

The Perch

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

Number Ten: Autumn 2011

Ryanair Takes Flight

After months of speculation regarding Ryanair's use of Girona airport, from conversations with the airline's Head Office in Dublin, *The Perch* has confirmed that, for many residents and visitors, it is to be a winter of discontent. We have been told categorically that if a flight is not now on the Ryanair website then it is 99% likely that it will not be available until at least the first of March when the next 'summer' period for the airline begins.

Although discussions still take place between the Catalonian Government and Ryanair, a positive outcome in terms of any reinstatement of flights or aircraft is not anticipated by the airline before next February at the very earliest. As previously reported in our Eighth Edition, Girona has been hit with the loss of three aircraft, 21 routes and 1.3m passengers p.a. after Ryanair stated that the Generalitat refused to offer a competitive cost base to the company to secure the business this winter.



The impact of this impasse means that flights from several airports will disappear altogether during the winter months with, in the United Kingdom, for example, no flights to Girona from Luton, Stansted & Gatwick (already an early faller) from the end of this month. Reus is also very much in the same situation, but there will be flights from London into Barcelona, El Prat later in the year. Ryanair has also included Lille, Madrid, Brussels, Lanzarote, Milan, Rome, Stockholm and Tenerife among those on its winter 'hit list.'

Ryanair's Head of Communications, Stephen McNamara told *The Perch* that the airline was very conscious of the number of people with homes in Catalonia who would suffer from this situation and hoped that it could be resolved before the summer 2012 flight schedules were finalised in the coming weeks. "We

In the meantime, Ryanair, as ever not backward in coming forward, has two more cunning plans for passengers to contemplate. You'll find them on page 8.

don't like what has happened and are very keen

to resume our low cost flights into Girona and it is possible that Gatwick will be a part of this. But until next year" he added, "it is most unlikely that there will be any additions to our current published schedules."

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JD

WHY 217 IS NOT ENOUGH. SEE BACK TO THE FUTURE ON PAGE 5

Cabanyes Property – Boom or Bust?

Among the disarray and uncertainties in the Eurozone, the dire state of the Spanish economy is no secret. The unemployment rate, at around 21%, is the highest in Europe - not much different from the number of jobless in France and Italy combined. After real estate prices soared by more than 200% between 1985 and 2007 Spain has ended up with around one million empty properties waiting to be sold while the Spanish banks have been unable to raise sufficient money to provide the mortgages that are needed to enable people to buy them.

Against this gloom-ridden background, more properties are still being built, albeit on a less speculative basis and with marked regional variations. So what does this mean for anyone with property interests in and around Cabanyes? Arjan de Goede and Danny Bakker of Quality Estates offer a wide range of property services locally and have done so for many years. They are also major sponsors of *The Perch*. We asked them for their expert views.



Danny Bakker and Arjan de Goede

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The Perch: Looking first at sales and purchases, how has the local market performed this year compared with previous years?

Quality Estates: The market has been very active in many respects although slower in the higher price ranges above the €700,000 mark, the level where the Russian buyers start to show some interest. The lower to mid-range properties up to €425,000 or thereabouts are selling well. These are existing villas; it's difficult buying land then building from scratch for that sort of money. 80% are bought to rent – a better proposition than leaving the money in the bank when you can get yields of 5% on property.

TP: What are purchasers looking for? What helps to shift a property quickly?



QE: A minimum of three bedrooms is a good starting point, state of repair, a nice pool and a good location. The view is very important to a lot of people. As the internet is a crucial marketing tool, if a villa looks scruffy and in the wrong place, prospective buyers will stay away.

TP: And who are the buyers and sellers?

QE: At the moment, the Scandinavians are enthusiastic as are the French, particularly from the south. They tend to be in their forties or fifties, investing as we mentioned, but planning ahead so that later on they have a place ready for their retirement. Amongst those selling are the mature Swiss, ready to go home, and the British, taking advantage of the

exchange rate, often to cut losses.

TP: So where are sales heading would you say? Up, down or nowhere?

