

“ANGELA DAVIES’ DIARY”

Subtitled “Travels of an Ancient Briton in Spain” or “Gaudi-amus ‘ockey tour”

SUNDAY 6TH OCTOBER

The Greenhoughs, Davies’s, John Flynn and Sonia all left East Midlands Airport on the 18.55 BMIBaby Barcelona flight and arrived on time at 22.00. They awaited the arrival of the other ABs who had flown from Gatwick on the Easy Jet flight which was due to arrive half an hour later. The London party consisted of the Moorhouses, the Barnes and Nick. All ABs were met by our “Julia” coach – what lengths our tour organiser went to in order to “personalise” the tour for us! With cases firmly en-bussed the party departed for the first week’s destination – the Hotel Husa Imperial Tarraco in Tarragona.

MONDAY 7TH OCTOBER

After taking breakfast and in the wonderful sunshine, the Davies’s, the Moorhouses and Sonia decided to take a stroll down to the old harbour and visit the fish market. After a leisurely coffee they returned to the hotel for lunch. It’s a first; never before has lasagne been served with no sign of pasta – instead it was layered aubergine. Anyway, it was felt that some exercise was needed so they decided to find the swimming pool. Sadly it was closed: “It is winter!” stated the duty receptionist - surprised at the request. It was warmer today than some of our hottest days of the UK summer! However, they did have a tennis court so Trevor and Angela decided that a few games were required but sadly, Angela came second yet again.

That evening all ABs headed for the harbour in pursuit of a good fish restaurant that had been recommended. Unfortunately it was closed but a nearby alternative (La Puda) was found. A variety of food was ordered and enjoyed and feeling quite replete, AB’s took a leisurely stroll back to the hotel.

TUESDAY 8TH OCTOBER

This morning Julia had arranged for all ABs to visit the Tarragona Archaeological Museum to watch a film explaining the Roman history of this wonderful place. Beautiful mosaics, statues and artefacts were cleverly displayed and everyone left far more knowledgeable than when they arrived. Coffee was taken in the Square and AB’s then scattered to do their own thing. A formal dinner was organised in a lovely restaurant that evening and as the Mayor would be dining in an adjacent room, the Captain decided that blazers and ties were the appropriate attire. A variety of dishes as starters to share amongst us had been pre-ordered but it was misinterpreted and we all ended up with five starters each! One of the main dishes on the menu was Suckling Goat which amused all (no kidding!!). On leaving the restaurant, the heavens opened and it became a mad scramble to get back to the Imperial – Julia having borrowed an array of brollies from the management with a promise to return them all the following morning.

WEDNESDAY 9TH OCTOBER

It had been raining all night and the accompanying thunder and lightening had been spectacular! It stopped early morning until about 11.30am. The little train on wheels that started from the hotel and took the tourists around Tarragona was not running this morning so the intrepid five (Trevor, Angela, Sonia, Nick and John Flynn) decided that today was the day to find the Roman Aquaduct. Not sure how far it was because it wasn’t on the map but we did have an arrow in the top left hand corner indicating the direction! Off we set and after a quick stop for lunch at “Which Sandwich” we set off. The busy road that we walked along with the traffic hurtling along it seemed to go on for ever and after a while we arrived at an AutoRoute junction. We were told by a man in a yellow jacket that we could not walk any further without the appropriate attire (meaning the obligatory yellow jacket) so we turned face and, on his advice, headed back a half mile to the bus stop at the “Educational” and caught the No. 5 bus to the Pont del Diablo. Strangely, we were dropped off in the middle of a housing estate with no Pont in sight! A cyclist pointed us in the right direction and eventually we found a “Pont” signpost. After another lengthy walk and a climb and feeling extremely tired, we eventually found the aqueduct and after four ABs had walked over the viaduct and the appropriate photos taken, they descended and we caught the No 5 bus back into the city – exhausted but triumphant. We headed for a Tapas bar for well earned drinks and eats but then sadly the rain started again. Following the “Houchin” route back to the Hotel, Angela was nearly pick pocketed but this event was greatly overshadowed by Sonia who, shortly afterwards, tripped and fell prostrate on the pavement. Sonia was concerned that she had dislocated her left arm but Nick

the Vet concluded that it was badly strained – she had taken a beautiful swallow dive forward using the left arm to protect her good looks! The usual jokes about “You must take more water with it next time” were banded about but ironically not much alcohol had been consumed. The party hurried back to the hotel in the rain and afterwards “Nurse Helga” showered Sonia and put her to bed for the night. More rain, thunder and lightning followed (The Ride of the Valkyries perhaps!).

