

The Perch

Our Final Look at Life In and Around Cabanyes -
The Special Place

What lies ahead? The view
from our major sponsor
Quality Estates:

Expect the unexpected

See page five

American To Come Up Trumps?

A wealthy US citizen has revealed plans for a leisure development in the heart of the urbanisation as well as enhanced travel facilities coupled with other improvements to the quality of life for Cabanyes' residents. Having seen the 30th edition of *The Perch* he made contact with us by email and arranged a meeting three weeks ago in London.

He turned out to be a lightly bronzed American, probably in his early sixties. We knew nothing about him other than his Connecticut email address. He told us that he had first visited Spain around 45 years ago and went to Cabanyes which was barely populated at the time. (See *The Perch*; edition sixteen – 'Cabanyes at thirty-five'.) He said that he fell in love with the place and had been back many times, but was never able to stay long due to business commitments.

But he said that he felt that it was a community without a heart, without a centre. "In a way it had one on paper through *The Perch* but will no longer have that." He had agreed at the outset that we could record the interview and his exact words were, "It needs somewhere where people can meet but that

just don't exist."

His proposition is as follows. He wishes to purchase all the plots and properties marked in amber on the draft plan on page four. If he is successful, he will acquire some nine developed and up to six vacant plots amounting in total to an area of approximately six and a half acres.

We said that we did not feel that everyone would agree and that planning permission for anything other than residential was most unlikely. This was his response.

"Don't knock it. Let me just tell you what I intend to provide. It will be a superb development. Facilities & services branded YESCABAN. There'll be twenty-five multi-million euros luxury apartments, pre-constructed & honeycombed into the mountainside, a restaurant & bar, a leisure centre with gym, spa, & squash courts & a library & learning complex with free overall membership for all Cabanyes owners. And a laundry."

Continued on page four

**Eat for a Tenner
on pages four and five**



Catalan Correspondent's
Call for Independence
See page six



Page seven for
The Good, the Bad and
the Okay

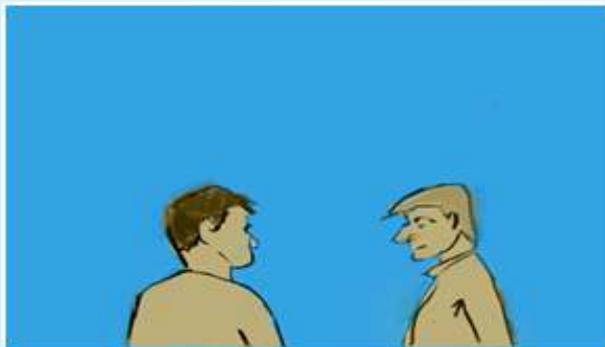
Adios!

Welcome to the 31st and final edition of *The Perch*

Apologies for the delay in publishing this edition but now is the moment. The moment when I need a stiff upper lip, to keep right on to the end of the road, believe that every cloud has a silver lining and whatever I do, avoid any threat of light heart and heavy trousers. It does feel a bit like taking early retirement from the kindergarten or scuba diving in the paddling pool. It's also further proof that you can fool all of the people some of the time and that it's not all over until the sat lady things. Keep going, it will get worse. A lot worse. Particularly in verse. Much worse. Probably. But that's quite enough of the nonsense. Because there are some very important things that I want to say.

Firstly, and most importantly, thank you to our sponsors; Quality Estates, a marvellous group of people and so very generous from start to finish; Al Vent, such good, long term supporters and CE Consulting so supportive of more recent issues.

There are also people who regularly helped us to balance the books and we have been glad to recognise many of these in print in recent editions (see page three). Some of you have been particularly generous for many years, alongside our sponsors, in enabling us to meet the printers' bills totalling in excess of €10,000.



Don't often see this many blue parrots and butterflies.

But what a time we have had in filling the pages with something around 150,000 words! Over the past eight years or so, we have been blessed by the folk who are Cabanyes and who have given us their time, ideas, words and pictures. Difficult to mention them all, much as we would like to but just a few on page three who have put pen to paper, over & over & over again.

There was a young man of Cabanyes,
Who collected old upright pianos
He could play Real Madrid,
And quite often did
Which completely confused all the Spaniards.

If you gave us pleasure from time to time and don't see your name then I'm sorry – very much so. But I have been through every edition trying to remind myself of anyone who may have made a handful or more of contributions.

