



# The Perch

*An occasional (mainly) light-hearted look at life in and around Cabanyes*

Number Eight: Spring 2011

## Association Meeting Called Off

The meeting for the formation of a Proprietors' Association scheduled for 23rd April 2011 has been cancelled as, late in the day, legal advice 'changes the rules' on voting.

We are now told that under Catalan law a simple majority of ALL proprietors must vote in favour of the formation of such an association. As a result unless there is a written response of at least 426 positive votes from the 850 proprietors on Cabanyes, the planned association cannot be established. Previously the assumption had been made, incorrectly it now appears, that a majority of those voting was all that was required for a legally binding Proprietors' Association to be formed.

It is understood that all proprietors will receive a letter in the next few weeks in which their agreement will be sought so that the Association can still be created as originally planned.

Amongst all this confusion, one thing seems certain. If a majority vote is to be achieved there will have to be a massively increased response from the Cabanyes' proprietors when the time comes to respond to the letter and to vote. Last July's EUC AGM was attended, in *The Perch's* view, by just over 40 people and

*A majority vote of ALL proprietors is needed - that means at least 426 positive votes*

votes cast for any one agenda item, including proxies, did not exceed 80. A long way to go...

In the meantime, Agustin Ambros, President of the EUC, is holding back on signing Cabanyes over to the

Ajuntament of Calonge. This is to ensure that substantial overdue payments to the EUC are actively pursued and that satisfactory arrangements are made for the maintenance of the estate if the majority vote is not achieved.

Mark Woolf & JD

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## La Bodega No Longa



"Closed until the Spring"

Despite the notice (pictured) outside the restaurant and bar, La Bodega, we are told that it will not be re-opened in the spring by the most recent tenants. We understand that, at the end of the initial two year agreement, they were not able to agree terms that would have enabled them to continue to trade on a viable basis.

The establishment, previously known as Cabanyes Sports, had the potential to be an important facility for the local community but this has never been realised. On the contrary, over the last ten years or so, tennis courts, swimming pools and other health and recreational facilities were no longer available.

It is not clear what, if anything, will happen next, but the outlook for would be diners and drinkers does not look too promising.

JD

# iHola!

## Welcome to the eighth edition of *The Perch*.

One thing seems quite clear as we complete the second year of our existence, and that is that Cabanyes is anything but boring. It's been a very lively start to 2011 to say the very least. We may not have had a repeat of last year's blizzard but there has been no shortage of other developments that make life just that little bit more interesting in more ways than one.

A drugs raid on our doorsteps, surely not? But it happened nevertheless. Then what about the three contestants for the 'on-off award'? The meeting to vote for an association to succeed the EUC was on and now it's not. Ryanair had signed an agreement for another five years for Girona airport and now it has not. La Bodega was expected to open again in the spring and now, it seems, it will not.



He who counts his chicken before they are hatched can sometimes find his highs are lower, his children hungry, his passport redundant, his throat drier, his roads rougher and his eggs scrambled. (Translated from ancient Chinese proverb what I made up quite recent.)

But despite the little local difficulty over the legal voting requirements, it now becomes even more important for owners to vote if we are to have an Association and maintain Cabanyes. If insufficient 'yes' votes are cast then, unless another solution is found, we face the prospect of badly kept roads and unwanted litter. You do not need to travel far to see what has happened on other urbanisations. It is not in any proprietors' interest to allow this to happen here. Is it?

So here's a thought. The circulation of *The Perch* is about 450. The minimum votes required in favour appears to be 426. I am sure you are ahead of me by now... But yes; if every reader submits a 'yes' vote, then we have a legal Association. Simples.

And talking of meerkats (surely you've seen the

award winning TV commercial) leads me on to another group of two-legged animals, our growing band of contributors. Those whose articles appear in our pages are, of course, credited in print. But hidden from sight are the ones who come up with ideas and information. For instance, Pat & Denis Hartley initially told us about the drugs raid and Paul Lee sent a page & a half of creative ideas for the letters column. Our thanks to you all and keep on keeping on.

What we still need are more financial contributions. Please take time to look at Thanks (and Please!) on page six.

And I know that you will all be relieved to learn that *Cricket Wonderful Cricket* eventually went to the printers and will be published early in April. It's on Amazon and elsewhere, heavily discounted. If you buy a copy, you'll be helping kids with special needs. If you don't, I promise not to cry.

Spring is sprung, let's have a beer, *The Perch* completes, its second year.

JD

### Drugs Raid in Cabanyes

In January, simultaneous searches took place in a number of European countries targeting an international network which is believed to have laundered up to €3 million of drugs money.

