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Jan 2009 monthly



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CAN IT BE TRUE???

PREDICTIONS FOR 2009



January. The New Year will begin, almost certainly, on the 1st January, although for some civil servants, it may not be until at least the 16th.

George Michael's new single "I'm going for a cottage in the country" will reach number one, although there will be accusations of chart entry via back door methods.

February. Gordon Brown announces a tax on tax. Everyone paying income tax will have to pay the new ITT (Income Tax Tax) at a rate of 4% on every pound they pay in tax.

Amazon.co.uk will court controversy by losing CD's in the post, namely "The Eagles Greatest Hits" and "Pavarotti sings the Sex Pistols". Gordon Brown will deny all responsibility despite it not being his fault.

April. Tesco will reduce the price of their Christmas trees, crackers, wrapping paper and other Christmas profit-generating crap.

May. The entire Manchester United football team, including Alex Ferguson, will get through an entire football match without spitting, chewing gum or attempting a Bafta award-winning fall.

June. June is designated as British Annual Water

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Shortage Month, with celebrations of localised hosepipe bans and forest fires.

Tesco announce a Christmas sale.

July. An animal month. An English Sheepdog called Phyllis wins "I'm a celebrity get me out of here" and Dingo the Donkey wins the East Ham by-election caused by the death of some chap with a moustache and glasses. Unison decide it is in the best interest of their members to organise a national strike ballot in sympathy with overworked bus drivers in Bogota.

August. The LibDems announce their 2002 election manifesto. No one has the heart to shatter their illusions by telling them it's 2009. Rare British Coronation postage stamps are discovered on some undelivered mail from 1953. Wales declares the 14th as National Self-Abuse Day.

September. Arnold McFroggitt of Lerwick in Scotland is fined by e-bay for selling the Scottish Government on their auction website. A refund had to be made, as someone buys it for 47 Euros.

December. Easter Eggs go on sale in Tesco. The Internet Research Company release figures showing that up to 3% of the world's spam is genuine email. Hewlett Packard invent a computer printer that never runs out of ink because it never works from the minute it is taken out of its box.



EDITORIAL

MEET BOB THE EDITOR

WELCOME TO THE
JANUARY ISSUE.

WE WOULD LIKE TO WISH ALL
OUR READERS A PROSPEROUS NEW
YEAR .

Are you sick of making the same
resolutions year after year and yet
you never keep them? Here are some
resolutions that you can actually keep.

10. Read less.

9. I want to gain weight. Put on at least 30
pounds.

8. Stop exercising. Waste of time.

7. Watch more TV. I've been missing some good
stuff.

6. Procrastinate more.

5. Drink. Drink some more.

4. Start being superstitious.

3. Spend more time at work.

2. Stop bringing lunch from home: I should
eat out more.

and last but not least...

1. Take up a new habit: maybe
smoking!

LOOKING FOR A BUSINESS THEN VISIT
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UPDATES OF CLASSIFIEDS AND
EXTRA USEFUL INFORMATION.

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BUT ALSO A FEW WINTERS AGO
DOWN SOUTH IN ANDALUCIA**

THE



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Honda's Robot Legs Honda has invented robot legs. As you can see, this assistive device is designed to help handicapped, elderly or people who stand for a long time, such as factory workers. The device is designed to reduce stress and make you feel less tired. Engineer Jun Ashihara said, " This should be as easy to use as a bicycle." It is still not yet commercially available and no price has been set. This seems similar to HAL. We are just waiting for the day an entire body suit is invented so we can become a cyborg.

Graveyard Solar PowerThe Town Hall in the Barcelona municipality

of Santa Coloma de Gramenet, is claiming a first. It is the first place in Spain to install solar panels in the local cemetery. The panels placed above the typical Spanish niches generate enough power to supply 60 families a year and saves 62 tons of CO2 a year. There are 462 panels

in total, making up 752 square metres. The installation has cost the Town Hall 720,000 € and the power generated is now going to the local grid. There are plans to triple the size of the current plant.

TV and Internet Spanish Language Course A new Spanish language course, called "Hola, que tal" has been developed by the Cervantes Institute, TVE, and others. The course, designed for anyone wishing to learn the language, is already available on the internet at www.holaquetal.com and will go live on TVE in January. There are many different facets of the course including 208 television programs of 15 minutes each, 8,000 interactive and multimedia activities, nine virtual books, three student guides with advice on how to get the most out of the material, and a Web page.

Spanish Wine Master. A Spanish man, Pancho Campo, became the first Spaniard to be a Master of Wine at a ceremony at Vintner's Hall in London recently. The Institute of Masters of Wine awarded the title to 15 successful applicants who have studied for three or four years and have passed three days of blind tasting tests and four days of exams in viniculture, oenology, business, marketing and other wine related subjects.

EC Withdraws Body Scanner Proposal The European Commission has withdrawn the proposal for the installation of body scanners at all EU airports. It is considered that the initiative would have seriously delayed the deployment of a whole package of security measures due to come into force in 2010.

Granada Pigs Fed on Olives A family of pig farmers in a village near Granada is feeding their animals on olives. They say that the meat from the pigs tastes better than that from animals fed on the usual acorns.



Doctors and Nurses to take off their clothes in Barcelona Medical students from the sixth course in the Vall

d'Hebron teaching hospital in Barcelona have taken off their clothes to make an end of course calendar. The group, which will all qualify as doctors in June, poses

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in several parts of a different hospital, after the Vall d'Hebron refused permission. The calendar goes on sale today, price 8 € from calendarivh@hotmail.com. An initial print run of 1,500 copies has been made and the students say they want the money to pay for an end of course holiday to the Caribbean at Easter.

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Are you a victim of domestic abuse – does your partner or parent or loved one physically, verbally or emotionally attack you? We are a group of people who have suffered domestic abuse from our loved ones and support each other in finding solutions and courage to overcome our difficulties. If you are suffering domestic abuse please contact us in confidence at :- batteredpartner@ymail.com

Javier Bardem & Penelope Cruz nominated for a Golden Globe Spanish actors Javier Bardem and Penélope Cruz have both been nominated for a Golden Globe for their roles in Vicky Cristina Barcelona, the latest Woody Allen film. Many reports describe the pair as the couple of the year, both on and off the screen. The Woody Allen film is also nominated as Best Film, Musical or Comedy, and Rebecca Hall is also nominated in the Best Actress category. The award ceremony will be held in Los Angeles on January 11.



Three Catalan policemen found guilty of torture Three regional policemen from Barcelona, Los Mossos d'Esquadra, have been handed down six year prison sentences for torture. The Barcelona Provincial Court found the three guilty of beating and torturing a man of Romanian origin, Lucian P., after arresting him in confusion with a thief. At one point during the aggression in the Les Cortes police station in July 2006, they placed a pistol into his mouth and threatened to kill him. A fourth policeman was given a two year term and a fifth will face a fine. The guilty men also subjected the Romanian's three month pregnant girl friend to ill-treatment.



