

The View from the Perch



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

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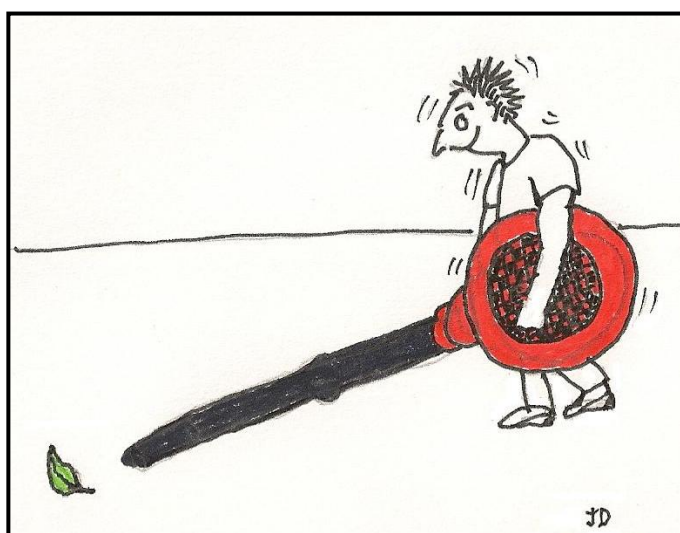
Knock out Blow?

Increasing levels of concern at the widespread use of petrol driven leaf blowers by Cabanyes' five or six professional gardeners has finally resulted in some action. At July's Entidad Urbanística de Conservación (EUC) annual general meeting in Platja D'Aro, a petition was signed by many attendees and proposals were put forward aimed at controlling what has become, for many residents, an unacceptable state of affairs.

After a lively and often noisy debate at the meeting, the choice was between trying to limit the type of machinery based on noise levels or restricting the hours of use. Ultimately, it was decided, on a show of hands, to propose to the gardeners and to the Council simultaneously that they be free to carry out all types of gardening, except the use of petrol driven suckers/ blowers, during normal working hours, and that the use of those particular machines be restricted to 08.00 - 14.00 hours, Mondays to Fridays, and 09.00 - 13.00 hours on Saturdays.

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Blowin' out of proportion?

The noise and air pollution caused by these hand held machines is an issue not confined to Cabanyes. Indeed, campaigns have been mounted as far afield as the United States and Australia while, closer to home, there is a European Union directive setting out maximum noise levels to be observed by manufacturers of a wide range of outdoor equipment, including leaf blowers.

The local petition, meanwhile, has been printed in six languages and is 'intended for any official body or agency who could help.'

It states that the machines have no silencers with decibel levels that are too high and that they are used constantly, at all hours, seven days a week. But have the machines been inspected? Do they carry 'CE markings' that indicate that noise levels standards have been observed? Who are the timekeepers? And who has measured the decibel levels?

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Hola!

Welcome to edition two of "The View from the Perch."

We are most grateful for the feedback that we have received, both by email and word of mouth, to our first somewhat tentative attempt. Nobody, so far, has said 'don't do it' so, as you can see, we have decided to have another go.

We decided to be anonymous first time around to help provoke a bit of speculation as to the source of these few sheets of paper. And that has worked to some extent. But now, it's stand up and be counted time!

We are John & Helen Duncan and we have been living up in Carrer Zuric, on & off, for more than ten years. We don't pretend for one moment to be full time professional writers, publishers or illustrators! But with our limited experience, spell check and some valued contributors, we have again managed to stumble erratically into print....

If you want to contact us, there is The Perch email address and our caseta number on the top of page one. If we had any faith in Telefonica we might even reveal a telephone number as well...

And why 'The View from the Perch' you may well ask? Well, our little office, in which we write all this stuff, we call 'the perch' and, from it, the view towards Palamos harbour & beyond, is fantastic and occasionally, inspirational.

And the changes? Community Corner is launched on page 5 as well as the stunning Feathered Friends on page 3. But, currently, we plan to stay with Mark my Word, Here we Go, Wine & Whine of the Month and Wry on Air.