As part of a joint police operation across Europe which involved about 450 officers from different forces, we understand that villas in C/Florenca were searched and sealed. Police took documents relating to the money laundering, as well as money, jewelry and several luxury vehicles. Among these was a Bentley Continental model valued at 180,000 euros. (Exclusively pictured below)

JD



## Here we go.....

### A Road Trip to Montpellier

We made our very first visit to Montpellier - just because it was there. After a relaxed drive of around 200 kilometres, and the odd diversion, of which more later, we were delighted to discover easily the large medieval centre of the city. It is beautiful, lively and full of great restaurants, bars and a variety of musical offerings – plus the odd interesting monument and museum for those that like that sort of thing.

There are three universities in Montpellier, the most famous and prestigious being the University of Medicine. For this reason the city seemed to teem with life and vitality, something that we personally find attractive.

The old city is surrounded by a circle of newer big roads and I highly recommend staying within this ring so as to experience all the interesting bits and fully enjoy the atmosphere of the area. By searching the hotel bookings web sites we got a decent rate at a nice 2/3 star hotel called Le Guilem that had a fabulous view of the Cathédrale Saint Anne (but as with many older hotels there are good rooms and not so good rooms !).



**Arc de Triomphe**

While driving up to Montpellier we took some of the local roads and did a bit of wine tasting. We nearly always look for the co-operatives in the villages as these seem to usually have very good value for money wines. We stopped at the co-ops in Pomerols and Nissan-lez-Enserune (look them up on Google) where both had a very large and delicious selection of wines to try, and we are still enjoyably working our way through the purchased cases. But there are 1001 vineyards in Languedoc, so only 912 to go ...

Andy Ball

### Alternative Health Care – Close at Hand



Treatment for a wide range of problems is now available in Sant Antoni from an experienced and qualified practitioner in Acupuncture, Chiropractic and manual therapies such as cranial and sports massage. Heidi Widmer, who is fluent in English, Dutch, German and Spanish is available at Amalur Bio-Botiga, 8 C/San Antonio Her treatments, which are by no means expensive, are effective in the treatment of a wide range of disorders such as musculoskeletal, mental/emotional, menstrual & menopausal to the challenge of weight loss.

Heidi has treated a number of Cabanyes residents, including Catherine Farley who was suffering so much pain from tennis elbow it was keeping her awake at night. “I have always been committed to acupuncture” she explained “so that when I was in a pretty sorry way, I went to see Heidi and am now completely cured.”

Call 972 651 499 and 671 805 256 to make an appointment.

JD



**University of Medicine**

It is near the Arc de Triomphe, which turned out to be a very good place to start to explore, because it is at a high point in the city and from there you can wander down the small streets, taking in lovely local squares, many surrounded by idyllic cafés and restaurants. We particularly liked the plaza next to Rue St. Pierre. In the streets surrounding Place St-Côme there are some lively bars that come into their own in the evening and we also stumbled into an open air jazz concert when we were there. The secret to Montpellier is to wander and then wander some more.



The sun is high in deep blue sky  
It is, we pray, a perfect day.  
Windows wide, can't stay inside  
Enjoy the view with lots to do.  
Washing's out, there is no doubt  
We have the chance to cast a clout.

Within the hour we start to choke  
From clouds and clouds of pungent smoke.  
Garden rubbish by the load  
Begins to burn down every road.  
With angry words we say adieu  
To the clear and perfect view.

What can be done to stop pollution?  
There is a readymade solution;  
Fill a bag, make a trip  
Take the whole lot to the tip!

Brian Parish

## Mark My Word

### Driving Me Crazy Part 2 - Re:cycling and other rubbish

Although you may not use them yourselves, it could be important for your very survival to know that two wheeled, low powered and off-road vehicles each have their own set of regulations, aimed at maximising chaos on our roads. Here is a summary of those rules:

1. Groups of cyclists must NEVER ride in single file; they would run the risk of being overtaken safely by cars.
2. Lone cyclists must ALWAYS occupy at least as much road width as if they were riding three abreast. The ability to wobble erratically with legs, elbows and other appendages flapping wildly is therefore essential.
3. A helmet must ALWAYS been worn...strapped elegantly to your wrist.
4. Hand-signals should NEVER be given. But if you insist, ensure that your right hand is outstretched before turning left. Note that a brief one finger signal does NOT mean that the cyclist is testing for wind speed and direction.
5. You are FORBIDDEN to ride a bicycle with one hand on the handlebars; no hands at all is the rule.
6. Off-road vehicles may ONLY be driven on roads.
7. Exhaust pipes on all motorcycles and scooters must ALWAYS be cut short or otherwise modified for maximum noise impact.
8. Riders of two wheeled vehicles MUST NOT obey traffic lights or one-way street indications. Other road users would have it far too easy.
9. The tightest and brightest neoprene, lycra and spandex body-suits MUST be worn at all times by everyone.....oh, and cyclists may also do so.



