



Anglo-Ecuadorian Society Newsletter
 December 2020
Letter from the AES Chairman, Jonathan Lea

Well, we are emerging from lockdown again so it must be time for another Anglo-Ecuadorian Society Newsletter!

It's an understatement to say it's been an up and down year. Almost exactly a year ago we held an enjoyable Christmas Drinks event and hoped that would be a platform to restart a programme of events for the Society. Those plans, like so many others for 2020, have had to be suspended but we have restarted our Newsletter and, in this edition, our editor James McKeigue interviews the recently appointed British Ambassador to Ecuador, Chris Campbell. David Horwell describes a visit to



the Cloud Reserves of Yungilla and Maquipicuna and we have a report on the exhibition of paintings by Susana Uvidia held at the Embassy of Ecuador in London. We also have a Christmas recipe for Pristiños to cheer us all up, recommended by David Reyes. They are very good with a cup of coffee – or even a canalaso!

In December, we received a Christmas card from Caletth, who we sponsor through **Juconi Ecuador**. During lockdown, Juconi developed a virtual platform to be in meaningful contact

with the children, while face-to-face meetings resumed in July. It's good to know that Caletth is continuing to get support throughout this difficult period and we continue to dedicate the greater part of our membership fee income to supporting Juconi

Condor Trust for Education – we hear that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility has recently completed an 'audit' of the Condor Trust's schools and awarded it 82.8% for its effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability. This result, which the Ministry classed as "Very



Satisfactory", puts the Trust in the highest category and the report recommends that the Trust should increase its funding and expand its work to other cities in Ecuador. So congratulations to the Condor

Trust and we hope we can help them deliver on this recommendation. Don't forget Easyfundraising when you are doing your online Christmas shopping!

Our plans for 2021 include updating the Society's website and developing how we use Facebook. If there is anyone among our members and friends with expertise in social media and digital marketing (and some spare time) to help us grow its online presence, please do get in touch with me! You can follow us on Facebook here <https://www.facebook.com/AngloEcuadorianSociety>

Although we cannot meet this Festive Season, the whole Committee joins me in wishing all our members and friends the very best for Christmas and in hoping that we all have a Happy - and healthy - New Year! Feliz Navidad y un Prospero Año Nuevo para todos.

Jonathan Lea

The UK's New Ambassador to Ecuador, Chris Campbell,

tells us how links between the two countries are improving...

Anglo Ecuadorian Society: *Please give us a profile of the relationship between the UK and Ecuador.*

Ambassador Campbell: There are lots of opportunities in Ecuador for UK companies and British innovation. The world has been coming to terms with the pandemic for the last seven months but now we need to look ahead and plan for the future. We need to innovate if we are going to reactivate our economies. It's not just a question of going back to before, we want to build back better. In Ecuador they are keen to grow in a sustainable way. So that means using the country's incredible natural resources responsibly. They need to use those resources, for example in mining, energy and agriculture, to kickstart the economy but they are keen to do it sustainably. And that's where the UK can help. We have expertise in renewable energy, precision farming and marine environments. We are already working with the Ecuadorian government to see how British firms can help them achieve these goals.



Your readers may remember from my previous interviews that I am a trade-focused ambassador. Commerce is at the heart of what I do and, in that sense, I am very fortunate that my predecessor, Cathy Ward, oversaw the UK – Ecuador Trade Agreement, which has now been ratified by the Ecuadorian parliament. That means there won't be any gap in bilateral trade come the 1st of January 2021 when the UK's transition period to leave the European Union ends. Part of my role is to make sure this new trade agreement is used to the maximum extent possible. I want to make sure that British companies know how to use it to its full potential, and that Ecuadorian companies are ready to export to and invest in the UK.

We are co-hosting COP 26 next year, and this is already a major focus for our work here. The UK has long and historical links working with Ecuador on the Galapagos Islands. There has been a lot of work on conservation and the protection of biodiversity and we want to help the islands become self-sufficient in renewable energy. We want to take the best of UK energy technology, expertise and innovation and apply it to a remote island location with very specific needs. That's just one example of how the UK can collaborate with Ecuador and create opportunities for British companies. I have met with many of the UK firms already here and they are enthusiastic about the opportunities here.

AES: *Trade between the UK and Ecuador is relatively small; how will you seek to increase it?*

AC: You're right. It's not a huge trade relationship – the school report would probably read “could do better”. My job is to work with the DIT team to identify opportunities and open doors. But there is a lot here for us to work with. One of the largest companies here, Agripac, is led by an English family, we have strong business chambers in both Quito and Guayaquil and there have been some trade developments that look promising. Ecuador recently started shipping pineapples to the UK, on top of its traditional banana and shrimp exports, while the Sunderland-made Nissan Qashqai is a popular car here. There is potential for so much more. For example, Ecuador is opening up its mining industry, which could create lots of opportunities for responsible mining.

One area with potential is using British innovation to help Ecuadorian agribusiness become even more efficient. We already import Ecuadorian bananas, cacao, shrimp and tuna, but we can also help those industries become more sustainable.

