

In November 2009 Pip and Chris together with Pip's brother Hubert Carr and his wife Bridget spent three weeks in Argentina with the primary goal of following up on the life of their father John Reginald Carr and their grandparents Hubert Martin and Nancy Carr née Lingard. Hubert Martin was manager of the Estancia Güer Aike near the town of Rio Gallegos, the capital of the Province Santa Cruz from 1908 until his death there aged 42 in 1920.

This is a diary of the journey.

6<sup>th</sup> November

After a smooth and comfortable flight Pip and Chris arrived late at night in Buenos Aires and the transfer took them directly to the hotel Loi Suites Arenales, which was very close to the Plaza San Martin. This is a large square with a huge (magnolia) tree in the middle; we later learnt that like many more such trees in BA it is over 200 years old. There is also a statue to San Martin who was instrumental in obtaining independence for Argentina and Chile from Spain.

7<sup>th</sup> November

Before Hubert and Bridget arrived, we went out to buy a suitable map of Patagonia to assist with our driving in Santa Cruz Province to get to Rio Gallegos. In doing so we discovered the pedestrian shopping street of Florida. The emphasis is on the i – Floriida and not on the first syllable as in the US state. Maria came to the hotel to meet us with the news that Hubert and Bridget would be slightly delayed. She gave us all the vouchers for the trip and explained some things. We discussed going to a Tango evening on our return to BA – see later. Hubert and Bridget arrived without too much delay but it turned out that Bridget's suitcase had not arrived, hence the delay. After some more discussion with Maria we took a taxi to Peurto Madera to have some lunch – a very good seafood meal starting with a complementary glass of sparkling wine. After that we walked back to the hotel via Florida where Bridget bought some clothes to tide her over until her suitcase arrived. In the late afternoon our transfer arrived and we went to the domestic air terminal and caught our flight to Bariloche arriving there late at night. We stayed in the hotel Villa Sofia quite high on the hill above the town and thankfully fell into comfortable beds. It had been a long day!

8<sup>th</sup> November Bariloche and Patagonian train.

After a late breakfast we walked down to the town to investigate and found that it was very cold with a strong wind off the lake but also attractive. The town has been built to resemble an Alpine town – it is a ski resort for Argentina but by November most of the snow had thawed; only the high peaks were snow covered. There were plenty of tourists around and although it was Sunday the shops were open and Bridget was able to supplement her bare wardrobe with a beautiful dark green fleece.

The highlight however was really the chocolate! The town is renowned for it and in one large shop we went in and drank hot chocolate, not a mug of cocoa but really liquid chocolate. It was delicious and nice and warming after the cold outside. After a further short walk about the town and some lunch we returned up the hill to our hotel where we had a while to wait until our transfer to the station arrived.



At the station and on the platform we found a huge crowd to get the train to Viedma, it only runs once a week. However there was plenty of time to take photographs and examine everything and once we had pulled out punctually the four of us settled ourselves in the restaurant car for a drink before the evening meal. It was light for quite a long time and it was interesting to see the landscape gradually changing from the mountain to the plain. What horrified us was the litter all along the way – this was to be the case in most of Patagonia. We stopped at a number of stations, though in all cases there was very little to see in the way of habitation. At one station where quite a large number of people got off the train, we saw an ancient Peugeot 404, the same model as the one we drove in South Africa in 1972-4. Shortly after this stop the train stopped again and then went backwards down the line for quite a long way until at a level crossing a police car arrived, two girls got out of it and onto the train. Whether they were part of the school party on the train who had got off, or whether they lived there and had just 'missed the train' we do not know. Finally after a meal of grilled steak we settled ourselves in our respective compartments for the night.



9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November Puerto Madryn

As we expected to get off the train at 8 a.m. at San August de Oeste we were ready for breakfast at 7! However the train was running late and it was nearer 9.30 that we finally arrived at our station. The transfer was waiting for us but neither the driver nor the guide spoke much English. The drive to Puerto Madryn took a good two hours and when we arrived at our hotel it, turned out that there had been a mistake and we had to go to another one. That was very nice and we had good rooms. We went to a good restaurant almost across the road for an excellent lunch before then walking along the front and seeing a three-masted sailing ship from the Netherlands called 'Stad Amsterdam'. One interesting feature of the town was that trees along the front which had died had been

carved into different 'sculptures' which was fun. We had another good meal in the evening.