QE: A lot will obviously depend on the availability of mortgage finance. Many of the smaller banks, in particular, had to repossess properties when the owners got into financial difficulties. But following the bank mergers some of the bigger banks are starting to lend again and we're aware of at least one overseas bank that might enter the Spanish mortgage market. It is a very difficult call because of the problems in Europe, but 2012 could be better.

TP: Turning now to the letting market, has that been good this year?

QE: We've seen an increasing number of people who are keen to pay good money for quality accommodation and facilities. This year alone, clients have come from 24 different countries including America, Israel, France, Sweden & Norway. And after they enquire about the pool, the next question is almost always "Does the villa have Wi-Fi?" Business people have to stay in touch and their kids want to go on Facebook. Increasingly, people not only want the outdoor facilities for barbecues, but indoors, air-conditioning is on the list.

Continued on page 5

Here we go.....

Close to home, but nonetheless well worth a visit. **Andrea Broom** introduces a spot of local tourism with....

A Trip to Ullastret

One sunny Sunday morning we set out to see the ruins of Ullastret, located on Puig de Sant Andreu hill not far from Pals and Peretellada. This was the site of the most important Iberian settlement in Catalonia, dating from the 6th century B.C. until its abandonment in the 2nd century B.C. with the arrival of the Romans. The Iberians were the indigenous peoples who inhabited the Mediterranean side of the Iberian Peninsula during the Bronze Age and are considered to have been the first historical culture, with their own writing system. They were crop and livestock farmers and also engaged in mining and quarrying. They traded grains and raw materials including metals, furs, salt, honey and even slaves for wine, oil and luxury goods such as fine crockery, ceramic amphorae vases and jewellery from the Greeks and Phoenicians.



On the way, we drove past paddy fields being prepared for planting until we reached the signpost to the ruins (*Ruïnes d'Ullastret*). Continue through the gates and into the car park at the entrance to the ruins. Make sure to begin your visit at the museum at the very top of the hill, where you will receive a numbered site map and an explanation brochure in English (the interesting museum exhibits being in Catalan only). The area around the museum is wheelchair-accessible, with ramps, and the receptionist said that a small car can drive right up behind the museum with anyone who has reduced mobility.

As you visit the site you can enjoy lovely 360-degree views over the rural plains and as far as the cliffs overhanging Estartit. April was a

lovely time to visit, with spring flowers everywhere. A nature walk starts from behind the museum.

As we left, we spotted a family enjoying a picnic under the trees but we had already set our sights on lunch at the traditional Catalan restaurant of Mas Pou (www.maspou.com) in the medieval village of Palau-Sator near Ullastret, with water gushing musically from its covered natural spring and on under the street. Palau-Sator boasts a number of other restaurants. Also worth a visit is the quaint farming museum (*Museu rural*) situated next to Mas Pou, which is open 12.30–17.00 hours from Wednesday to Sunday (www.maspou.com/Museu/museuUK.htm)

The ruins are open all year from Tuesdays to Sundays (10.00–14.00 hours and 15.00–18.00 hours until 31 May and 10.00–20.00 hours from 1 June to 30 September).

Approximate duration: one hour for the site and 40 minutes for the museum.

For more information, click on 'Ullastret' on the website of the archaeology museum of Catalonia: <http://www.mac.cat/eng>



Cabanyes Property continued

TP: What then makes the big difference in the letting market?

QE: As with sales, the property has got to look good, well maintained and attractive when marketed on the internet. The price has got to be right, to be competitive. But above all, the service has to be spot on. People don't want to come on holiday to be faced with a problem, with hassle – they get plenty of that at work. So there mustn't be problems – only solutions. And yes, we do expect the market to be stronger in 2012!

TP: You appear to be better equipped than many companies to judge what makes a difference in the property business because you offer a wide range of services and are not just an estate agent or a builder. Now we've already touched on some of these areas, but what, in terms of value & marketability is a good and bad investment?

QE: Creating an extra bedroom, a pool if you don't have one, a well maintained garden and, of course, a nice area for barbeques and relaxation. Those, in our experience, represent money well spent. And becoming increasingly popular is a special feature like Domotica, the home automation system that can control domestic activities, such as home systems and irrigation and may allow remote access from the internet. On the other hand, a new kitchen or bathroom, if the existing ones are in good order and working well, are unlikely to add much value.

