



THE ROAD TO RIO

ABs GO LATIN IN 2001!



The Tour Party on the steps of the Prince of Wales Club, Santiago de Chile



Standing (left to right): Greta Band, John Oakley, Pat Barnes, Maxi Greathead, Beryl Darlington, Audrey Purnell, Lynn Matthews (partly hidden behind Audrey), Rita Oakley, Ian Marsh, Sonia Wingfield, Peter Band, Trevor Davies, Allan Matthews, Neeru Phakey, Chris Bradbury, John Flynn, Anne Handley, Brenda Wallond, Tony Handley, Bob Moorhouse, Julia Greenhough, John Haggett, Bernard Sperring, Margaret Coughlan, Tony Hall, Angela Davies, Paul Bloomfield, Chris Moorhouse, Mukesh Phakey, Steve Geyger (Prince of Wales Club).

Seated (left to right): Angela Peirce, John Peirce, Lienel Barnes, Arthur Barber, John Carrick, Colin Rogers (Prince of Wales Club), Mike Greenhough, Nick Houchin, Tom Darlington, Marlene Sperring.

At front: Betty Bloomfield. Missing from photo (in video mode): Alan Purnell.



A magnificent setting for the team photograph!

FRIDAY 9th NOVEMBER

From North, South, East and West, a total of 39 ABs gather at 17.00 hrs in Terminal 2 London Heathrow for Iberia Flight 3167 to Madrid on the first leg of the long and eagerly anticipated South American Tour. Sadly there is already one AB casualty, as, for family reasons, Val Haggett had had to drop out at the “eleventh hour”. The Midlands contingent of Bottles, Bands, Davieses, Bradders and Max, Margaret, Sonia, John Flynn and John Haggett (who, having attended several tango lessons in Willenhall, was now to be known as ‘El Haggett’) arrive in style (the Best by Far) bus – the “Bottle Sky-Link”. Apparently, they had stopped for a late lunch at Oxford Services and El Haggett had refused to eat his peas (to be reported to Val).

Peter Bloomfield is at Heathrow to see us off and, having got rid of the luggage and passed through security, we then come across Chris Webb, the first AB Captain, on his way home to Portugal and Colin Campbell (Julia’s former boss at Central TV who had made one appearance for ABs a couple of years ago) who is en route for a golfing holiday. The Skipper advises that everyone will be required to play in the first game only to find that there are further casualties: Nick has a hamstring injury and Lienel has a trapped nerve in his back – although we are suspicious that this is a ruse to enable him to be pushed around everywhere in a wheelchair. The midfield is reduced to two!!

We all proceed to the departure gate – but ‘where is Trevor?’ “Going direct” says Bradders. **PANIC!!** There is an urgent request for Nick to report to the Iberia Rep at the gate. Did they want to check his reported hamstring? Does the Iberia Rep have a sick dog? Panic over – Nick returns; just a mix-up over his boarding pass. After a short delay, we leave Heathrow at 7.40pm and arrive in Madrid at 10.30pm (local time) and immediately embark upon the first training run – or walk (push for Lienel) – to reach Gate ‘A Ocho’.

Trevor gets out his new toy (digital video camera) but Alan Purnell is already in movie mode, giving lessons to Trevor Davies and filming anything that moves – but hopefully not the move made by Lynn Matthews who decides to test Newton’s Law of Gravity on the see-saw bank of chairs!! Sonia discovers she has the wrong bag. It is Trevor’s – Sonia knows this, apparently, because ‘it contains some extras’. Angela’s face lights up! Trevor videos Alan videoing Trevor; but there appears to be a problem – Trevor’s camera isn’t working. The combined brainpower of Trevor and Alan is having difficulty working it out. Could it be something to do with the extras in Trevor’s bag?? Apparently ‘Trevor flashes and he shouldn’t (not in his condition, anyway). At which point, Angela Peirce announces, “John can't flash at all !!!” It transpires that the problem with Trevor’s camera is not a lack of brainpower but a lack of muscle power – ‘the button needs pushing harder!’ We leave Madrid on Iberia Flight 6833 and try to make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the long flight. Bradders enters a trance-like state on the plane which is said to be caused by lack of oxygen; the comment is heard that he should be used to this having regard to his normally aspirated condition! Anyhow, ABs draw lots in case a ‘kiss of life’ is required – fortunately an Umpire wins!! The young lady sitting next to El Haggett (John thought she was 16 but later discovered she had four children) falls asleep with her head in his lap. It transpires that she is a research scientist – what was she researching in John’s lap?? (To be reported

SATURDAY 10th NOVEMBER

Ten hours later, having woken from a fitful sleep, those who are fortunate enough to have a window seat are rewarded with a magnificent view of the Andes and, soon after, we arrive at Santiago airport at 10.30 in the morning – there being a four-hour time difference from Madrid. Trevor decides to keep his watch on Greenwich

Mean Time (3 hour difference), which worries the Skipper who knows what Trevor's time keeping is like when there isn't any time difference.

At Santiago airport, we encounter a few problems with luggage: Paul Bloomfield's stick bag looks as though it had been mechanically chewed and John Flynn's is nowhere to be seen. Bob (El Presidente), who had been presented with new stick and boots by Salisbury Hockey Club in an effort to bring him into the modern era, sees an opportunity to avoid having to play with 'one of these new-fangled sticks' and readily offers it to John Flynn. After seeing the warning notice, Sonia disposes of the "illegal fruits" which she has on her person but manages to hand onto her home-baked cakes stored in her hand luggage!! The familiar figure of "King Tony I of Australia" is spotted in full AB regalia in "Arrivals" – the Tour party is now complete. We are met by Bernardo and Nahida (our Tour Guides from Sportstour) who usher us all to the two waiting coaches outside. Esteban (Steve) Geyger (from the Prince of Wales Country Club) is also there to meet us and announces that the pitch at the Club will be available during the afternoon for a training session – or would we prefer to meet him in the bar that evening for a drink and a look around? Never ones to shrink from a challenge, ABs to a man choose the latter. Almost another casualty – Trev, endeavouring to be helpful in trying to load the luggage, is nearly decapitated when the driver closes the hydraulically operated doors on the luggage compartment beneath the coach. Finally, we arrive at the Sheraton Santiago Hotel, which proves to have excellent leisure facilities. Temperature 75°/80° F.

After a "freshen-up" shower and a lazy afternoon around the pool, a scouting-party of stalwart ABs – the men in blazers 'to make a statement' – take taxis to the Prince of Wales Club where they are duly met by Steve and shown around. The Club is "**something else**" – a sprawling, colonial style multi-sports (including golf) complex with attentive staff everywhere. Steve organises drinks and leaves them to it – having first instructed the staff to see to their every need. Before leaving, he has also managed to "put the wind up" Peter and Greta Band by informing them that there were no public golf courses in Santiago and clubs could not be hired from the "P of W". The Skipper ('El Capitan') had given Peter and Greta the responsibility for organising a Stableford competition for later in the week – What to do? Sandwiches, fritas, return in taxis and worry about it tomorrow.

Meanwhile, back at the Hotel a wedding reception is in full swing. The bride and groom seem to be waiting around for the official photographer so El Presidente offers to take a photo. However, they are still kept waiting since Bob's camera, which is of the same vintage as his hockey stick, needs time to warm up. The members of the scouting-party return and gaze in awe at the wedding reception still continuing (22.00 hrs). Evidently the Chilean custom is to have the wedding at a late hour and then to party all night!! And so to bed.

SUNDAY 11th NOVEMBER

Following an excellent buffet breakfast with "fruit-fly" John Peirce much in evidence, we 'embus' promptly at 09.00 hours for a City Tour guided by Bernardo and the attractive Nahida. We visit the Hill & Monument of Virgin Mary at Santa Cristobel (vista of the City), Museum of Archaeology, Cathedral, Presidential Palace (many AB females having photos taken with members of the Military), various "Squares", (Gin-Lynn and Maxi seen staggering back after a large, swift "tizer"), the fish, fruit and meat market, old and new Santiago and important buildings. John Peirce is our reference point – having spent time in Chile during the 1980s – although, disappointingly, there is no plaque or statue to commemorate his contribution to the nation. It is also during this Tour that Trevor, now inseparable from his video camera, is nicknamed 'Aynuk B De Mille'. We finally end up in a lapis-lazuli showroom (this being a semi-precious stone indigenous to Chile) for a "chat-up" and our first brush with "pisco sour", the local "firewater".

Whether it is the effect of the chat-up or the pisco sour is unclear, but many purchases are made – even the husbands are seen taking money or credit cards out of their wallets – and Mukesh commences on a spending spree that, in years to come, may well be the reason for a sudden and unexplained blip in the economies of Chile, Argentina and Brazil. We return to the Hotel at 2.30 pm for a leisurely Club Sandwich lunch and prepare for a 4.30 pm departure to the Prince of Wales Country Club for the first match.

Once the bus driver has displayed his ability to do a 12-point turn, we disembark and, resplendent in blazers and ties, the team and their Ladies are photographed with Steve Geyger and the Club President, Colin Rogers, on the steps of the Club entrance. Steve has even arranged for a professional photographer to accompany us to all our matches in Santiago. There is panic in the camp – John Flynn, not content with having lost his sticks, has forgotten to bring his trainers – size 8 required. Betty, being good at sums, offers 2 x size 4s! More photos, in kit, with the Andes as a backdrop before Greta drags us off on our first warm-up. We then line up with our opponents, the ‘Old Golds’, to be presented to the Lady President of the Chilean Olympic Association (a Silver Medallist in the Javelin we believe) and then, as it is the 11th of the 11th, observe a minute’s silence.

Ancient Britons 1 Old Gold 8

During pre-match discussions we discover that, as Nick is still side-lined with his hamstring problem, the Old Gold’s oldest player is the same age as our youngest! We expect, therefore, to be under some pressure. As it turns out, the first 10 minutes are fairly even with scoring chances going begging at both ends but, with our defence coming under increasing pressure Old Golds score two goals in quick succession. Excellent defending, from Allan and Bradders in particular, prevents any further score and shortly before half-time we reduce the deficit when a well-rehearsed short corner sees Tony Handley deflect the Skipper’s strike into the back of the net.

The second half is a different story; is it the combination of our long journey, walking through downtown Santiago and drinking pisco sour or just advancing years that is slowing us down? Within 5 minutes Old Golds extend their lead and then quickly add a further two to lead 5-1. We manage to pick up our game, however, and it is against the run of play that Old Gold score their 6th. They add two further goals in quick succession to win 8-1, Steve Geyger having showed why he played for the Chile National Team, by scoring 5.

ABs Man of the Match – Allan Matthews.