I hope that a lot of what I learnt during my time in the Dominican Republic will prove useful here. The key for me is boosting trade in both directions. I don't just want to promote UK exports and create an unbalanced trade relationship, not least because Ecuadorian exports mean jobs in the UK. Also, I believe that we need to use this time in the pandemic to prepare for what's coming after. The world is going to recover soon, with industries like tourism coming back, so we need to make sure that we are ready for that.

AES: *Can the pandemic improve the bilateral relationship between the UK and Ecuador?*

AC: The pandemic has been a tragedy that has caused pain around the world. The loss of life has been terrible, especially in Ecuador, so I don't want to pretend it has been in any way positive. However, it is an area where we have been working with Ecuador. In September the Ecuadorian Health Minister came to the UK to discuss Covid-19 responses and vaccines with British health officials. We must remember that this is a relationship that was already on an upward trend. During Ambassador Ward's tenure there were visits from the then Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan and the then Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Simon Fraser. So, my job is to build on that momentum and make sure that we take the relationship to new heights.

I get asked a lot about the Oxford University vaccine as there is plenty of interest here. The UK government's stance is clear - we want equitable access to a vaccine for all. It's not about which country has the first vaccine but about ensuring that we can protect as many people as quickly as possible and as safely as possible. That's why we encourage all other countries to sign up to Covax and to Gavi, so they can ensure they get the vaccines they need. And that's why I am very pleased that the Ecuadorian government has now formally signed up to Covax mechanism and that they have agreed a commercial deal with Astra Zeneca that will help guarantee provision of the Oxford University vaccine, as and when it is ready, for the Ecuadorian people.

Realm of the Clouds - Reserves of Yunguilla & Maquipicuna

With lots of exciting vaccine progress it seems likely that British tourism to Ecuador will start to recover next year. To help us plan our next Ecuadorian adventure, AES Committee member, David Horwell, recounts his trip to the country's stunning cloud forest reserves...

Just over a year ago I travelled north-west of Quito to two very distinct cloud forest reserves. These are the dense forests lying on the steep slopes of the Andes, sustained by mists that sweep in from the moist Pacific. They are highly diverse and rich in orchids, bromeliads and many bird species. Little did I know this would be my last big trip before the pandemic struck.

The first stop was Yunguilla, only an hour by car from Quito, via Calacali and Nanegalito. Yunguilla is a picturesque hamlet off-the-beaten track in Ecuador's cloud forest. The close-knit community lies on the slopes of the Andes between the Pululahua and Maquipucuna reserves, on the way to the Esmeraldas coast. The region was once given to cattle farming and smuggling but now are one of the few communities that have developed sustainable community-based tourism in Ecuador.

Yunguilla is home to about 80 families who take in homestay guests, which helps fund protection of the surrounding cloud forest. One night was not long enough, to see all the trail walks and explore the flora and fauna. I did visit the community restaurant, sample food with local cheese and jam and a walk through the co-operative organic farm. The octagonal restaurant has amazing views of volcanos and rippling green valleys below.

The main attraction was staying with a local family, eating dinner in their home, enjoying moments



with unassuming people - the locals are dedicated to community tourism. Before arriving, I was apprehensive that the accommodation would be basic and dorm style, but the house I stayed in was spacious, comfortable and very clean. The modern but rustic architecture is very homely. There is a variety of accommodation you can choose from, including camping. The food was substantial country fare, with plenty of soup, chicken, rice, potatoes, corn, beans, bread and eggs.

Long-term volunteers can help-out in the cheese or jam factories, the greenhouse or general horticulture. Teaching English is another popular choice for volunteers, as language is a key skill for those working in tourism. Tourists can partake in creating hand-painted cards which are illustrated by local children and made with home-made paper from natural fibres.

At an altitude of 2,650 metres above sea level, the climate is spring-like and pleasant with outstanding views. At night, the entire village congregates around a volleyball court, where they take the game very seriously. Beer is available for the less athletic minded.

I would highly recommend anyone traveling to Ecuador to stay in this community, at least for a night. For nature lovers, the Andean cloud forest is the place to see hummingbirds, the toucans and spectacled bear if lucky. Additional information is available at: www.yunguilla.org.ec

After a hearty breakfast in the scenic restaurant, I was met by Rodrigo Ontaneda the co-founder of Maquipucuna reserve. We drove on a dirt road for about 45 minutes down into the tropical lowlands. I wimped out of taking the hiking trail through the jungle which follows the route of the Yumbos, the indigenous inhabitants who lived here before the Incas. Maquipucuna is an impressive 6,000-hectare tract of pristine forest that is protected and managed by an NGO. The reserve is in the mega diverse Chocó Andino region. It is home to 45 species of mammals, 250 species of butterflies, 1000 species of moths, more than 2,000 species of plants and 400 birds. I was on a quest to see the spectacled or Andean bear, more famously known as Paddington. Researchers are identifying individual bears and studying their behaviour.