Helen Duncan knows all of this would not and could not have happened without her. Now she has the time to sculpt and, perhaps next year, to exhibit locally some of her work, as illustrated right here. She deserves a huge round of applause.



As do you all, especially those who have not only read but also responded. The communication of information and entertainment through *The Perch* was always meant to be a two way process. I have so enjoyed being a part of this.

John Duncan

But what happens next?

It would be marvellous if someone felt able to take over from Helen and me so that a successor to *The Perch* can be created, under a new title. So far we have had a few interesting and helpful discussions but these have not resulted in anything that might continue in the future

One possibility that developed was based on no longer producing a printed version but for there to be an online publication only. This has the great advantage of eliminating printing costs but there would no longer be that feeling of physical and mental pleasure that many get from words and pictures on pieces of paper.

We are still both available, of course, to advise anyone who is interested in taking a publication, in whatever shape or form, to the next stage. If you would like to know what is involved do please get in touch with us by email at viewfromtheperch@gmail.com

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!

The Corporates



Quality Estates, our main sponsor, has been generously supporting *The Perch* since the very first edition. QE is the all round Real Estate, Holiday Letting, Construction and Maintenance Company. Whether you want to buy or sell a property, need a complete reconstruction of your villa, a new kitchen, an extension added or an infinity pool, they will fulfil your dreams. Based in Sant Antoni de Calonge you can contact them on 972 653 955, by email at info@quality-estates.com or visit www.quality-estates.com



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Audit, Consulting Lawyers and Human Resources Consulting. See their website www.consultinggirona.es while they can be reached on 972 109 613 or by email at girona@ceconsulting.es



The Twenty-Fivers

Mark and Deborah Nankivell, Bob and Margot Carefull, Steve and Sue Brown, Anna Van Hoof, Derek and Catherine Farley, Denis and Pat Hartley, Andrea Broom, Jeff Lee and Mary Bennett, Dale Butcher, Andrew and Aileen Thomas, Jon and Cathy Parsons, Byron Ousey, Eric Kakebeen, Peter Cowan, Pepe and Charles Mountain, Anne-Britt and Paul Mercer, Inger and Ake Andersson, Glynn Jones and Lionel Warne, David and Linda Pilkington, Russell and Ellie Jones, Eelkjen and Anthony Hoenderkamp as well as two supporters who asked to remain anonymous. And those lovely others who gave what they could when they could.

The Contributors

Mark Woolf originated and responded right from the start and has simply been invaluable as between them have the Ball trio, Andy, Joan and Nancy. Andrea Broom discovered so much information and many stories that we would otherwise have missed and Alyona Strange always and elegantly provided the most expert taste on wines and much more. Narcis Corominas brought to our pages a unique look at life from a Catalan point of view, while Pam & Geoff Benson wrote with a rich mix of wit & wisdom. Bob Carefull happily & skilfully has written about everything from banks to boars and in the early days, we enjoyed the quality words & pictures in Feathered Friends of Jim & Helen Weare. And then there are the Hartleys. Pat & Denis, apart from Here We Go & much else, have given us a mouth-watering stream of places to eat in HR for what must be close to 20 editions.

And we've enjoyed contributions from Derrick Callon, Ian Christie, Christiane Rinke-Schuck, Paul Mercer, Paul Lee, Fionnuala and Alan French.

American To Come Up Trumps? from page one

"A laundry?" We asked. "Yes, our financial advisers tell us there is a lot of money to be made from laundering."

"There will be a helicopter landing pad far enough above the development to be relatively quiet but close enough for a swift cable car descent to YESCABAN.

"Cameras will be installed at all entrances and throughout the urbanisation for security and traffic speed control. Consequently, all roundabouts and speed humps will no longer be required and will be removed.

"In future, every piece of garden equipment must be tested and approved for European standard sound levels before use. Non compliance with this particular regulation will be punishable by long term imprisonment or deportation or both. And finally, it will become law that all owners of dogs that bark for more than 31

seconds per hour or foul the sidewalk will do six months community service per offence at the local abattoir."

The whole development will be designed and

created using state of the art facilities so as to be 98% soundproof. We'll be providing employment for at least 100 folk and will generate massive benefits for the local economy and authorities.

In all our time producing *The Perch* we had never heard a more compelling, more ambitious, more credible, more beneficial or more

exciting set of proposals.

