

Newsletter No. 4

To friends spread across the Globe, another offering from the Exile in an undisclosed, but fairly obvious location.

Rainy season started in April and has produced spectacular downpours and thunderstorms. Long gone are the bush fires in the North, and the resultant smog. Its now possible to see an elephant's ass at some 200 paces. Further south the temperature has remained in the late 80s but the storms have provided a welcome relief.

Birthday arrived third week in May, completely unrecognised by my near family. I did, however, travel down to Lake Chaknork for celebrations with William and the Lakeside gang. A fine bottle of wine was duly presented by the staff of the Silom Serene along with a harmonious serenade. Lovely gesture. The only other gift was a basket of chicken consomme concentrate by the owner of Starlight Bar on Soi 6/1, Pattaya Nua. Hope it isn't the Asian 'flu' strain !!

Three days in Jomtien and much fun was had. Richard 'Lost My Rabbit's Foot' Hill entertained us all royally with tales of staggering misluck and non payers. Its amazing that out here there are so many people specialising in the short arm, deep pockets principle. In fact they are so specialist they make some of our worst freeloaders and spongers (and we all know who they are!!) look like lottery winners.

Back to Bkk and the usual run of the bars and pubs. A week of this and the feet became itchy for more outdoor life at Jomtien. Checked out of the Silom Serene end of May and set forth for the peace and tranquility of Lakeside. Khun Wilhelm has the place up for sale at a decent price so a number of prospective punters kept arriving to view the place. All sporting the same enthusiasm from various parts of the world, William was ever the host. Needless to say none have yet come up with anything more than sails out of my bottom each morning. Oh well, the bloke with one testicle, pop bottle bottom glasses and a face like Hagar chewing Davy Crockett's hat looks a likely candidate. Time will tell !!! Others range from a dodgy Maori with a ponytail, a couple from Geneva, and a passing fisherman !! I think there's more chance with the latter !!

Moving on, early June saw the obligatory visa run. The merry team of William, me, Onn and Ae set off to Koh Chang further south. Second largest of the islands in Thailand, this mountainous retreat is about two hours from Jomtien. 45 minutes on the ferry, regardless of the hour wait, and you arrive at a remarkably primitive island with one road, potholes you could lose a jeep in, and drivers with no sense of direction. After precipitous twisty roads and gargantuan trucks crawling up and down narrow single lanes, we arrived at the delightful Koh Chang Resort and Spa. Lovely beach, nice beach villas, spasmodic IT service and a pretty dreadful kitchen. Overall impression was good, but a set of new chefs are urgently required.

Day one saw the visa run so it was a leisurely start, omelette to kill you, coffee and take yer chance down desolation road. Back on Central ferry and another crossing of epic proportions. Wedged in like sardines with no chance of escape, RoRo platform in the down position, it brought memories of the Spirit of Zeebrugge flooding (pun) back. As our intrepid driver eventually twatted the arrival pier, we knew we were back on the mainland. Phew.

Driving through Trat and the vast fruit markets we arrived in Khlong Yai (or Big Ditch). The border is 15 clicks further on. An hour later and the three monthly requirement is stamped and done. Back to the ferry and a late lunch was at the excellent seafood restaurant at the southern end of the island. First class in anybody's book, it is however 45 minutes drive from our base. This is due the the fact the Thai bloke who owns the land at the end won't sell it to connect the road around the island. A stretch of about half a mile !!!!

The girls decided on an early night so the ageing Night Owls set off to find the hotspots. A visit to Pentrebychan would have seen more life !! Eventually Silver Sands night entertainment centre was located. Some rare talent of bar owners, ranging from heavily mustachioed rodeo failures, ex-cons, Thai drugesses and other wayward souls ran this dormant activity centre. One even confessed to having a police tattoo forbidding her return to Bangkok ! Well, that's her story and I suppose she's sticking to it !!

Back to Lakeside and more fun with the locals. Bought two fishing rigs for five quid each. Huge amusement at setting them up and attempting to catch fish. Old fashioned effort with fish net seemed to work best. Pla Ning being the main fish in the lake, with other edible varieties, they seemed to sense the lamentable efforts by visiting Farang and became as scarce as the coelacanth.

All the resorts are very quiet at this time of the year. Rainy season, extremist activity, dodgy and incompetent government, appalling decision making and floods of illegal immigrants ----- and that is just UK !!! Its much the same here but rather fewer of the farcical political toadies that screw the British public. And whats this we hear about Sir Salmon Mufti. Please read the post on M&WCC cricket forum about this gross Blairite indiscretion. Astonishing !!! Actually, for those of you who haven't read any of the posts, do have a look. Recent entertaining posts should keep you amused for ages. www.marchbrook.co.uk or <http://pub25.bravenet.com/forum>

Before boring readers to tears with my ingratiating political incorrectness, I now move like Dutchy to the next stage of life in the tropics. Healthwise, I am still as big as a barrel, knees are Kerry Packered, hearing is Mutt and Jeff but the 'old chap' still outperforms his visitor. The old chap is my host Khun William, for those of you with a filthy mind !!! I have taken to swimming every day for at least an hour or two. Not hard stuff but far better than no exercise at all. After two weeks of this I am being transformed from Douglas Bader to Flash Gordon. And boy, you get many helping hands trying to get you up the kerbs in Soi 6. In Wrexham, you'd just get mugged and pushed under the No. 26 to Gwersyllt. Oh, by the way, is Jamie out of jail yet !!!!

For those adventurous souls wishing to enjoy some rum, bum and gramophone, I can highly recommend the Jomtien area. Just south of Pattaya, this is much quieter and relaxed. New developments are going on all the time despite the removal last year of Thaksin Shinawatra. The bunch of Generals, Admirals and Wingcos should really stick to their proper jobs and get out of politics. Major insurrections in the South, illegal immigrants in the North and minor bomb scares in the Capital suggest someone isn't doing what they should be doing.

Regardless of the overzealous embassies of Australia, United States and United Biscuits, stating that Thailand is an unsafe place to travel to, it still remains a Country with a wealth of tradition and culture. Coupled with fabulous scenery, lovely weather and great ass, this is not a time to be put off.

Best wishes to all, more in a few weeks.

Exile