THURSDAY 10TH OCTOBER

A weary looking Bradders arrived at the hotel this morning – having been on the move for 24 hours! The stormy weather yesterday had delayed flights from the UK and he had arrived very late the previous night in Barcelona. At 10.30am the ABs were all on the coach to visit Termes Monbriou Spa and Parks which was half an hour out of the city. What a wonderful place – a selection of aqua tonic baths and pools filled with natural hot and cold spring waters. The only downside was that all ABs had to wear green and white rubber swimming caps - which looked most unflattering! Our President was duly admonished by the Senora on duty for encouraging a six AB formation dive from the central podium! After a good lunch the rest of the afternoon was our own. Julia and Angela opted for a body massage and Sonia had reflexology. ABs travelled back by coach slightly delayed as Jules had also decided to have her hands plunged into wax – “Beneficial” so she said. On the return journey we were again met by more rain and lightning.

FRIDAY 11TH OCTOBER

The tourist train was running this morning so at 10.30am the intrepid five plus Bradders climbed aboard for the 10.30am tour. On their return, they then went round the Roman Circus Tower and took the lift to the top for a good view over the city. They returned for 12.30pm as all ABs now embussed for lunch at Les Fonts de Can Sala. A most unassuming place from the outside but wonderfully decorated inside – some decorative ideas were noted for use when next emulsioneing back home! Our table was covered in brown wrapping paper (strange?), upon which were all kinds of delicious starters. Then huge platters were brought out filled with barbequed leeks which needed to be stripped of their charred exterior and dipped into a delicious sauce. Now it was understood why baby-like bibs had been handed out at the start! For the technical, the eating-action required was the “reverse empanada”!! When all leeks were spent and the debris lay around, the table resembled a Welsh battlefield, but the brown paper was dexterously rolled up and revealed a fine white linen cloth underneath. The main course was a feast to the eye with a baby artichoke standing vertically on a baked potato and topped with tomato. These were served with a variety of different meats – wonderful. ABs were encouraged by the waiters to drink red wine from the traditional pourers. The Captain attempted this great feat but sadly missed his mouth and stained his trousers (in a different place to where they were already stained in contemplation of the attempt)! Back on the bus again, fully replete, ABs headed back to the city. Several of them decided to visit the Early Christian burial site and Mausoleum (in search of old friends?!!) which was a good walk through the city but sadly it was shut when they got there. There was a small exhibition inside so they looked round that. Trevor would insist on trying various stone coffins for size – he is difficult to keep under control sometimes. They walked back looking for presents but were not successful.

SATURDAY 12TH OCTOBER

Out on the “Houchin Trail” again – John, Trevor, Bradders and Angela join Nick on a 10k walk to find three Roman sites outside the city. The first monument was found after about 7k and the second, a quarry, was found after another 2k (but not sure if it was the Roman one - or Wimpey’s - as it looked as though it was still being worked!). The third site was to be a Castellated Fort but as Brad was, by now, suffering badly from blisters on the bottom of his feet (having been walking in shoes and thin socks), it was decided that a taxi should be found to transport them to the last site. They were admonished at the Fort as they strolled up through the main entrance – they were told it was “Private” by a Senora leaning over a balcony. The whole area was being prepared for a party; judging from the lights, the size of the cabling and the number of black-clad security men in shades it would some “bash”. The taxi had waited and now returned the gang to the hotel. After a quick pizza at our favourite pizzeria they filed into the bus with all other ABs for our journey to Barcelona. The city centre was bursting at the seams with visitors – apparently it was a public holiday for all-Saints Day and Columbus discovery of America and the world and his friend had decided to celebrate in Barcelona. There was also an extremely large police presence. At the Catalonia Albinoni Hotel they meet with other ABs who had flown out to Barcelona that day or earlier - the Bands, the Haggetts, the Jacksons, the Suttons, the Jamesons and the new goalkeeper for the tour, Nigel Dixon. All retired to bed extremely tired.