FESTA MAJOR ST. ANTONI 'EL PERELLÓ'

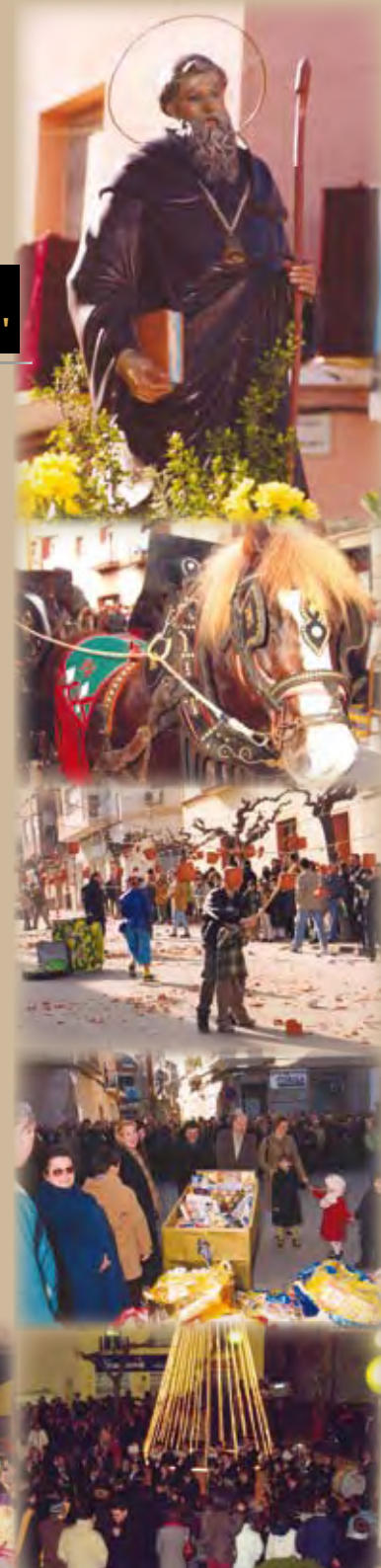
On January 17th is the festival of 'Els Tres Tombs de Sant Antoni,' which translates as 'The Three Turns (circuits) of Saint Anthony.' The festival dates back to the mid-1800s and is dedicated to the patron saint of animals, Sant Antoni. Historically, anyone who worked with livestock could go to this fiesta to receive a blessing from Sant Antoni and ask for a good harvest. A procession of horses, carts, mules and farmers makes three circuits of the town and on the third circuit, the blessings are carried out. In Valls, this festival was banned throughout a large part of the century, and started again in 1980. This celebration is spectacular for the sheer effort and festive spirit that the townspeople enter into with their authentic costumes and laden wagons. Many towns celebrate this event so check your local events.



In El Perelló on 17 January this local festivity is celebrated. The traditional "Three Strolls|Turns", act is done with the presence of numerous trained horses and the blessing of all animals is carried out. Their is also an auction of the traditional "Darrera" which is a cake during a dance "ball a l'aire lliure". Greatly important, is the "Festa del Calmant" (party of the "Tranquilizer"), which is the famous drink of the festival. Apart from these acts, there are many other activities so that everybody can have fun with the local festivity.


"ELS TRES TOMBS" 17 January events:

A les 8:00h Esmorzar (breakfast)


A les 11:00h Inici dels Tres Tombs Lloc: Plaça de l'Firal (the start of the blessings & celebrations)









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SOLAR HOT WATER



With more and more people now focused on reducing their carbon footprint and as importantly their gas or gasoil costs, there is an increasing interest in renewable energy. Arguably the best and most cost-effective way to do this is to install a solar-thermal water heating system.



Solar thermal means using the heat of the

sun directly, rather than turning the sun's energy into electricity then using the electricity to do the work.

There are two types of solar hot water systems, one that relies on pumping pressurized water through a closed loop between solar panel and hot water tank, or a passive system, this is a compact system which consists of a tank for the heated water, a solar collector and connecting pipes all pre-mounted in a frame. The water flows upwards when heated in the panel, when this water enters the tank (positioned higher than the solar panel) it expels some cold water from inside so that the heat transfer takes place without the need of a pump.

Both systems can include a backup heating element that is activated when the water in the tank falls below a minimum temperature setting such as 50 C.

Your solar hot water can provide 85% of all domestic hot water.

In 2005 Spain became the first country in the world to require the installation of photovoltaic electricity generation in all new buildings and the second after Israel to require the installation of solar hot water.

A good quality solar hot water system with 200ltr. Tank can be purchased for as little as 1200€. Once installed they are maintenance free.

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HOROSCOPES

A MORE DETAILED HOROSCOPES CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEB SITE



CAPRICORN Dec. 22 - Jan. 20

You begin the year with tremendous energy and initiative, dear Capricorn. You are especially focused, goal-oriented, and willing to go after what you want. 2009 brings new opportunities with money and personal possessions, and you'll get a taste of this energy towards the end of this month.



AQUARIUS Jan. 21 - Feb. 19

-While the New Year won't necessarily start with a bang for you, get ready for an exciting year ahead. You'll begin to feel this energy towards the last week of January, when the urge or need to start fresh overcomes you. 2009 is a year of discovery, expansion, and new beginnings.



PISCES Feb. 20 - Mar. 20

-Venus, the goddess of love, is in your sign most of the month, dear Pisces, and your charm soars. It's especially easy to attract who and what you want into your life in January. 2009 brings a cycle of regeneration, spiritual protection, and an increased desire to contribute to, and invest in, altruistic activities and causes.



ARIES Mar. 21 - Apr. 20

-The year begins with plenty of dynamism and activity in your professional life. You're especially serious about pursuing your goals, and your ambition runs very high. 2009 brings plenty of activity, development, and opportunity with friends, groups, and business income.



TAURUS Apr. 21 - May 21

-The year begins with a strong instinct for adventure, learning, and risk-taking. Your desire for experiences that reach beyond the usual routine is strong. 2009 brings opportunity and expansion into your professional life.



GEMINI May 22 - Jun. 22

The year begins with a strong need for inner change, transformation, and self-mastery, dear Gemini. New Year's resolutions mean more to you than usual, as your conviction to rid yourself of bad habits is stronger than usual. 2009 brings wonderful energy for adventure, learning, and travel into your life.



CANCER Jun. 23 - Jul. 22

The year begins with a strong focus on your social life and a significant relationship. Relationship matters are especially lively--full of conflicts and resolutions. 2009 brings a strong emphasis on intimate relationships, financial expansion, & psychological growth. Partnerships deepen and bring rewards.



LEO Jul. 23 - Aug. 23

-The year begins with plenty of work activity and energy for health and fitness routines, dear Leo. Getting organized and "back on track" is the focus now. You are willing to pour more time than usual into doing just that. 2009 brings opportunity and development with close personal relationships and partnerships.



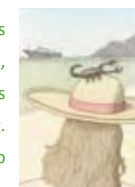
VIRGO Aug. 24 - Sep. 23

-The year begins with a whirlwind of romantic and creative energy, dear Virgo. You find it especially easy to pursue what you want, and your propositions are received well. 2009 brings fabulous opportunities in the areas of employment and health routines.



LIBRA Sept. 24 - Oct. 23

The year begins with a strong need for family and attention to domestic matters, dear Libra. This nesting instinct is a chance to rest up for more adventurous experiences to come. 2009 will be an especially opportunistic year for romantic and creative energy.



SCORPIO Oct. 24 - Nov. 22

-The year begins with a scuffle of activity, learning, and communicating. Tending to errands, handling paper work, and networking are important matters now. For you, 2009 will be a banner year for family, home, and domestic matters.



SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21

You begin the year with strong financial initiatives and the desire to boost your income. As long as you avoid impulse buys, you will come out ahead! 2009 opens up doors for you through new contacts and friendships, opportunities to learn and improve your skills, and sharper communications.



FOOD THOUGHT

This month's article attempts to answer some of the most common questions or doubts about feeding and nutrition.



Nutritional needs vary with age, activity level, temperament, environment, state of health and reproductive status. We invest hours daily, directly or indirectly, securing a balanced diet for ourselves. The animals that are dependant upon us for their food ought to be extended at least a modicum of forethought in planning what we give them to eat.

It's important to tend to their specific nutritional necessities, carnivores or meat eaters differ from herbivores or plant eaters, and there are differences within these groups. Cats require more protein than dogs. Our meals and leftovers do not satisfy the dietary needs of our pets, many of the seasonings we enjoy may upset them, some table scraps may be given as only an occasional extra! Their nutritional needs may be met by home cooking for those with the time to prepare meals for them. Your Veterinarian should be able to provide you with recipes to meet their specific needs. The easiest alternative is providing a commercially prepared diet, biscuit and/or tins are widely available. They provide a convenient well formulated balanced diet. These foods are prepared to fulfil the nutritional needs of the animal they are designed for.



The best way to determine their proper weight is to use the rib test as a guide. The rib cage should not be easily visible as that is a sign of being underweight (long hair breeds may need to be wet), while if you have to apply pressure

to feel the ribs as you run your hand over the rib cage, the animal is overweight.

