mornings held every Wednesday at 10.30 am at the Escaldes hotel, Paris-Londres. This provides an opportunity for members to get

> together, or arrange activities, which can be organised or suggested by any of them....

The Club offers free information sheets with details of forthcoming activities. It aims to help people feel more at home here and to enjoy themselves. This international group gives the impression being a family of friends who like keeping in touch and helping each

and helping each other. ... "We are making an effort to become integrated here, by learning the language and participating in the Andorran way of life... In this, the Govern has helped considerably by offering all-year-round Catalan classes given by qualified teachers," Caroline Colville Smith told us.

It is quite clear that this International Club aims to provide enjoyment and ways to meet people at the same as learning Scottish dancing, finding out about natural history, joining a choir, playing bridge, or even taking a trip abroad.

Anne F. Raichs, Informacions



Dinah and Wallace Baxter trying to keep warm on the picnic!

THE "ENCANTS DE SANT ANTONI"

In this brief feature, Ursula Ure recalls the celebrations of Sant Antoni in the days before the the day was marked by the Escudella

oon after we had put the roof on our house, sometime during the winter of 1958, the door bell rang. The knocker was wielded with authority, and when I opened the door there were two rather straggly individuals, beaming broadly, holding a large cloth bag and a portable shrine. This was a wooden box, carved in ogive style like a church window, fronted with glass, and it held a statue of Sant Antoni. His two proud supporters, wearing the smile that only a few well-earned glasses of wine can bestow, told me they were collecting on his behalf.

My father called out to me to know who was there and a figure I was very familiar with joined us apologetically. He was a key figure in the parish. A sturdily-built man with the broken nose and battered air of an ex-pugilist, he was the one who came to collect the fee for the Cuart - we were not then a Comu - and the payment for the thermal water which we had piped to our house, sharing the cost with Gil Torres who had just built his hotel along the mud road from us.

Even more important, he was the sole dustman or escombraire, the man who collected all the old rubbish in Escaldes and Engordany. When it was not the usual household detritus, it was often the householder or dweller, as our friend also drove the shabby antiquated black vehicle that served as a hearse, crawling like a snail, solemnly from the church to the little cemetery beyond our house.

My father, who was well on in years, admitted to an enormous admiration for this shy, polite man. "You never know, he may be the one who takes me to my last resting place. I just hope he brings the right vehicle!" When he saw his friend, he at

once made a generous contribution to Sant Antoni, whom I didn't think he had ever met before.

The visit with the shrine was followed the next day by a summons on the tooter from the town crier, again our dustman, to participate in the auction, the Encants de Sant Antoni, in the square by the church.

As we hurried along in the cold, we could hear voices calling out and laughter. We came on a crowd of townspeople and farmers surrounding a man with a long pole held high on which were hung what had once been a pig, or pigs: an ear, a cheek, a trotter, a sausage. These were being auctioned with much good humour and banter. People were joking and bidding against one another and towards the end, an enormous sausage, the biggest I have ever seen, was celebrated joyously with fierce competition amongst the bidders and was knocked down for a price which fully complimented its size.



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I later discovered the money all went to the priest, the parroco, and each house donated part of the pig they had killed to keep the family pot boiling in the middle of winter. The poorer houses would give a snout or an ear, the wealthy ones would give trotters, a whole pig's head, butifarras. The ones who were very poor would take some of the lard to the baker and he would use this to make a giant coca which was also auctioned. A friend of mine told me that in her house, they were poor and could only give lard. They could not afford to enter the bidding, but with other friends they formed a syndicate to bid for the coca, sharing the cost and the coca, which they carried off in triumph to divide among them.

The richer the householder, the more he was supposed to donate and the more he was supposed to bid for perhaps his own piece of pig and they always appeared to enjoy making the large gesture. I am sure when the auction was most successful a bumper candle was lit to Sant Antoni by the parish priest.

There was no Escudella served for the fast of Sant Antoni until recently. It was Riberpuig of the restaurant La Truita who decided to celebrate in this way and it has now become a feature in some of the main parishes of Andorra.

Some jokes from a Christmas Cracker:

hree boy scouts reported to their Scoutmaster that they had done their 'good deed' for the day.

"What did you do?" asked the Scoutmaster.

"We helped an old lady cross the road," they said proudly.

"What, all three of you?" asked the Scoutmaster suspiciously.

> "Yes, sir" said the boys with pride. Then the smallest one added, "She

didn't want to go."

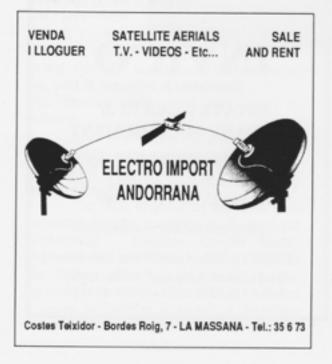


Nothing destoys the Christmas spirit faster than looking for a place to park.

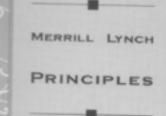


A statement isn't necessarily true because it sounds reasonable - and that sounds reasonable, too, doesn't it?

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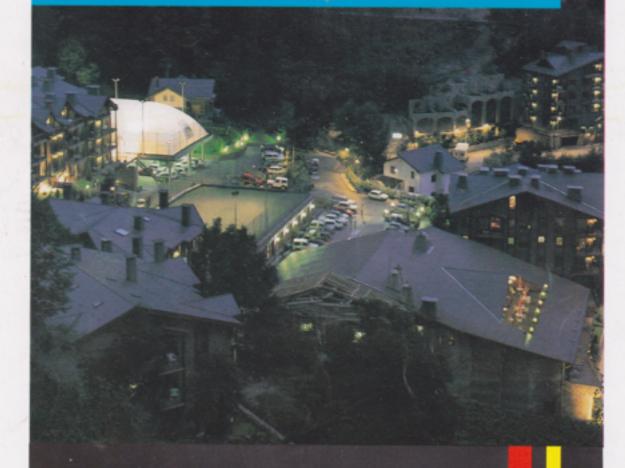
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