We really would welcome your input – it will help to make this truly a Cabanyes publication. And we can email it to you, if you prefer.

Any comments, criticisms, contributions or requests - just get in touch.



Knock out Blow

Continued from page 1

It is a sensitive and emotional issue. With most of the building development completed, residents have every right to expect to enjoy the peace and tranquility of their homes and gardens. At the same time, they must recognise that the gardeners involved have to make a living.

Even if agreement is eventually reached on all sides, residents still face the prospect of 34 hours a week of unacceptable noise and pollution. Whatever happened to brooms and rakes? And why are leaves not swept up and gathered for mulch or compost? And why don't owners tell gardeners 'no blowers or no contract.' Sometimes the best solutions are the simple ones.

JD



Imisa – An Apology

On the front page of our first edition we wrote about Imisa, everyone's favourite Catalonian property development company. Because the piece was not very well written, and because we tried to be far too clever, this was seen by some of our readers as an advertisement for the company. Others went even further and believed that Imisa was actually the publisher of this modest paper.

So we must apologise to Imisa if we have inadvertently and in any way suggested that it might have been involved in a well constructed and creative development such as 'The View from the Perch.'

For clearly this is not its area of expertise...

JD

Feathered Friends

In each edition of *The Perch* we plan to take a close look at the amazing range of birdlife in and above Cabanyes. And we shall be doing this through the many & varied lenses of Jim Weare and the words of wisdom of Helen Saker.

They take off in fine style with the Bee-Eater.

From May to August our skies are filled with the glorious bubbling trill of the European Bee-Eater. This slender graceful bird whose silhouette is easily spotted against the sky, with its narrow pointed wings and distinctive feather projections on its long tail, only shows its true beauty as it dips to the tree line, a stunning flash of yellow, blue and chestnut.

On closer inspection you will find in the plumage almost every colour in the spectrum making the bee-eater one of Europe's most colourful visitors.

With their long slim beaks these aerobatic little rainbows snatch dragonflies, wasps and predictably, bees, from the skies which are carried to a regularly used perch and repeatedly beaten on a hard surface to help remove the potentially harmful sting. Beautiful, haunting, a joy to eye and ear – their visit to us so short but, oh so sweet!



Mark my Word

*Electric lights and telephone
Are quite essential, you may moan;
And water too is useful, but
Today there's none of it; it's cut.*

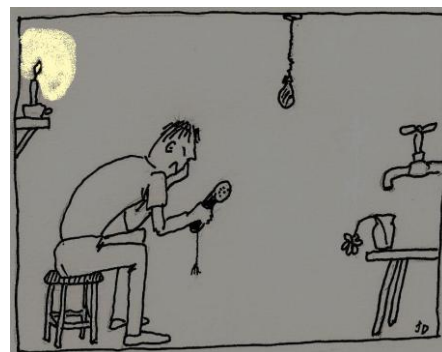
Welcome to Cabanyes where, if your phone, electricity and water all work on the same day, it's an occasion to crack open a bottle of Cava and celebrate.

But don't despair; there's a fair chance that at least one will obey your command, even if it's the tap suddenly gushing, or more likely dribbling, when you switch on the lights. Those of you who were here on 13th June this year (not a Friday, surprisingly), will recall the epic 7-9 hour electricity failure. Being a seasoned Cabanyite I had of course expected it, since it was one of the hottest days of the year to date. And those whose properties are on the upper echelons of the estate will have had cause for added joy as the domestic water failed; an electric pump is needed to push the water up to us.

I'm certain that one of those much feared leaflets from Sorea or Endesa - the Water and Electricity monopolies - will appear imminently in the post building near the office to warn of a planned cut "to improve the quality of the service we offer." But never fear, readers; if the electricity service is temporarily suspended for that reason, the next time you turn on a light or plug in the freezer, subsequently you'll be able to marvel at the enhanced electricity "quality," as your hair - if you're endowed with some - stands shockingly on end.