Litter mates, with similar activity levels in the same environment, may have very different energy requirements. Feeding two meals a day instead of one will lead to better behaviour, generally help to inhibit begging, and is recommended in deep-chested breeds which are prone to gastric torsion, like Setters, Shepherds, and Danes among others.

Kittens and puppies (as well as adults) should learn to eat their food in a time limit within which to finish and not to have food left out all day (or night), limiting picky eaters, as well as unwanted pests. Working dogs, hunters, and brood bitches have greater caloric needs and their diets should



reflect this. Lack of Calcium to a brood bitch prior to whelping may lead to convulsions and even death if not corrected quickly, which is easy for your Vet.

An animal receiving a properly balanced diet generally does not need vitamin or mineral supplements. Treats like candies, cookies, or leftovers should never exceed 10% of their diet, these may lead to weight gain, even diabetes (from giving chocolate) as well as unwanted begging behaviour. Meat, poultry, and fish bones are definite items to avoid. A carnivore is a meat eater not a bone eater; sooner or later their consumption will cause problems that could be fatal. Bones are definitely a bad idea and now there are substitutes, commercially available which will do no harm. Eating grass or other plant material may make them sick or could even be poisonous.



Be careful with overdoing the table scraps, especially in holiday seasons as there is a tendency to be generous with turkey skins, crackling or other fatty cast off bits, they may lead to serious pancreatic problems. A variety of different diets is not essential but helps by permitting easier acceptance to changes in diet due to a lack of availability or for medical reasons. Watching what our animals eat is good common sense on our part, besides being good for them. You will be rewarded with the very least, by a wag of the tail or a purr, as well as saving otherwise avoidable and unnecessary trips to the Veterinarian.

Ronald Rosenfeld D.V.M.

A.M.P.A.R.E.

PROTECTORA D'ANIMALS DE LA RIBERA D'EBRE

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A. M. P. A. R. E. The society for the protection of animals Ebro region. Based in Mora La Nova. We desperately need to re-home dogs to make room for more! We have over 200 dogs for adoption.



TRIO

Our dogs of the month are: Trio is a year old and has one leg amputated due to an accident. He's very affectionate and loves to play. He needs space to run as his lack of a leg is no handicap! He is sterilised.



SUZI

Suzi is 9 months old and was abandoned as a three month old puppy. She loves attention and is intelligent and obedient. If you are interested in these or

any other dog please phone: Lynn 638 731 434 English

Isabel 977 404 720 Spanish/ Catalan

Donations always appreciated.

Do you know this dog?

He was found wandering in Mora de Ebre in December.

He was wearing a collar and was in very good condition.

He is obviously someones dog He is confident with people and very intelligent. We would much rather he were re-united with his owner than go to a stranger. If he is yours or you think you know his owner please contact me. Or if you would like to adopt this or any other dog call now. **Lynn 638 731 434**



Those pets that get home cooked diets should also be accustomed to eat commercial preparations, for those times when there is not time to prepare the home cooked meal. This is to avoid their rejection of said food or that by eating something they are not used to causing a bowel upset.

"HELLO, I AM ENCARNA"

THE ANIMAL REFUGE TERRES EBRE, PLEASE HELP ME!!!!!! I HAVE 20 PUPPIES AND 70 DOGS, 40 CATS PLEASE I NEED FOOD FOR DOGS AND CATS....."

I have adopted an abandoned dog. Have you?

www.albergdanimals.com

Alberg d'Animals de les Terres de l'Ebre

657 18 14 37
619 84 87 78

Col·laboradors de l'Alberg d'Animals

"HELLO, I AM ENCARNA"

THE ANIMAL REFUGE TERRES EBRE, PLEASE HELP ME!!!!!! I HAVE 20 PUPPIES AND 70 DOGS, 40 CATS PLEASE I NEED FOOD FOR DOGS AND CATS....."



CALL ARCA TODAY TO PROVIDE A HOME TO ONE OF 200 DOGS NEEDING A LOVING HOME or IF YOU CAN VOLUNTEER ANY ASSISTANCE WITH THE DOGS

Association for the refuge and Care of Animals

Arca

Hundreds of lovely dogs need homes

Donations and Volunteers needed

Maeve (English) 678 975 816, Cinta 625 915 605

Anna 649 507 427, Carmen 655 040 359

protectora.arca@wanadoo.es

<http://www.protectoraarca.org/>

THE LIGHTER SIDE

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

Handle every situation like a dog. If you can't eat or hump it. Piss on it

One of the greatest secrets of life is having both patience and wisdom...



and walk away.

TOP 12 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS MADE BY DOGS

12. HAVE A TORRID ONE-NIGHT STAND WITH A STREET MUTT.
11. TRY TO UNDERSTAND THAT THE CAT IS FROM VENUS AND I AM FROM MARS.
10. I WILL NO LONGER BE BEHOLDEN TO THE SOUND OF THE CAN OPENER.
9. CIRCULATE PETITION THAT LEG HUMMING BE A JURIED COMPETITION IN MAJOR DOG SHOWS.
8. CALL RSPCA AND TELL THEM WHAT THAT SURGICAL MASK-WEARING FREAK DOES TO US WHEN NO ONE IS AROUND.
7. TAKE TIME FROM BUSY SCHEDULE TO STOP AND SMELL BEHINDS.
6. HAMSTER: DON'T LET THEM FIGURE OUT I'M JUST A RAT ON STEROIDS, OR THEY'LL FLUSH MY ASS.
5. ALWAYS SCOOT BEFORE LICKING.
4. GROW OPPOSABLE THUMB; BREAK INTO PANTRY; DECIDE FOR MYSELF HOW MUCH FOOD IS "TOO" MUCH.
3. GET OUT OF THE CASTLE MORE, MAYBE SWIM COUNTER-CLOCKWISE THIS YEAR.
2. JANUARY 1ST: KILL THE SOCK! MUST KILL THE SOCK! JANUARY 2ND - DECEMBER 31: RE-LIVE VICTORY OVER THE SOCK.
- AND THE NUMBER 1 NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS MADE BY DOGS...
1. I WILL NOT CHASE THE DAMNED STICK UNLESS I SEE IT LEAVE HIS HAND.

NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS 2009:

Lose weight



Stop Drinking



Take more Risk



Make new Friends



I will always "check for paper" when leaving the loo.

New Year's Resolutions for Internet Junkies

*I will try to figure out why I "really" need 12 e-mail addresses.

*I will stop sending e-mail to my wife (husband). A phone call every now and then would be appreciated.

*I resolve to work with neglected children -- my own.

*I will answer my snail mail with the same enthusiasm with which I answer my e-mail.

*I will stop sending e-mail, ICQ, Instant Messages and be on the phone at the same time with the same person.

*I resolve to back up my 120GB hard drive daily...well, once a week...okay, monthly then... or maybe... at least once a year.

*I will spend less than one hour a day on the Internet - This, of course, will be hard to estimate since I'm not a clock watcher.

*I will stop checking my e-mail at 3:00 in the morning... 4:30 is much more practical since my friends overseas already had time to answer me by then.

*When I hear a funny joke, I will not reply. "LOL... LOL!"

*I will read the manual... just as soon as I can find it.

*I will think of a password other than "password."

*I resolve... I resolve to... I resolve to, uh... I resolve to, uh, get my, er... I resolve to, uh, get my, er, off-line work done, too!

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

SELF HELP

THE



LIVE PRESS

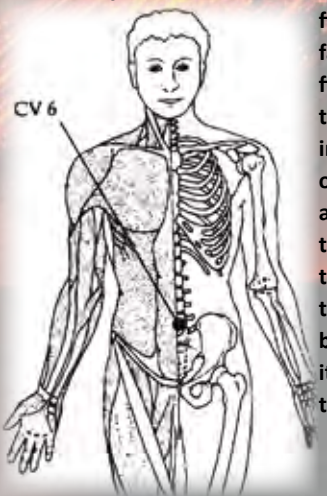
FINDING BALANCE



The start of the new year often reminds us to renew our efforts to find the balance we need in our lives & to help make up for any excesses that may have left us a bit tired and toxic as the last year ended. Just attending to the basics again, like eating better & a little exercise, we know can give us back the balance and stability we need to enjoy our lives & bodies more, and help keep our resistance up to the winter colds this weather can bring. Another simple way to support the body to detox & boost the immune system is to practise self-help acupressure, using the body's pressure points which you can easily find on the body - or on each other. These pressure points are the same points we use in acupuncture, located on the meridians or channels of energy which run through the body joining the dots, but they can be just as effective used with pressure alone, without needles. Using gentle pressure at these points where the energies of the different main organ systems converge can relieve many unwanted problems, from muscular pains & arthritis to hangovers.