SUNDAY 13TH OCTOBER

All AB's were up early this morning as the coach taking them to the match against Club Egara was leaving at 9.15am. Our coach driver, given few details by his company, eventually found the club and his success was warmly applauded. Club Egara had excellent facilities for all types of sports spread around a well designed club house.

Ancient Britons v Club Egara played at Club Egara, Tarrassa at 10.30 a.m.

In our squad we were pleased to welcome our new guest player, Nigel Dixon, a goalkeeper from Southgate who had kindly agreed to help us out for the first two of our three match schedule.

Greta Band soon organised our warm-up routine and the skipper, Mike Greenhough, dealt with the greetings and introductions in his 'fluent' (pigeon) Spanish. We soon learned that that ABs needed to supply 'un arbitro'; this released Bob Moorhouse from the gruelling warm-up to negotiate the mysteries of umpiring with his Spanish colleague, Manuel. The discussion was brief mostly as one on the rules until Bob mentioned 'allowing advantage'. Manuel replied "I think we will have that with our young team and more fresh ones coming". By now Bob felt like Basil Fawlty!

Egara had some very skilful players and were a hard hitting and pretty rugged side although they were always very polite after a collision. ABs managed to hold out for about 10 minutes with Nigel Dixon making two fine saves but eventually Egara scored their first goal when, following a typical strong run down the right wing, a hard centre was neatly deflected into goal.

Peter Band was having a great game against fast moving forwards. Nick Houchin, Sean Sutton and Lienel Barnes were working hard but there was a lack of control amongst the forwards and so our defence was under constant pressure. The skipper called for a greater effort and ABs responded through Alan Jackson leading the line with skill and vigour. However, this spell of AB pressure was short lived and, following some further fine saves from Nigel, Egara scored three quick goals all resulting from strong and fast right wing raids.

At half-time and 0-4 down some changes were made. John Flynn took over the umpiring for the second half and Bob Moorhouse occupied the left wing spot. Positional changes saw Sean Sutton move to centre forward, Alan Jackson to right wing, Lienel Barnes to right half, Mike Greenhough to centre half and Nick Houchin to inside left.

ABs started the second half in spirited fashion with Sean and Alan having good shots on goal saved and cleared with little difficulty. Sean burst through for another attempt on goal only to be accidentally brought down. The resulting short corner was shot just wide by the skipper. The opening 10 minutes of the half was mainly ABs attacking with good support from Nick and Lienel. Egara then brought on two subs (fresh from office work duties). One of these players was an ex-international who last played for Spain in 2001. He gave us a torrid time down the right hand side where Bob Jameson and Chris Bradbury needed help. Trevor Davies moved over as extra cover but he too felt the hard hitting and robust play of the new forward. In spite of having some good moments and Nigel making some remarkable saves, ABs could not prevent Egara scoring two more goals. John Flynn lightened our burden with a strange umpiring decision when he correctly awarded a free hit but insisted that we take the free hit from **just inside the circle!!** The Egara players soon saw the funny side and John became a mini hero.

A very tired ABs squad defended resolutely for the last 10 minutes of the game restricting Egara to just one further goal.

Result: Egara 7 Ancient Britons 0

When our opponents disappeared immediately after the game, the meal previously arranged by the Captain and Julia looked in doubt but, after a word with management, a hastily prepared table was laid and a meal was served. We were very late for the coach but a good tip for the irate driver seemed to take the heat out of things. On returning to the hotel Trevor and Angela sat on the balcony with Trev's shirt draped on the latticed twig divider between their room and next door. A gust of wind took the shirt over onto next door's balcony so the intrepid Davies climbed on the wall of the balcony (which was about five feet high and six floors up), over to next door's balcony to retrieve his shirt instead of going to reception to ask for a key! Afterwards a ramble down La Rambla Trev, Angie and Sonia join Nigel for a meal at the Port Vell. There was a four masted Russian training ship in dock, the "Sedov", so they took a tour of the ship which was apparently given to the Russians by the British in 1949 in a sorry state of repair as some form of war compensation.