May I end by quoting from that on-line font of all knowledge, Wikipedia, commenting on utilities, those essential constituents of modern living: *"In poorer developing countries, public utilities are often limited to wealthier parts."*

Am I missing something? Polite answers only please.



Here we go.....

One of the beauties of living in Cabanyes is how you learn from your friends and neighbours. And how lucky we were to learn about the county of Osona and especially Parador Vic-Sau.

For walkers, outdoor enthusiasts or simply those of us who enjoy finding a quiet place to sit and feel spiritually uplifted, this is well worth a visit.

About an hour and a half's drive, and using the Parador as a destination, you may find the beginning of the journey a little uninspiring; certainly so for those of us that troll back and forth to Gerona airport anyway, as initially, you take the same route.



However, once you start heading towards Vic you will become mesmerised by the majestic beauty of the area. We stopped a number of times once we were off the main roads, just to breathe it all in; to absorb the pure tranquillity of the place. At one point, I felt I might just have been transported to Switzerland, so evocative were the sound of the cow bells.

The area is that sublime contrast of mountainous craggy rock, forested areas with the occasional plateau, and as you get closer to your destination, the River Ter and the Sau reservoir. There is so much history associated with this area. Beneath the vast reservoir (17 km long, 3 km wide) lies the remains of Sant Romà de Sau, a sunken village whose only visible part is a Romanesque bell tower popularly used as an indicator of the water level. And just 4 kms behind the Parador, perched high on a peninsula on a bend of the river, is the Monastery of Sant Pere de Casserres, documented from 898 and constructed by the Viscounts of Osona between 1030 and 1050.

Write a travel piece

Why not share your experiences with the Cabanyes community? If you have discovered a gem, let others benefit too. We would welcome your article (maximum 350 words please) - contact details are on page one.

We parked at the Parador which itself is a lovely converted (if somewhat grand) farmhouse that overlooks the water. A tasty snack on the terrace (the restaurant looks good, but was completely empty when we went) and time to take in the jaw-dropping scenery.

We could have retraced our steps back to Cabanyes but took the longer squiggly route home, via Rupit which added about an hour to the journey, but was well worth it.

I intend to return to this area, to explore with knowledgeable friends, and to learn more about an area that has truly embedded itself in my soul. Apparently, Taverdet will blow my mind..... watch this space!

HD



Thanks

How often in your life have you said "The builders exceeded our expectations?" Rarely if ever? Well, it does happen. Honestly. And when it does and they also print The Perch and supply the paper and do some of the stapling – well, what can you say? Only "Thanks again to the quality team at Quality Estates."

And thanks also to our gradually expanding team of contributors and correspondents, particularly Pat and Peter Cowan for their part in Community Corner.

WRY ON AIR

Michael O'Really(?), Ryanair's much loved, self-effacing, Chief Executive, said recently that the low-cost airline was looking at the possibility of installing a coin slot on the lavatory door so that "people might actually have to spend a pound to spend a penny." That one may never fly, although the airline seems to refuse to rule out anything in the never ending quest for cost savings and additional revenue streams.

Already, Ryanair passengers must pay a £5 charge per flight to print out their tickets at home as part of moves to abolish check-in desks. Anyone who arrives at the airport without a pre-printed check-in card has to pay a £40 "boarding card re-issue fee". So where will it all end?



"The Perch" can disclose that O'Really(?) has allegedly been working all hours on a range of additional charges including extra payments for seats for those who prefer not to stand for the duration of their flight. It is also rumoured that the airline plans to charge for oxygen in the event of an emergency. The oxygen masks will apparently still drop down from the overhead lockers but the supply of oxygen will be activated by a slot-meter taking Euros and pound coins.

Finally, another whisper from an insider suggests that, in an emergency, passengers will be allowed to rent the life jacket under their seats and buy a scratch-card to win a place in the life-raft. Enormously reassuring for those of a nervous disposition.