TP: So the message seems to be; stay calm, invest wisely and be patient. Thanks for your advice and for talking to *The Perch*.

QE: It's been a pleasure and we hope it helps people in these difficult times when there are good opportunities to purchase, let and improve - if you know where to look.

JD



Back to the Future?

We are well into October but is the future of Cabanyes safely and securely confirmed? No it is NOT. As we highlighted on the front page of our eighth edition in the spring, 426 votes were needed to ensure that there would be in place a legal organisation dedicated to the future of Cabanyes.

But the total number votes cast to date is just 217 – barely half the number required.

Why? Is it apathy? Is it simply that the majority of the proprietors don't see the need and are prepared to rely on Calonge Council to do the right things at the right time? Or is it poor communication?

Probably a combination of the three but nevertheless another 209 votes are still required.

If this is to be achieved a far better effort is needed at getting the message across. The exercise so far seems to have been a bit of a shambles. Lack of clarity and translations, wrong addresses, missing letters, absence of deadlines and much more. The outcome is no surprise. There has probably been more people involved than you'd find in a football team. They cannot all sit on

the substitutes bench. Which one is Lionel Messi?

But the bottom line is simple: Approximately one in three of those still entitled to vote must come forward sooner rather than later. Or face the consequences in the years ahead - like the rest of us.

JD



Mark My Word

Driving Me Crazy Part 3 – Pedestrian thoughts

From my previous contributions, you may have thought that I had only motorists and other road hoppers in my sights. In this final instalment you will realise that pedestrians too share responsibility for creating as much confusion as possible on and around our public highways. Here is up-to-date summary of rules from the current foot-users' manual:



1. With immediate effect, all new-born pedestrians are to be fitted with wing-mirrors at birth; rear vision is a prerequisite in Spain for all.
2. Children who are not yet experienced in the technique of putting one foot in front of the other - known colloquially as "walking" - are particularly dangerous. Always assume that they will hurl themselves at you with full force.
2. Only if absolutely necessary should you use a pedestrian crossing. The painted stripes on the ground are for car drivers to see you clearly enough to have the choice of hitting you or not.
3. If you're out and about with a wheeled shopping trolley, you must ensure that it takes up enough space to trip over everyone in sight.
4. Do not be lulled into a false sense of security if you're walking on the pavement. You're likely to be sharing it with cars, bikes, earth movers, road sweepers, joggers, roller bladers and the odd stray elephant from the visiting circus.
5. When out walking, always listen to tracks from your MP3 player at full volume; in this way, you will need to shout to anyone you meet, thus adding to the delightful cacophony of sound.
6. Always carry a chamber pot with you; public conveniences are few and far between. Although you may use bars, their owners will not appreciate it and insist that you use their toilets instead.
7. Watch out for the new breed of silent electric cars, especially in wet weather; they are likely to give you a nasty shock.
8. If you are walking along the promenade in a group, always ensure that you are spaced out enough for other pedestrians to be forced to walk around you along the beach or in the road.
9. When using an umbrella, poking other pedestrians in the eye is forbidden; ear-ache is less costly to treat.
10. Nordic skis are excellent, especially along the icy, mountainous promenade in Sant Antoni.

Extra rules for dogs.

- a) Make sure that your dog has you on a lead and is firmly in control of you at all times.
- b) All well-behaved dogs must be sent abroad to attend Neighbourhood Annoyance classes... (To be held in Barking? Ed.)

Mark Woolf

Thanks

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 have given their expert view on the property market in this issue. You can contact them on 972 653 955, by email at info@quality-estates.com or visit the website, which they plan to re-launch by the end of the month, at www.quality-estates.com



Al Vent, our second corporate sponsor, provides professional services such as regular controls of your property whilst unoccupied and for your rental requirements, cleaning and can meet-and-greet your clients. They also offer maintenance and repairs of your villa or apartment and are highly experienced in assisting with official documents,



residency, inheritance issues, tax declarations and home insurance. They can be contacted on 972 652 119 or by email at alvent@alvent.cat and the website is at www.alvent.cat

We are grateful, as ever, to both companies for their tremendous support and to those special individuals who continue to generously help finance *The Perch*. If you have offered donations in the past but have not got around to handing over the euros for a while or at all, then now would be a good time to do so! If you have not supported *The Perch* financially thus far and are able to do so, then please let us know.