‘The Country Club is quite exquisite’ is the opinion of the Ladies who are invited to use the shower and changing facilities afterwards if they so wish. Even supporters’ drinks were brought out by the waiters as they watched the hockey match. Although the loss of 8-1 is a bit of a downer, the hospitality afterwards – which includes a sausage and beef barbeque, salads, pisco-sours, beer and wine – does much to alleviate our disappointment! After Colin Rogers has explained in Spanish what is about to happen, King Steven I (Steve Geyger) of Wales is ceremoniously appointed by ABs El Presidente and the final inspection is duly carried out by the Colonel to loud cheering. Plaques are exchanged and books (commemorating 70 years of Prince of Wales Country Club) and ties are presented to Mike, Bob, the Colonel, Tony Handley and Arthur (the oldest player). The evening ends with the AB choir joined by Colin Rogers (who knows the tune) singing the ‘Woad Song’. The hour is now late and we return to the Hotel, the opinion being that this has been a ‘bostin’ day.



From left to right: The Colonel, Colin Rogers, Bob (El Presidente) Moorhouse, King Steven I of Wales, Mike (Bottle) Greenhough

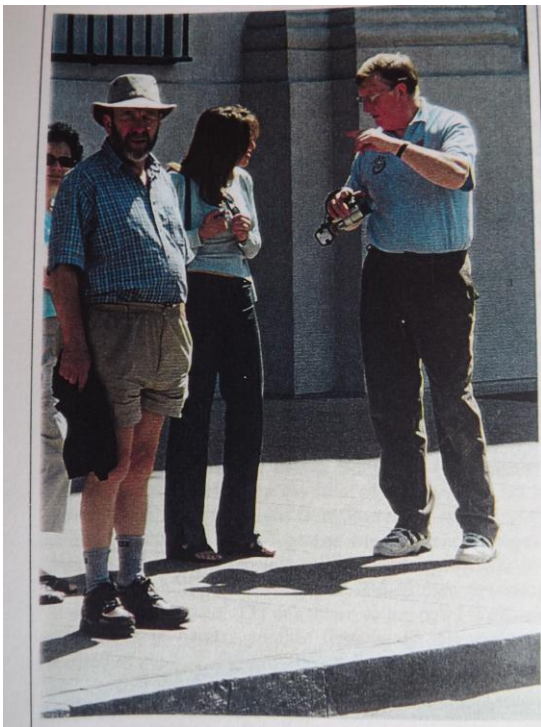


The AB choir lulls Rita to sleep

MONDAY 12th NOVEMBER

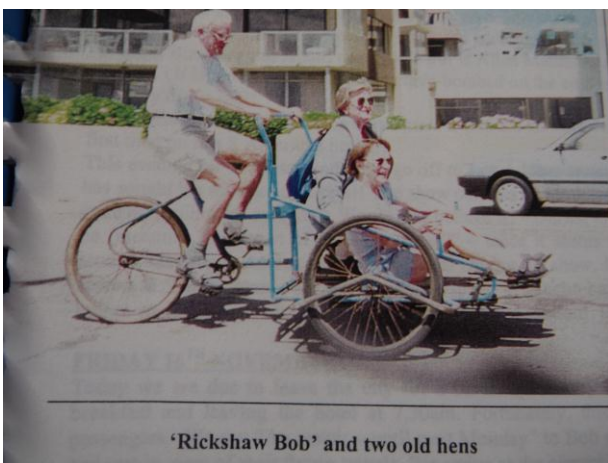
The two coaches arrive at 9.15 am to whisk us off to the old port of Valparaiso and to the neighbouring up-market seaside resort of Vina del Mar. Traffic is very heavy as we fight our way out of Santiago but then, travelling with the coastal range of mountains on one side and the snow-capped Andes on the other, we head out on Highway 68. As there is a request to buy water, bus No 2 makes an unscheduled stop which is prolonged by the tasting of 'chicha' (a sweet brown drink made from grapes) and local pastries, and photos of llama – or was it an alpaca. The first official stop en route is at Veramonte Winery in the Valle de Casablanca, which meets with no opposition from

ABs. After a talk and tour we are encouraged to taste their Chardonnay, Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon. Several purchases are made and Aynuk B de Mille is spotted filming his latest epic ('Casablanca') and then on to Valparaiso.



It's historic associations are much in evidence but it is now "down-at-heel"; the upper part of many of the town dwellings is clad in corrugated metal in great need of a coat of paint, whilst behind the town are the collections of shacks perched precariously on the steep hillsides – defying gravity. By way of contrast, we are driven down to the restaurant 'Chez Gerald' at Vina del Mar (the posh seaside resort) for a wonderful seafood lunch.

After lunch, "Ricksaw" El Presidente Bob is spotted returning from market on a "stolen" bicycle with two old and unsold hens in his front basket (aptly named Chris and Beryl !!) singing "Daisy, Daisy". The group in the second and persistently late bus (much to the annoyance of Bernardo) decide to take a paddle in the Pacific Ocean and several ABs are spotted clambering over the great rocks and boulders to reach the beach. Betty, the two Angelas and Greta are later spotted with wet knickers! Another unscheduled stop further up the coast saw us spotting sea lions and pelicans and more T-shirt vendors! A further stop to view a 'moai' statue brought from Easter Island prompts several mother-in-law jokes.



'Rickshaw Bob' and two old hens

On our return to Santiago we make a 'comfort stop' at a garage where Sonia manages to get herself locked in the disabled toilet but is saved by Greta. Sonia returns the favour and stands guard whilst Greta uses the unlocked cubicle. As the proprietor says in broken English "I lost no-ting yet". Peace then descends upon the bus and Aynuk B de Mille films another epic 'Sleeping to Santiago'. On our return to the Hotel, Trevor, John Haggett, Sonia and Angie decide to watch the football with G & T's in hand – another first for El Haggett who reckons that it is his "virgin" Gin and Tonic!!(to be reported

TUESDAY 13th NOVEMBER

A free day, so most ABs are late breakfasting although Angela Peirce and Greta have been spotted taking an early morning dip! It is a scrum for breakfast as a cruise ship has docked and hence the Egg Florentines are in short supply this morning. Trev and John Haggett decide to go walkabout in search of culture (bars and antique shops). On their return it is obvious that they have been successful, with the bars at least (a very pleasant sojourn at 'Les Amis'), as El Haggett tango-ed his way across the foyer of the Hotel. Was it really true that the Sheriff had disappeared for a "comfort stop" in the Santa Maria Park!(to be reported)

John Carrick decides to hire a car and goes on his first Safari of the Tour. Some, who are energetic enough, climb Santa Lucia Hill (rumours that Mukesh and John Peirce have been shot by the noonday gun prove false). Audrey, meanwhile, totally confuses some poor soul who asks her the time – she hadn't changed her watch and informs the enquirer that it is 9.00 am when, in reality, it is nearly lunchtime! Ian Marsh has successfully challenged the Metro and Post Office and has won. Paul and Betty go to report to Iberia the sorry state of Paul's sick stick bag and then eat at 'Donde Augustine' in the market. Other ABs choose to laze around the pool all day under a clear blue sky until it is time to rendezvous for the game. A slight hiccup en route to the Club de Golf Sport Frances when the bus stops at a Club where we start to get out, only to find that this is the Stade Frances and they only have facilities for tennis. When we eventually arrive at the right Club, we again find magnificent facilities and are warmly greeted by the Sport Frances players (including one who had played so well against us yesterday!).

Ancient Britons 1 Sport Frances 3

Nick's hamstring injury is now sufficiently improved to allow him to start the game but, sadly, Lienel is still unfit to play. The match starts off very evenly and Nick comes close to scoring at a short corner. At the other end, Sport Frances hit the bar but it is well into the half before they open the scoring with a simple stop and clean strike from a short corner. Shortly after half time, the same short corner routine gives Sport France a 2-0 lead and 5 minutes later they notch up their third goal. This prompts us into renewed efforts and 10 minutes later a nicely worked move starting with Mukesh enables Bernard to centre from the left for John Carrick to crash home. The award of a penalty stroke gives us a further chance to put Sport Frances under pressure but the Skipper can only manage to hit the stationary keeper with his flick. However, the match ends with ABs beginning to play some better hockey. We discover after the match that Sport Frances' penalty corner striker is Bob Horsman, a Dutchman played for Tulse Hill in the late 60s / early 70s. ABs Man of the Match – Tony Handley.

Another exceptionally appointed Clubhouse with loads of polished wood, high vaulted ceilings and comfy sofas; another excellent barbeque – but this time cooked and eaten inside; more beer and wine (what a drag!). First taste of that wonderful Chilean fruit 'chirimoya'. As we are in a Club of French origins El Capitano decides to deliver his speech in that language. He soon realises, however, that only one or two people are showing any signs of understanding and reverts to English. After another very enjoyable evening we return to the Hotel, tired but happy, at 10.45 pm.

WEDNESDAY 14th NOVEMBER

Breakfast-time is busy again – the cruise ship is leaving Valparaiso for Rio today and most of the cruisers must be staying at our Hotel. Two carloads of ABs are collected by Maria (Steve's wife) and her friend Issi and taken to the Graneros de Alba, a centre for Chilean handicrafts, popularly known as Los Dominicos Arts & Crafts Village; en route we visit Maria's house. It is a bit of a squash with six people in one car – Julia in the boot of one and Angela wedged between Trev, Sonia and Audrey in the back of the other. Great variety of crafts; lots of "secret" presents bought; finally return to the Hotel by taxis at 4.00 pm.

Meanwhile the Matthews, the Handleys, the Bloomfields, John Flynn and Nick walk to the cable car for a return visit to the Virgin Mary statue followed by Schop Beer. The waiter asks for one cigarette in the packet as "recuerdo" – apparently a "souvenir". They then take the Funicular towards the Zoo with many exotic birds and a polar bear basking in 85°C (have you all been drinking)??

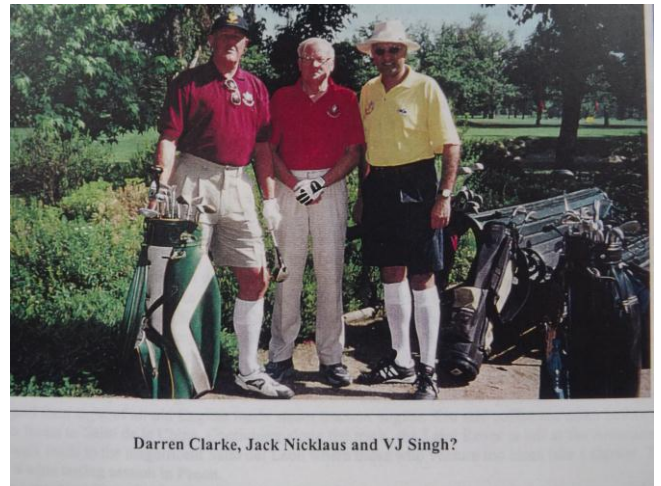
All ABs assemble at 5.45 pm for the journey to the Manquehue Club – home of the next opponents, the Fantasmas! Yet another impressive Clubhouse – this time in quasi-Bavarian chalet style since the origins of the Club were Germanic; and a very nice water based astro pitch. Our warm up today includes avoiding the water, which is spraying haphazardly from a wayward hose. A change from the usual cap / lapel badge – we are each presented with small spoons containing a lapis lazuli stone.