JD

Community Corner



Community Corner is where we want YOU to tell us about a place or a product or a service that you feel you would like to recommend.

Without responsibility. Because we all know that it is so easy to try someone on their rare off day! But this corner is all about offerings from third parties; it is not a place for 'free' advertising.

But, on the other hand, if you have something domestically that you want to sell, or buy, then tell us.

So to round one!

Restaurant Nautilus: On the sea front at Passeig Del Mar, Sant Antoni with a beautiful view of the sea. Excellent food and a very friendly service. Three course meal, plus house wine and coffee will cost approximately 80 Euros for two people. And you may smoke if you must! Tel: 972 660 023.

Centro Rehabilitacion Del Mar: Five minutes from Cabanyes in Calonge, you will find a centre that offers all types of therapies, both recuperative and therapeutic. Dominique, the proprietor, and her therapists offer osteopathy, physiotherapy, acupuncture, quiromassage, amongst other treatments. Tel: 972 660 812

Comtelcat at PCCalonge: Computer frustrations?!! PCCalonge in the Old Town offers up to date technical solutions. Luis (speaks good English) and his team can come to your home to maintain, repair or upgrade your computer. They also can arrange your ADSL line. Not online? PCCalonge is an internet café where you can get online for one euro an hour! Tel: 658 811 561; info@comtelcat.com

Al Vent: Clara and her team at Al Vent in San Antoni offer extensive all round services in addition to house maintenance and cleaning. They can advise and help you with taxation, insurance, Telefonica(!) as well as provide translation services. Of course, if you need your home looked after in your absence, or prepared for rental this is an essential part of the services available. Tel: 972 652 119; alvent@encomix.es

Wine of the Month

Can there be a nicer way to spend a lazy Sunday lunchtime, than with good food, good friends and a chilled glass of rosado in one hand?

Of course, one might argue that there is no need to limit oneself to the weekend, when you have such an easy drinking, quaffable wine like our wine of the month, Torres De Casta Rosado.

The Torres family has been making wine in the ancient Catalán town of Vilafranca del Penedès since at least the 17th Century. However it was not until 1870 that Don Jaime Torres established the house of Torres whose wines have now become such a familiar sight on supermarket shelves and on restaurant wine lists across the world.

This rosado is consistently good. Made from a combination of

two traditional grape varieties, Garnacha and Cariñena, it has a lovely cherry colour, is fruity but not overly so with a slightly floral bouquet. Dry and refreshing, it goes well with most light dishes, such as pasta, chicken or a good helping of tapas!

Last seen at Suma at 3.99 euros, this is a good one to keep in your fridge for your unexpected visitors or as a little treat for yourself after an extensive work-out in the pool!

HD



Know a great wine?

Do you quaff a wine that you feel others would enjoy? Then let us know! Email your recommendation and we will pass it on. Of course, if you would like to write a piece for Wine of the Month, even better!

Don't be shy – it's great to pass on the nice things in life!

Whine of the Month

What exactly is Cabanyes? Is it simply a collection of villas scattered across an urbanization? Is it primarily a residential area? Or, perhaps, is it a holiday camp, for all or part of the year, where anything goes? For at times, the valley rocks like Glastonbury or howls like Crufts.

It has been proposed that it be made clear to rental clients (and the proprietors of such villas) that there are certain regulations in place, for the benefit of all, regarding noise, courtesy to neighbours, rubbish disposal, noisy dogs and so on.

The proposal is that every villa should have on display guidelines aimed at setting out these standards of acceptable behaviour while allowing residents and visitors alike to enjoy the benefits of this very special place.

So who is responsible for ensuring that these standards are maintained? Is it the proprietors or the EUC? Perhaps Agusti Ambros, President of the E.U.C., might welcome the views of those that care about such matters.

Should he be told?



JD



The Last Word

This edition of The View from the Perch is dedicated to the memory of Mo Callon. She was a very lovely and very special lady and will be terribly missed by everyone who had the privilege of knowing her.