MONDAY 14TH OCTOBER

This morning, on the recommendation of Greta and Peter, the Davies's and Sonia took the Touristic Bus and were joined by John and Val. They decided that the red route taking them to the north side of the city should be the plan for the morning, followed by lunch in one of the small squares which surrounded the Plaza Catalunya, saving the blue route, taking them south, for the afternoon. They noted during the morning what sites they wished to visit, namely the Sagrada Familia, Park Guell, Tibidabo and the Great Barcelona Futbol Stadium (Camp Nou). On returning to the Plaza Catalunya they follow "El Haggett" who knew exactly where the Hotel Colon was –its right opposite the Baroque Church, if he could just find that! Eventually they find it and eat, and are much entertained by a fellow in the guise of Charlie Chaplin pushing a cart and playing the xylophone to the accompaniment of a pre-recorded tape with such songs as diverse as "Roll out the Barrel", "She Loves You" and "Last Train to San Fernando". There's something in there for everyone! At 2.15pm leaving the Haggetts, they resume their bus tour – this time taking the blue bus and note the places to visit tomorrow, namely Poble Espanyol, the Olympic Estadi, Christopher Columbus's statue and Port Vell (the old Port). THE NEWS REACHES US THAT ITS PETER BAND'S BIRTHDAY TOMORROW AND ALSO THE HAGGETT'S 36TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY so it's off card hunting. Sadly business demanded that Peter and Greta flew home tonight so ABs duly handed over Peter's card and bade them farewell. Brad and Nick were out for the tapas record so they decided to head for TapaTapa where there were about 84 selections. Trev, Sonia, John Flynn, Nigel and Angela decided to walk to Port Vell – difficult to find somewhere to eat for John Flynn – his criteria was simple: a straightforward, unmucked-about piece of grilled fish but it proved most difficult to find. A restaurant was found and the owner was so anxious to please as there were only four other people in there! The owner is perplexed as Nigel attempts origami with his table napkin – not too successful as more starch was needed! Afterwards another ramble up the Rambla back to the hotel.

TUESDAY 15TH OCTOBER

Several ABs spent a few hours at the Spanish Village today after catching the blue bus this morning. It was built in 1929 for the International Exhibition and its streets and squares were of an authentic Spanish "town" - a good place for present buying in the artisan shops. Next the Davies's and Sonia moved on to the Olympic Stadium and what a wonderful facility: built for the 1992 Olympic Games – "Why is Wembley taking so long?" we ask ourselves. Sonia was now flagging so she is put on the blue bus with instruction to get off when everyone else does, in the Plaza Catalunya. The Davies's then walked to the Teleferic which took them to the Castle with wonderful panoramic views over the city and port. They then caught the blue bus to the Christopher Columbus statue. A circular lift running up the central column, measuring about 3 ft in diameter took five people at any one time up to the viewing area. On leaving the lift you stepped into a circular viewing gallery which was about two feet wide. Not to be recommended if you suffer with claustrophobia and if you didn't know your fellow travellers when you were going up, you certainly do when coming down! They returned to the hotel in readiness to board the bus for the hockey match again Atletico Terrassa; glad to learn that Sonia had successfully navigated her way back to the hotel and was not still sitting on the blue bus going round in never decreasing circles!

A long and slow journey to the hockey venue as traffic was very heavy and arrived at 8.30pm - the match was started shortly after.

Ancient Britons v Atletico Terrassa played at Atletico Terrassa at 8.45 p.m.