Feathered Friends

The Hoopoe

Very familiar to golfers especially, the hoopoe loves to probe with its long, slightly downward curved bill in sparsely covered ground or short grass for worms and insects. No longer having a lawn in our garden (Wild Boar 1 – Weares 0), it is a bird we rarely see. However, this spring a pair nested nearby and were often around our patch, calling to one another and warning off competitors in the evenings with their distinctive “oop oop oop”.

From the same family as its colourful cousins, the bee-eater, woodpecker and roller, strikingly and boldly patterned it may be but it is often surprisingly inconspicuous as it shuffles on the ground in dappled light and shade.

Consequently is easy to miss; only when it flies does the hoopoe suddenly catch the eye with its dazzling pattern of black and white, its flight undulating, like a giant butterfly.

A very attractive and appealing bird, the hoopoe has a unique fan-shaped, black tipped erectile “Indian chief” crest, which is only seen when it is excited, agitated or sometimes on landing.

In case you think this colourful summer visitor is a bit of a lightweight, it was voted National Bird of Israel in 2008, is the State Bird of Punjab province, appears on the logo of the University of Johannesburg and is King of Birds in Aristophanes’ ancient Greek comedy ‘The Birds’. How about that then!



Weathered Friends

But it’s not all about happy hoopoes, as a little bird tells us from a soggy corner of Cabanyes.

"I'm a Blue Rock Thrush and I think I'm about 2 months old. It's mid-July, it's pouring with rain and I'm



cold, soaking wet and fed up! Hatching here in this weather is not all it's cracked up to be - I even feel sorry for the tourists.

While Mum is out, I'm supposed to be doing flying practice to get my wings strong and looking for insects and small lizards but my wings are sodden and my food doesn't like the rain either.

So where's my Mum? And where's my supper? I want my grubs and I want to go to bed and NO I don't want a bath!"

Ryanair's Plastic Seating

Firstly, if you acquired a prepaid Mastercard so as to avoid paying the fee levied by the airline on any other card then sorry but from 1st November you won't be protected. From that date it, in effect, won't be worth the plastic it's printed on because you will have to pay the fee like everyone else. Unless, that is, you take out a different specific exclusive prepaid card. One that is issued by – yes, of course – lovely cuddly lil ol' Ryanair. It's called the Ryanair Cash Passport and is available now.

Secondly, on some routes – and they tell us there will be many more – Ryanair has introduced reserved seating with priority boarding and extra legroom for just ten euros a go. Isn't that great? Well, it's actually the existing seating in the front row and by the emergency exits – yes, often the ones we rush for on boarding. Now yours for sure - but at a price. However, if you're not particularly mobile or a child you're not allowed to use those seats. Is that discrimination against young and maybe old? Surely not?

Christmas is coming – surely not yet!

While it is warm and sunny, it is hard to think of Christmas. But to enable you to be well prepared and get the most from our adopted country, here is an explanation of some of the wonderful traditions you may encounter if you are here this Christmas

The Pessebre is a tableau of the Nativity Scene that includes Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus, together with the shepherds, the Three Wise Men (and sometimes practically the whole community), which many Catalans set up in their home or garden. Villages such as Calonge, Pals and Castell d'Aro have a tradition of holding a live nativity scene (pessebre vivent) where the tableau is played out by real people. The Calonge pessebre vivent started in 1998 and is held in the castle grounds. It is one of the best, as the figures actually go about their tasks and the players in the tableau are residents of Calonge who give up their time for free. Take a look at a video of last year's pessebre vivent on the internet: <http://www.fempais.tv/indexword.php/?p=44441>



The date for this year's pessebre has yet to be announced but you will see it displayed on posters by the roadside and you will be well advised to visit the Tourist Office nearer the time, as there are usually loads of fun activities around this time of year.