The pressure points are usually just like wells, as they tend to be in a small dip or place that your

fingers just naturally fall into. Trust your fingers to find the point that is most intense in the areas pointed out in the diagrams, and gently build up to using a pressure that is strong enough that you can feel it - but not so strong and it is painful so that the body tenses up,



obviously - to get the most benefit. Use pressure on the point for a couple of minutes. It's usually best to do whichever ones are most tender as they are the ones that most need rebalanced.

With Chinese medicine tools like this you have to be strong if necessary, though always gentle, in order to make the change the system needs to make things better. You can either use steady pressure or a pulsing style, releasing and increasing the pressure, whatever your intuition tells you. People find that using some of these points for a few minutes a day over a period of time can make real changes to their well-being - and it's free!

Governing Vessel GV 24.5: between the eyebrows, in the little dip where the nose meets the forehead

- calms anxiety, helps headaches, dizziness & insomnia

Gall Bladder GB21: on the highest point of the shoulder, 1 or 2 inches out from spine, on the tightest spot

- helps relieve neck pain, shoulder tension and irritability

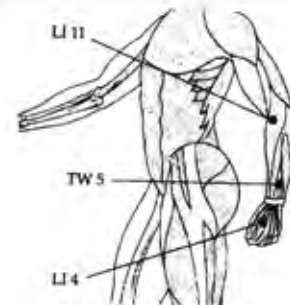
Gall Bladder GB20: just below the base of the skull, on either side of the spine, in the hollows that lie 2 to 3 inches apart

- relieves neck pain & stiffness, & headaches

GV 24.5



GV 24.5



on the outside of the arm, in the dip between the 2 bones

- helps rheumatism, tendonitis, wrist pain, & increases resistance to colds

Large Intestine 11: by the elbow where crease ends when you bend it

- strengthens the immune system, helps colds, fever, constipation & elbow pain

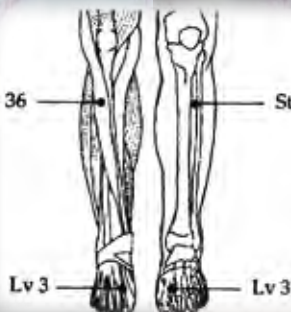
Large Intestine LI4: (Note: don't use this point if pregnant, as it can start contractions) in the webbing between your thumb and 1st finger, at the highest point when you squeeze these together

- relieves pain anywhere in the body, calms the mind, helps headaches, colds, constipation & allergies

Conception Vessel CV6: two finger widths below the navel

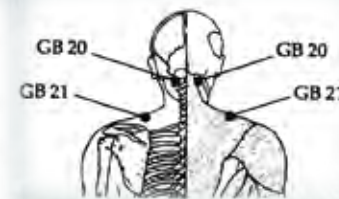
- strengthens the immune system, boosts energy and helps digestion

Stomach ST36: on the outside of the leg, 4 finger widths below the base of the kneecap just out from the shin bone



Lv 3

Lv 3



Triple Warmer TW5: 3 finger-widths above the wrist crease

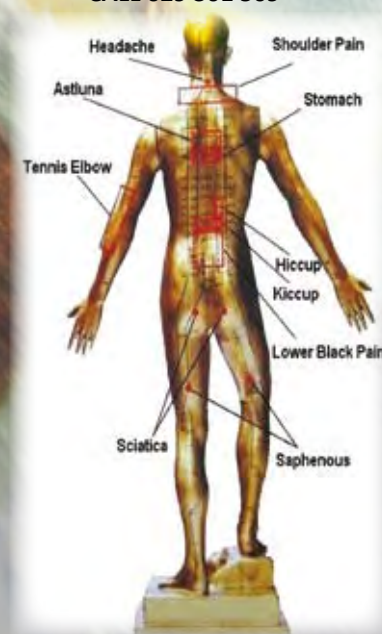
boosts energy, immune system & clarity, relieves knee pain, helps digestive problems & anxiety

Liver LIV3: between bones above 1st and 2nd toes, run your finger up to where it can go no further & press in

boosts the immune system, helps clear headaches, hangovers & moodiness, and sore/tired eyes, helps memory & concentration

So good luck exploring what these points can do for you - some of them may become your really good friends

Taru Burstall, M.A., Dip. Mass, Lic. Ac. practises massage & acupuncture in El Perello CALL 629 301 509





CHALLENGES OF GARDENING IN CATALUNYA



WARMING GARDENING By Clodagh and Dick Handscombe.

Hopefully January brings a month of sunny if cold weather as a welcome change to all the rain we had in the autumn. Crisp sunny days are just what one needs to get into the garden to work off the Christmas excess kilos, progress the laying out of new gardens and prepare established gardens for the Spring.

Luckily the following ten jobs will keep us warm on the coldest of days.

1. Get on with the major winter cut back and clean up. What needs doing is explained in Chapter 6.9 of *Your Garden in Spain*.

2. Old olive, almond and citrus trees will need heavy remedial prunings. Younger ones and all other fruit trees will require annual prunings to stimulate flowers and sizeable fruit this year. *Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain* details what needs doing.

3. Large flowering trees often need a major pruning every few years to ensure that they are not too large for the garden while ensuring that they still give sufficient shade in the summer.

4. If you don't already have one prepare a raised bed or vegetable plot for sowing/planting up from March onwards.

Chapter ...in *Growing Healthy Vegetables in Spain* compares ...ways of constructing raised beds.

5. Unless it's freezing January is a good month to lay down terraces or paths whether with stone slabs or chippings laid over plastic sheeting.

6. Ponds and fountains



WINTER GARDENING

add a special touch to Spanish gardens both by adding the relaxing and cooling sound of running water and for water /bog plants with exotic summer flowers that need no watering. Now is a good time to dig one out but make it twice as big as your first plan. We have enlarged both ours to ensure that the fish can still be seen when water lilies are fully leaved.

7. Hedges are due for a thorough trim as part of the winter cutback.

8. Compost heaps need turning and filling with shredded prunings and weeds from the winter cut back. Last years fully composted heap can now be worked into flower and vegetable beds and used for mulching shrubs and trees.

9. Major branches cut from trees need cutting, stacking and drying ready for burning next winter in the wood stove.

10. If you are an experienced builder how about building a garden kitchen ready for the Easter Monday paella and summer barbecues.

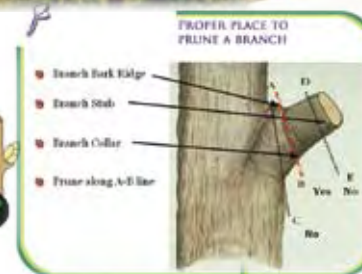
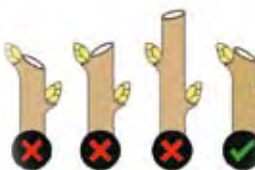
Suspect that's more than enough winter work for even the most enthusiastic gardener handyman! Happy gardening in 2009 from the results of your efforts.