Once again our opponents were considerably younger and possessed some very skilful players but ABs started the game in a very positive manner and had three promising attacks which resulted in shots on goal. At the other end our defence was generally keeping the Atletico forwards at bay and when they did get through, Nigel Dixon was again in good form and made two good saves. About 10 minutes into the match ABs produced a 'purple patch'. John Flynn brilliantly intercepted an Atletico left wing attack and made a good 15 metres before laying off an accurate pass to Alan Jackson on the right wing; Alan beat his opponent and centred to the top of the circle where Sean Sutton thumped the ball home to the delight of our supporters who cheered loudly. This boosted our confidence and for the next few minutes our play was assured in defence and threatening in attack. John Flynn continued to have a fine game at the right of the defence - winning the ball and laying off good passes to Lienel Barnes in the centre and cross field to Nick Houchin who were then able to link with the forwards so that some constant pressure was exerted. Chris Bradbury and Trevor Davies were solid in defence and ABs looked good value for their 1-0 lead.

However, the threat posed by our younger opponents was eventually rewarded. Two dubious penalty corners were awarded in quick succession each leading to a goal and, shortly before the end of the first half; a quick and skilful move brought a third goal. 1-3 down at half-time was a little against the run of play but a fair reflection on the speed and shooting power of our opponents.

The skipper gave a spirited half time talk and we started the second half determined to try our best to reduce the deficit. Alan was leading the forwards well and Lienel and the skipper were winning tackles in midfield but our lack of pace made it difficult to break away from our opponents' defence. This allowed Atletico to intercept our attacks and launch their own speedy counter attacks one of which down the right wing led to a fierce shot on goal which Nigel looked to have covered until their centre forward nipped in to deflect it out of his reach.

The last few minutes of the game became something of a farce as players from the next game on the pitch started to warm up on part of the pitch with the game still in progress. Atletico managed to score one further goal to make it 1-5.

ABs performance was much improved from the previous game but the younger side had eventually come through to win comfortably.

Result: Atletico Terrassa 5 Ancient Britons 1 (Sean Sutton)

Afterwards the hospitality could not have been better – such a contrast to Sunday's match.

After a good meal all ABs and their hosts played a game, which was probably called "Pass the wine pourer" – a bit like pass the parcel with vino, with the home team providing the singing and encouragement. Great fun was had and an invitation was given by Xavier (Xavi?), who was trainer to the Spanish National Under 16s hockey team, to visit the Camp Nou; left at about 12.30am after exchanging addresses and E-mail numbers.

WEDNESDAY 16TH OCTOBER

This morning the Davies's and Sonia headed for the red route and Guell Park - a World heritage Site named after architect Antoni Gaudi's great patron, Eusebi Guell. It was intended to be a garden suburb with distinctive houses for the wealthy all designed by Gaudi; it was never completed and is now a public park where Gaudi's work is seen integrated with nature. Encountered the Jamesons on the way out and together headed for the Gaudi Pavilions (closed) and then the Palace Real. It was now 5.35pm and closing time was 6.00pm but they still managed a good look round; back in time to bid farewell to Brad who was returning home with a host of pressies for Maxie. Mike and Julia appeared in the hotel foyer – they had been at hospital with Julia and her virus since 10.00 this morning.

THURSDAY 17TH OCTOBER

This morning started with a message from Brad via the Captain. The boots that Brad had bought for Maxie were size 33 (size 3 in UK) and not 39 (size 6 in UK) – not quite big enough! Could Angela find out if there were any 39s in stock at the shop next door to the hotel called Bershka?

Today the Davies's and Sonia headed out on the red route for the art Deco, Gaudi-designed Sagrada Familia – it was the only "cathedral" in the world which was still under construction – although it wasn't really a cathedral because it didn't have a See –see!! The foundation stone was laid in the late 1800s and since then, construction had been funded by churchgoers, Gaudi devotees and revenue from visitors. Gaudi died in 1926 (run over by a tram!), when only one tower was completed – you do feel that as time has gone on, his disciples have repeatedly modified his plans and the towers look more outrageous than they were meant to be. It's sad to think that you design such a fantastic building only to get run over by a tram before it is finished!