But it was only when our meeting with this amazing American was over that I looked at his elegant embossed business card for the first time. Walter Mitty, it read. Walter Mitty, I thought. Now that rings a bell.

John Duncan



Green belt in green, c/Zuric - red, c/Paris - purple, entrance & bridge - blue



In a Perchless world, with nothing to read, why not join Calonge library where there is an ever-growing section of English books you can borrow? You can also take your unwanted books there to help build up their stock.

Frances Nelson

Denis & Pat Hartley offer their Five Best Bites for just Ten Euros!

Heroic research and amazing appetites has resulted in Hartley

Recommended, as our deadly dining duo, Denis and Pat Hartley, offered us

time after time, yet another place to eat. So one last piece, one last challenge, this with a budget! Find us, we asked, five menu del dias at €10 or less; simple as that! So off they went, five times to dine, seeking three courses with wine, water, bread & iva. Inevitably they came back with a splendid list, but then, what would you expect?

Restaurant La Malaguena, Av.de la Plaja, 54, Castell D'Aro. 972 825 290

A nice village restaurant with several dining areas and an upstairs covered terrace. They offer the largest choice of starters, main courses and desserts. The choice of kidneys in sherry was delicious. The welcoming and friendly staff make for an enjoyable dining experience. Cost: €9.98.

Brothers Restaurant, C/Ramon Casas 5, St. Antoni de Calonge. 972 318 129

Friendly café style restaurant a stones throw from Palamos sea front. Their patatas a lo pobre are well worth choosing. Cost: €10.



Quality Estates says: “Expect the Unexpected”

As the Residents of Cabanyes try to foresee what to expect in the coming years we have only one solid advice: expect the unexpected. The reality of trying to foresee something is that, as many of us have previously experienced, whenever we make plans, the universe has a very funny way of doing just about anything else. However, don't be discouraged, preparing ourselves for what the future will bring is something that must be done, and we are here to help you when it comes to our area of expertise: real estate.

Real Estate is a difficult subject to form predictions around, however not impossible. In order to help you form a good idea of what possibilities lie ahead, we present to you a list of key factors and how they're currently affecting the real estate market.

What are the key factors? There is a long list of many complex factors, however we've chosen four: Demographics, Interest Rates, the Economy (that is generally measured by GDP, employment data, manufacturing activity, etc.), and Politics. You need to keep an eye on these factors because each of them affect the delicate balance between the supply (available houses for sale) and demand (people who



are looking to buy), which is what determines the price of your home (example: more houses available and less people looking means we can expect lower prices).

How are these factors currently affecting the Real Estate Market? Currently the demographics are showing a transition of “baby boomers” to retirement which means higher demand for second homes in vacation areas, and demand for smaller homes due to smaller incomes. The interest rates are currently at historical lows, which means the costs of obtaining a mortgage are low, which creates a higher demand for real estate, which pushes prices up. Then there's the overall health of the economy, which in Europe, is dominated by the concerns regarding the ultimate impact of Brexit. Finally, the policies that the Spanish government chose to implement, such as the 'Golden Visa' offering residency by investment and the 'Visa-free travel', have both attracted buyers into Spain.

How are these factors going to affect the future? This is where we will tell you once again, do your research and understand what these factors mean and how they interact with each other, but at the end, always – expect the unexpected.

Café Dali, C/Catalunya Avenida 17, St. Antoni de Calonge. 972 660 601

Run by the family who used to have the 'Bodega' restaurant in Cabanyes Sport. This restaurant offered the cheapest menu but this in no way compromised the quality, quantity or presentation of the food. The hake cutlets were enormous and perfectly cooked. Cost: €9.50.

Bar Restaurant Romanyá, C/Teulera 55, Sta. Christina D'Aro. 972 838 137

Very popular village restaurant, so arrive early or after the first rush, about 2pm. A good choice of Catalan dishes. Here, the bottle of red wine, water and gaseosa are already set out on the table. However, other drinks can be substituted. Another restaurant with friendly, welcoming hosts. Here we had a main course of mixed fried fish with 'proper' chips. Cost: €10.

Restaurant Hong Kong, Av. Catalunya 12, St. Antoni de Calonge. 972 652 967

Finally, to add an oriental flavour, look no further than this family run Chinese restaurant. Here there is a choice of two menus del dia. No bread, as this is replaced by a basket of prawn crackers. The only difference between the two is extra choices on the dearer menu. You can also swap dessert for coffee. When you ask for the bill, you are offered a chupito. Costs: €7.95 & €9.

