

all general practitioners.

These study days are unique in three respects. Firstly, the candidates are able to discuss their educational and cultural difficulties directly with the College examiners, and benefit from their advice. This contact has already raised the pass percentage of these candidates in the past two years. Secondly, the examiners are able to reas-

sure the candidates that there is no colour prejudice in the examination, as they might have believed. This College aims at membership by inclusion and not by exclusion. The scientific thinking of the College is explained along with the organizer's advice on the finer points of the cultural differences which are a barrier for borderline candidates. Finally, the English partici-

pants can understand the overseas graduates' viewpoints and appreciate their determination to become better general practitioners to serve their patients. Specific problems are identified and ways of dealing with them are established, and there is a genuine hope for everyone concerned to look forward to a better future in general practice.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

A dream in winter

Dr Graham Buckley reports on the first international meeting of the Portuguese Association of General Practice held at Evora, Portugal from 19 to 21 January 1984.

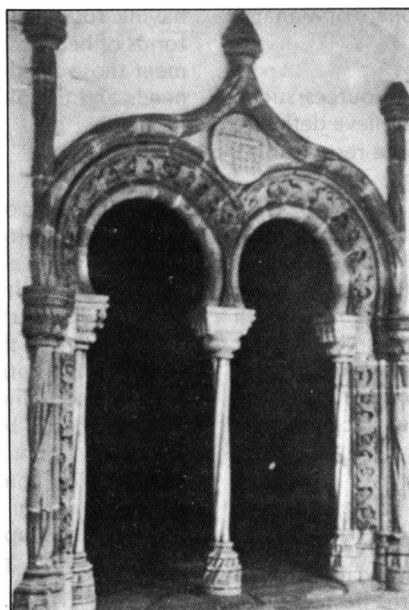
One of the privileges of the Editor of the *Journal* is the occasional invitation to travel. Southern Portugal seemed the right kind of place to be in winter, and it fully lived up to expectations. There was a dreamlike quality in leaving snowbound Scotland one morning, passing through the surreal surroundings of Gatwick Airport—where I met up with Dr John Horder and Professor John Bain—and landing in the early afternoon in Lisbon to be greeted by a mild sea breeze and a friendly Portuguese welcome. The feeling of being detached in time and space was enhanced by the organ music played by Dr Horder who successfully continued his pursuit of playing church organs in all the capitals of Europe.

OUR host's charming disregard of time was combined with impressive efficiency in arranging simultaneous translation of Portuguese and English throughout the whole meeting.

The venue was the small and attractive town of Evora, just south-east of Lisbon. This walled town is full of sixteenth-century colleges, palaces and monasteries which provided the halls and accommodation for the meeting.

The Portuguese Association of General Practice is only one year old and had decided to invite general practitioners from all over Europe to this first international meeting. The members wished to compare their emerging system of general practice with the systems operating in other countries and, by so doing, to define the path they themselves wish to follow. The meeting attracted 300 young and enthusiastic general practitioners, and its importance was confirmed by the attendance of the Minister of Health who spoke at the final session. It is evident from his contribution, and from the whole atmosphere of the meeting, that there is strong support for the rapid development of general practice in Portugal.

Speakers from other European coun-



Sixteenth century Moorish arch in Evora.

tries, while willing to describe their own systems and methods of work, emphasized the importance of cultural and medical traditions and encouraged the Portuguese doctors to create their own style of general practice. Professor Bain, in particular, drew attention

to the need for a strong research foundation upon which to build general practice.

The value of the meeting will have to be measured by the growth and development of the Portuguese Association. It was certainly exciting to be present and to participate in the early stages of what we hope will become a vigorous academic body. Although many problems lie ahead for general practice in Portugal, not least the meagreness of the resources available, the doctors at the meeting did appear to be clear about the way in which they would like to see medicine develop.

When the plane landed back at Edinburgh Airport where it was still snowing my own fantasies, visions and dreams also came down to earth as I faced the prospect of a Monday morning surgery. Next stop Inverness.

Balint workshop in Sweden

In Umeå, Sweden, a second national workshop on Balint groups was held on 10 and 11 February 1984. There is an increasing interest in Sweden, especially among young general practitioners, in Balint's work.

Dr Michael Courtenay, general practitioner and senior lecturer at St Thomas' Hospital London, was invited as a special guest. He spoke about the history and development of Balint's work as well as leading one of the groups. Professor Lennart Kaij of the Department of Psychiatry Malmö who has stimulated general practitioners in Sweden to undertake this type of work was one who initiated the meeting.

The meeting was organized by Dr Bengt Mattsson at the Department of General Practice, University of Umeå.

More than 40 people attended the meeting, mostly general practitioners, but some psychiatrists and psychologists were also present. There will be a meeting next year in Stockholm.