John Flynn, however, had spent his day travelling by train back to Tarragona. Sadly John was not too meticulous when packing and had left his shoes under a chair in his hotel bedroom. Several telephone calls to the hotel came to nothing – nothing could be found. However, John did not give up. This great explorer caught the train and went straight to the hotel. He enquired at the desk but nothing had been found. Tenacity led him to enquire yet again but this time he saw one of the porters. The porter disappeared – only to return with one pair of Flynn shoes! How's that for perseverance! On his return, John was also questioned by a very odd stranger about the train timetable. When the stranger walked away, he was then questioned by the police who asked to examine his Euro notes. He still did not know from that day to this who were the goodies and who were the baddies.

The coach left for Club Deportivo Terrassa at 7.30pm. On arrival at the club there was a very friendly welcome from the Deportivo members. Again there were excellent facilities and with the improvement we had shown in the previous game we looked forward to a good game on a lovely evening.

Ancient Britons v Club Deportivo Terrassa played at Club Deportivo at 8.30 p.m.

With Bradders and Nigel now having returned to the UK, we had to borrow a couple of players from our opponents and we were delighted when they turned out to be younger players whereas the Club Deportivo side were of a similar vintage to the ABs. Miguel, our hired goalkeeper, was keen to keep a 'clean sheet' and Ferrand professed to be a full back.

We started with Ferrand at right back. This proved to be a little unnerving since he positioned himself near the centre line and didn't come any further back even when we were under attack - perhaps he had misunderstood Trevor's tactical prompting! With due haste the skipper made some positional adjustments that left Ferrand at inside right with a roving, goal scoring remit. Meanwhile, John Flynn, Lienel Barnes and Sean Sutton were playing with great confidence, winning 50/50 situations, supporting the attack and were mainly responsible for pinning Deportivo in their own '25'. Lienel missed nothing within reach at centre half and was spraying out accurate passes; John was a revelation with strong tackles calm distribution and covering a great deal of ground to support the attack; Sean too was a tower of strength in attack and defence. This raised the level of play of the rest of the team and the supporters too caught the new mood and cheered us even louder which in turn attracted more spectators to come and watch the game.

After prolonged pressure ABs took the lead on 15 minutes when John Flynn put Alan Jackson away on the right. His centre was met by Sean just outside the Deportivo circle and his shot on goal rebounded to Bob Moorhouse. Bob's shot was then stopped illegally and the skipper stepped up to calmly score with a well placed penalty stroke.

ABs continued to take the game to Deportivo and Ferrand was causing some Spanish humour with his darting runs and shots on goal that went just wide. Miguel too was enjoying himself as he had little to do behind the in-form Trevor Davies and Bob Jameson.

The second half started with Miguel being tested early following quick breaks down the right wing. There was more urgency and pace from Deportivo now but ABs were in no mood to be overrun again. John Flynn rekindled our spirits with some excellent interceptions, Lienel and Sean raised their game to their first half level and Nick, Alan, the skipper and Ferrand all had shots on goal saved. However, the pace of Deportivo down the right was testing Bob Jameson and one such attack brought an equalising goal 15 minutes into the half. Miguel and Ferrand appeared to exchange 'war dance' signals - whatever it was merely encouraged Deportivo to lay siege to our '25' for the next few minutes and, despite determined defence, an excellent piece of inter-passing left Miguel stranded and we went 1-2 down with only 5 minutes of the game left. The response was immediate and ABs surged forward roared on by their supporters. Two penalty corners were won but amounted to nothing the Lienel launched another attack; the ball was swept forward by Nick and Sean for Alan Jackson to shoot at goal. The Deportivo goalkeeper saved and cleared towards their left; but who was there to receive the clearance? - none other than Ferrand just outside the circle. He dribbled in beating two defenders before lashing a powerful shot into the back of the net to make it 2-2 with very little time left. Time enough for attacks at both ends but no further scoring so a very enjoyable game ended with honours even but for John Flynn this game was an extraordinary triumph; we look forward to John continuing in this form. Lienel too had an outstanding game - as did Sean and the skipper.