You may spot the caganer (the pooper), a small statue of a Catalonian peasant, wearing a traditional red stocking hat (barretina,) crouched with his trousers half down in a "toilet" position, often smoking a pipe or reading a newspaper! The exact origin of the caganer is a mystery but the tradition is known to have existed since the 17th century. According to some, he is fertilizing the land to ensure a bumper crop the following year, while others believe that he represents equality between all people! He is usually to be found crouching somewhere in the Pessebre, adding a rather comical touch to this traditional scene.



Still on the toilet theme, caga tió is another Catalan Christmas tradition, translated literally as the 'pooping log'...Caga tió is a hollowed-out log standing on four little stick legs with a smiley face painted on one end and sporting a red barretina hat. Every evening from the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (8th December) onwards, caga tió is "fed" by inserting into his rear end sweets, gifts and traditional Christmas nougat (torró in Catalan, turrón in Spanish) under cover of the blanket used to ensure that he doesn't catch cold at night. On Christmas Day, children beat caga tió with sticks, singing traditional songs ordering him to "poop" all the goodies! They do not include larger gift items, as these are brought by the Three Wise Men (Els Reis Mags) in January. When no goodies are left, he drops a salt herring, a head of garlic or an onion. What comes out of caga tió is a communal gift shared by everyone present.

The Feast of the Three Kings on 6th January is a big celebration for Catalan (and Spanish) children, for whom it is the equivalent of our Christmas Day. On the evening before, the Three Kings travel in procession through many local towns and villages, flinging sweets to the waiting children in the streets below. Before the children go to bed that night, they leave shoes and a snack near the window or on the balcony. On the morning of 6th January, they wake up to find the gifts that the Kings have left for them, sometimes accompanied by a piece of coal if they have been badly behaved that year!

Live

English speaking Doctor



Help close at hand

Coming highly recommended by a number of Cabanyes residents is international GP Dra Anna van Hooff. Her medical practice is at Costa Brava Medic on Avda Catalunya in Sant Antoni (next to the Carmen shop) and offers a wide range of medical services. Anna is Dutch and speaks English fluently.

Cabanyes resident Elli Jones says of Anna “I found Dra. van Hoff not only extremely competent and efficient but also warm and approachable and would like to recommend her to any resident seeking medical advice.”

Anna treats both residents and visitors to our area and amongst her services she can provide clinical analysis, minor surgery, routine medical checkups as well as care for the elderly. Her website has the full list of services available.

For further information, call 972 660 813 or 626 598 930 or visit <http://www.costabravamedic.com> where there is a wealth of information. The surgery is open Monday - Friday between 9.00-13.00 hrs and 16.00-18.00 hrs and you can call for appointments daily between 9.00 and 19.00 hrs.

and Learn.....

International Language School

For those of you wishing to improve your language skills, whether simply for practical conversational purposes or something more challenging, there is an international language school right here on our doorstep. Located just off the main square in Sant Antoni at Carrer Vermell, 61, 1B (above the newsagents), Links Academy is the brainchild of Vanessa McIntyre. The academy runs lessons in English, French, German, Spanish and Catalan. Sessions are run for both groups and individuals. You can talk to Vanessa about tailoring the tuition to suit your needs - all ages and levels are catered for! The Academy is also particularly well geared for business and academic language courses and teaches many Spanish speakers the beauty of the English language.

Learning or improving a language can be a very exciting and sociable activity – as well as being challenging and keeping the grey matter stimulated. Rates are extremely reasonable and there is no enrolment fee on ongoing commitment. Contact Vanessa on 972 660 623/ 690 757 365 or email her at Linksacademy@hotmail.es to find out more.



Making sense of language from every perspective

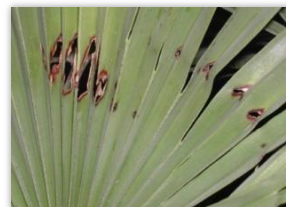
HD

Beware the Paysandisia Archon

The Paysandisia archon is a beautiful but destructive moth. Introduced to France accidentally from South America, it is spreading rapidly through Europe. The moth attacks native and exotic palms causing major and potentially fatal damage.