So, there you have it. Five menus del dia at €10 or less. All different, all welcoming and all serving good quality food which should please all palates. And all, of course, Hartley Recommended.

Independence

The fierce and often emotional desire for Catalonia to be granted independence from the rest of Spain has many supporters including *The Perch's* Narcis Corominas.

"Freedom for Catalonia", "Catalonia is not Spain" or "Love Democracy" are the slogans that you can see anywhere in Catalonia demanding independence from Spain.

Catalonia was an independent country with its own language, customs and political structures until 1714 after that Spaniards harassed everything related to Catalan.

During the last decade Catalonia has increased the number of supporters of independence due to many reasons always among them being the fact that the Spanish government caused a lot of obstacles and problems to whatever that Catalan Government were proposing to do. I have to say that the Spanish crisis is not only financial, but is also political and territorial as well.

Calls for a complete independence grew steadily when the Constitutional court in Madrid overruled part of the 2006 Autonomy Statute, stating that there is no legal basis for recognising Catalonia as a nation within Spain. Since then, around two million people rallied in the streets of Barcelona, every 11th of September (Catalan National Day) five years in a row, asking for the independence of Catalonia. Curiously enough, according to Madrid, there were only few hundred thousands!



The Catalan Government held an informal non-binding vote on

independence in 2014 where the majority of voters

said "Yes" to independence. As a result of this voting some Catalan politicians went to court standing accused of disobedience against the state. Incredible, but true! I hoped that the Spanish Government would behave simply with a democratic spirit for dialogue just like British and Canadian Government did when they faced calls for a vote from independence movements in Scotland and Quebec.

Central Government from Madrid constantly scares Catalan pensioners by saying that they will lose their pensions and savings if they become independent. And the more Spanish Government causes obstacles or problems to Catalans the more independent they want to become.

Knowing that Catalonia is a powerhouse of Spain, contributing around 25% of GDP, I think that by becoming independent we will have more control of our financial resources, have a better justice system, better laws, control of infrastructures, and most importantly for us all able to preserve our language that in some periods has been threatened or forbidden to speak. *Visca Catalunya!*



Eat Drink and be Merry Dream Wines

My grand finale with a request from the editor that I write about my two dream bottles, regardless of the price, it's a dream come true but what a pressure to choose just the two, one of which has to be Spanish, by the way. OK, let the dream begin...

My first choice will be Pétrus, from Bordeaux, France. Maybe because it is so unreachable and I will never be able to afford it, is what makes it so desirable to taste. There is no wine in my humble opinion that can taste so exceptionally great that one is prepared to pay an average of €2,500. Pétrus is ranked consistently among the world's most expensive wines. The vineyard's small size permits harvesting to be completed in one day if necessary. At the most 30,000 bottles are produced annually. It produces a red wine entirely from Merlot grapes. Pétrus is supposed to be extraordinarily rich, powerful and concentrated, like many other wines but nevertheless there is only one Pétrus. Is it worth it?

The Spanish one is a more realistic choice, for an average price of € 250, one can try one of the most emblematic Spanish wines. Vega Sicilia Único is the Vega Sicilia flagship wine. It is also known for the longest ageing period, it normally spends six years in wood and three in the bottle before its release. They say that it offers an infinite complexity that is gradually revealed, in every sip, the palate immensely silky and elegant, and has an ageing capacity that only a handful of wines in the world can claim. Why would I not like tasting it?



Alyona Strange

Mark Woolf looks at Cabanyes: The Good, the Bad and the Okay

“You're too young to remember, my piglets, but your ancestors used to wander these hillsides amid lush vines, olives and fruit trees without a care in the world. But now the human swine with their cultivated plots and the water holes they use for swimming are hogging all the land and driving us away.”

However, there have been some consistent improvements. Roads are generally in a better state, apart from the odd pothole or three, street lighting is effective and our waste system seems to munch or crunch its way through everything.

Even our electricity seems less prone to breakdowns though I'd advise keeping a torch and candles handy.

The fresh water system remains a matter of some frustration; it is prone to leaks and bursts and you'll have seen unsightly pipes running along above ground. The good news is that Sorea is at last aware that we are living in the 21st century, not the 19th. The company says it has committed to a comprehensive upgrading programme, although the work is necessarily being undertaken piecemeal due to limited municipal funding.