Result: Club Deportivo Terrassa 2 Ancient Britons 2 (Mike Greenhough, Ferrand)

A meal had been organised and ABs were shown into the dining room by a very helpful barman / Maître d'/waiter in evening dress but again no opposition company!! At least this time arrangements had been put in hand and it was explained that most of the players lived at some distance from the Club and it was a working day tomorrow.

FRIDAY 18TH OCTOBER

This morning the Captain and his lady, the Davies's, Bob Moorhouse and John Haggett were meeting Xavi at the Barcelona Futbol Stadium at 11.00am. They were given a guided tour of the stadium and visited the Club's museum - much of which had been a private collection until donated to the Club. In front of an appropriate display, Mike presented Xavi with an AB's tie. Barcelona football shirts were next on the agenda so it was off

to visit the shop. John Haggett was keen to purchase shirts for his “boys” but when he realised that one could have ones own name printed on the back – well! John is now the proud owner of one Barcelona shirt with “El Haggett No 25” on the back. Wondering what the significance of 25 was (knowing that it definitely was not his age) Angela made enquiries only to be told that it was his house number! Chatted with Xavi over coffee and left there about 1.00pm. Walked to a café, had lunch and then taxi back to hotel. Trev and Angela decided to visit Le Pedrera (a world famous “undulating” Gaudi-designed mansion – with no right-angles anywhere), and after a swift walk of 30 minutes and virtually no queuing they duly got in. The building’s proper name was Casa Mila (built in the early 1900’s for the wealthy Mila family), but because it was a huge dwelling with stone embellishment, the locals called it Le Pedrera meaning “stone quarry”. A period apartment had been created and the forest of chimneys on the roof which follow the contours of the amazing attic gives the illusion that you are in another world. Back to the hotel – ABs were due to have an end-of-Tour meal at an Italian restaurant that Mike and Julia had found where ABs could have a room to themselves! ABs walked up the Ramblas away from the Port and were shown to their dining room downstairs. After the meal a presentation was made to Mike and Julia and thanks given for all their hard work in organising this Tour which had been much enjoyed by all participants.

SATURDAY 19TH OCTOBER

At breakfast this morning Bob Jameson (or Mr Hameson as the waitress kept calling him) had us spellbound explaining his thespian adventures. He began by asking if we wished to hear about his big film role. Sadly Trev was within earshot and queried “Was that the Fiji 400, 35mm film roll! Apparently Bob had appeared in the 1980s version of A Christmas Carol which was filmed in Shrewsbury and he appeared for 3 seconds as a “Grain Dealer” (very apposite!!); this sadly gets misconstrued as “Reindeer” and the conversation just goes from bad to worse! Bob was already in the dog house with Janet because earlier that morning, when she stepped into the bath, he had left the tap switched to shower and her hair that was newly coiffured got a soaking.

Nick and John had exchanged notes with Trevor and Angela on another Gaudi house on the Ramblas (called Casa Batllo), which they thought was wonderful so this is where T, A & S headed today whilst Nick and John headed for Le Pedrera. As it was Saturday there were more visitors around so the waiting time was longer. Trev decided that he should go and queue for tickets to see around Guell Palace so as he headed in one direction, Sonia and Angela in another. Trev finally caught up with us at Casa Batllo - a wonderful example of Gaudi’s work with the beautifully soft contour lines of his designs and no right angles in sight; a very calming environment and his affinity with nature is all too evident; a beautiful home that Angela could easily have lived in.

Next, off to Guell Palace. This was built for the affluent Count Guell in the late 1800s and rose like a metaphor from the dark basement of poverty to the festival of colour on the top (that’s what the book says!). And so finally back to the Hotel to prepare for the journey to the airport – and the flight home!

