

## Newsletter No.3

Once again, for global friends and colleagues back in Blighty, another offering from the Land of Smiles.

Mid March saw the intrepid duo set forth for Cambodia for the day. The usual three month visa run to Aranyaprathet and Poi Pet. Extremely hot and with plenty of walking, it was essential to find a suitable bar as quickly as possible. Our guide, Ann, and the driver Jimmy did their best to keep the sweat out of my eyes. Jimmy, by the way, is a girl but even though she could barely see over the steering wheel, her driving skills were excellent. Once all the paperwork had been completed, it was a short journey to the casino at Poi Pet. The place was full of Thais and Koreans and very Las Vegas style. Free drinks and eats for those playing the tables, so we went to the cheapest roulette wheel. Its amazing how long 1000 baht will last, but only as long as the free drink is taken in excess.

Returning to Bkk by midnight, it was a long tiring day. The following day Tony and I set about finding a supplier of team shirts and caps for the Outlaws.

Having excited the entire tournament last year with a gaudy outfit and baggy pantaloons, this year's effort would have to be more low key. Thinking that yellow would be appropriate as it supported the King's birthday colour, little did we expect them to be fluorescent. Still squad members were easy to spot at the crowded opening ceremony at the Pornping Tower. The tournament started early on the Sunday in sweltering heat at the beautiful Gymkhana Club. Without repeating myself, there are daily reports available on our Cricket Forum about the Outlaws exploits. Suffice to say that it was another very successful venture and will hopefully be repeated next year. Congrats to the Gloucestershire Gypsies on their success in one of the most exciting finals ever.

Return to Bangkok the following Sunday to await the arrival of Songkhran and the annual soaking. Regular visits to the Duke of Wellington to check out the e-coli, botulism and salmonella menu, happily finding another new chef in the kitchen. All is now well. Excellent Pub grub on a grand scale - next task will be to get the wine cellar improved !!!! Also discovered a new route to the place as if it wasn't close enough anyway. Front door hotel, thru' carpark and into lounge. Perfect, and no tortuous steps to negotiate. A good crowd gets to the Duke and with free Wifi it is definitely the 'in' place. Mike and Mark will certainly give a warm welcome and the girls always on hand to keep you topped up.

Songkhran dragged on for four days with huge crowds of water rats soaking any unsuspecting farang. No chance of getting to Patpong, or even further away to Sukhumvit. Still see a few stragglers from the Sixes calling by. Rick 'Viking' Davis and I took lunch at the magnificent Peninsular on the other side of the Chao Praya river. Cab to Sathorn quay and then a short ferry ride saw us arrive for a fine array of unusual dishes. I think the lobster in sticky rice and rolled into a pancake was the highlight. Should be definitely on any visitors 'must do' list.

Also appeared were the Mighty Midget and the Swiss Miss, stopping over in Bangkok for a few days before travelling down to Greg Maher and Carly's wedding in Brisbane. Very kindly they invited me and the increasingly erratic Paa to an extraordinary night out.

How about a nice cocktail at the Banyan Tree on the 64th floor of the tallest hotel in Sathorn. This cocktail bar is the highest outdoor lounge anywhere. The views are truly spectacular. Off we go, ready for some HiSo fun. Trouble was, the lift only went to the 59th floor. Jeez, what a climb !!! Better suited for mountain goats, my wheezing, sweat covered corpse eventually arrived at the bar. At least I thought I was nearer to heaven if the old pump gave out. Half a pint of Johnnie Daeng and normality returned. After about an hour it was time to move on to the next venue, the Bedwetters Club - oooops, sorry, the Bedsupper Club.

Now feeling like Sherpa Tensing, and probably looking like him, we arrived at Sukhumvit soi 11 and approached the entrance. IDs are essential here and on producing my Thai Consul letter of Authority, the gorillas showed us in. Inside, the place resembled a cruise ship with a 50 foot bed along one side. Foppish types were lolling about on the bed and other pretentious dandies were hovering around a bar at the end. Serving on was by a team of elderly ladyboys and some topless wooftahs. All rather different to the Red Lion in Marchwiel !!!!

After attempting, and failing, to get me on the bed I managed to acquire a sturdy chair and sat like a visitor talking to multiple patients in a hospital ward. The food was surprisingly good and the massage by a muscle bound bloke in a thong kept me alert at all times. Many thanks Deano and Debs for this unique experience. Not sure when I'll get there again, but I will certainly build my strength to visit the Banyan Tree.

By now the errant and increasingly irritating Paa had shown her true colours and done a runner in the middle of the night along with a number of my items including some of the folding stuff. Oh well, it turned out that she was herding several buffalo including a big Swedish one in the same hotel. Better out than in !!! A swift call to Chiang Mai and Khun Ae was on her way. At least this one is reliable (until she gets too much fallover juice).

Matt Luton called in having gone from Chiang Mai to Koh Samui for a couple of weeks. He was here to have some dentistry work done so extended his stay for a further week. Amazing resilience for a bloke who has so many injections in his mouth, so it must have been the copious amount of Tiger beer. A good few days and some interesting venues visited, Matt returned to the UK with a new set of munchers and no wallet !!

Finally, another visit to Willie 'von Giblet' Gibbs was on the cards. A swift drive to Jomtien with rarely seen Khun Tony and Lakeside Lodge looked a picture. Next door had been virtually finished so no noise, apart from a rampant goose on the lake. This was a most enjoyable three days and a welcome break from the frenetic life in Bangkok. He has decided to sell the Lodge and buy a plot of land in the hills and build three houses. It will be a shame not to visit this idyllic property in the future, but nothing is forever. We had a sightseeing day looking at his proposed location, visiting Buddha mountain and a vineyard called Silverlake. Lunch was taken at a lovely old colonial style restaurant in Sattahip, near the huge USA naval base. Excellent seafood washed down with some chilled chardonnay made for a most relaxing afternoon. That is until the chair collapsed from under me. Deposited in a heap under the table, my leg shot out, kicked the underside of the table resulting in the entire coffee pot emptying itself all over Khun Onn. Fortunately no major damage done.

Returned to Bangkok amongst huge thunderstorms and torrential rain, and it will time soon to consider another Visa run. More on that and other events later.

Keep taking the pills - you know it makes sense !!!!!

JB