And finally, three local bye-laws for your information:

- A. The local quad bike track is ONLY for sissies; Vizcondado de Cabanyes has been designed specifically for them and is much more fun.
- B. NEVER cycle on the broad cinder cycle track on Palamos promenade; it's no fun having no-one to mow down.
- C. On Sant Antoni seafront promenade: cyclists, joggers, skateboarders, roller bladers and battery powered wheelchair users ALWAYS compete daily with each other to collide with the maximum possible number of pedestrians. Prizes are awarded to the winners, on a "per broken limb" basis.

Mark Woolf

## Gardening in the Mediterranean

When I came to live in the Mediterranean, I brought with me, as probably most gardeners, memories of gardens I had tended elsewhere. The characteristics of the Mediterranean climate were new to me. What plants would tolerate such prolonged heat and dryness? Where to find them? How to make the right choice and care for them? Gardening in a Mediterranean climate is challenging and often frustrating, especially when we buy plants from the garden centre only to find them shrivelled up and dead within a matter of months. I found help in the form of the Mediterranean Garden Society (MGS) which offers monthly workshops on topics such as How to Dry Garden, Pruning and Design, talks from Horticulturists on topics such as Weeds, Pests & Diseases, private garden visits and the opportunity to meet likeminded gardening enthusiasts and share knowledge and experience.

Membership of the MGS gave me access to amateur and professional gardeners, horticulturists, and botanists, and others who appreciate the unique climate called 'Mediterranean'. I was asked last year to take on the challenge to create a Catalonia Branch of the MGS which together with two other members is now up and running.

You don't need to be a member so why not come along to any of our events. However if you want to join the MGS, as part of your membership you will receive a wonderful quarterly journal, an informative website, a seed exchange programme and expert advice on Mediterranean Gardening. For more information or a copy of the Catalonia Branch Activities 2011 either contact [joanball53@gmail.com](mailto:joanball53@gmail.com) or [www.mediterraneangardensociety.org](http://www.mediterraneangardensociety.org).

Joan Ball



**Salvia microphylla - 'Hot Lips'** is a "must have" in any Mediterranean Garden. The fast-growing, 30" tall x 6' wide clump is adorned with stunning bicolor flowers with red tips and white lips. When the nights warm in summer, the new flowers are all red with an occasional solid white one and the fragrance is amazing. As fall approaches, the flowers again will be bicolored red and white. This plant needs little to no water once established and is one of my favourite dry garden plants.

## Feathered Friends

### The Siskin

The Siskin is a small and dainty, colourful and distinctive member of the finch family. At 11-12 cm it is a good 3-4 cm smaller than its big cousin, the Greenfinch, but it is nonetheless very easy to spot.

The male is greenish yellow above, with a yellow breast, streaked flanks and a black cap and bib. The female lacks the black on the head and is overall more streaked and grey (aren't we all?) It is in flight however, that both sexes are transformed, showing off bold yellow bars on black wings and a striking yellow rump. Altogether a fabulous flash of colour.



**The male**

mosses and twigs, sited high up in conifers where they have two broods in April and May. If you have conifers or spruce nearby, you may be lucky enough to see them all through the summer, although in less dense packs. As we have no such trees in our garden they typically leave us around the end of March.

In the meantime, as I write this on a grey and gloomy late winter's day, these little birds give us a splash of sunshine and the promise of Spring – our own avian daffodils!

**Photos by Jim Weare**

**Words by Helen Saker**

### Ryanair five year Girona deal cancelled

Ryanair's extension agreement at Girona Airport, reported in our last issue, has collapsed as the new Government of Catalonia has at this stage failed to honour what had previously been arranged. As a result, Ryanair is cancelling 18 routes, reducing the frequency of 17 more and removing five aircraft from its base in Girona.

Passengers who have already made reservations from airports such as London Gatwick are having to make alternative arrangements or claim refunds. However, flights are still available on most days until the end of April which is not the case at many of the other airports. Cancelled routes also include Ibiza, Lanzarote, Madrid, Lille, Poitiers and Seville while among those with reduced frequency are Birmingham, Liverpool, Malta, Marrakech, Eindhoven and Bologna.

The impact could be considerable as Ryanair currently dominates Girona airport and in 2010, handled 95% of the 4.86 million passengers. But there are already signs that all is not lost and that a deal of some sort could be agreed and routes reinstated in October.



