

# Nuestros Parientes Perdidos ~ 2008



About a hundred years ago Peter Mauricio Pagliero left the tiny village of Savigliano in the mountains of Northern Italy near to Turin to make his fortune in England but that is another story. Things must have been hard in those days for many other Italians did likewise and Italian restaurants flourished in England as Chinese and Indian restaurants have done since the second world war. Indeed the catering trade became Peter Mauricio's life initially running a restaurant in London's Theatre land, and then becoming head waiter in the prestigious Langham hotel and finally head waiter at the R.A.C club in Pall Mall. It was through his well connected aristocratic clients that he was not sent back to Italy or imprisoned at the outset of war against Germany and Italy but that too is another story.

When he emigrated his three brothers and one sister, like a host of other Italians, emigrated to Argentina. They kept in touch for many years but postal services were unreliable and there were no e-mails and the families lost touch. There had been no post war communication whatsoever between

the two branches of the family - at least not until the intervention of Peter Mauricio's great granddaughter, Helen Pagliero. Helen had a strong desire to explore her family roots and to help her she took her grandfather, Leonard, back to Peter's birthplace, a little bakery in the beautiful cloistered village of Savigliano and with brother George as chauffeur discovered the unknown remote village of 'Pagliero' just a few kilometres away in the mountains. Having lived in Pistoia for a year Helen was fluent in Italian and was easily able to talk her way into the Records office and research the family and we now have a comprehensive family tree.

Helen is a lover of all things Spanish and likes to visit Latin America and visited Buenos Aires, the last known location of our lost family, in Easter 2007. With the help of a somewhat unusual name she consulted the 'guia telefonica' and was surprised to find as many as fifteen Paglieros. Undeterred she called them all up until finally located our 'parientes perdidos' on a date that will ever be a red letter day for them because it was daughter Yanina's birthday, a date that will be remembered! Helen joined them, sadly for only four hours as she was due to fly home the next day but no matter the enigma had finally been unlocked and the family reunited.

We now have to jump ten months to just before Easter 2008 when Michael and Anne pitched into

Buenos Aires on a sunny late summer afternoon and it was a case of love at first sight - a beautiful, beautiful city with wonderful tree lined boulevards, stunning shops with beautiful clothes and furniture and a swarms of lovely casually well dressed, happy and polite people. Much laughter came from the busy craft market, acrobats



### **Magic Argentina**

amused the crowds in the park and clowns caused traffic chaos at the cross roads and the amused locals were only too pleased to contribute to the hats that were passed round. Michael quickly explored the many al fresco restaurants that grace Ricoletta for tonight we were to meet the family for the first time.

At the early hour of 8.00pm we met in the hotel. The first person was

Humberto a large and impressive man who is the corner stone of the existing family. Humberto, who is affectionately known as Carlos by everyone but as 'mi hermano' by Michael, is the grandson of one of the two emigrating Italian Paglieros. His father, also Humberto, has passed on and would be a first cousin of Leonard and certainly their respective photographs are difficult to tell apart. Carlos therefore is a second cousin of Michael.



### **Paglieros united at last - Carlos and Vané**

Having lived out of suitcases for four weeks traversing Brazil we could not be dressed more than 'smart casual'. However, Carlos and Vanesa his daughter (who confessed later that she was very nervous of having to meet her 'opulent' relatives) were in their 'Sunday best'! but not for long - Carlos' stunning plaid jacket was over the back of his chair and we were in shirtsleeve mode chatting away like old friends - well perhaps chatting is not the most apt word but with a 'poco inglis' from Vanesa and some Spanish from Michael and the aid of some excellent vino tinto there was reasonable communication and a wealth of hilarity.



**Isabel and Carlos at home**

Although we were hosts we sought the advice of Omar, Vanesa's 'novio', and he recommended the 'Parilla' (pronounced in B.A as "pareeja") which traditionally is the entire cow, 'innards and all'. He advised that as we were six we should order for four but that proved over optimistic as nearly half of the enormous platter of meat was sent back! The entire meal including desserts and copious wine was £8.00 a head, a Kings ransom in Argentina but a snip to English tourists. A lovely evening and the ice was broken!

The next day a taxi ride to their home, I would say was the equivalent to Piccadilly Circus to Harrow cost a mere £4.50 and we were at their



**Outside su casa - Enriques motor bike**

little house in the lovely district of Simbron a pleasant residential area with a fine shopping mall close by and several good restaurants. This was our opportunity to meet dear Isabel, Carlos' wife, who could not join us all the previous night.



**Isabel and Anne**

That afternoon Vanesa (Vané) took us to her local church for Palm Sunday



**Carlos, Isabel and Florencia with Michael** not to a service as such but to see the beautiful ornamental basilica with wonderful statues and paintings. We encountered a Palm Sunday tradition the Service of the Rosary which Vané recited word perfectly.



### **La eglisia preciosa**

We didn't see an organ so maybe music is not a part of Argentinian worship. As we left a bunch of olive branches was thrust in our hands to signify the palms of the 'via doloroso'. Outside into the sunshine (average Summer temperature 80 degrees - winter 60 degrees) where we saw about two hundred kids of the parish enjoying organised Sunday entertainment with sports and games and tables groaning under the weight of cakes and bocadillos - clearly religion is an important part of Argentinian life. something perhaps the English could learn. All this while Omar was absent without leave and we knew not his whereabouts - but not for long - he turned up to join Vané who announced that all the while he had been at home wood carving and

produced a block of what looked like mahogany on which he had carved

PAGLIERO

ENG - ARG

and that paper weight is in front of me as I write. That night we treated the family to another parilla but by now we understood the generosity of the portions and with prudent ordering and pacing ourselves we were coming to terms with this delightful tradition.