The following day we were picked up at 8.30 for a tour around the Peninsula Verdes where we saw guanaco, mare – a strange Patagonian animal which is referred to as a guinea pig, walks like a hare and looks almost like a small deer when standing, it has a marked white stripe across its backside, rhea and many other birds, sea elephants lying on the beach – here we had a walk down the sand dunes to just above the beach and had a good view of them all sunning themselves just like tourists.

After a lunch break we were taken to Les Pyramides a small harbour where the whale watching boats are stationed. Here we joined other parties on a boat and at first wondered how we would all get a view of the whales. However it was explained that once we were near to any we could get up and walk around the sides and that the boat would move round so that everyone would get a good view. That was indeed the case. We saw a number of whales and the ones we were closest to were feeding, this is most unusual as they normally only feed in much colder waters nearer the Antarctic. We could see that with the mouth wide open it was not a huge hole but the sides covered with a mesh so that the water taken in from the front is expelled through the mesh at the sides and the plankton remains in the mouth. We saw one mother with her young one but it was feeding from the water not suckling. These were all the Southern Right Whales, very similar to the Northern Right Whales but it seems that the two sorts remain in their respective hemispheres and never meet.



The following day we were again picked up at 8.00 and drove south to Punta Tombo where we could see Magellan penguins, which have a very distinctive extra stripe around their white fronts and are quite small, about 60 cm. tall. It was amazing to walk along the dunes and find penguins with nests in almost every bush. Quite often we were able to see the two eggs they were sitting on

and some of them seemed to want to show off their prowess. It was impossible not to take lots of photographs of them. On the way back we stopped at the archaeological museum in Trelew where we saw huge fossilized skeletons of dinosaurs. From there we drove to Gaiman, a Welsh town, which had been

settled in the mid 1880s by Welsh people hoping to escape the repressions of the English. It was a pleasant small town where we walked around for about an hour. There was the option of having a 'Welsh tea' but as it cost about the same as a main meal we felt it was rather superfluous, we certainly wanted a good meal in the evening too. It would seem that there are still a number of people here who speak Welsh but it is not as dominant as in Trevelin further west in Patagonia.

On both of these days we were again horrified to see how much litter was blown about the countryside and it was clear that the guides found it most embarrassing. On the return from Punta Tombo we had to pass the Trelew airport and were able to call in and collect Bridget's suitcase at last. She was most relieved to get all her clothes again after 6 days!

12<sup>th</sup> November

Another early start and after an hour's drive with Roger Rhys who told us plenty about the Welsh and English immigrants we got our flight to el Calafte, where we picked up a hired car and drove across the Patagonian steppe to Rio Gallegos, partly on the famous Ruta 40. It was very windy and soon after leaving the immediate mountains it was snowing and we came out onto a plateau where the ground was covered with snow. We stopped half way at the cross roads of 'Esperanza' – supposedly a town with a population of between 20 and 49! There was a hotel with restaurant and a filling station but not much more. Auntie Vi – she had been a friend of Hubert Martin and Nancy Carr, Hubert and I remember visiting her in her home near Guilford in the early 1950s – lived on the estancia 'Esperanza' which we gathered was 'near' the cross roads when she was married to her first husband. Auntie Vi (Violet) was first married to Douglas Pewlston and they had one daughter, Rosemary. Then she married Andrew Galley who lived to be 101. Driving across the steppe we very soon became aware that near any human habitation the litter flying about in the wind was almost unbelievable, as we had seen from the train. Shortly before Rio Gallegos we came upon the road junction with the national road 3 and the river Gallegos and there was a white and green estancia house and a sign saying Güer Aike but we were very uncertain if this was really the house as it seemed to be nestling against a hill and be surrounded by trees which was not our memory of the photos. On later inspection of the photos we found that the hill is there but not the trees.