***Clodagh and Dick have now lived and gardened in Spain for twenty five years. They have collated much of their experience and ideas for your convenience in a trilogy of books titled *Your Garden in Spain*, *Growing healthy Fruit in Spain* and *Growing Healthy Vegetables in Spain*. They are available from many bookshops and websites and by telephoning 952-485838 if you have no internet.**

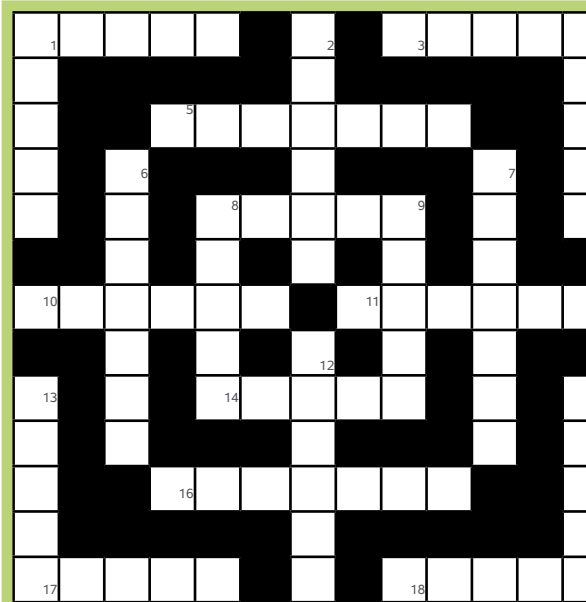
© Clodagh and Dick Handscombe December 2008.



GARDENING EXERCISES



SPANGLISH?-ANSWERS NEXT MONTH



ACROSS

1. clock/watch
3. arm
5. to use
8. square
10. besides
11. sad
14. rescoldo (E)
16. ill-wil
17. shower
18. book

DOWN

1. straight
2. to silence
4. to hate
6. opinion
7. to lay down
8. toll
9. to open
12. abort
13. grande (E)
15. mud

BYSARAH (E=translate to english otherwise to spanish)

ACROSS:

2. navidad
5. pavo
6. idol
7. cat
9. mini

ANSWERS TO THE DECEMBER ISSUE OF SPANGLISH

DOWN:

- | | | | |
|------------|-------------|---------------------|-----------|
| 10. nada | 18. acne | 7. carolling | 17. rooms |
| 12. roe | 20. oval | 8. tres reyes (4,5) | 19. coin |
| 13. tinsel | 22. gas | 9. manteca | 21. also |
| 14. rancho | 23. vino | 11. alcohol | |
| 16. ivy | 25. regalos | 4. food | 15. meyor |

JEWEL OF THE PYRENEES BAQUEIRA-BERET, SPAIN

If you want to talk about skiing in Spain, no one would point you anywhere else but Baqueira-Beret. The resort is nestled in the region of Catalonia on the northern side of the Pyrenees among tranquil towns that seem to have stood still for centuries. Its remote accessibility (you can only get there by bus or car along winding, narrow roads) makes it one of the most secluded and exclusive skiing locations in Europe with the finest reputation for natural winter beauty. Baqueira counts on 70 slopes across 100km with altitudes between 1,600 and 2,500 metres. Baqueira is the ultimate paradise for expert skiers who have six black slopes available and the freedom to explore off-piste on notably the best powder snow in Spain. Although a relatively inexpensive resort compared to others in Europe, its popularity comes from the natural feel behind the stone and wood decoration along with the variety of off-ski activities and the mouth-watering Spanish-French cuisine that waits below in the villages of Baqueira and Beret. Don't be surprised to see the Royal Family on vacation or the Spanish Ski Team practicing nearby. For more information and reservations visit www.baqueira.es.

THE ASPEN OF EUROPE ST. MORITZ, SWITZERLAND

With an average of 322 sunny days a year, St. Moritz is one of the most renowned holiday resorts of the world. Chic, elegant and cosmopolitan in ambiance, it is situated at 1,856m above sea level in the middle of the lake-dotted landscape of the Upper Engadine. Corvatsch, Corviglia and Diavolezza are its most popular skiing areas, each with its own level of expertise from beginner to experienced. But it's not just the skiing that makes St. Moritz exceptional: the expansive network of snow bars, toboggan runs, snowshoe trekking and winter golfing make a skiing holiday completely unlike any other. You can also sign up for a "Clean Energy Tour" that takes you along St. Moritz's latest renewable energy installations, including a solar-powered railway system. And if you really want to feel one with the snow, take a camping trip, igloo style – build your own icy hut and snuggle up inside with a heated blanket and winter-weight sleeping bag. For more information and reservations, visit www.stmortiz.ch.

TO SEE AND BE SEEN CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, ITALY

Likely a contender for the costliest and most stylish resort in Europe, Cortina, as most shorthand it, is the primary and largest resort of the Dolomite region in Italy. Young and trendy, Cortina is crowned by dramatic rock formations which can limit your skiing activity but also add to the beauty of the Italian Alps. A place where sipping your tea or espresso is just as important as your turning technique, the village entertainment has turned into the classiest post-ski hobby. But beyond the glam façade, Cortina has a variety of slopes for all levels and loads of non-ski activities that are equally popular. The best part for serious skiers: a large component of the winter guest list mostly comes to be seen or to

relish in the fabulous sunshine. Translation: the slopes tend to be relatively empty and skiing high above the treeline is especially rewarding for all-day sport. For more information and reservations, visit www.cortina.dolomiti.com.

JETSETTER'S PARADISE COURCHEVEL, FRANCE

If you don't want to be limited to one neighbouring ski town for evening entertainment, Courchevel 1850, part of the Three Valleys, is the best bet. This isn't just the favourite Alpine hangout of the Paris jet set (who fly their private planes into the mini airport mid-slope), it's also the scene of leading hotels and Michelin-star eateries. Courchevel itself is a series of smaller villages whose names reflect their heights in metres - Courchevel 1850, Courchevel 1650, Courchevel 1550, and so on. And although the more than 600km of ski runs are available throughout the Three Valleys via lifts, Courchevel is the place to hit the slopes straight from your apartment or hotel lobby. And if by chance a long day of cross-country trekking or snowboarding hasn't worn you out completely, the nightclubs and sultry lounges will keep you occupied with luxurious locals and relocated St. Tropez partygoers who come to Courchevel exclusively to party right under the star-dotted French sky. For more information and reservations, visit www.courchevel.com.

Top Hotel Picks Byblos Courchevel, France

The name itself says it all. The Byblos Courchevel, which is noted as being one of the most booked hotels in the Alps, is elegant, refined and simply luring with its cozy fireside decor. The hotel's facilities, in addition to being five-star, include a fitness centre, an on-site fine dining restaurant, a spa facility and indoor pool.

For more information, visit www.byblos.com.

LA PLETA, SPAIN

Named a member of the Small Luxury Hotels of the World, La Pleta offers calm and comfort in a five-star setting. Each of the 67 rooms has a mountain view as well as under-floor heating. La Pleta boasts one of the finest restaurants in Spain and houses a library, gym and the renowned Oceania Spa, inspired by the ancient culture of the Pyrenees. For more information, visit www.lapleta.com.

Tschuggen, Switzerland

The Tschuggen Grand Hotel is a must. We not only loved the concept behind this tastefully thought-out hotel, but we also loved part of the re-design, which is unlike anything you'll see in modern ski resorts. Today, the 130-room hotel is a member of the Leading Hotels of the World and not surprisingly lives up to its good name thanks to its welcoming and utterly professional service. In addition, the Tschuggen has no less than four excellent restaurants, which cater for all tastes from Swiss delights to sophisticated French cuisine. For more information, visit www.tschuggen.ch.



YOGA FOR ALL

Happy New Year. The fun and festivities may have taken their toll and perhaps you're ready for a fresh start, a detox. From reading the celebrity mags we may be forgiven for believing that detox is something you do by either checking into a cushy rehabilitation facility or consuming nothing but liquids for 21 days. It seems overly arduous or something only the rich and idle have time to do. But your body is designed to engage in detoxification every day. We can help these natural processes

along by adopting a regular yoga practice. Yoga, with its focus on systematically stretching and compressing every part of the body, is particularly well suited to keeping the waste removal departments of the body functioning well.

In a well rounded yoga practice, every part of the body is pushed, pulled, twisted, and turned. This facilitates the removal of waste products such as carbon dioxide, lactic acid and lymphatic fluid from the deep tissues and extremities of the body that a jog or bike ride just don't reach.