An improvement of recent years has been the introduction of high(ish) speed broadband. With at least two providers of fibre-optic connections on Cabanyes, there is no excuse for not communicating instantly with anywhere in the world, if that's what you choose to do.

Ah, the wild boar are being targetted again. This time they're not after the birds so, despite the guns and flying bullets, the rare petrel should remain unleaded. (Nice one. Ed.)



The Petrel (unleaded)

From Head to Toe

As a car, I would fail my MOT, fit only for the scrapyards. Yet here am I, 81 and still keeping on keeping on. And four people, one way or another and to varying degrees, help to keep the old engine ticking over.

To start with, there is the absolutely delightful **Sonia** who at Artur Perruquers (972 651 771) does a quite wonderful job of keeping what is left of my hair in a wearable and bearable state. (And Helen rates highly her boss, by the way.)

Then **Dr. Anna van Hooff** of Costa Brave Medic (972 660 813) who has been so very helpful when the system has needed running repairs, always providing the right treatment, medication, advice or referral as appropriate.

And now there is also **Anita Mooren** (630 227 170)

on the same premises who will expertly keep your feet in optimal condition.

Finally, **Heidi Widmer** (671 805 256) has helped a

great many people, not least in Cabanyes, to overcome a wide range of physical problems, through massage, manipulation and acupuncture. She has helped me significantly with a level of therapy and understanding of Parkinson's that has been simply the best. She has provided pain relief,

flexibility, mobility and, in a way that is difficult to explain, a remarkable state of well-being. Physical, mental or spiritual? Who can say? Probably all three.

But as a result, the car is still on the road.

JD



Out to play with the U3A

Many are aware of, or already members of the U3A. If not, do have a look at www.u3acostabrava.org which tells all about the organisation. And you may well find much to enjoy, in a *Perchless Cabanyes*, by reading U3A's admirable online monthly publication, *The Link*. A valuable source of information, it is expertly edited by Chris Swinburn, who also recently penned the absolute gem below.



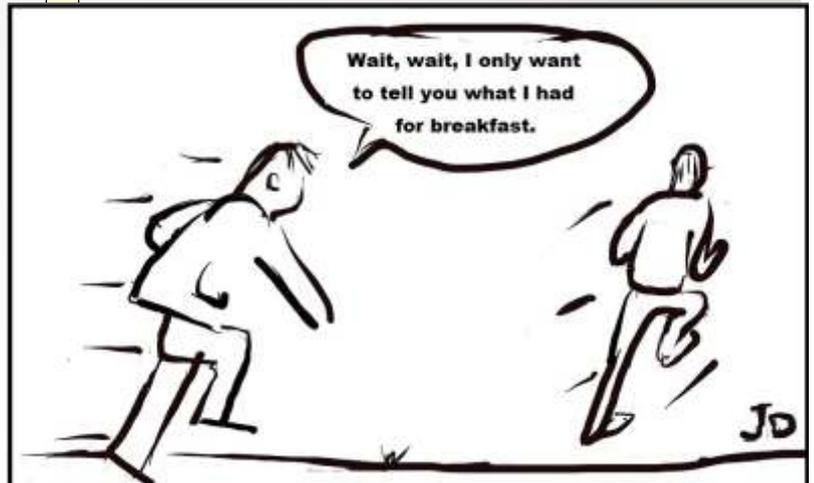
Facebook for Seniors

For those of my generation who do not and cannot comprehend why Facebook exists: I am trying to make friends outside of Facebook while applying the same principles.

Therefore, every day I walk down the street and tell passers-by what I have eaten, how I feel at the moment, what I have done the night before, what I will do later, and with whom.

I give them pictures of my family, my dog, and of me gardening, taking things apart in the garage, watering the lawn, standing in front of landmarks, driving around town, having lunch, and doing what anybody and everybody does every day. I also listen to their conversations, give them the "thumbs up" and tell them I like them. And it works just like Facebook.

I already have four people following me: two police officers, a private investigator, and a psychiatrist.



And almost *The Perch's* last words come from the talented Jim Collis who really can write a limerick, unlike others I know.

*There was a young man from Cabanyes,
Playing poker with all his companions.
He jumped to his feet
And cried "You're a cheat.
"The last Trump you played was Melania's."*

Poet Lorry Ate?



He: "Well, I guess that's it then."

She: "I guess so."

He: "Fancy a siesta?"