Ancient Britons 2 Fantasmas 5

Communications seem to have broken down since no one appears to be writing a report of this game. The Skipper notices that Fantasmas have only ten men and offers them one of our subs. They decline and we soon realise why – again they are slightly younger us, they are fit and, in Pablo Boetsch, they have the most capped Chilean international. We take a little time to get used to the pace of the water-based pitch by which time Fantasmas have taken a lead, which we are never able to pull back. At one stage Fantasmas are reduced to 9 men when one of their defenders limps off with a calf problem. We see a chance to get back into the game but Greta, ignoring the AB pleas to let him suffer, gives him treatment which enables him to soon return to the fray. Tony Handley and John Carrick each score to keep them neck and neck in the race for “Hot Shot of the Tour” but we are unable to prevent Fantasmas recording a convincing victory.

ABs Man of the Match – Peter Band.

Another excellent evening of generous hospitality. King Richi I of Santiago was duly appointed by ABs El Presidente to unanimous approbation and “passed-off” by King Tony I of Australia.



Darren Clarke, Jack Nicklaus and VJ Singh?

THURSDAY 15th NOVEMBER

Sterling efforts by Greta and Peter had finally produced sixteen sets of golf clubs via contact Carlo and so, on behalf of interested ABs, they had accepted Steve’s offer of a round at the Prince of Wales Country Club and today is the day. Poor Julia has a migraine and Mike’s back is none too good so he stays behind at the Hotel; the remaining 15 – Peter and Greta, Trevor and Angela, Bradders (resplendent in Skipper’s golf shorts), Mukesh, the three Johns (Carrick, Oakley and Haggett), Allan, Tony Handley, Bob, Allan, Bernard and Paul (accompanied by Betty) – take taxis to the Club for 9.30 am. Carlo is duly there with the hired clubs and we are informed that local caddies can be hired for about £10 for the day. Then panic! Pro is ill – so no shop open and hence no tees, balls, and, for some, no glove. This was the first reported occasion where ABs had no balls but persistence wins through as “tackle” is found, gloves scrounged, caddies employed and a wonderful day is had by all, especially AJD who plays her first

ever round of golf on this wonderful parkland course. Bernard Sperring wins the individual Stableford competition; the winning team comprised of Bob, Mukesh, Bradders and Allan; nearest the pin is Allan Matthews and (amazingly but deservedly) the longest drive goes to Greta. It is reported that Allan was dive-bombed on the course by the birds nesting in the rough! "This is the story of my life" he says.

Other ABs go with Bernardo on a mountain trip on a mountain trip to the ski resort of Portillo where they need their winter woollies for the first time on this South American holiday.

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This evening all but Greta and Peter go off to Los Adobes restaurant for a show and a meal. Unfortunately, Montezuma has sought his revenge on Greta! The show consists of some colourful cavorting girls in various regional styles followed by general dancing for everyone. Would you believe it, during the latter Angie is asked by someone in another party "Is he (meaning Trevor) part of the floor show" since it seems she had heard the mellow Welsh tones as she danced around. Obviously American and tone-deaf. During the show, John Flynn is invited on stage to take part and is suitably attired as 'Huaso Juan'. We are all photographed in gaucho hats and the photos are back post haste for us to purchase before we leave Los Adobes. El Haggett is poetry in motion! Back to the Hotel for midnight.

FRIDAY 16th NOVEMBER

Today we are due to leave the city for a break, up-country (or is it down-country) at Pucon; this means an early breakfast and leaving the Hotel at 7.30 am. Fortunately, this morning we don't have to compete with the cruise ship passengers. We say "Au revoir – until next Monday" to Bob and Chris Moorhouse who have opted to stay in Santiago and rest in view of their future travels. We arrive at the airport but sadly Bradders Passport doesn't. Is this the opportunity we have all been waiting for? Divine intervention!! Could we leave Bradders in Chile? We are further a little disconcerted when asked to fill in a Form before we board the aircraft asking us the name and telephone number of our next of kin. However, we eventually board the flight (Bradders included) and land safely at Temuco airport where we board the inevitable coaches for the hour-and-a-bit ride to Pucon with guides Christian and Felipe whose English is perfect (much better than ours) – we soon discover that he is actually Philip from Winchester, an Oxford undergraduate doing a year's work experience in Chile. Whilst on the coach we discover the origin El (J.A) Haggett's initials. There on a formal notice in full view are the names JUAN ALCOHOLODA !! From now on it's El Juan Alchy 'Aggett; we did have our suspicions (especially after the episode at Les Amis!). An informative commentary from our guides, a stop on the way at Villarrica to take photographs and then we arrive at the Gran Hotel, Pucon. The Hotel requires us to have a green band attached to our wrist – we suspect that this is not because they think we are environmentally friendly but because we need feeding in the evening as well as in the morning. Angie and John Peirce manage to get themselves stuck in the somewhat slow and decrepit lift ("an elevating experience" says Angie) which further adds to the already monumental problems facing the sole porter who is totally overwhelmed and is trying to find reinforcements (gone to a dance!). Eventually, all ABs locate their rooms all of which have wonderful views – either of the beautiful lake at the rear or of the magnificent snow-clad volcano from the front. Potential activities for the next day seem endless: climbing, rafting, bussing, 4-wheel drive experience, horse-riding, photographic safaris etc. – even climbing the volcano for the more adventurous and energetic. As we have now been away for a week and have played three hockey

matches, a Lavandaria is urgently required. Several have already been spotted in Pucon – the problem is remembering which one you have patronised.

SATURDAY 17th NOVEMBER

Trev, El Haggett, and the Colonel have decided to go horse riding. John Carrick, John Flynn, Ian and Nick are going to attempt to scale the volcano. The majority opt for a coach tour to Caburgua Lake, Los Pozones and the Huiffe thermal springs. The first stop is at a suspension bridge where a sign informs us '1.5 TONS – PESO MAXIMO'.

Those who have now acquired a little Spanish realise that this is not the amount of money you can take across but the maximum weight the bridge is designed to take. Paul and Angie calculate that 24 ABs = 1.5 tons – at which point there are about 40 people on the bridge plus a car laden with people trying to cross it with inches to spare on either side!



A weighty problem.

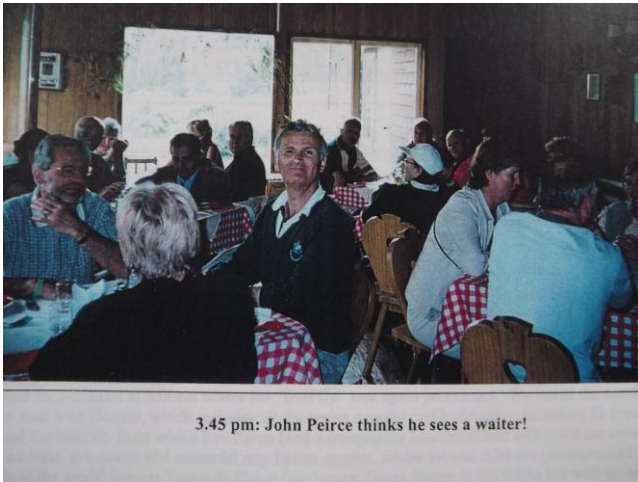
10ABs + 1 truck + 1 bike = 1.5 tons?

10ABs + 1 truck + 1 bike > 1.5 tons?

10ABs + 1 truck + 1 bike < 1.5 tons?

The rest of the morning goes well but then we enter the Salto del Carileufu restaurant to order lunch. Although worth waiting for, it is the longest lunch ever encountered – in at 1.40 pm and out at 4.50 pm – and we still have the thermal springs to visit.

Betty and Paul sit with Alexandre, an escapee from the Neurological Convention taking place at the Gran Hotel (perhaps he saw the ABs as a useful source of study!). There is a mix up with the charge but Julia agrees to meet the restaurant owner at our Hotel later that evening to sort things out. At last we head for the thermal springs and are surprised to see Trev and John Carrick already there – courtesy of a lift from Trev's new Chilean horse riding friends, Claudio and Victorio. After a relaxing dip in the hot springs, the coach departs – leaving the four horse-riders to return to the Hotel in their own vehicle.



Unfortunately, on the way back, they have a head-on collision with a taxi (on the “roller-coaster” dirt road leading to the springs). The two cars are pretty much “write-offs” but, thankfully, there is no serious injury to the occupants. Like 007’s drinks, they are ‘shaken, but not stirred’. The coach driver is asked to return to the Hotel via the Launderette as Angie had taken El Haggett’s washing there the previous day and he will otherwise be without pyjamas in a foreign land!

The laundry closes at 7.00 pm but thankfully it is still open at 7.15 pm when the coach pulls up outside. El Haggett’s modesty is intact!

On our return, we discover that, because of cloud cover on the volcano, Ian and Nick had decided to try again tomorrow and had returned in time to join the photo safari. The two Johns, thwarted in their attempt to reach the top because the weather had deteriorated to such an extent (including dangerously high winds) that the ascent was aborted with about 400 yards of hard trekking to go, had descended the volcano by the ‘backside’ route. Bradders seems relieved when informed by Julia that his Passport has been found (other comments on this matter appear in the unexpurgated version).

SUNDAY 18th NOVEMBER

The Colonel has early morning surgery to separate him from his laptop and is taken shopping by the Bloomfields. The Handleys and Margaret have been to church, which was apparently packed with worshippers. Most ABs are up late. Nick and Ian leave to make a second attempt on the volcano but John Carrick is just too late. The Barnes, Darlingtons, Matthews, Arthur and Brenda decide to take the Photographic Safari 4x4 trip. Since the standard Safari included visits to the waterfalls at Ojos del Caburgua and Salto del Carileufu which had been visited yesterday, the itinerary is changed ‘on the hoof’ by the Tour Boss. After crossing the Quelhue hanging bridge, a left turn is taken along a track to where the Rio Trancura enters Lake Villarica. This is the place where the Mapuche initiated their siege of Villarica in 1599, and is also their warriors’ burial ground. After encountering sheep on the road and re-crossing the bridge, a visit is made to the Ancapulli Lagoon Bird Sanctuary. Crossing the Rio Trancura for the fourth time, the tour proceeds to Salto Palguin for a view of the Falls and then sight of an old English made steam traction engine. Tea and coffee are taken before a stroll through a bamboo forest to Salto de la China. Continuing along the track, the Land Rover is left at the Araucaria forest edge and a short walk leads to the magnificent Salto Del Leon where those who venture too close, take a shower. The trip finally ends with a wine tasting in Pucon.

