

Newsletter No. 5

From his lair in the Himalayan (Him a-layin') heights, the Great Bustard sends another offering to avid readers, from the Land of Smiles. Enjoy !

Whilst admitting that the first attempt was cruelly wiped from the hard drive before the 'save' button could be pressed, this is the second offering which, in the author's view, is not quite as entertaining as the first, however !

Being the rainy season we have been experiencing several storms across the region. Although generally less affected than other areas, Pattaya has seen some of the most fiercesome downpours. Sitting on the balcony at Lakeside fishing for Pla Ning, the skies became ominously black. Sweeping in from the west, this storm had the makings of being special. Rolling in at around 5.00pm the heavens darkened dramatically. All hands on deck to drop the protective sheeting around the terrace area, the wind picked up to gale force.

Handyman Pon at the lower level managed to secure the first two sheets. A Swedish guest and his companion of, errrr, highly suspect credentials managed to rescue the fishing rods even though most of the bourgainvillea ended up in the lounge attached to the hooks. The front of the rain came across the lake like an express train. Water everywhere. Then the electricity went off as thunder and lightning struck all around. Chaos for an hour or so and then as quickly as it came, it went. Still in total darkness, and avoiding any subject involving gender reassignment, the lost art of conversation returned with William regaling us about huntin', shootin' and fishin'. Not sure that our visitors really understood what 'down the line' or 'giving it both barrels' actually meant.

An excellent lunch party the following Sunday with a whole poached salmon, and the finest trifle accompanied by Khun Wilhelm's wine with the magic ingredient, vodka. Anytime you find you are having to consume a bottle of gnats water, just chuck in a shot of Stolli and, hey presto, total transformation. Amazing, but it really works !!! Livens up proceedings too, as some of the guests duly found out. Simon and Debs Philbrook, Maurice and Renita Bromley, Martin and Noi, Richard 'I've fallen off my bike again' Hill, plus the usual team put a couple of cases of drain cleaner/vodka away. Good to see our Sixes tournament Director having to be ladled into the car with a very stern Renita at the wheel.

Following day it was back to Bangkok and the usual bar runs.

Plenty of rain in and around the Capital, so it was handy being just round the corner from the Duke of Wellington. The boys had revamped the food menu with some interesting items included. The Beef Wellington is a fearsome thing. Big chunk of fillet smeared with brown goo and wrapped up in a pastry duvet. Sounds like something you'd find in the public loos in Stryt Fawr, but it actually turned out to be extremely good. Washed down with flagons of some aforementioned wine and day turned to night. Very nice. There seem to be a few staff changes at the Duke as well. Some of the cuties had moved on and a couple of new ones had appeared. A new bar (man), errrr, boy, had been taken on. Not sure what his role is as I never saw him do anything over the entire month. Looks a bit like Beaker from the Muppets, vertical hair and a gormless expression. Still I'm sure the floor Manageress, a giant of a woman, will soon educate him. She marches around like a bulldozer in a field of poppies and all are terrified of her.

A call from big Alistair Rider the next day and a meeting at Mojos Blues Bar on Sunday is arranged. Eat and I trundle down to Londoners on Suk soi 33 for their buffet lunch and then on to Mojos round the corner. What a top dollar spot !! Rock blues in full flow and the place is jumping. Can't hear a word anybody says but who cares. Lead singer is Melissa, a South Walian girl and daughter of Colin who drinks with us in Chequers on soi 4. Great voice and a hottie for all those farang lovers out there. Yup, this is a deffo for more Sunday rockin'.

Sixes veteran, Brett Farmer, an Aussie Government official was in town so we met up at the Duke along with some of his colleagues. A wild bunch to say the least. Peter Hollibone was also in town so there was plenty of Oz banter over lunch. Good luck to Brett for his next posting which will be New Delhi in November. Graham Colless and his wife Daeng were staying at the Serene so it was good to have a few lunches with them. Very unimpressed with O'Reilly's, the Irish pub on the corner of Taniya/Silom. Service was on the dire side, the food was quite tasteless and we were treated to some dreadful entertainment on the TV. Anybody fancy eating a plateful of Massaman Poo whilst watching the world record attempt for eating hotdogs. Quite off putting I can assure you. With a large Yank and small Jap tied on 69 apiece, fortunately the smaller man did a projectile vomit thus eliminating him. Never did finish the massaman.

Coming to the last Friday in the month and an invite to join the famous CRAFT club for the monthly lunch. For those not familiar with this fine bunch of upstanding drunks, this is an anachronism for 'Can't Remember A F***ing Thing' !!! A party of 12 assembled at Coyote on Soi Convent for another round of banter and bacchanalian debauchery, assisted by some curious Mexican nosh. Apart from the main course of pork fillets (or was that chihuahua fillets?) which was very good, the rest was rather bland. Perhaps it was the fermenting cucumber and diced bellpepper in a yoghurt porridge, or maybe the curious minced stuff in a somosa like parcel that reminded me of vegetarianism. At least the wine made up for the eats. As the party got underway, it fell to the Chairman, Richard 'Big Dick' Ellis to relate a recent reprimand to one of the Members, currently absent. Apparently this, errr, gentleman blotted his copybook in quite a way. At the previous gathering he arrived absolutely paralytic, sat for lunch wedged in by others, proceeded to urinate on the floor, threw up in the ice bucket and with final gusto, emptied his bowels on the seat before leaving the table. Hmmm, action taken – a letter of reprimand only. Well its nice to know what the benchmark is before you get a written warning. I suppose to get fully blackballed, you would probably need to murder the chef !!!!

The hotel had started to fill up with French people and numerous waifs and strays, presumably from Cambodia and Vietnam. All very tiresome particularly at breakfast, so it was time to move back down to Jomtien. Before this, Eat and I decided to do the Sunday lunch buffet down at the Shangri-La. This is where Cyndy and Chris sat whilst agreeing to extend their stay an extra week in Thailand. Sitting on the terrace is a lovely experience and with a nice bottle of Oz chardonnay to wash down all manner of seafood, this was a great afternoon. We then felt another visit to Mojo's was a good idea so proceeded to the Blues Bar for some more rockin'. Another great evening with Melissa in full flow before settling back to watch Lewis Hamilton win his third Grand Prix at the Hungaroring. This is a good action bar on Suk Soi 33 and is highly recommended to anyone wanting plenty of sport (and not just the Coyote dancers), live music and great atmosphere. Check it out next time in town.

So it was back to the countryside on Tuesday, Jomtien and Lake Chaknork looking a picture. Our old friend Boy Wonder still in dreadful strife, his missus on the fringe of sprogging (put the kettle on), he is now in danger of getting banged up for being an illegal alien. For him it's a big fine and a couple of days in Kuala Lumpur before re-entry with suitable documents. The Thai government really make things quite hard for expats to either live or work here. Fortunately for the over 55s, it is relatively easy to obtain a retirement visa, a procedure I shall be checking out soon.

That's about it for now. Lunch at the Bangsaray Club today to meet up with William's other daughter, Miranda.

Sawasdee Khrap, sa-nook dee nam kwai ouan mak mak !! Chok dee khrap,

Khun Rakang (The Exile)