Rodrigo told me the history of the place which began as a personal mission over 30 years ago, when he and his partner Rebeca Justica were inspired to save the forest from loggers and miners. They built a small rustic bamboo lodge for scientists and visitors. Initially tourism was seen less important than conservation, but recently its role is seen as crucial to sustainable growth. There are now two very comfortable cabins with en suite facilities, king-size beds and a view of the Umachaca

river. Visitors can hike 40 km of trails, dive into natural pools, visit waterfalls, experience Ecuador's first coffee-tour, bird-watch, visit the organic gardens, or simply relax in a hammock. Rodrigo showed me plans for new eco-friendly cabins he plans to construct. The friendly staff are all recruited from local communities, so Spanish is the main language, but English-speaking guides are contracted. The food is made up of solid, highland staples, such as soup with *morochó*, a kind of rice-like corn, fried plantains, tortillas de *yuca* and orange cake washed down with locally produced coffee.

I headed-off on the trail with a guide in search of bears. They migrate here in August to October and had recently been filmed by the BBC for a Natural World documentary. Sadly, I was a few weeks late, the only traces left were droppings. They are partial to a kind of fruit that looks like tiny wild avocados (*aguacatillo*). I did see plenty of butterflies and insects, tropical plants and many birds. It helps to have a local expert to identify these. The cloud forest has a lot of species, but mainly heard not seen. I also watched a pair of enchanting torrent ducks. They sat upon rocks amid the rapids of the fast-flowing stream. They feed upon larvae beneath the rocks and are extraordinary to watch. The reserve belongs to a foundation which has received funding from international conservation organisations. However, owning the land does not protect it, that is achieved by getting the local communities involved and patrolling the terrain. I hope that the plans to develop tourism take-off as financial support in times of Covid-19 are lean. Initiatives like this are a good example to us all - how to save the planet.

Additional information is available at: www.maquipucuna.org/home

To see more spectacular photos of Ecuador and learn about the country's hidden touristic treasures visit: www.selectlatinamerica.co.uk/blog



Dinner with Dave - Christmas Pristiños

London's leading Ecuadorian chef, David Reyes, who you will remember was behind the Flavours of Ecuador dinners that we held at the Oriental Club in the past, suggests we liven up this Christmas with Pristiños, a traditional Ecuadorian yuletide dessert topped with a sweet brown sugar syrup.

-- Ingredients

- 1 lb. (500 grams) flour
- 1 tbs. baking powder
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tsp sugar
- ½ cup (100 grams) butter or margarine
- 5 eggs
- ½ cup (125 ml) water
- 1 stick of cinnamon
- 1 tsp anise seeds
- Vegetable oil for frying
- Brown sugar syrup (see recipe at end of article)

-- Instructions

- Mix the flour, baking powder, salt and sugar together. Sift these ingredients into a large mixing bowl twice.
- Form a well in the middle of the dry ingredients and add the butter and eggs to the middle. Mix everything in well, using clean, dry hands. Set aside.
- In a separate saucepan, add the water, cinnamon and anise seeds and boil for about 10 minutes. Let the water mixture cool.
 - Once the mixture has cooled, add it to the flour and egg mixture, in a slow stream, mixing all the while. Make sure all of the ingredients get completely mixed, until a soft dough is formed. Set aside and let rise for about 10 minutes.
 - Next, roll the dough on a lightly floured board to about ¼ inch thick. Cut the dough into strips that are about 6 inches (15 cm) long by 2 inches (4 cm) wide.
- Cut small, ½ inch notches on one side of the strips. Bring the two ends of the strip together to form a circle, notched sides facing out. Pinch ends together and drop in the hot oil. Fry until a deep golden brown. Remove pristiños from the oil and drain on paper towels.
- Instead of frying you can also brush them with egg wash and bake at 190 degrees for 15-18 minutes.
- Serve with brown sugar syrup.



Serves: 8

Preparation: 25 minutes

Cooking time: 10 minutes

'Going Native'

Exhibition of paintings by Susana Uvidia at the Embassy of Ecuador in London...

Susana, an Ecuadorian artist who lives and works in London, held an exhibition at the Embassy in September 2020. It had originally been planned for March but had to be cancelled due to COVID 19. It was fortunate that it could take place when it did.



The title of her exhibition was *Going Native* in response to her personal experience of living outside Ecuador. As she says: "I am interested in identifying who am I? My cultural awareness was not predominant in my home country. It was in Europe; I realised my understanding of my historical roots is fundamental to my identity. My artistic practice centres on my interpretative struggle of my identification. It responds to the European stereotype of the "other". And, it links to the almost ignored Andean diaspora".

Susana's works include painting, sculpture, and ceramics. She looks for materials that have the potential for a bold aesthetic impact but essentially that questions the social and political history of the materials themselves. "I make geometric compositions with freedom of forms in which colour achieves power. The careful balance of harmony and dissonance in my works, combined with my vibrant colour palette, are evidence of critical reflections of the female presence, in a peaceful but dominant way, in this male-dominated world".

We are very pleased to welcome Susana as a member of the Society. To see examples of Susana's work and some photographs of the exhibition check out her Instagram account and her website.

Web: www.susanauvidia.com

Instagram: @susana_uvidia