Frequently mistaken for a butterfly due to its impressive markings, it flies by day and can have a wingspan of 90-110 mm. Except for the period when the adults are flying, the pest is difficult to detect. The egg is laid (usually in July) at the base of a leaf on the stem or in the terminal bud. The lava bores through the stem or leaf causing damage. When several are at it at the same time, the palm can weaken and possibly die. Jean



Marquette, a Cabanyes resident has reported that he has caught three of these moths in his garden and urges us to be aware of these pests, before we have a serious outbreak in Cabanyes and in the area generally. From internet research there appear to be no control methods, either naturally or through pesticides. Keep an eye out for them and catch them if you can.

HD

Liquidity Crisis –a Salutory Tale

In early August, my wife Pam and I were at our home in Cheshire when Tobias, our neighbour and key-holder in Cabanyes, phoned to tell us that there was a substantial water-leak in our villa. He said that there was about four inches of water in the ground floor of the house which our pool-man, Oscar, had spotted flowing out of the french windows.

Tobias summoned the firemen who said that the water was too shallow to pump out, but did have a good wheeze in removing the downstairs toilet so that the water could drain away relatively quickly.

I arrived in Cabanyes the following morning, having been warned that the house was virtually unusable as the water had been turned off, as had the electricity, because the dampness caused the mains to trip off. By the time I arrived at the villa, however, the electricity was functioning and shortly after, the water too was restored, and I was able to move in..

The source of the flood was a small tank adjacent to the boiler; the expansion tank. Its function is to protect closed water heating and domestic hot water systems from excessive pressure. But it had corroded and eventually perforated. It is apparently connected direct to the mains water supply, and given the pressure here at the lower part of Cabanyes, had spewed out water with considerable force for some hours. The fact that we had turned off all the internal stop-cocks did not help, and I have to admit, I thought (perhaps naively) that as the boiler and heating were turned off, there would be no question of water flowing around the system.



Walk on Water?

So we have now discovered the hard way that it is advisable to turn the water off to the house using the external stop-cock. Our villa has two - one in the road by the meter, and another in the drive. The advantage of the latter is that it will isolate the house water, but leave the irrigation and swimming pool unaffected.



Corroded expansion tank

The plumber/electrician advised us that these expansion tanks should be regularly checked, and probably replaced every few years. They are not expensive (about 150 Euros) and we will certainly bear that in mind. We also (again naively) thought that as our boiler is serviced twice a year, faults such as these would be picked up. However, Roca, the suppliers, are careful to disclaim responsibility because this item is not actually part of the boiler itself - a fine distinction if ever there was one!

We were told that SOREA would refund, in part at least, the cost of water lost if you could show that you had a leak and it had been repaired. However, when we queried this at the local SOREA office, they said that they *may* do so, but to qualify, they had to be summoned immediately so that they could see for themselves that there had genuinely been a leak. Photographs were not acceptable!

Throughout, we were helped by the magnificent efforts of our friends in Cabanyes who rallied round during 'operation mop-up' – we are eternally grateful to them.

We were also fortunate that the leak was discovered relatively quickly, and that the damage was contained. But nevertheless, be warned.

Geoffrey Benson

(The story that "Geoff is drying out in Spain" may have been misinterpreted in some quarters. Ed)

Musicians Union

We have written in the past about some of the talented magicians living on Cabanyes and three of these are currently changing direction. During the last few years, Nathan Drohm, Libbie van Geert and Andy Ball have fronted the Blues Messengers locally, not least at the now defunct La Bodega.



Andy and mike

he was a member of the band Candlewick Green that won the TV talent show Opportunity Knocks.

Now, Nathan & Libbie, as Loop Alley, have produced their first CD, also titled Loop Alley, and are close to completing a second. If you like a fusion between Jazz, funk and chill out pop then this is the album for you! It is available at cdbaby.com/loopalley and on iTunes. And they perform live at 21:00 on Thursday 13 October at Club Hotel Giverola, Tossa de Mar.



Nathan and Libbie at play

Meanwhile rumour has it that keyboard king, Andy Ball, will be back in business very soon alongside vocals and guitar man, Baz Speed, offering a mix of blues and pop classics. In the mid-seventies, Andy played with Mud who had a big hit with Tiger Feet. Previously,

Christmas cricket cracker?