Perhaps the next tour should come with a Government Health Warning. I list below the Catalogue of Catastrophic Catalonian Clinical Casualties:

Julia Greenhough	Spent most of a day at the hospital with a virus infection
Sonia Wingfield	Sprained and bruised left arm badly in fall
Wendy Sutton	In pain with an abscess under her tooth
Alan Jackson	Had flue-like symptoms on arrival in Spain
Wendy Jackson	“ “ leaving Spain
Bradders	Extremely blistered feet
Bob Moorhouse	Several giddy turns but improved towards the end. Underpants too tight?!!
John Haggett	Tired spells – under investigation
Pat Barnes	Sugar levels playing up
Nigel Dixon	Very poorly with sickness and diarrhoea on his last day
Lienel Barnes	Very poorly with same on his last day
Val Haggett	Had to resort to wearing vest and extra clothing on Friday because she felt cold – could be the 12th victim.

This means that out of total of 23 Tourers, 12 had problems one way or the other! Not much leeway between “FitBrits” and “SickBrits” is there?!!

Thinking about it I think we should give Val Haggett just half a point – since nothing actually developed on tour!!

In conclusion and looking on the positive side, if you tour with the ABs again, you stand a 50% chance of coming home with nothing wrong with you!

Ancient Britons v Welsh Bards played at Newtown on Sunday 6th April at 1.00 p.m.

Having had the winter to recover from the trip to Spain, ABs were on their ‘foreign’ travels again - albeit only over the border into Wales. Our opponents, the Welsh Bards, were made up mainly of players from North Wales who were hoping to get into the Welsh Over 50s squad for the forthcoming Regional tournament but also included ex Welsh international and current President of the Welsh H.A., Cemlyn Foulkes, so were likely to prove quite strong opposition.

The skipper had failed to raise sufficient ABs from hibernation to field a full XI and we were pleased to welcome, as a guest player, Rex Rogers from Old Halesonians who had been recruited at the last minute by Peter Band. Also, on the morning of the match, the skipper had received a phone call during breakfast at his overnight hotel from Bob Jameson who had gone down with some dreaded lurgy - Bradders, munching his third sausage, wondered whether it was delayed reaction from Barcelona or Shropshire swine fever! So, on arrival at the ground, arrangements were made to borrow a couple of players. One was our old friend Glynn Thomas from Old Wulfs, playing as a centre forward rather than in goal, and the other was the girl friend of Chris Harkness, the Welsh skipper, who played a very effective game for us at right midfield. Even then we started with only 10 men (sorry - 9 men and 1 lady!) as there was no sign of John Flynn.

The first half was a very even contest with ABs mounting some very promising attacks. The Bards defence, however, was too experienced to allow us many opportunities on goal and, at the other end, the Welsh forwards were beginning to find gaps in the ABs defence. Only some excellent covering by Peter Band and good saves from Gordon Boulter in goal kept the sheet clean and we were able to reach half-time with the score still at 0-0. The discussion at half-time was mainly concerned with keeping the ball for longer periods of time once we had gained possession. The arrival of John Flynn, who had spent the last half hour touring the valleys of mid Wales in an effort to find the ground, should have assisted us in this respect but it was not to be since the Bards midfield, prompted by Cemlyn Foulkes, took control of the game and the ABs defence, under increasing pressure, began to make mistakes. The Welsh took full advantage of this to score four goals and ABs were never allowed back into the game. We could take heart, however, from an encouraging first half performance. The game was played in excellent spirit and we look forward to playing this fixture again next year.

Result: Welsh Bards 4 Ancient Britons 0

We were well entertained by our opponents afterwards at a local pub where a good supply of sandwiches and chips replenished our spirits. Things went from ‘bard to verse’ however when our President, Bob, decided to entertain us with some verses he had penned especially for the occasion. We only have room to print the better, repeatable ones here:-

Martin, Bards elegant keeper
Of fierce shot saving fame
Stalled ABs’ band wagon
And spoiled our whole ‘bleeping’ game

Bradders, our sturdy defender
Stands majestic like the QE II
And needs almost as much room to turn in
When the forward has ‘bleeping’ cruised through

Bob and Mike, the Bards great wingers
Provide style and power to their game
Now all they need to work on
Is where to ‘bleeping’ well aim

Mike, the ABs’ hard working skipper
Gives us the tactics to employ
But our hearing aids seem to be switched off
For he seldom has any ‘bleeping’ joy