How detoxification works

There are three main systems of the body that play a crucial role in the elimination of wastes – circulatory, digestive and lymph. The circulatory system pumps blood throughout the body, delivering oxygen to and carrying waste products from cells. The digestive system processes the food we eat, separating nutrients from waste and eliminating anything the body doesn't need. And the lymphatic system collects intracellular fluid from throughout the body and transports it to the lymph nodes where anything harmful (such as bacteria or other contaminants such as excess alcohol!) can be removed before the lymphatic fluid is returned to the bloodstream. It's a robust system that works well on its own. But in order to help your body keep up with the demands of our sometimes stressful lives, and nutrient poor modern diet place on these systems, the trick is to give your body some help so that it can perform its natural detoxing functions. And yoga is the ideal companion.

New Year, New You

To kick start the New Year why not give yourself the gift of a weekly Yoga for Detox class. Classes start on Wednesday 7th January 11am - 12 at the Hotel Flamingo Spa in L'Ampolla, and are held weekly. After the poolside class feel free to swim in the heated indoor pool, then complete the detoxification benefits by stepping into the sauna. Give yourself the gift of health – all for only 10 euros.

Weekly Yoga Classes
All levels welcome just bring yourself and a desire to reach your full potential!

Tuesdays 10am 11 Basquerra Casals
Wednesdays 11am 12 L'Ampolla, Hotel Flamingo Spa
Thursdays 10:30am 11:30 L'Ampolla, Hotel Flamingo Gym
Fridays 11am 12 Miami Playa

To discuss your goals call 663 140 297

Sarah Good is a Sivananda trained yoga teacher offering weekly drop-in classes. Please feel free to call for more details on 663 140 297



Your recipe especially for Olive Press readers from the chef at Restaurant del Mar



ARROZ A BANDA

INGREDIENTS

FOR 4 PEOPLE:

4 CUPS OF RICE

4Kg OF FISH OF YOUR CHOICE AND SHELLFISH

2 LEEKS

1 LARGE ONION

2 CLOVES OF GARLIC

2 TABLESPOONS OF TOMATO SAUCE

WATER

OIL

SALT

SAFFRON

1 BAY LEAF

A BUNCH OF PARSLEY



Cooking instructions:

Pour a generous amount of water into a large, deep pan. Slice the fish, leeks and onion, adding them to the pan along with the shellfish. Tie together the bunches of parsley and add them to the pan with the bay

leaves, leaving them to cook for 15-20 minutes.

In another pan crush the garlic and fry. Add the saffron, tomato sauce and the rice. Bit by bit add the stock you have made (double the quantity of stock to the rice you have added) and leave to cook for 15 minutes.

Take the pan off the heat, cover it with a cloth and leave it a while.



🌿 Bookings coming via The Olive Press will get a free glass of cava 🍷 🌿

HOTEL FLAMINGO
Restaurant del Mar L'Ampolla

Choose a starter plus a second plus a dessert with house wine and water included, for only 20€ per person (VAT included)

From the Restaurant del Mar, you can enjoy fantastic views of the 'golfo of Sant Jordi' and of the natural park of the Delta del Ebro and taste international meals made with fresh products and fish from the area.

The dining-rooms have capacity for 300 people and are perfect for social events, meetings and all types of celebrations.

The kitchen opening times are:
1pm - 3:30 pm & from 8.00pm to 10.30pm

BOOK YOUR SPECIAL LUNCH OR DINNER TODAY

Reservations Call 977 593 816 Fax 977 593 819
Ronda del Mar, 58. 43895 L'Ampolla (Tarragona)

Starters
Rucula salad sprinkled with parmesan.
Pumpkin soup with beans and mushrooms.
Fried artichokes cooked with prawns.
Steamed mussels with a touch of lemon.
Escalibada, traditional cold vegetable salad with anchovies.
Carpaccio of cod made 'Flamingo' style.
Fish soup with prawns cooked in butter.
Price Per Starter 8€ (Vat Included)

Main Dish
Hake cooked in sider with fresh elams.
Cod baked with caramelized 'All i oli'.
Pork filets cooked with roquefort cheese.
Entrecote of veal with fried mushrooms.
Monkfish kebab wrapped with bacon, peppers and prawns.
Traditional spanish paella (min 2 persons)
Fideua with 'alli oli'.
Price Per Main Dish 12€ (Vat Included)

Desserts
Crema catalana.
Fresh fruit salad in fruit juice.
Hot chocolate coulant.
Handmade pastries
Medal of vanilla and chocolate icecream coated in honey nuts.
Pears in wine.
Sweet milk flavoured icecream in a chocolate boat.
Price Per Dessert 5€ (Vat Included)

www.hotelflamingo.cat
reservas@hotelflamingo.cat

CUTTING PINES AND CLEARING LAND



An English friend living here recently said she'd heard that pine trees are no longer classed as a protected species, and did I know if this was true? So I called

the *Medi Ambient* offices in Amposta and Tarragona, regional head offices of the Generalitat's Environmental Department.

Firstly, they point out that pine trees have never been protected species as such, but that there are regulations about cutting any forest trees and using the wood. These have not changed.

Formerly cultivated farm land with abandoned olive trees etc is apparently classed as forest land as soon as wild and forest species —including long grasses and bushes— start to appear, and permission is needed to clear it.

There are two basic permissions that may apply:

1) Rompuda de terreny forestal, for completely clearing

forest land in order to plant new crops or bring abandoned ones back into production.

You'll have to fill out a detailed form, justify the work on economic grounds, and provide a diagram of the area to be cleared. You will get a visit from a technician, and no work can start until you have permission.

2) Notificació per ús domèstic, for selectively cutting a specific amount of wood for your own use on the *finca*.

This is a simple, one-page form. If you don't hear anything from Medi Ambient 15 days after submitting it, permission is automatically granted for one year. You may get a visit from a technician or the *Agents Rurals*.

For both you will need your NIE, passport and your *escritura* (title deed).

If you are not sure which permission you need, Medi Ambient suggest you visit them or the Agents Rurals. Take the *poligono* and *parcela* number, a rough plan of the finca, and some photos of the land you want to clean up.

Medi Ambient Terres de l'Ebre

Burgos, 17, baixos, 43870 Amposta

Tel: 977 707 320, email: a/e: sttebre.

dmah@gencat.cat

Medi Ambient Tarragona

Vidal i Barraquer, 12-14, 43005

Tarragona

Tel: 977 241 514, email: sttarragona.dmah@gencat.cat

Agents Rurals

http://mediambient.gencat.net/cat/el_medi/incendis/agents_rurals/localitzacio_BC_AR.jsp?ComponentID=155893&SourcePageID=155905#1

Medi Ambient say they are happy to look at any property and tell you which areas can be cleared, or advise if you have individual trees that need to be cut down, for example for safety reasons.

A common protected species: the Mediterranean fan palm



They encourage enquiries and claim to rarely say no, unless you want to completely clear a forested area with protected species in a Xarxa Natura 2000 area or natural park...

What is the Xarxa Natura 2000?

The Xarxa Natura 2000 is a network of protected nature areas. It includes protected bird habitats and some of Catalonia's most magnificent natural countryside.

These areas are effectively 'policed' by the Agents Rurals, who are responsible to the Medi Ambient department.

Within them, special controls apply to activities like clearing land and building *almacenes* (storage buildings). For example, to build an *almacén* in one you may need approval from both the local Ajuntament and Medi Ambient.

In some areas the Xarxa Natura 2000 overlaps with two Natural Parks: 'El Port' and the Delta de l'Ebre. They have their own specific governing bodies, and the Medi Ambient department may refer enquiries to them.

So if you have a rural property or are thinking of buying one, I'd say it's important to know if it's in a protected area.

1:50.000 scale, PDF format maps of Xarxa Natura 2000 areas in the Ebro region:

http://mediambient.gencat.net/cat/el_medi/espais_naturals/xarxa_natura_2000/mapes_terres_ebre.jsp?ComponentID=114126&SourcePageID=113833#1

Maps of Xarxa Natura 2000 areas in the rest of Tarragona province:

http://mediambient.gencat.net/cat/el_medi/espais_naturals/xarxa_natura_2000/mapes_tarragona.jsp?ComponentID=114125&SourcePageID=113833#1

These can take a while to open. Each map is for an individual protected area, so you may need to look at more than one to find your finca.