John Carrick has convinced Trev that he should go on a Carrick adventure in a Fiat Punto! After some eight hours driving over mountainous terrain along logging tracks which a 4x4 would have trouble with – let alone a Punto – Trev is immensely impressed with the Carrick driving technique, especially for a lad from a flat area! It is difficult to interpret road conditions from the average map; the unclassified white roads indicated on the map actually disappear in some places - at other times Trevor has to get out and repair the road, bridges, etcera to make them passable. El Haggett, not having learnt from his previous experience, invites Angie and Sonia out; so wine and

tapas are taken at the Puerto Pucon where other ABs, who were out shopping, join in. Angie and Sonia later return having left El Haggett in merry mood in the Bar (to be reported.....). Several ABs spend the day relaxing on the terrace or by the pool. Some talk of crossing the lake on a pedalo but after several lunchtime beers, piddle-o rather than pedalo is the order of the day. The peace of the day is greatly disturbed by nesting birds on the lawn shrieking when anyone approaches the nests; however, the true tranquillity and beauty of this place is experienced by Maxi and a few other intrepid ABs as they catch the red evening glow over the volcano. This pleases Paul who had previously declared it 'a no glow area'! Trev, John Carrick, El Haggett and Angie meet up in the evening with Victorio and Claudia for a meal; they had no delayed shock after their accident yesterday (they had spent the previous night in the casino!). Angela had to endure Claudia and Victorio's adoring comments on the quality of Trev's singing – did he really sound like Dean Martin? – tone deaf Chileans this time, not Americans.

Ian didn't make it to the top of the volcano – "legs and brain were willing but the lungs were not" – but Nick succeeded in getting to the summit. The Skipper rings ahead to Argentina to see if they have any pitches with a 1 in 3 slope!

MONDAY 19th NOVEMBER

Up early this morning to pack as we are due to leave Pucon to fly to Buenos Aires via Santiago. We breakfast at the "cheaper end" of the Hotel (a conference delegation of IT teachers has usurped our position in the better end).

Green bands are removed from those who are still wearing them and, after the Skipper has sprinkled all his players with holy water from a local shrine ("it appears to have worked miracles for other people" he explains), we 'embus' again and leave with Christian and Philip for the airport. The flight from Temuco to Santiago unexpectedly goes via Concepcion, which prompts the start of a bout of limerick composing that continues until the end of the tour (see end of report). On landing, we are reunited with Bob and Chris, and Bradders is reunited with his Passport.



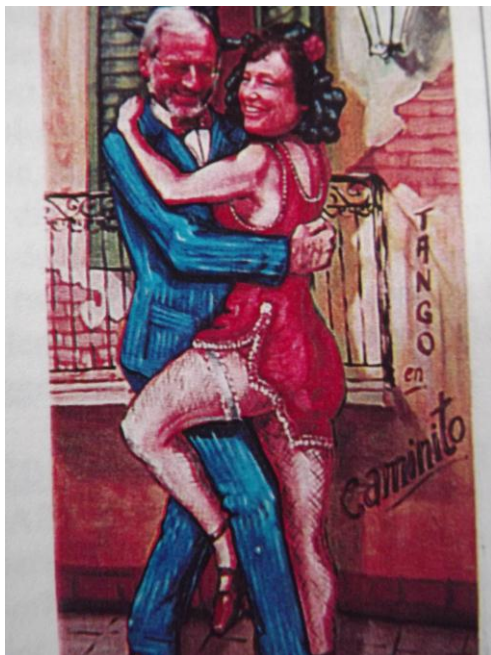
BRADDERS, REUNITED WITH HIS PASSPORT, IS ALLOWED TO LEAVE Chile

Bob has obviously been “presidential” in declining the offers of bribery proffered to him by various ABs – or perhaps the sums offered were too small (this is Latin America!!). We then fly to Buenos Aires (BA) and are met at the airport by our Guide, Donald Rodman. At first, we wonder what to make of Donald, particularly as he seems to be very taken with the DARLINGTONs. In fact, he turns out to be one of the best Guides anyone could have had – so much information is given to us. Sniffer dogs identify Sonia and John Flynn as likely suspects and their hand luggage is searched. All cleared, we are taken by coach to the Dolmen Hotel **. We are met at the Hotel by Andy MacFarlane of Macren Travel. He is responsible for all our arrangements in Argentina and, along with Donald, is always on hand to give help and advice during our stay. Showered, unpacked and some ABs go for a drink and a late supper.

** Monday 17th December: I have just been watching ‘Who Wants to Be a Millionaire’ where one of the questions (for £125,000) was “In ancient times, what was a Dolmen?” The correct answer was ‘a burial chamber’. Do you think Andy was aware of this when he booked the Ancient Britons into the Dolmen Hotel? (Editor)

TUESDAY 20th NOVEMBER

Assembled for breakfast at 8.00 am where the ‘fruit fly’ was again prominent. We board the coach promptly at 9.00 am for a city tour with Donald, which includes all the major squares and buildings – including El Presidente’s famous pink Palace and the balcony from which Eva Peron (and subsequently Madonna) had addressed the crowds. We then proceed to the Caminito, the quaint and colourful arty Italian quarter, where several ABs are photographed in ‘tango mode’.



Peter and Greta have got the right idea



Trevor still hasn't lost the habits acquired at Tettenhall College for Boys!!!

The Tour ends at the world famous Teatro de Colon (the largest in the world but with no air conditioning), where we are given an orchestral demo of the acoustics. Ian Marsh is heard to remark that it took the orchestra as long as the ABs to warm up and the final product, even then, was just as uncoordinated. So many interesting facts about the Argentine are learned from Donald – the state of the economy, the oppression and corruption of successive governments, the need to have more than one job to live comfortably etcera. This first tour ends at a leather shop (which Donald happens to know) in Florida Avenue (the main shopping area) and ABs are treated to a private

fashion show with wine thrown in. The more gullible among the ABs succumb and order bespoke jackets etcera to be collected later.

Most then enjoy a lazy afternoon in preparation for the 5.30 Reception, which ABs are hosting for representatives of the Clubs to be played in Buenos Aires. Donald's assurance that they would be late is proven to be very wrong. A good mixture of wine, beer, canapés, and chat until 7.15. ABs 'embus' once more at 7.40 to be taken to the San Telmo area of the city for dinner at La Bistecca where Maxi is so overwhelmed by the variety and amount of food on offer at the buffet that she declares that "it's like Tesco's – I want a trolley" Then on to La Ventana for a Tango show – El Haggett's little feet are twitching at the prospect and he begins fantasising about getting home and buying a sharp Italian-style suit, having brylcreamed hair and partners in fishnet tights! Oh for Val's controlling influence! It is after midnight before we stagger back to the Hotel.

WEDNESDAY 21st NOVEMBER

30 ABs assemble in the Hotel Foyer for taxis to take them to their 1½ hour tango lesson; the taxi ride proving to be an experience in itself. The Argentine tango is a very seductive, erotic dance born of the bordellos of Buenos Aires. Chris Moorhouse wonders how well this will be received at Spetisbury Village Hall and how she will begin to explain it to the Ladies of the W.I. Anyhow, it allows ABs to express a range of emotions from a superficial "Good Fun" to an intense "We'll get into this back home". We anticipate the day when Haggett and Peirce will make their debut for the West Midlands in 'Come Dancing'. The return taxi journey is no less hair-raising than the outward one. At a set of traffic lights, one of the taxis pulls into the left hand lane of the four-lane one way street; cries from the passengers of "You Bloody Idiot" when the car in front turns right across the other three lanes are quickly silenced, when they realise that the taxi driver is going to do the same. Trev, Sonia and Angie go shopping and visit Sterns at the Marriott Hotel – a very nice but very expensive jeweller; they did get their free gift – courtesy of the leaflets Donald had handed out the previous night. All ABs are assembled at 5.00 for the first match in BA and are taken by coach to the San Martin Club. This proves to be much closer to the UK's idea of a traditional sports pavilion design than those in Chile but it is still on a 'grand' scale and with changing room attendants, fresh towels etcera.

Ancient Britons 4 San Martin 1

Early AB pressure is rewarded after 7 minutes when a quickly taken free hit finds the Colonel unmarked on the right; he collects the ball, moves into the circle and fires the ball home. San Martin then come more into the game and, in their first fluent attack, the ball is moved down the right, crossed, initially blocked by the AB defence but a missed tackle allows a San Martin forward to lift the ball into goal from close range. ABs then upped the tempo and only a number of excellent saves prevent them from scoring. The game then ebbs and flows between the two circles and the half ends with San Martin on top and ABs lucky to stay on level terms when a San Martin goal from a short corner is disallowed.

A stern half-time talk from El Capitano produces some more purposeful hockey with the two Tonys (Handley and Hall) prominent. A succession of left-sided attacks involving Tony Handley, John Peirce and the Skipper culminates, after 49 minutes, in a reverse stick score by Tony Handley. A further period of intense AB pressure brings some excellent saves from the San Martin keeper – one notable flying horizontal effort from a fierce John Peirce shot. At the other end, Allan is called only into sporadic action as ABs' midfield and forwards continue to dominate, coming close to scoring on a number of occasions. On 66 minutes, another left-sided move in which Nick is prominent leads to John Peirce crashing the ball home. One minute later, another AB attack involving the

Skipper, John Peirce and Tony Handley results in a reverse stick 'strike' by the Skipper to complete the scoring.

Did that holy water really work!

ABs Man of the Match – Nick Houchin.

Even the supporters found this an exciting game – such that Chris Moorhouse is heard to remark that it was the most exciting game she had witnessed in 50 years! However, the AB menfolk suspect that the Ladies' enthusiastic cheering during the game may have had something to do with the fact that the San Martin forward had 'Casanova' emblazoned across the back of his shirt.

We are then entertained to an 'asado' built in the traditional Argentinian style and the Ladies in particular enjoy an evening of chat with their special San Martin player, 'Santiago'. We watch an expert tango demonstration and everyone is then encouraged to join in. ABs make a donation which, we are informed, will be used to purchase a Cup for the annual Veteran 7-a-side Hockey Tournament which the San Martin Club organise and in which 85 teams take part. We are presented with a special pennant – the only one remaining of a batch of 22 made in 1926. Carlos Cocina, the San Martin captain, who had been instrumental in setting up this match, is elevated to the status of 'King Carlos' and Mike declares that the Colonel, in recognition of his fine goal, be promoted to Brigadier. The evening finishes with a rendition of the Woad Song (with the appropriate actions), by way of response to the tango demo.

A final bit of good (!!) news to end a successful day: Neeru and Mukesh hear that their daughter has passed her driving test.