But back to the Paglieros. We entered their property from a quiet street (except when the nearby trains thundered by). We entered via a small courtyard littered with Augustin's toys and graced by a large orange tree in the corner, which sadly was out of season, and so into the living room.

I should have mentioned that before entering we were greeted by the entire family con mutes abrazos y besos (hugs and kisses) - there was Carlos, his wife Isabel, their two daughters in their early twenties, Ionian and Florence and Yanina's delightful one year old son August.



### **Augustin with Yanina**

It was a small sitting room with a table and chairs, a large book case a television and music/video centre - it felt cosy and welcoming. Off the

sitting room was the kitchen, and two bedrooms one for the girls and the baby and one for Carlos and Isabel.



**Carlos, Vané studying Helen's 'family tree' with Michael**



**"That makes you my second cousin....."**

The atmosphere was relaxed and friendly as we explored our language skills. With some props, family photos and gifts and some prepared statements, Michael's Spanish held up - just and Isabel spoke a little English. Also Florence recalled some of her schoolgirl English. We got by and had a lot of fun doing it. Our prowess grew with the aid of Carlos' steady flow of beer and Yanina skilfully lit the garden barbecue and produced some extremely tasty pizzas - we hadn't ever seen them made quite like that before!



**Mmmmmmm!!**

Isabel gave us a delightful china cow which surely must be the national animal and we gave them some books with lovely pictures of England and the West Country.



**Grub up!**

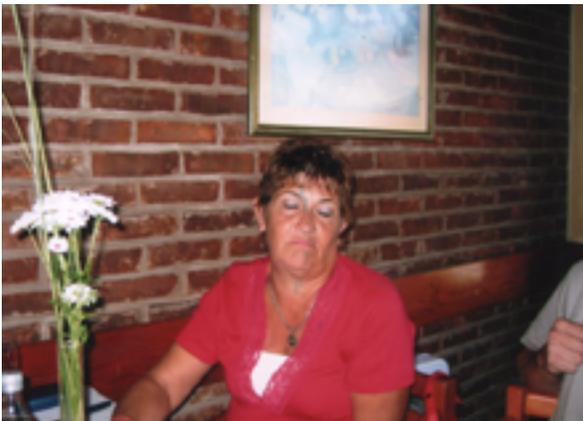
And somehow eight hours disappeared before one could say 'Hola'. More hugs and kisses and we were on the road back to our hotel with instruction to return the following morning.

The day dawned and as up to then and throughout our stay the sun shone, the air was warm but not humid - perfecto! We were a little late and as we arrived we saw the family waiting outside in the street peering into each taxi as it passed to see if we were aboard.

A few minutes later we set off walking into the town and ended up in a delightful restaurant where a long table was set up for thirteen places. Beer flowed and as it did so the rest of the family turned up - Omar and Vanesa - Enrique helmet clad fresh from his motor bike - and finally a car full of Rosario , Celestina and her 14 year old son Augustin. And so we embarked on yet another 'pareeja'!!



**Cheers!!**



**Celestina - sweet dreams**



**Couldn't eat another thing.....!!**

After two hours of feasting back to la casa de Carlos Pagliero where more beer flowed. Later Yanina tried to tempt us to more pizza and we showed the family George's video footage of Oscars christening which was repeated more than once and we left them two copies. They loved Leonard's reluctance ("what's wrong with Hello?") and his final giving way to greet his Argentinian relatives with "Hola!" Isabel was a particular fan of Leonard whom she saw as the oldest surviving Pagliero and direct cousin to her father in law Humberto and in a barrage of subsequent e-mails always asked after him and sent him their love - they were devastated to hear of his recent passing having expressed the hope that one day he might visit.



**Say "cheeeeeeese" !**



**Carlos, Enrique and Augustin**

The next day we returned and Isabel wanted to show Anne her local shopping Mall, not dissimilar to one of our provincial shopping centres but crammed with Rio Plata F.C., Boca junior F.C.. and Panthers R.F.C. memorabilia - they are a proud nation. The next day we were summoned for midday - Anne was to go off with Vané to explore some more elegant shopping but Michael was due to accompany Florence and Isabel to the



**Omar Vané's 'novio'.**



**C.A.Rio Plata youth champions**

Club Atletico Rio Plata, one of the two major Football clubs where Carlos was clearly an important administrator - we hadn't seen him at all that day - it was the day of a match and he was there early morning to see everything right. Clearly a much loved figure for as he conducted us past all the major trophies, the changing rooms and out into the arena about every three yards



**Vané and Michael enjoying Maté**



he was accosted and hugged by his fellow staff. Flor, Isabel and I were put in the pound seats but Carlos was off administrating - we didn't see him till the end of the game - and we were entertained to a couple of hours of exciting football though with no result. A thoroughly fun afternoon - a first for me. On this occasion Isabel took us back home and prepared us another parilla, yet again monstrous portions most of which found their way to the fridge for later on.



### **It's all too much!**

While we were there it was our Henry's birthday so Isabel baked him a lovely cake. It was not practical for us to bring it home so Anne

It was delightful reunion with our 'parientes perdidos' which sadly had to come to an end. Isabel and Flor didn't want us to go. Sadly we said good-bye and went to bed for our early start. The limo picked us up and



blew out the candle and we ate the cake but Henry got to enjoy all their lovely birthday cards on our return.



whisked us to the airport where Isabel and Flor were already waiting for us after an hour long bus ride to come and see us off. More genuine heartfelt tears as we went through security and as we turned the corner, after one last look back, we realised they were *truly* our family. God bless them!!