Finally, a handy website with common and protected plants in Catalonia, Valencia and the Balearic islands. Some English content, and includes Spanish, Catalan and scientific names, and photos: <http://herbarivirtual.uib.es/eng-med/index.html>

Hope this is useful, and I'd welcome any feedback or comments via email, to jeff@fincasdirect.com.

Wanted: riverside village house to rent

I have some clients looking for a riverside house to rent for at least one year from February 2009. They are an English couple that already know the area well and want to try before buying.

They are looking for a house with at least two bedrooms and preferably some garage/storage space for fishing gear. They have one dog: a well behaved Jack Russell.

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CABALGATA LOS REYES MAGOS

The tradition in Spain and Catalonia is that the biggest Christmas celebration is not on 25th December, when JC is born, but the big day is when "Los Reyes Magos", the Three Kings of the Orient (also known as the Three Wise Men Balthasar, Caspar and Melchior) arrive to see the new born baby Jesus (or "Jesús" as he is known here!) This is called the Night of the 3 Kings, the "Cabalgata los Reyes Magos," - "Cavalcada de Reis" in Catalan and The Three Kings' Parade and also know as the "Twelfth Night procession" The Reyes Magos parade in Spain is on 5th January every year. This is the evening before Twelfth Night Epiphany on 6th January, which is the day when the children get their biggest haul of presents.



It makes sense from a gift point of view. Santa Claus is a fine guy with the best of intentions, but we all know he was brewed up by Coca-Cola as a modern day mutant Saint Nicholas and he certainly was not in Bethlehem on 25th December in the Year 0000 with a bulging sack of pressies, was he? Whereas the Three Kings were definately there, albeit 12 days late, but bearing great pressies! So the Kings are worth waiting for.



On the night of 5th December Spanish and Catalan children before going to sleep, put some milk and biscuits next to the Christmas tree for the Three Kings and some water for their camels. They also leave out their best pair of shoes to be filled with presents.



On the next day, 6 January children wake up and see how many presents they have received. If they have been good, they will find a lot of good presents but if they have been naughty they will find coal. These days, the coal is actually made of sugar, but some years ago it was real coal.

During this day, all families enjoy a piece of roscon (a sugar-frosted fruit-filled bread) for breakfast tradition says that the person who finds a novelty such as a coin, in his or her portion will have good luck for the next year.



Both young and old enjoy opening their presents on this day, but sadly it also marks the end of Christmas.

There are lots of processions of the Three Wise Men in each city, the children go along with there parents to see the kings and receive sweets from them. In Barcelona at the Cabalgata los Reyes Magos, or Procession of the Three Kings, crowds gather at the harbour steps of the Moll de Fusta to witness the glorious arrival of the regal trio.



The first sightings of the kings' boat are met with fireworks and a riotous cacophony of fog horns from a flotilla gathered in the port, while a 21-gun salute welcomes them to dry land. Then the colourful Procession of the Three Kings, led by the mayor and the metropolitan guard, heads towards the city centre past some of the city's major monuments, culminating at the floodlit fountain of Montjuïc, where classical music written especially for the event is played.



Olives & popcorn

Welcome to Olives & Popcorn, your monthly guide to great Spanish based films that in my opinion should not be ignored.

Any comments are welcome. Also if you want to know more about a particular film and how to get a copy again get in touch via my email below.

This month I present one of my favourite Spanish films of all time...I can say with a sense of pride that I went to the cinema three times to see this film and enjoyed it more every time.

This is one film you really need to watch cuddled up with that special someone.....



Talk to Her (Hable con ella) - 2002 (Drama)

Talk to Her (Spanish: Hable con ella) is a 2002 film written and directed by the Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar, starring Javier Cámara, Darío Grandinetti, Leonor Watling, Geraldine Chaplin and Rosario Flores. It won the 2002 Academy Award for Screenplay Written Directly for the Screen and the 2003 Golden Globe Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

The film's themes include the difficulty of communication between the sexes, loneliness and intimacy, secrets and infidelity, and the persistence of love beyond loss.

Benigno (literally meaning "benign" or "harmless" in Spanish) and Marco cross paths when they both attend the same dance performance, only to eventually meet again at a private clinic where Benigno works. There he is the personal nurse and caregiver of Alicia, a beautiful dance student who lies in a coma and with whom Benigno has become obsessed. Marco, a journalist and travel writer, is at the clinic to visit his girlfriend Lydia, a famous matador who is also comatose after being gored by a bull. As the men stand vigil over these women, the story unfolds in a flashback and flash forward motif, telling the lives of the four with respect to their relationships. Marco leaves Lydia when her previous lover informs him that they had reunited a month before Lydia's accident.

'Talk to Her' is slow paced from the start but it is in no way wasted for every moment on the screen is full of profound meaning regarding relationships, and the thin line between devotion and obsession that I am sure we all have had to face at some point in our lives.

The film is a beautiful tapestry of emotion and scenery that only someone like Pedro Almodóvar would be able to create. Without giving away the ending I can say that you have to have a very stony heart not to be swept away with the feelings that are illustrated on the screen.

Pedro has directed many great films but this is his best work with only 'Volver' coming close. But don't despair I will be sure to present more of his work including 'Volver' in later issues.

Jason Berry 10/12/2008 Contact e-mail:
gatchajay@hotmail.com





NEWS FROM OUR CALIFORNIA CORRESPONDENT (NORFOLK)

FAREWELL TO THE ENGLISH 'LOCAL'

By your celebrity DJ, you can listen to him live on www.futureradio.co.uk Wednesday mornings 10..00-13.00

If you are to believe the storylines of UK soap operas you may be led to think that the hub of any community is the neighbourhood pub. Whether it is the Rovers in Coronation Street, the Queen Vic in Eastenders or the dear old Bull in the Archers it appears that the whole community, rich or poor, pops in for a pint or a port and lemon at one time or another. Plots are hatched, hearts are broken and problems resolved within the oak covered walls of these cosy establishments.

Sadly this is rapidly becoming a thing of the past. No more are rosy cheeked landladies or busty barmaids pulling pints and dispensing crisps and pork scratchings; surely the food of the Gods! Old Jethro no longer sits in the corner of the inglenook toasting his boots in front of a blazing log fire picking the flies out of a pint of 'Scrutstocks Old Dirigible' and making it last all evening. Darts and skittles are rapidly falling victims to health and safety regulations and, if they are played at all, are banished to some back 'games' room. The hazy fog that hung over the whole proceedings has gone with the onslaught of the smoking regulations. Even the prevalent smell of stale beer has been washed away by chemical cleaning agents in the name of hygiene.

The sad truth is that British pubs are closing weekly. The doors are shutting for the last time and the windows are being boarded up to ward off the squatters and vandals. The demise is down to many causes and has been coming for some time. The 'Olde Worlde' pubs

run by independent breweries were merged into the major chains that set out to 'modernise' them. Most of the charm of these places was replaced by 'theme' interiors where everything was seemingly made of plastic, even the staff. Out went the Real Ales and in came exotic, and insipid, Continental lagers. Whatever they were called they somehow all tasted the same spewing forth propelled by high pressure gas from metal tanks rather than the traditional oaken barrels.

There was a time when a selection of curly sandwiches or the 'Ploughman's Lunch' was enough to satisfy the gastronomic demands of your average pub-goer. Then the brewery presented us with a menu the size of a barn door with all sorts of exotic dishes which, in reality, nestle in the bowels of the kitchen deep freeze ready to be popped into the microwave and served up with a sprig of parsley. We never really complained, after all we are British. Of course there were some establishments who had real chefs usually desperate for a TV series. If you were prepared to be put on a waiting list for several months to get a booking, you could be served a pretentious and wildly overpriced concoction which looked nice but frankly tasted of dog food. Somehow this was not really what most of us wanted.