**The female**

In winter, before the breeding season, they are gregarious and are commonly seen in flocks. Nimble and mobile, they roam far and wide in search of food. Siskins eat small seeds and insects and are particularly fond of peanuts, often seen hanging upside down on nut feeders like the tit family. Although relatively small birds, they are pugnacious and stand their ground when other, often larger, species try to drive them off their favourite feeder. Far from shy, by treading gently you can get quite close to them.

The Siskin nest is a structure of woven



**Grounded?**

## Banking on the Best

Bankers the world over are not generally the most highly regarded of people, usually ranked close to the bottom of the pile alongside politicians, estate agents and journalists. So how blessed many residents of Cabanyes were to have been pointed towards Caixa Laietana in Palamos, there to find the exceptions that prove the rule.

Now, 23 years after he opened the branch in Onze de Setembre, Carles Castello I Tolosa is retiring. Fortunately, his successor is Eva Blancos, an equally customer-friendly and talented performer who joined Carles 12 years ago. Together, they have formed a formidable partnership that has willingly assisted a steady stream of arrivals from the UK to such an extent that the branch is widely known as ‘The Bank of England.’

‘From the start, he has taught me all that I ever needed to know about banking,’ said Eva. ‘He really has been a very good teacher.’ ‘From Eva’ responded Carles, ‘I have learnt patience and have had someone who quickly understood the new systems, something that I never did.’



Carles, with his Beatle hairstyle and staccato delivery of English has yet to plan his retirement in any detail. His French wife, Catherine, will continue to teach her native tongue locally while her husband enjoys a well earned rest. Eva meanwhile commutes from Palafrugell, dotes on her young son and daughter and relishes this opportunity to follow in the footsteps of a unique individual.

Early in February at the Hotel Trias, a massed gathering of satisfied customers gave Carles, accompanied by Eva, a standing ovation as he arrived for a lunch in his honour. It was richly deserved.

JD

## Thanks (and Please!)

Quality Estates, our main sponsor, offers the widest possible range of property services from buying to letting, development to renovation and much more and has done so for more than 13 years. They are always available if you have questions about recent developments in the real estate market or in case you need advice about technical issues in or around your property. You can contact them on 972 653 955, by email at [info@quality-estates.com](mailto:info@quality-estates.com) or visit the website at [www.quality-estates.com](http://www.quality-estates.com)



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We are grateful, as ever, to both companies for their tremendous support and to those special individuals who already generously help to finance The Perch, which costs almost one euro per copy to produce. With a print run off 450 for each issue, the bill is around 1800 euros per year but we are now getting closer to covering this. Three or four more supporters able to donate 40 to 50 euros per year would balance the books.

I leave that thought with you! Our contact details are on the back page.

## Brief Encounters

*What's happening in the world around Cabanyes.*

### C31 News Flash

For those of you who love the noise of hammer drills and the clouds of dust generated by construction lorries, there is bad news: the widening of our local main road, the C31 between Castell D'Aro and Palamos, is due to come to an end this year. According to the Generalitat (whose Public Works Department controls such projects), the work is scheduled for completion at the end of March, though informed opinion is that it will not be finished until early summer 2011. For those keen on figures, the length of road between the two above-mentioned points is 13 kms and the total cost of work will be €78 million\*. The actual source of the funds will be from a mix of income tax, other taxes plus national funding from Madrid. There is no information to suggest that any European funding has been obtained.

But do not fear; those heading towards Gerona via La Bisbal will soon be able to get their pollution fix again as similar dual carriageway construction work starts on the 31 kms between Palafrugell and the AP7.

\* figure from the Generalitat of Catalunya website

Mark Woolf

### Speed limit drops to 110 km

On 7 March 2011, the speed limit on Spanish dual carriageways and motorways will be reduced from the

current 120 km per hour to 110 km, as an emergency measure to save fuel during the crisis in North Africa and the Middle East. The savings are expected to be around 15% for petrol and 11% for diesel. The last time this happened was during the 1973 oil crisis.

### Discovery of a deadly fungus killing Calonge's plane trees

The Department of Agriculture's plant protection service has taken radical measures to control a deadly fungus that attacks and kills plane trees by felling a group of trees in a small wood along the road between Calonge and Sant Antoni. The fungus was discovered by a former forestry technician who said that the consequences of the fungus spreading could be catastrophic, particularly for Girona's Devesa Park with its ancient plane trees. The fungus spreads very fast, through pruning tools, human action or insects. The only solution is to burn the affected trees, pull up the roots and leave not a trace behind.