THURSDAY 22nd NOVEMBER

After breakfast we are once more in the coach with Donald to be taken firstly to La Recoleta (the posh end of BA), and a visit to the cemetery where Eva Peron's remains lie. We are shown the huge Moreton Bay fig tree in the park in front of the cemetery and then told the story of Eva's death in 1952; her body was taken to Italy by her sister and then returned to BA some 20 years later. Only the rich and/or famous are buried in La Recoleta – they are only ones able to purchase the all too rare mausoleums that come up for sale. Talk of Eva Peron leads to Aynuk B de Mille to contemplate an AB Films Musical Production, which could incorporate 'Don't Cry For Us Argentina'; and 'Another Suitcase in Another Hotel'. We re-bus and are taken to a private ranch – Estancia Los Patricios – the home of Juan and Marie Brané where they breed polo ponies and other horses and grow arable crops. En route, Donald gives us a geography lesson and demonstrates the use of various items of gaucho clothing and equipment. We are met at the entrance to the estancia by four gauchos – two carrying the Argentine flag and two the Union Jack. We are given a welcoming drink and empanadas, which Donald had earlier told us, were the best in Argentina. He had also demonstrated the position in which he recommended we eat them to avoid getting the juice on our clothes; this involved standing with the legs apart and leaning forward from the waist - which we duly do, having first made sure there are no rampant bulls in the field behind us!! Next, we are taken on a tour to see the collection of carts owned by the Branés, including a French hearse from the 1880s. We are then given a demonstration of the gauchos riding at a terrific pace and attempting to pierce a ring suspended from a support, using a small dagger and are then entertained to a game of musical chairs on horseback. ABs then have the opportunity to either ride a horse or take a ride in one of the carriages around the estancia. Lunch is taken in the open air under the huge boughs and shade of a fig tree; the steak, salad and ice cream tastes wonderful. A trio of local folk musicians play

for us whilst a young couple display some traditional dances. Everyone is encouraged to join in. We are further entertained by El Haggett giving an impromptu demonstration of how to leave the table in one simple movement (i.e. falling backwards off the chair) and Arthur demonstrating an English traditional dance, which involves throwing Brenda under a table. After lunch we are invited by Marie for a tour of their wonderful 1870s house and are told that her great grandfather had been given the house and land for fighting and conquering the “bellicose” native Indians in defence of BA back in the early 1800s.

The Colonel is seen on the estancia lawns attempting to demonstrate the finer points of croquet to Bradders whilst the rest of the ABs splash around in the adjacent outdoor swimming pool. Angie Peirce’s swimming is coming along remarkably well thanks to Greta. After a day to remember, we say our goodbyes to Juan and Marie and board the coach for our return to the Dolmen Hotel – via the Stern shop at the Marriott where more “freebies” are on offer; they are small pendants inscribed with a depiction of the “bolladeros”. Donald has warned us not to ask the male assistant if we can see his ‘bollas’, which might embarrass him. Betty is rather taken with a three-row necklace of Inca rose – a snip at \$8,750. Paul would rather be taken back to the Hotel.

FRIDAY 23rd NOVEMBER

This morning, it seems that all ABs decide to take their washing to the Lavandria – when Trev and Angie visit after breakfast all machines have tickets attached to them with AB names. Trev, Angie and Allan take a taxi to the Estadia Boca Junior to look around the ground and museum and to pay homage (?) to the “Hand of God”. They enjoy the museum and shop before walking back to the Caminito and round the harbour. On their return to the Hotel they find that El Haggett has abandoned Sonia in San Martin Park but thankfully she has found her way back to the Dolmen. Julia, meanwhile, has gone back to the Esquina Carlos Gardel for a further tango lesson. The Skipper goes along to watch and thinks he has found an answer to ABs problems on the pitch – “we are facing the wrong way when we start”.

Trev and Angie set out to collect his leather coat but are trapped inside a restaurant by a torrential downpour. The roads around become like rivers and after thunder and lightning, two huge fountains are seen springing from the centre of the road – the drains just can't take the amount of water. They wade back and reach the Hotel just as ABs are assembling to leave for the next match against Lomas. Nicholas Gibson, our liaison with the Lomas Club, arrives and tells us that, in spite of the torrential rain, we will go to the Club, as they are anxious to entertain us. Eventually, everyone is on board the bus – but has Beryl changed her religion? Why is she wearing a turban? It has stopped raining by the time we arrive at the Club but the water still lies heavily on the artificial pitch; it is then that we discover that we have three brilliant, previously undiscovered ‘sweepers’ in our midst – John Carrick, Allan Purnell and Arthur Barber. Thanks to their efforts and those of their Groundsman, the game commences without too much delay.

Ancient Britons 1 Lomas 4

The strain of touring is beginning to take its toll, particularly on the midfield; the Skipper has a sore Achilles and has decided to take a rest for this game, although he will come on, if necessary. Lienel is still suffering and is unfit to start the game; John Carrick had gone lame towards the end of the San Martin game; and now Mukesh reports that he has a thigh strain – although we suspect that this is a ‘shopping’ rather than a ‘hockey’ injury. Nevertheless, the first half is evenly contested although it is ominous that the Lomas players, many of who have come out of ‘retirement’ to play in this game, are showing signs of blending together into a useful team. To add

to this they bring on some younger legs in the second half and, in spite of unstinting effort by the whole team in which Nick works tirelessly, ABs are unable to stem the tide of Lomas attacks and concede four goals.

ABs Man of the Match – Nick Houchin

Another excellent 'asado' follows and we are well entertained by our opponents and their Ladies who had, incidentally, entertained our Ladies to tea before the match.



Following the presentations and speeches (Paul deputising for the Skipper on this occasion), Henry Steven, a notable 'Maxi' Veteran hockey player in Buenos Aires and one of the few we came across who got anywhere near Arthur's age, performed his own 'tango' song which, we believe, referred to some fellow members of the Lomas Club. Henry was also very proud to show us a copy of a Buenos Aires glossy magazine in which an article about his hockey prowess, including his picture, featured between Tiger Woods and Michael Jordan. ABs responded with a 'tangofied' version of the Woad Song before reluctantly saying our farewells.

SATURDAY 24th NOVEMBER

Today, at Donald's invitation, the DARLINGtons and Purnells go aboard the elegantly rebuilt / refurbished Delta boat 'DONE JULIA', to join the flotilla of small boats welcoming the 'FRIGATA LIBERTAD' on its return to its home port from an around-the-world training voyage. There is a liberal sprinkling of sailing boats, motor launches, coastguard cutters and warships to welcome the Libertad as she is pulled by two large tugs into the harbour. Ships sirens and horns blast out a welcome as the crew dress the ship overall and splice the main brace. A massive crowd, including a large contingent of ABs, is on the quayside to greet her. Mike, Julia, Margaret, Bradders and Maxi, having had a splendid lunch at a rather posh restaurant overlooking the adjacent dock, stroll along to join in the celebrations. Earlier, on board 'Done Julia', due to turbulence and high winds (meteorological of course), when Audrey uses the "head" (toilet) it behaves like a bidet – rumour has it that she has to remove her "lower garments" to ensure she keeps her knickers dry! – Old habits die hard !! Old memories re-kindled !!

Some ABs are keen to watch the rugby match between England and South Africa and celebrate (beers and G&Ts) a 29-6 England victory. Trev collects his leather jacket taking three of his 'wives' for advice (Angie, Sonia and Chris). During the course of the day, John Carrick and the Colonel have been investigating the possibility of setting up a Croquet Association in Argentina. With the Colonel dressed in his finest No. 1s and John Carrick acting as the 'gaucho' driver, they con their way past the Security Guards and enter an exclusive sports resort, catering for the wealthiest of BA citizens. They finally meet up with the Centre Director who seems very interested when the Colonel explains the detail of the project. "Ah" says the Director, "you wish to start up a CRICKET team, yes?" "No,

No” shouts the Colonel with concern, “CROQUET”. The conversation never really regains its previous momentum but the Colonel is heard to comment, “I’ll be interested to see if anything comes out of it.

Edith, whom Betty and Paul had met at the Lomas Club the previous evening, fulfils her promise and arrives at the Dolmen to escort Paul and Betty to the Post Office where they purchase stamps and are shown where to post their cards – Edith even ensures that they return to the Dolmen safely.

Sonia and Angie, who had walked down to join the huge crowd seeing the Libertad arrive home (a wonderful welcome for this ship with a band on the quay, horns blaring, flags waving, and the sun shining), are invited to a party by Mario Roberto Labat, a retired Argentine Sea Captain, and his wife whose son had just returned on the ship and who would be appointed Petty Officer at a ceremony later that day. After explaining that they must go and watch the hockey, they are given his card with his address on and told that if ever they wanted to stay at a friendly home in Argentina, they would be most welcome. Back at the Dolmen, we are soon assembling in the foyer for our next hockey match at the Hurling Club. Again we are enthusiastically welcomed at yet another well-appointed Club.

Ancient Britons 1 Hurling Club 5

The Skipper’s Achilles injury was aggravated in yesterday’s match so he is side-lined for this game and John Carrick is still ‘hors de combat’, but all other injuries are sufficiently improved for everyone else to declare themselves ‘fit’. The first half is evenly contested with each side scoring once, AB’s goal scored by John Peirce from Lienel’s astute pass. Unfortunately, just before half time, having chased a ball down the left wing, Bob collapses to the ground in agony. It is soon obvious that he has sustained a serious injury to his left leg and he is stretchered to the changing room from whence he is taken to the local hospital accompanied by Chris and John Carrick. It transpires that he has severely pulled or torn the groin muscle. Somewhat deflated by this, the ABs cannot repeat their first half performance and concede a further four goals.

ABs Man of the Match – Peter Band.

After the match we assemble in the spacious Clubhouse where there is an excellent band, made up of Club Members, playing ‘60s music. The Hurling Club seems full of Spanish-speaking Irishmen and women!! We dine with, amongst others, Yo-Yo and Kathleen Wade, Alec Quinn and George McCormack whom we had met at our Reception earlier in the week. A change from the usual beef ‘asado’ tonight, we have chicken and chips (Margaret is happy!!). We have a most enjoyable evening and are all relieved and delighted to see Bob reappear half way through dinner. Supported by two of the abler-bodied ABs, he enters the room to rousing cheers. The Skipper decides that the fine for appearing at a formal AB event dressed in a tracksuit should be waived and Bob nobly carries out the ceremony of crowning George McCormack as King George I (or was it King Paddy I) of Roscommon with the usual “passing-off” by the Colonel. We are presented with a most unusual gift – a Hurley (the hurling equivalent of a hockey stick) that had been specially inscribed for the occasion.

A memorable evening for many reasons which ends at around 1.00 am.