Triple-A? Ainsley Harriott, Author John Duncan and Alan Davies celebrate the Cricket Wonderful Cricket book launch at Lord's Cricket Ground in London earlier in the year. Sales since then have been good and the book is being tipped as an ideal low price (look at Amazon!) Christmas present. Buy now while stocks last and let us know if you have copies that you would like signed by the author. Details of the people involved, reviews, media coverage and more at cricketwonderfulcricket.com



Community Corner

Fancy getting away from it all? Although Cabanyes is heavenly, it is still nice to have a break and be pampered. Well, if you are short of time, why not try Hotel Spa La Central, as recommended by Pat and Denis Hartley? Located just 55 miles away in the beautiful countryside near Darnius, the small hotel has 21 rooms and spa with swimming pool. The food in the hotel is good and the staff friendly. The lovely nearby lake has another restaurant which you might wish to try, possibly after a good walk to build up your appetite. Rates are reasonable with a number of packages available – the Romantic pack which includes half board, massage, cava and chocolates perhaps! Best to check out their website to get further information – www.hlacentral.com or email them info@hlacentral.com. Tel: 972 535 053.

Films for French speakers – c'est possible!

If you are a French speaker and would like to see films in French (to be shown at OCine in Platja D'Aro, potentially once a month), please send your name to

Jean-Pierre Marill - jpmarill@yahoo.com or call him on 972 662 034. If there is enough interest, a pilot film will be shown.

Well done Christine and Sally for the continued success of the VOSE initiative). If you are not currently on the mailing list for the VOSE films, email Christine at christineverde@gmail.com



Letters to the Editor

Editor,
Everyone calls me 'old bean' or asks me where I've been or makes some other bean/been related remark.

Is this meant to be funny or what?

Yours sincerely

Harry Cote

Dear sir or madam,

I met this lovely man one evening in a tapas bar in Palamos and he bought me lots of glasses of Cava and was soon telling me all about his plans for our life together and how much he loved me and that we would be together forever. And he said it all again as he was leaving my flat the next morning.

But since then – nothing. He didn't write; he didn't phone; he didn't email; he didn't even Tweet.

I feel devastated.

Sue Nova

Dear Sir,

I and my chicks - in the right pecking order of course - nearly fell off our perches, in turn laughing

and crying as we looked back at some of your previous issues. As high flyers ourselves, we simply don't know how you lowly creatures manage it.

Unfortunately my mate won't be able to read your next issue. He had been looking rather seedy lately, and was recently hauled before the beak; he's now doing bird in a secure wing.

Forgive this short tweet; It's visiting time, so I must fly.

Ennie Millet

Sirs,

I hear tell of a wonderful tourist attraction near Granada, a Palace with halls, courtyards, fountains, royal baths and a simply amazing history. One of the current attractions is the Patio de Sultana.

I am very keen to visit the Palace but just can't find out what it is called. Can anyone help me please?

Yours

Al Ambra

Wine of the Month

When I was asked to write about a wine for this edition, the summer was in full swing so I picked up a bottle of a very nice rosado, for research purposes only of course.

Estate, 2010, 6,75 euros from the Wine Palace is not the cheapest of the rosado wines but I think it is one of the best that Spain has to offer. You rarely can go wrong with a rosado from Navarra, the region famous for this wine. This one comes from Somontano DO which is located between Penedes and Navarra, an up and coming region for very good quality wines. It is a little more French in style and is made from 100% Cabernet Sauvignon and has extremely bright, garnet colour, with a powerful fruity bouquet. I have never taken rosado wines very seriously but once you have drunk a bad one, you will realise that there can be a big difference between the good and the definitely not so good! Enjoy this clean and well balanced wine quite cold, 8-10° preferably on a hot day!



Alyona Strange

The Last Word

Wild boar, wild boar
Trots in at dusk
Ruins your lawn
With a thrust of his tusk

How to stop him
Nobody knows
Not even electricians
Fences or hose

One consolation
Be sure you eat
Delicious sausages
Made with his meat

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