Unless otherwise credited, researched and translated by Andrea Broom



**Are you getting your cinema fix?** Many people are enjoying their monthly fix of current films in their original language. Are you? They are shown once a month in Platja D'Aro at the Ocine (opposite Decathlon). To get your name on the mailing list, contact Christine Green at christineverde@gmail.com. The next two offerings are *True Grit* with Jeff Bridges on Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> March and the unmissable award-winning *The King's Speech* on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April. (Ed – the latter is so good we saw it twice! Well done Christine for this great initiative).

**Enjoy good food and accommodation in gorgeous Corçà:** Coming highly recommended is El Recés, run by Julia Gillett and Jane Fernley. Set in a beautiful 15<sup>th</sup> Century restored village house, they are open for lunches, afternoon tea and dinner. Their Bistro menu has a range of choices from sandwiches to more substantial Steak and Guinness pie, all homemade and apparently superb pastries! They also arrange a number of "special event" lunches and dinners which have the wonderful atmosphere of a house party. And of course if you want to make a real evening of it, why not book one of their rooms and stay overnight? They will make you very welcome indeed. Call 972 630 361 to make a reservation or visit their website [www.elreces.com](http://www.elreces.com)

**Struggling to make sense of it all?** Don't forget Google Translate! It may not be the perfect translation tool, but it certainly helps a great deal and can deal with Catalan and Spanish. It's easy: Go to [www.google.es](http://www.google.es) or [www.google.co.uk](http://www.google.co.uk) and click on Language Tools to the right of the text input box; under "Translate text", choose the source language (e.g. Spanish) and the target language (English) and either type the Spanish text or import text from a website or other document (you can also copy and paste). Click on the "Translate" button for an automatic translation. If you don't like a word, move your mouse over the translated text for alternative terminology.

**Need a helping hand in the garden from time to time?** As a number of Cabanyes residents already know, Abdel Azani is an adaptable, exceptionally hardworking, mature individual available to help you, whether it is simply weeding, pruning or something a little more challenging. Although without his own transport (he thus needs collecting from Calonge), his rates are very reasonable and he is happy to come on an ad-hoc basis. He speaks Spanish and German. Contact him on his mobile – 617 819 295

Community  
Corner





# Letters to the Editor

Dear sir,

Since I moved to Cabanyes having sold my sheep and smallholding in Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllanty-siliogogog I have found it difficult to make ends meet. Nobody seems to want an expert in shearing & dipping so my unpaid bills are just mounting.

Yours desperately

Owen Owen  
C/Anglesey

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Editor,

I recently bought some flat packed furniture from Ikea but when I tried to assemble it I wasn't able to do so because I didn't seem to have the right tools.

Am I missing something?

Alan Key

\*\*\*

Sir,

Could you make it very clear to your readers that I am an extremely well educated and highly qualified professional senior executive, lawyer and brain surgeon. I do not therefore appreciate constant requests to replace tap washers, mend fuses, paint fences and clean fish ponds.

You remain,  
My obedient servant,,

Andy Mann, LLB, MD, DO, FiOD,



## Wine of the Month

I know that some of you already stock a few nice bottles of white wine in the fridge, probably with the expectation that this gorgeous weather will continue but I am afraid today it is going to be a red one, again...

I came across this wine thanks to a friend who is allergic to some wines and prefers to drink ecological ones if possible. So browsing shelves in Grau I saw this one and of course grabbed the wine and the opportunity to taste it, especially as it comes from one of my Penedes favourite producers, Albet I Noya. The wine in question, Petit Albet Negre 2009, costs 4.70 euro and it still amazes me such a decent wine can be produced for this price!

Albet I Noya is a very well known Spanish producer of organic wines, growing a range of grapes. The best ones are labelled Colleccio and made from 100% varietal wines, meaning that they come from a single grape variety.

Petit Albet is made primarily from Tempranillo and Garnacha/Grenache. It is a typically un-oaked red wine that can mature in the bottle nicely for another two or three years. It bursts with mixed red and black fruit flavours and a touch of balsamic and is uncomplicated, easy and friendly to enjoy slightly chilled. And the good thing is that you can always take it along with you on a picnic, as it comes with a screw cap. It may not produce a lovely 'pop' sound when it is opened but you will never blame anybody who left the corkscrew at home. Enjoy!



Alyona Strange

## The Last Word

*Fernando* (With apologies to Abba.)

There was something in the air that night  
The leaves in flight, Fernando  
They were flying there for you not me  
Such liberties, Fernando  
Though we never thought that you'd abuse  
There's no regret  
If you have to blow the same again  
You're not our friend, Fernando.

**Still saying 'NO TO BLOW'**

MW/ID

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