On arriving in the town of Rio Gallegos we found that the hotel had not received my email but they were still able to give us two double rooms for the week. The hotel was in the main street of the town Av. Roca (named after a former Argentine President) which runs east / west and after unpacking we went out to explore. We found that the British Club was only about one block away. We found the cathedral in the main north / south road and opposite the park; it is a small pink building with a lot of wood on the inside. It is Roman Catholic and everything was in Spanish. We also walked through the park, which was dominated by graffiti, which a few days later had been cleaned up, and stopped

for tea and chocolate cake in a restaurant called the Windmill. We were happy to go to bed that evening with the feeling that we did not have to be up too early in the morning. Hubert had spoken to Pablo Beecher, a journalist recommended by John Blake and with whom he had been in touch by email, and fixed a date of 9.00 a.m. When he arrived punctually we were all surprised at how young he is! We had expected someone of at least our own age, not that of our children! Anyway he promised to come and pick us up in the afternoon and show us some of the town. We then visited the museum of the pioneers. There we found the sign from Herbert Elbourne's office. We then walked to the docks on the river looking for the railway museum and restored locomotive Hubert had heard of. But we found no signs of trains and the docks looked very much unused. After some lunch we got into the car to explore hoping to find the trains and drove out to the Punta Loyola where we had been able to see some tanks in the distance. That is what we found there - huge oil / petrol tanks and quite a queue of road tankers filling up, but also we saw a wrecked ship in the distance and drove towards it. It turned out to be the Marjory Glen, a steel sailing ship, which had had a load of coal that self ignited in the hold and burnt out and had to be abandoned in 1910. Later the hull must have been washed aground in a storm, as it is now about 50 meters above the obvious high tide line. We just got back to the hotel in time to meet Pablo who then took us first to the Belgian house - a beautifully restored wooden building not far from the river front which had been built by a Belgian company at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is now the property of a foundation and used for cultural purposes. At the time there was an exhibition of paintings. Pablo then took us to the town museum where there was an exhibition of glass sculptures done by a local artist - it was very impressive. We went on to the municipal cultural centre, which is now housed in the old hospital building - again there was an exhibition of paintings and also the town library and a shop selling craft work done in the traditional indigenous manner. He also drove us past the 'British School', which we later discovered was the house Herbert Elbourne built for his first wife Alice Pickering. She had been very unhappy in Rio Gallegos and eventually returned to England with her four children. Herbert later married Aunt Peter in 1948 and died after being pulled out of a fire on an estancia in 1956. Aunt Peter then returned to England and lived with us until she died in 1962.

On Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> we explored the town a bit more and in the afternoon Pablo took us out to Güer Aike. Here we met Gladys Trutanic and her son Geronimo,, the present owners and visited Hubert Martin's grave. His death was on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1920. Some of the letters are now missing and there is a lot of lichen growing on the stone, which is very plain.



Left: the grave

below: The entrance to the estancia where the wooden bridge had been.



There are three further graves, one from 1933 of Paddy Monserat who ran the estancia between Leslie Cameron, who took over on Hubert Marin's death, and Errol Kennard, and the other two a husband and wife Adrian and Marie Herriot who had often visited and were very fond of the place and good friends of Errol Kennard and his wife Bidy. They died in 1955. Naomi O'Byrne (née Kennard) was able to tell us about them later. After this visit and tea with the Trutanics Pablo took us to his house which he is building on a small-holding. It is a lovely place with lots of trees, large grassy areas that he keeps well cut and a pond. His house is like a museum with ancient and modern things in it but all of them without exception with a special meaning for him. He calls the place Marie after his Beecher great-grandmother who came out from England at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

On Sunday we then drove out to Killik Aike Norte to have lunch with John and Monica Blake. We had been in contact with John Blake as a result of finding his correspondence with our father. He has written a fascinating book about his family's life in Patagonia which Hubert and Pip had both read in preparation of the trip. We were made to feel very welcome there and had an *asado* cooked in their enclosed terrace. They then took us around the buildings – a cottage which they call the 'museum' full of items from the earlier settlers, the shearing sheds and then to their beach on the river. Killik Aike Norte is on the north bank of the Gallegos river a little west of the town, almost opposite the airport. The estancia was developed by Herbert Felton, who left it to his son Carlos. Carlos and his wife Tommy (née Rudd), had been friends of Hubert Martin and Nancy as well as Aunt Peter and Herbert Elbourne. They had no children so they sold the property to the Blakes to prevent it from being divided up. Carlos and Tommy had kept the house as Herbert had built it and it is full of all kinds of treasures. Herbert and his wife had been buried there in the garden but on Carlos' death the graves were removed to the graveyard on the Rudd family property (Estancia Buen Tiempo), where Carlos and Tommy were also buried. Until this year the Blakes have been selling their (organic) wool to the company 'Hess Natur' in Butzbach, which is not far from where Pip and Chris live in Germany (and where our

daughter Victoria buys many things). Hess Natur is no longer able to process the wool and it may have to go to China to be processed before it can be made up into garments!