The young customers were what the pub chains wanted. They could be lured in with 'Happy Hours' when the deal was to drink as much as you could at reduced prices. Even this was not enough for the serious party seeker on a night out. The standard practice, I am informed, is to drink a



large quantity of supermarket alcohol at home before you embark on the evening's jollity. And here is the first factor in the demise of the pub. You local Lidl or Tesco can supply booze at prices well below what some pubs pay their wholesalers. It has even been said that they sell alcohol at a lower prices than some bottled water.

When they are fuelled up by the 'Happy Hour' the revellers will soon move on to the clubs. Here they spend the rest of the night, and their money. I remember a time when discos overcame the licensing regulations by serving a 'meal' to their customers. Apparently you could legitimately serve booze after hours if the customer was eating. The 'meal' as I recall was 'Scampi in a Basket'. A few lumps of re-constituted fish product and half a dozen chips served on a sticky wickerwork container was all you needed to drink until the small hours.



Live musical entertainment was once the mainstay of many larger pubs. Whether it was a bunch of rustic folksingers, or an emerging local Grunge band, people would pack the place to doors for the free entertainment and atmosphere. Alas music licences are now being regularly contested by neighbours who are mainly Yuppies living in new developments. They apparently 'don't like the noise' and so that puts an end to years of good entertainment and fun.

Next came the smoking ban. Now I, as a non-smoker, was amongst the first to welcome this but I did feel that there ought to have been a compromise

somehow. There was a time when we did have 'Smoking Rooms'. It is true that the staff should be protected from the dangers of passive smoke inhalation but surely we could have come up with airtight hatch systems which, after all, have been well tested in Star Wars movies. The compromise is that people are banished to the great outdoors, whatever the weather, to crouch under a makeshift shelter usually with a gas patio heater punching an even greater hole in the ozone layer. Soon these are abandoned by even the most die-hard of addicts and alcohol from Netto, drunk at home, seems a much better option.

The credit crunch is probably the last nail in the coffin for many pubs. Even with the lifting of the restriction in drinking hours establishments are more or less empty on anything but Friday and Saturday nights. I've tried to find a way of ending this article on an optimistic note, but sadly there isn't one. The only place you will soon be able to find a traditional English bar is in some Spanish resort. Make the most of them. They are probably the last British pubs we'll ever see.

© Mike Stevens
December 2008



GOVERNMENT TO BAIL OUT PATHETIC LAPLAND THEME PARK

LORD Mandelson has added the pathetic Lapland theme park to his list of businesses that must be saved.

The business secretary insisted the ludicrous attempt at recreating Santa's magical wonderland was essential to Britain's economic future.

He added: "Christmas is the most businessy time of the year and nothing is more important than Christmassy businesses.

"Future generations are unlikely to forgive us if we do not save at least one tawdry hellhole where they can dump their children for six hours while they continue their search for cheap alcohol."

But opposition parties said the government



should not be in the business of picking business winners and stressed that the Lapland theme park was unbelievably pathetic.

A Lib Dem spokesman said: "It's basically two garden sheds and a stuffed badger with a Comic Relief nose.

"The 'elves' are obviously just drunk, angry Welshmen while Santa is a foul-smelling

Polish gentleman who lets the children sit on his knee but then gives them a flyer for his plumbing business."

Other firms on Lord Mandelson's list include Corbett and Barker's Stationery and Saddle Emporium, the Coventry and District Pigeon Mart, Betamax Video Recorders-R-U's and the Daily Mirror.

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THE soon-to-be ex-wife of Formula One tycoon Bernie Ecclestone has vowed to buy a taller husband or two midgets that can be bolted together.

Slavica Ecclestone is expected to receive enough money in her divorce settlement to buy any man, or combination of men, that she wants.

She said last night: "When I was a young girl my idea of the perfect husband was a man who was suave, sophisticated, about six foot tall and had a billion pounds.

"But unfortunately at the age of 26 I found myself in the position where I had to choose between a man who was nine foot tall but skint and a three foot midget with two billion pounds.

"I chose Bernie Ecclestone."

She added: "We had many happy years but there's only so long you can be a climbing frame for a monkey. Even a very, very rich monkey.



'If only I could have had another Bernie Ecclestone attached to this one'

"But soon I will have the money and I can choose. I suppose the easy thing would be to have one very large husband but I really like the idea of two midgets in a boiler suit.

"Then they can take it in turns to be the one on top. It'll keeps things fresh."

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INTERNET PRIVACY...?



This months computer tips takes a look at how you can protect your identity whilst on the net, as well as ensuring your transactions made on the net are secure.

There are many reasons people have for wanting to surf the net anonymously. These can range from simple paranoia in terms of protecting personal data to buying that special present for a loved one. The most obvious need for anonymous browsing for most people is through use of a computer in an internet café.

Each of the main browsers, Internet Explorer, Mozilla Firefox and Google Chrome, offer similar levels of privacy incorporated within their applications. *These privacy options mean that at a press of a button you can clear your browsing history, cookies and other traces of your recent internet browsing.

This option leads people to think "I just enable this great privacy mode and nobody will see what I am doing on the net, nobody will know where I am coming from, nobody will be able to steal my private data", however, unfortunately this is not entirely true and anonymous browsing goes one step further.

Previously, secure surfing on the Internet was only available to corporate employees, i.e. those with the available money to pay for it and the technical 'savvy'.

However, there is now a free application available to download named 'OperaTor' that ensures your browsing is private and secure. It creates an encrypted connection to a server so you can browse the internet, make secure payments and feel confident that your data cannot be intercepted by any other malicious users. Basically, it provides a buffer between you and the internet.

The one drawback is that you need to use the unfamiliar Opera Browser. I would suggest though that you use your usual browser (Internet Explorer or Firefox), except for instance, when you wish to shop or use your internet

banking so that your important information is kept secure.

I hope this provides you with a useful introduction to browsing the internet in a secure and anonymous way. If you have any questions on this or any other technical matters please feel free to contact me.

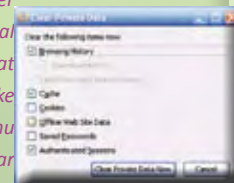
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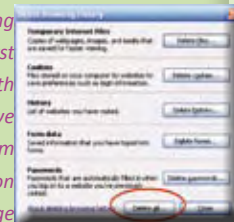
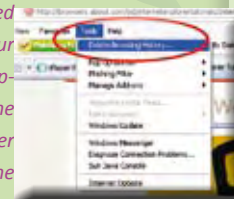
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**Click on Tools in your Firefox menu located at the top of your browser. When the drop-down menu appears, scroll down and click on the Clear Private Data choice. At this point, you will see the "Clear Private Data" dialog box overlaying your browser window. The user is given several options at this point regarding what types of data he or she would like to delete. If the box next to a menu option is checked, that particular data type will be cleared upon clicking the Clear Private Data Now button.*



Click on the Tools menu, located at the far right hand side of your browser's Tab Bar. When the drop-down menu appears, select the Delete Browsing History + any other areas you require... option. The Delete Browsing History window should now be visible, overlaying your main browser window. The first section in this window deals with Temporary Internet Files. To remove all of these temporary files from your hard drive, click on the button labeled Delete files.... A message dialog will then appear asking Are you sure you want to delete all temporary Internet Explorer files? Click on the Yes button. All of your temporary Internet files have now been permanently removed.



HOLIDAYS Public holidays in Catalonia: 1 January: New Year's Day; 6 January / Epiphany (Feast of the Three Kings); March-april: Good Friday; March-april: Easter Monday; 1 May: Labour Day; 24 June: Saint John (midsummer); 15 August: Assumption of Mary; 11 September: Catalan National Day; 12 October: Feast of the Hispanic Peoples; 1 November: All Saints' Day; 6 December: Constitution Day; 8 December: Immaculate Conception of Mary; 25 December: Christmas; 26

December: Saint Stephen (Boxing Day).

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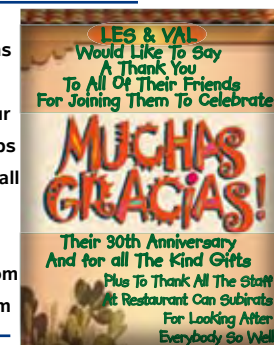
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