SUNDAY 25th NOVEMBER

This morning, after breakfast, yet another coach trip with Donald – this time accompanied by wife and daughter. First a walk in a Conservation area used by BA residents, either for jogging, cycling or walking, on this beautiful Sunday morning. We then board the bus (again) and visit La Boca (again), San Telmo market (watch out for the girl who charges you for having your photo taken with her!!) and the craft market at La Recoleta. Back at the Hotel, Julia has hired a Tango Teacher (Georgie), a private room and that famous filmmaker Aynuk B de Mille – say no more Jules! The unexpurgated version will soon be available in the UK on video and DVD – but only from adult shops or Mothercare.

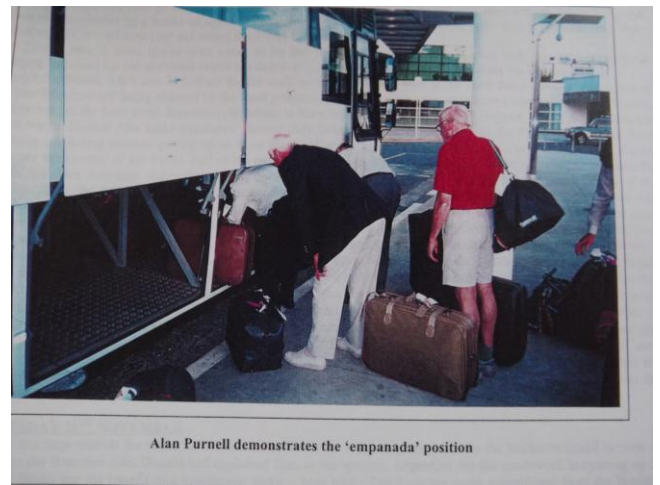
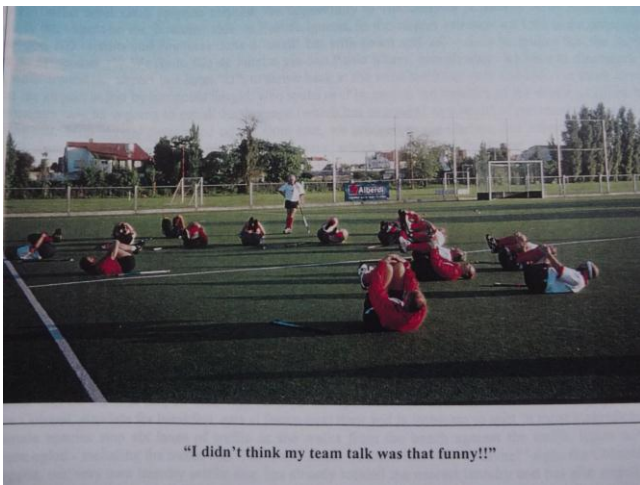
Bob and Chris have been to the British Hospital to get approval for Bob's long haul flight to New Zealand later that evening. He is given the OK – Qantas will provide a wheelchair, a seat on the aircraft where he can stretch out his leg and a stewardess will put an ice pack on his groin every 15 minutes; Bob seems quite keen to go!! All ABs assemble at 15.45 in the Lobby to say goodbye to Bob and Chris – they need to leave for the airport before we return from the evening match. El Presidente, although still on two hockey sticks, urges us to continue to show AB spirit in the face of moderate results to date but most of all to enjoy the rest of the Tour. He tells us that the one word that defines to Ancient Britons is TIMING. We wonder whether the Hospital has put Bob on drugs or has he been drinking to ease the pain? Perhaps he is thinking of the TV programme 'Time Team' where from time to time they go round the world looking for other ancient relics. We each take our leave and wish them more enjoyment when they meet up with daughter Susan and her husband Stephen in NZ.

We then depart for the poshest of Clubs that we would play – the very affluent San Fernando Club with its five floors of activities, Olympic size swimming pool, tennis courts, football pitches, Rowing Club and Yachting basin. They even own an island where they have further facilities.

Ancient Britons 1 San Fernando 1

Everyone has declared himself fit for the last game and, on a good water based pitch, we play some of our best hockey of the tour. Both sides create chances but the first half remains goalless. San Fernando take the lead after 60 minutes when one of their former Argentine internationals crashes home an unstoppable shot. ABs soon equalise when the Skipper to Tony Handley short corner routine is again successful. In spite of good attacking hockey from both sides, there is no further score and 1-1 result is an accurate reflection of the game and a fitting end to the hockey part of the tour.

ABs Man of the Match – Peter Band.



After drinks and empanadas we enjoy a grand feast of hors d'oeuvres followed by chicken and ham. During dinner we enjoy the music playing from the CD – but it appears not to be acceptable to El Haggett who has his dancing feet on and needs stronger stimulation; he suddenly disappears and re-appears just as suddenly clutching an alternative dance-tune CD rescued from his kit bag. Soon, the sound of Valetas, St Bernard's waltzes etcera fill the air – and we join in with glee! El Haggett, however, is still not happy, - the CD player will only play the first 7 tracks and he is therefore unable to give a demonstration of his prowess at the Dashing White Sergeant. We revert to music of the Argentine and Julia is invited to give a tango demonstration with one of the opposition.

In his speech, the Skipper thanks in particular Jorge Querejeta who has been instrumental in setting up most of the hockey in Buenos Aires and presents him with an AB tie and a polo shirt in Argentinian blue. The San Fernando captain, Carlos, presents the ABs with a beautiful silver tray specially engraved for the occasion of our visit. As we have to pack for our departure in the morning to Iguazu and the world famous Falls, we say our fond farewells and return to the Dolmen at 11.00 pm.

MONDAY 26th NOVEMBER

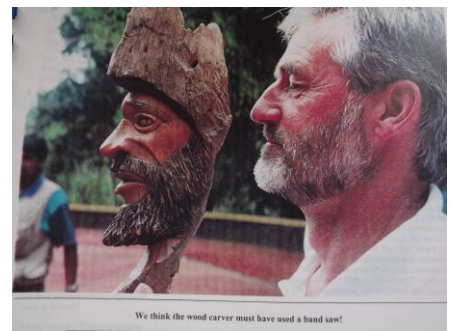
All ABs are up early to prepare for a 10.30 am departure – cases outside rooms by 9.30 am. We say our farewells to Donald and driver Josef – they have both been fantastic and Donald even says that he will miss us (not only for the commission from EU Leathers and H Stern). We have gained so much knowledge and familiarity with BA from Donald, it is sad to leave him. At the airport, those that have tax to reclaim on their leather goods etcera are taken by Donald to the relevant counter (you will be paid the refund if there happens to be enough cash available).

We arrive at Iguazu to be met by our Guide Erna and taken to the Sheraton Iguazu. En route, she surprises us by announcing that we will be doing a 3 hour tour of the Falls as soon as we have checked in (ABs visibly wilt) but after discussion with Julia it is decided to visit the 'Devil's Throat' this afternoon as the weather is so good and to do the Upper and Lower Falls tomorrow morning. When Julia asks if anyone disagrees with this plan, only El Haggett's hand is raised (to be reported). Julia has cleverly ensured that we all have rooms with a view of the breathtaking Falls. 30 minutes after arrival at the Hotel we assemble for the train ride and walk to the Garganta del Diablo ('Devil's Throat'). Hellishly hot and humid. We have another professional photographer. The Hotel looks like a cruise ship when viewed from the Falls. Was that the lesser – spotted Lienel that Trev saw?? Paul and Nick are exceptionally keen on the wildlife and agree to go on a "toucan watch" at 5.30 am the next morning. On our return to the Hotel, Erna suggests that we might like to go on the Gran Aventura after our visit to the Upper and Lower Falls – this consists of an 8km truck ride through the rainforest, a boat ride up to the Falls and a short walk back to the Hotel. She also recommends, for tomorrow evening, the dinner / show in Foz de Iguazu. Some sleep – others laze around the pool being entertained by the cat monkeys swinging in the trees. Buffet dinner at 8.30 pm. The thunder and lightning is terrific during the night but, sadly, doesn't do much for John Carrick's laundry, which he had carefully arranged on his Balcony and he awakes to find it on the floor and sodden!!

TUESDAY 27th NOVEMBER

As arranged, Nick and Paul go out on their "watch", and not only find toucans but also meet a coati family. Later that day we are entertained by a family of agouti (giant guinea pigs) around the swimming pool. Did you see the large furry caterpillar with the red nose (no! not called Bradders) and the dead tarantula?? The Colonel was in good spirits once again as he had managed to re-establish contact with the rest of the world following technical lap-top problems (virus NOT dancers!!), albeit he had to route his missives via Buenos Aires.

Having breakfasted, ABs met at 9.00 am for the walk to the Lower Falls with Guide Erna and official photographer in tow. Terrific views (all being videoed by the local professional). On the way, we encounter a very talented, one-legged wood carver not far from the Hotel. Incredibly he seems to have captured the likeness of El Haggett, Arthur and Peter in his face carvings.