On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> we were invited to tea with Dorothy Pickering. Her husband was the son of one of Alice's brothers (see above). This was quite an experience to us – a huge spread with drop-scones, scones, jams, dulce de leche, cakes, and more. Dorothy was delighted to hear that Aunt Peter had spent her last years with us. We asked her if she had ever heard of Nancy Carr (or Dad) but no, and she did not know of any house or estate called La Belita as described in some of the photos we have. After tea we were then expected for a drink at the British Club where we met a number of British families including Micheal O'Bryne, son of Naomi (now 80 years old) Kennard who had grown up at Güer Aike. Her father Errol had taken over as manager there in 1933 from Leslie Cameron. On Tuesday we were invited to tea with Terry Paine and Edith Duncan. Terry had worked at Güer Aike at the time when the Kennards were there and Edith's father had also been employed there. This was an even bigger spread than on Monday. Tea in an 'English' home in Patagonia is more like a meal from pre-war days in England. The hospitality is very generous. While we were there the bell rang and it was someone from Chile selling 'Chilean' products. Edith rushed out and bought several boxes of chocolates from him saying that the Chilean chocolates were so much better than the Argentinean. She proceeded to give each couple a box to take away.

On Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November we took the bus to Punta Arenas in Chile. It had not been possible to hire a car with suitable papers as in el Calafate they only insure the 4X4 cars for Chile, assuming that one is travelling up over the mountains. The journey lasted about 4 hours including a 40-minute break at the border for emigration and immigration. It would have been faster in a car as it would only have been the four of us not a whole busload. Still it was no harm to get up and move about a bit. We had taken a picnic lunch to eat on the bus and then found we had to eat it all before the border because of restrictions on taking fruit, vegetables, meat and milk products into Chile. The same applies the other way round. In Punta Arenas we had booked a hotel right on the front and that proved to be only about 6 blocks from where the bus stopped so we took our luggage there first. We then investigated where the bus back to Rio Gallegos would depart the next day and from there walked around the town. It was after 5 p.m. but still light and we wanted a cup of tea. We found an 'Irish tea house' and thought that looked like a good idea – well! On the menu there was 'tea' and also 'tea with milk' which cost a little more. Pip was OK, she ordered the former but the others all wanted milk. What did they get - a cup of hot milk and a tea bag. It does not work as well to dangle a teabag in hot milk as in hot water. For Hubert who dislikes milk and hates it hot this was a disaster and he ordered a coffee, which the waiter found most confusing. There was a lot of election campaigning going on and posters up everywhere. It was noticeable that many of the names were Croatian in origin and we saw a Croatian school as well as the Croatian consulate in the town. The town itself was nice and clean

with trimmed evergreen trees in the middle of the big wide main streets. The square in the centre of the town had a statue of Magellan in the middle and a pond with the points of the compass and around the edge naming many world cities – but not all quite in the directions indicated. Punta Arenas is the most southerly town on mainland America. Around the square there are large houses, the most imposing of which was Sarah Braun's, which is now a hotel. Just off the square is the house of her brother, Maurice Braun. It is now a museum, which we visited the next day. Inside it is furnished with the original furniture, which showed a marked French influence. The garden is quite small but it is in the centre of the town and there are a number of sculptures in it. These and similar buildings were built at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the fortunes made from wool and other trading. We also visited the cemetery, which is interesting. Sarah Braun gave an imposing gateway which was in use until her death but then she had stipulated it must be closed for ever and a side entrance used.



The gate



some of the 'graves'



Painted houses

That evening we had an excellent meal of crab at Sotito's restaurant near the harbour. The next day we walked past the harbour as far as possible but there was a large building site as the town prepares for the independence bi-centenary celebrations in 2010. There were two things of special note, the painted houses pictured above and again we saw the 'Stad Amsterdam' in harbour. It had come down from Puerto Madryn despite the awful accident there had been the day before we left there. A group from the ship had also gone to see the penguins at Punta Tombo and on the return journey had an accident and one woman was killed and two others injured. The clipper 'Stad Amsterdam' is currently sailing around the world following Darwin's route in the Beagle.

Our feelings about Punta Arenas were very much that it is cleaner and much more attractive than Rio Gallegos but not so many shops!! We returned to Rio Gallegos on 19<sup>th</sup> and that evening went to meet Naomi O'Byrn née Kennard who had grown up at Güer Aike when her father Errol was the manager. From Naomi we learnt that Mr Bittencourt, the owner when Hubert Martin was manager was a Chilean ambassador to Britain and had very possibly met Hubert Martin on the boat coming out. He owned the property until his death when his daughter inherited it. She sold it to a member of the Menendez family. Later Gladys Trutanic and her husband bought it in 1968. Mr Trutanic was a Chilean of Croatian origin. It seems that Mr Bittencourt also had race horses and they wore green and white and that was the reason for the colouring of Güer Aike.

Everything had to be green and white. The story of the ace of clubs makes us wonder whether he won money with the ace of clubs that led to him buying the property – or even, did he win the property with the ace of clubs? Our Mother had a brooch, which had been Nancy's which was a black ace of clubs surrounded by tiny diamonds on a gold bar. This had supposedly been the sign for Güer Aike. As sheep do not get branded we wonder in what way they were marked with this. Naomi remembered 'Auntie' Peter well and was able to tell us the story of how Herbert died. She also remembered a 'Tommy Thompson' whom her mother did not like; she did not associate Aunt Peter with him but saw no reason why he had not been her first husband. Unfortunately she knew no other details about him. Also Naomi had not known that Aunt Peter had had a longer association with Rio Gallegos. She did not know her in association with Güer Aike at all. Naomi herself was very impressive. She had just returned from a visit to Buenos Aires, her flight was due in at 7.30 and we were due with her at 8.30 and got there about five minutes late, but her flight had been delayed and she had only been home about 15 minutes when we arrived. Nonetheless she had us in and sat and chatted for at least one and a half hours!

We left Rio Gallegos early on 20<sup>th</sup> November and drove directly back to el Calafate and past the town towards the glacier of Perito Moreno. As we progressed towards the peninsular Magallanes on Lago Argentario the weather deteriorated and by the time we actually arrived at the glacier, it was snowing. The glacier was still a fantastic sight, very impressive not only the sight but also the sound. We thought that pieces were breaking off 'around the



Bridget, Chris and Hubert in front of Perito Moreno

corner' later we realised that it was just the sound of the ice mass moving as there was no corner! Finally the cold pulled us away and we drove back to el Calafate, found our hotel and checked in and then returned the car to the airport.



asado

The next two days in el Calafate were booked with excursions so we went into town and did a spot of shopping or looking before eating. Some of the restaurants there specialise in serving an *asado*. That is grilled or barbecued meat done with the whole carcass spread out on a frame over an open fire – that was the traditional method of cooking meat while out rounding up sheep etc., or in their language on the 'camp'.

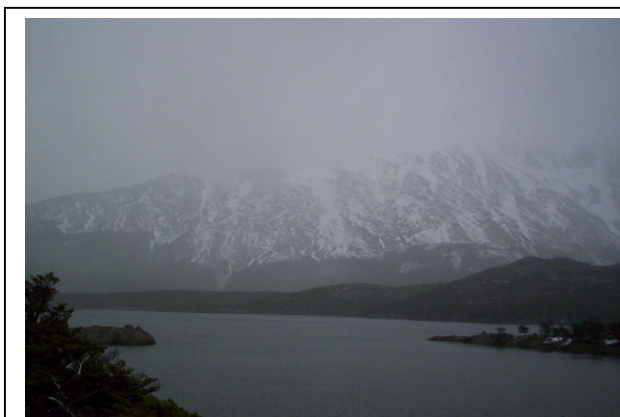
On 21<sup>st</sup> we were taken to el Chaltén which is a very small town just north of Lago Viedma north of Lago Argentino. We drove along the south of Lago Argentino

und then north along the Rio Liona – so named because the explorer Perito Moreno was attacked beside it by a lioness – however he was only injured not killed. And actually it was a puma not a lioness but the pumas in Patagonia are often called lions. The Rio Liona drains Lago Viedma into Lago Argentino, which incidentally is the largest lake in Argentina. At the north end not far from where the river comes out of Lago Viedma there is a small hotel – Hotel Liona, which also has some history. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid hid there for about a month after their audacious robbery of the Banco de Londre y Tarapaco in Rio Gallegos in 1904. They then got over the border into Chile and so were never caught in Argentina. There are different stories about their exploits