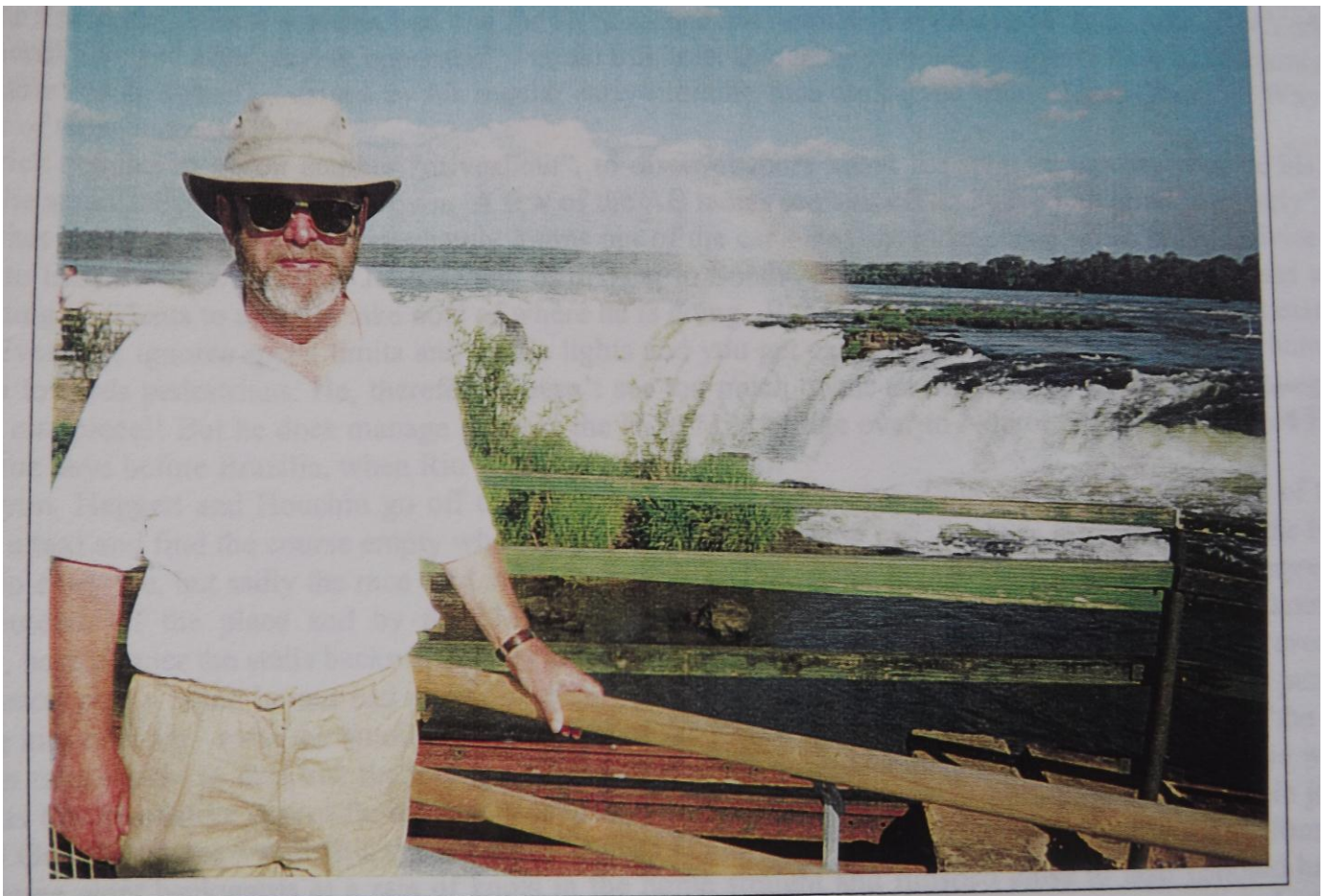


Several ABs make purchases. Having duly followed the walkways around the Falls and noted the flora and fauna (including toucans getting up to some mischief at the top of a tree - only two-can play!!!! – and the swifts which are the symbol of the Falls), half of the party then return to the Hotel whilst the more adventurous descend the cliff for the Gran Aventura. After 30 minutes, during which the Skipper is seen dangling his feet in the waters of the river ('good for the Achilles'), life jackets are donned and shoes placed in plastic bags for a powerboat ride through the Falls. Terrific fun, very exhilarating and very wet!! After landing lower down the river, we ascend steep steps and are met by a ranger of the National Park who takes us in an open lorry through the rainforest and explains

about the wild life and trees. We return to the Hotel and most laze around the circular pool. Assemble at 6.30 pm to watch the video that is for sale and then onto the coach for 7.00 pm to travel to Foz de Iguazu (over the border in Brazil) and the restaurant Plaza Foz for dinner and a show. We are all bemused by having to disembark the bus at the frontier, step onto a disinfected mat, get back onto the bus, and then the bus is driven over a second mat, to ensure that foot and mouth is not taken into Brazil from Argentina. Little do they know that we have secretly imported our own foot (El Haggett) and mouth (Trev) into the country! The show features dancers from Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay and briefly, quite a few ABs. John Carrick, Betty, Allan and Mike are spotted on stage enjoying the company of some scantily clad females and Maxi also finds something that tickles her fancy!! Tony Handley is heard to remark that Paraguayan Indians leap about enthusiastically, Argentines do the tango but the real message of the show was that Brazilians know how to party!

WEDNESDAY 28th NOVEMBER

Up early and bags outside the room for 7.15 am in readiness for a coach journey across the border to Brazil to view the Iguazu Falls from the Brazilian side. Donald had explained that, in his opinion Argentina did the spadework in opening up the Falls but Brazil got the benefit of a spectacular show – how true. The Falls are quite magnificent from the Brazilian side. Most of the ABs get very wet viewing the Falls with their far-flung clouds of spray but it is a very exciting and exhilarating experience.



‘Heading for a fall’ – El Haggett (or is it a Columbian drugs baron?) in disguise

We then visit the Hotel Das Cataratas, which is an old colonial-type building, and enjoy a leisurely buffet lunch (and, surprise-surprise, the opportunity to visit another H Stern!). After lunch, we are taken by coach to the airport on the Brazilian side, at Foz de Iguazu. In the airport entrance we spot some potential, but rather statuesque, AB

recruits and Bradders dons a 'coati' hat with snout and tail – does he realise that the shooting season starts on December 1st? We fly to Rio de Janeiro via Sao Paulo where, inexplicably, we have to disembark in torrential rain, walk around the airport in a large “U”, to arrive back at the same boarding gate and onto the same aircraft! We are met at the airport in Rio by our Guide Sergio, who looks as if he carries the troubles of the whole world on his shoulders and wonders how he is going to get all our luggage (which has expanded as a result of numerous shopping expeditions) onto the bus. With several cases piled on the front seat, we proceed to the Carlton Rio Atlantica Hotel in driving rain. Mukesh almost has a heart attack; his 'shopping' case, which was on the front seat, is taken off the bus and left unattended on the pavement. He shows his most penetrating form of the tour as he leaps from the bus, scattering ABs in his wake!! We are received at the Hotel with drinks (including the Brazilian national drink – 'caipirinha') and nibbles. Has everyone lost their glasses?? John Peirce's – believed to have remained at the Iguazu Sheraton, John Flynn's – somewhere between bus and Hotel, Trevor's – could be anywhere. Most ABs retire to bed for an early night. The Bloomfields, the Matthews, Chris and Maxi cause great confusion in the Bar – you can't buy a Gin without Tonic!! John Carrick opts to buy a coconut from the beach and drink the milk – however, he is warned to keep his “facon” out of sight or he might be arrested. (We think it's a machete but are not sure, as we are not yet into Portuguese!!).

THURSDAY 29th NOVEMBER

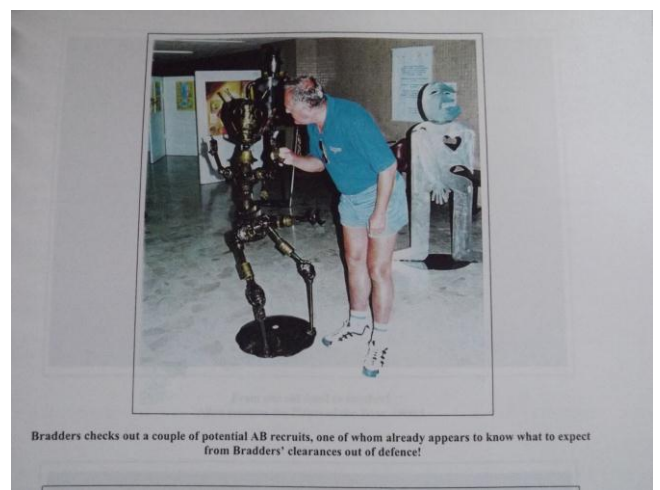
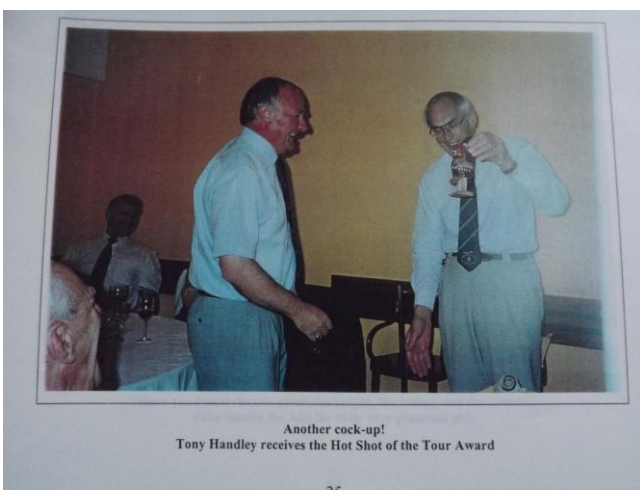
Our Hotel is right on the famous Copacabana beach with Ipanema Beach being a short distance away. This is quite an up-market area but we are advised by Sergio that it is, never the less, on the patch of certain “professional Ladies”. Most ABs stagger down to breakfast after a well-needed night's sleep to learn that El Haggett has already been out twice on early morning runs along the beach – the second time to see if he could meet up with the young Ladies, who had overtaken him on the first run, on their way back (to be reported) Bradders and Maxi don't appear until 12 noon and the Colonel, also late for breakfast, eats al fresco next door and is fortunate to spot “a most magnificent specimen of the female species stop six lanes of traffic as she walks from the beach against the traffic lights without pausing; everyone ogled – including the traffic cop. The whole street watched in awe”. “Heaven” sighs the Colonel.

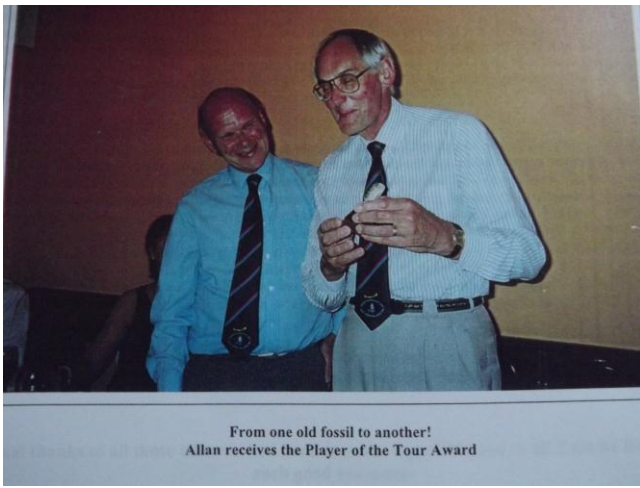
El Haggett, our very own laundry sniffer dog, has already located the nearest laundry and has also negotiated a haircut and a beard trim – and so early. We board a coach at 2.00 pm and are taken on the mandatory city tour, which includes the famous Maracanã Football Stadium. Several purchases later, we board the cable cars that will take us to the top of the Sugar Loaf (the name derives from the shape of the mountain being reminiscent of the large bottle-shaped edifice in which sugar was dried by the Portuguese). We return to the Hotel and “chill-out”; various groups of ABs plan to “do their own thing” in the evening – going to different restaurants or staying in the Hotel; the restaurant next door proves to serve enormous portions. Rumour has it that John Carrick was approached by a “professional” but to date, we have no details except that it was around 4.30 am?? John Oakley is also believed to have been “approached”, but, true to the umpiring code of practice, he retorted “Do you realise that I am a Hockey Umpire” and immediately blew for offside (under the old rules) – or was it for obstruction. Gin Lynn now manages 9 out of 10 for her G & Ts.