Rio Valutes (windings) from above

– see both 'In Patagonia' by Bruce Chatwin and 'A Yankee in Patagonia' by Robert and Katherine Barrett. Driving along the north of Lago Viedma we had a good view of the glacier at its western end before going on to el Chaltén. There we went on a hike or trek with a guide and a Portuguese couple up the lower slopes of Mount Fitz Roy – the highest peak in Patagonia. Unfortunately the higher we went the worse the weather became but we reached our goal of Lago Capri where we ate our picnic lunch in a snowstorm. We returned rather faster than we had gone up only to find that the weather in the town had not changed! Still it was chilly waiting in the wind for our transport back to el Calafate. The trek was a good experience and the only major exercise that we undertook in the whole three weeks. We were very pleased to have done it.



Lago Capri on Mt Fitz Roy

On 22<sup>nd</sup> November we then had our planned boat trip on Lago Argentino to see icebergs and glaciers, and we did. The weather was fine, a good wind blowing as



Perito Moreno on 22<sup>nd</sup> Nov.

usual in Patagonia where it is predominantly a west wind off the glaciers! We had already seen a couple of big icebergs in the distance on the lake, they looked rather like white ships – one had some good sails so that at first we had thought it was a sailing boat.

We saw the end of Upsala – so named because the first people to take proper scientific measurements were a team from the university of Upsala in Sweden. It is the largest of the glaciers with many side arms but because so much has broken off it is not possible to get closer than about three kilometres, the water is



Iceberg

blocked with icebergs. We then saw the Spegazzini glacier which is the tallest in the National Park, though not such a very big glacier and then passing a glacier which does not actually reach into the lake (yet) we went on to Peritio Moreno seeing it now in sunshine and from a different angle. All of them and the icebergs we saw were very impressive and fascinating. While admiring the icebergs some of the crew lassoed some of the floating ice and pulled it up onto the deck – some people broke pieces off and put it into their whiskey!



Pip and Hubert in front of an iceberg



Spegazzini

And so our visit to Patagonia slowly came to an end. On 23<sup>rd</sup> we had the morning for further shopping and a brief visit to the small museum in el Calafate. There we learned that it is estimated that 52% of all Argentines have some indigenous ancestors so that although there are very few if any full blooded members of the original peoples of Argentina or Patagonia there are many who are descended from them, though most of them have lost or given up the old traditions except the drinking of maté – one adventure which we have left to discover on our next visit. In the afternoon we caught the plane to Buenos Aires, but all was not over yet, we flew via Ushuaia and in doing so had a good view out of the window. First we saw the summit of mount Fitz Roy, which on our hike had been well covered in cloud, on this occasion it was poking up through clouds so that it would not have been visible from below. Then we saw the Straights of Magellan and eventually the Beagle Channel, Ushuaia and also the town of Puerto Williams south of the Beagle Channel. For those of us who had read 'The Uttermost Part of the Earth' by Lucas Bridges it was interesting to see

'Flat Top Mountain' and easily understand how it got its name, thought that must have happened before it could be seen from the air.

Two last days in Buenos Aires, warmth at last, it was possible to go out in a t-shirt and without a jacket. On 24<sup>th</sup> we took the metro to Plaza Mayo and admired the pink house (Casa Rosada) and other buildings there and then walked on the San Telmo district and explored the streets and antique markets there. Pip was sorely tempted in many of the markets, she had never seen so many teaspoons worthy of being bought but in the end only bought one with a covered wagon on the handle – after all that was the 9<sup>th</sup> spoon in South America – two in Chile and 7 in Argentina. In the evening we had a wonderful finale to our trip with a tango evening in 'el Querandi – restaurant en el Tango'. The last day we explored a different quarter of the city- Retiro - though interesting less picturesque than San Telmo and then it was back to the airport and the long flight home.



Houses in Buenos Aires and mosaic in the metro