FRIDAY 30th NOVEMBER

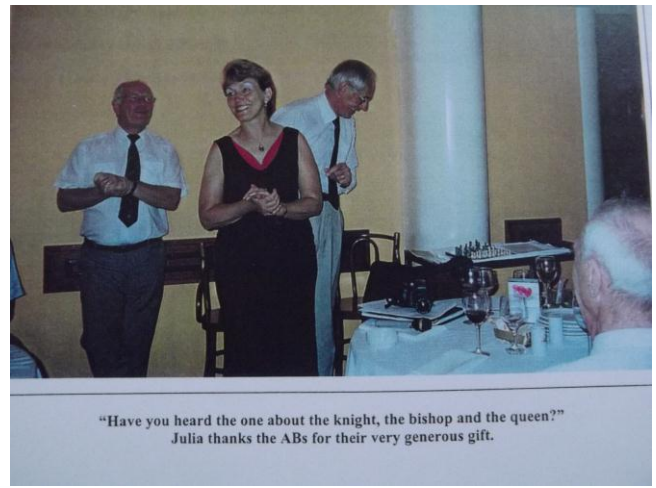
Sergio has arranged a visit to the Corcovado (statue of Christ). We assemble at 9.30 am and are taken to the electric rail terminus but unfortunately arrive at the same time as coach loads of Americans from two cruise ships

that had docked at Rio. We wait patiently for the electric funicular to take us to the top – and are then accused of “pushing in” by the Yanks whose tour guides are not as dedicated as Sergio in getting their groups to the front of the queue. Having avoided a third world war, we find that there is plenty of room for everyone in the carriages. At the top of the railway we ascend the 200 steps to the foot of the statue and what an impressive sight it is. The 360° view of Rio is clear and spectacular. We purchase souvenirs and queue for our descent. We return to the Hotel via the racecourse, and Ipanema beach. It seems that Banks are in short supply but John Carrick (of Laundry fame) has found a Citibank at the back of a Blockbuster store so everyone becomes solvent immediately. ABs are urgently summoned to the Skipper’s room where we are informed by Julia that Iberia have discontinued their Saturday flights from Rio – we will, therefore, be leaving on Sunday instead. “Oh shucks – another day in Rio – what a yawn!!” Julia has managed to arrange for us to keep our rooms for a further night, so all is well. ABs meet at 7.30 pm for the coach to take us to our (Almost) End of Tour Dinner at the Porcao Pio Restaurant. Sadly, there has been a mix up and the private room supposedly booked for us has been given to others. Sergio is distraught – his usual “hang-dog” expression is even more lugubrious! He feels that it reflects on him. “Don’t worry” is the response. The meal is excellent with all meat carved from skewers straight onto your plate. A further misunderstanding over the drinks results in a bill for 1081 Real (about £350) – twice as much as expected. Our imperturbable Bean Counter sorts out the situation! The presentational formalities get under way against the background hubbub of the restaurant and no microphone – but plenty of Bottle! Allan Matthews is presented with the “Player of the Tour” Award, in spite of late challenges from Peter Band and Nick Houchin, he had accumulated enough points in Chile to hang on to the Title for the second tour running; nobody had ‘nul point’. Although we haven’t managed many goals (10 in all), Tony Handley has scored 4 of them and, therefore receives the “Hot Shot” Award (an award of dubious pedigree!!). A presentation to Mike and Julia by Paul Bloomfield of an antique marble and malachite chess set embodies the appreciation of all the touring ABs of all the hard work which has resulted in such a wonderful tour of contrasts. The Skipper also makes presentations to Betty, for her organisation of ‘Man of the Match’ voting, to Greta, for once more assuming the Trainer’s role and for her and Peter’s golf arrangements, and to Trevor and Angela for their Bean-counting expertise – and so to bed!!





From one old fossil to another!
Allan receives the Player of the Tour Award



"Have you heard the one about the knight, the bishop and the queen?"
Julia thanks the ABs for their very generous gift.

SATURDAY 1st DECEMBER

Several ABs send emails to those folk who would expect us to be returning home by tomorrow. Trev and Angie sit with the Fruit Fly and his Pill Popper wife, Angie, and confuse the breakfast chef by ordering 4 hard-boiled eggs: 1 cooked for 3 minutes, 2 for 4 minutes and one for 5. Someone has reported back, that an article in the New York Times reads "Sheriff arrested after slaying opponent" – could this refer to our very own El Haggett. He has certainly played a mean game (when sober!!) – driven by his regular early-morning runs during the whole tour. Question! Why did the frequency of these increase in Rio?

John Carrick decides to go on another 'drive-about' to discover more about the area; he has no takers to his offers of places so he steadfastly sets off on his own. A few of the AB Ladies see him off and give him good 'motherly' advice – "Watch what you're doing!!" He immediately jumps out of the car – NO, not in response to the Ladies' advice – he has forgotten to take a map with him. John's view of driving in South America is that the driver has to spend too much time avoiding accidents to actually take note of where he is going. Roads on maps bear no relation to what exists on the ground. Everyone ignores speed limits and traffic lights and you get carved up if you show the slightest humanitarian tendencies towards pedestrians. He, therefore, doesn't see too much of the countryside as he is concentrating fully on staying in one piece!! But he does manage to cross the Nine Mile Bridge over to Niteroi, which was the old provincial capital in the days before Brazilia, when Rio was the federal capital.

Messrs Flynn, Haggett and Houchin go off to lose their shirts at the Jockey Club where there is a card of ten races. They take a taxi and find the course empty when they arrive – is the racing on? - or have the punters read the New York Times. No entry fee, but sadly the race card is in Portuguese so they retire to the 'Derby Bar'. All are impressed both by the grandeur of the place and by the "Made in Hanley" toilets with the famous Staffordshire knot imprint. Unusually, the horses enter the stalls backwards (was this a portent?), and all the races are late starting (No! Trevor wasn't a runner in each race – some horses had gone direct!!). John Flynn's studious approach (being the expert punter) takes everything into account – even the humidity, the weight of the jockey's lunch and the number of visits to "the facilities" prior to the race – only to find the Tote has closed and he has missed betting on what proves to be the winner! El Haggett has the innovative approach: his eye is caught by a "very pretty thing" – not a horse but a female jockey. He backs all J Gulait's horses – sadly his system fails despite J Gulait's ride on the favourite "Darling Julia". Rumour has it that this horse went backwards at a rate of knots in the home straight and finished close to last (should have got its skates on). Not sure about Nick, but we think all return to the Hotel with

far fewer Reals than they started with. Sadly, back at the Hotel El Haggett sees the last race on TV – his Senorita Gulait brings her winning horse home at 66-1.

Trev, Angie and Sonia go off shopping to the Rio Sur and then catch a taxi to what they thought was the San Bento Monastery. They are dropped off by mistake at the Igreja Gloria but, as a service has just finished, the Priest takes pity and shows them round this beautiful church; the Priest happens to speak excellent English (his teacher was a Welshman so he would, wouldn't he!!). Afterwards they go by taxi to the proper Monastery but are rather disappointed as it is all in darkness and does not look anything like the magnificent gilded and carved edifice shown in the Brochure. More torrential rain on the way back.

Shopping is easy on Copacabana beach – you just have to sit for five minutes and you are inundated by vendors selling skirts, wraps, drinks, ice cream, nuts, bags, sunglasses, bikinis, hats etc. El Haggett has decided to do his Christmas shopping: so all the staff at his firm, men and women alike, will be wearing football shirts from Brazil in the New Year – whether as nighties or recreation garments (isn't that the same thing!) – but much more exciting than the “smellies” John usually buys for them from Lichfield High Street on Christmas Eve!

SUNDAY 2nd DECEMBER

A bright morning and there is a carnival taking place along the front of the Copacabana beach; it is their annual Christmas carnival with floats and Father Christmas. Apparently all countries are represented in the procession so when El Haggett spots the Gran Bretanha placard being carried by a lovely girl called Lili, he exclaims “Come on chaps, let's give it a go”, grasps the placard and strides out followed by an ever increasing number of ABs (about 8 join in but only 5 finish the course).



Most of the other ABs are to be found either idling on the beach or else around the Hotel's rooftop pool.

All ABs are packed and ready to leave the Hotel at 2.00 pm for Rio Airport where there is frantic activity trying to get rid of the last Reals. Big problem! – Not many shops want them – not even the Duty Free – only US Dollars. Ian Marsh is exasperated by this and vents his spleen in the traditional Anglo Saxon manner on behalf of the whole party. “How bloody stupid” he is heard to utter aloud (hadn't seen an Umpire show such emotion before – quite frightening). Others have decided that, if their Banks at home would not change them, then they would change Banks! Presumably HSBC would be accommodating!!

After our overnight flight to Madrid, a two hour wait and a further two hour delay, due to fog in the flight to Heathrow, we finally arrive in the UK very tired but with so many happy memories of a fantastic Tour.

A final thanks to all those who worked hard to make it possible and to all Tourers for being such good company.

We trust that Bob's injury mended rapidly and that he and Chris were able to enjoy their extended trip despite Bob's extended trip!!!

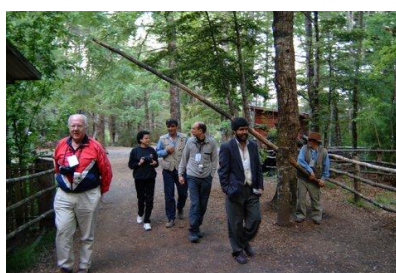
Happy Christmas and good health and fortune in 2002 to all ABs.

Postscript from Audrey and Alan Purnell: We have enjoyed every single moment with you all and our congratulations to all for the efforts put into the arrangements to make it so memorable to us both.

**DEDICATED TO THE
AUTHOR:-
MIKE GREENHOUGH,
A SUPER GUY,
SKIPPER AND
PRESIDENT**



Extra Photos courtesy of Ian Marsh.





The following is the Appendix collection of AB Limericks:

On Landing unexpectedly at Concepçion:

There was an old man of Concepçion
Who attended an AB Recepçion
When stood on a chair
And inspected from there
He passed the Colonel's inspeçion

On hearing of the flight cancellation:

The fault for the delay was Iberia's
But the ABs thought it not quite serious
On Copacabana they stayed
Even joined in a Parade
So happy they were almost delirious

On taking part in the Parade:

Sheriff 'J' as a matter of course
Paraded in Rio – sans horse
But the flag-bearer Lili
A magnificent filly
Was voted the main tour de force

And, as you might expect, the Umpires have the final word:

A female's approach late one night
To our John, gave him quite a fright
 But with no offside rule
 He still kept his cool
And walked on 'til he saw the light

An AB, an Umpiring fellow
In Rio's airport was reported to bellow
 "It's a downright disgrace
 Reals aren't worth their face
If they were, it would make a Marsh-mellow