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MEET BOB THE EDITOR

WELCOME TO THE DECEMBER ISSUE

COVERING CATALUNYA & COSTA AZAHAR.

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In Latin, decem means "ten". December was also the tenth month in the Roman calendar until a monthless winter period was divided between January and February. December's flower is the narcissus or holly and birth flower the Poinsettia.

December's birthstones are turquoise, lapis lazuli, zircon, topaz (blue), or tanzanite.

December is the month with the shortest daylight hours of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and the longest daylight hours of the year in the Southern Hemisphere.

December starts on the same day of the week as September.

◆◆◆◆

Why is Prancer always wet?

Because he's a ?rain?-deer!

Why does Scrooge love all of the reindeer?

Because every buck is dear to him!

Which of Santa's reindeer has bad manners?

?Rude?-olph!

What do you call a reindeer wearing ear muffs?

Anything you want because he can't hear you!

◆◆◆◆

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COVER PICTURE: ON THE TWELFTH DAY OF CHRISTMAS, MY TRUE LOVE SENT TO ME TWELVE DRUMMERS DRUMMING, ELEVEN PIPERS PIPING, TEN LORDS A-LEAPING, NINE LADIES DANCING, ..



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Royal Navy accused of firing at the Spanish flag off Gibraltar El Mundo reports that tensions between Gibraltar and Spain are rising after the Guardia Civil came across a British Navy patrol which, the paper says, was carrying out firing practice



last Tuesday on a buoy on which the Spanish flag was printed. El Mundo reports that the British cleared away their exercise when they noted the presence of the Guardia Civil, but the paper highlights that they had been firing at the Spanish flag. The paper says that incidents between the Guardia Civil and the British Navy patrols around The Rock are ever more common. Spain believes such incidents only benefit the smugglers in the area and the Spanish Government indicated over the summer that they want to reach a new agreement with Britain on the joint control of the waters around Gibraltar. The new British Ambassador in Madrid, Giles Paxman, has been called in to give an explanation, and is reported by El Mundo to have presented his 'excuses' for the 'error of judgement and lack of sensitivity' by members of the Royal Navy. The Partido Popular has asked the Spanish Foreign Minister, Miguel Ángel Moratinos, to explain the incident to Congress.

Catalan family forced to live away from their home for 16 months A Catalan family have had their flat occupied by squatters for the past 16 months, and the City Hall continues to charge them

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the rent. If the couple stops those payments they will lose their right to the property managed by the City Hall housing department, and they have to pay the electricity, gas, telephone and water bills for the same reason. Josep M. and his wife lived in the El Raval area of the city and were on holiday for a few days when the squatters broke into their home on July 21 last year. When they rushed home on hearing the news from a neighbour they found the locks had been changed. They immediately placed a denuncia with the regional police, Los Mossos d'Esquadra, but now a judge has refused to order the eviction of the squatters as they are considered to have no means. The couple's lawyer, Esther Villaescusa, is quoted by El País as describing the situation as 'surrealist'. A few days ago the couple were advised by a neighbour that the squatters where

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16 years in Spain. References available.

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'throwing things onto the street'. The couple rushed there and managed to save a television. The wife told El País 'It may not be worth much, but it is mine, like everything else in the flat. The squatters have even replaced the names on the buzón letter box for the flat with their own.

Lottery sellers in Spain worried about privatisation Lottery sellers in Spain are protesting at what they consider is a back-door privatisation of their business. As the world famous Gordo Christmas Lottery approaches, queues can be seen at most of the lottery administration offices where tickets can be purchased, but that could all change. The Government is reported to be considering opening up part of the National Lottery to the private sector, which would mean that ticket selling machines could be seen in commercial and other centres. Earlier this month Congress approved two motions which will allow any company to be allowed to sell Spanish State lottery tickets, and those who work in the current lottery administration offices say the Government is planning the liberalisation of state lotteries without even consulting them. The 250 year old National Lottery in Spain is run by the Director General of Lotteries and State Bets, LAE. General Director, Gonzalo Fernández,

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has denied that privatisation is taking place, noting that the products and the network are not being touched. He said all that was being done was opening the door to the use of new technologies in ticket sales. Even now by using the Internet people can choose where to buy their 'Gordo' lottery ticket. As the draw approaches on December 22, the statisticians tell us that Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Alicante are the luckiest provinces and tickets ending in a 3,7 or 9 are the most popular.



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wingers IU, and 17 against the now defunct GIL party which was based in Marbella. The remaining cases come from Unión Mallorquina, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya, the Bloque Nacionalista Galego and the PNV Basque Nationalists. The number represents about 1% of the total number of 66,000 councillors and mayors across the country. The numbers were given in Congress on Wednesday by the Attorney General, Cándido Conde-Pumpido, who in answer to a Partido Popular question, said the data showed that the judiciary was working against all political parties. He ended his statement with a call for calm from the public.

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"Whats green covered in tinsel and goes ribet ribet?!"



"A Mistle-Toad..."

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Rental Contracts - Contrato de Alquiler by David Piqué

LAW



Nowadays when trying to obtain a mortgage it has become a mission impossible for many people so renting property has suddenly become popular. Until a short time ago, renting was thought to be an investment without return and that it was much more appropriate to purchase but now, with so many obstacles to overcome in order to obtain the necessary finance, the tenant has once more come into his/her own in which case I consider it worthy to briefly summarise rental contract details.

At present, town rentals are subject to Law 29/1994, of the 24th of November although certain points of earlier laws are applied in specific cases. This law includes the rental of town property and business premises and excludes, among others, the seasonal rental of houses and rental of rural property, even though it consists of house + room, if the main object of the contract is to make use of the land.

The duration of the rental agreement will be agreed to by both parties. But one has to bear in mind, that if the period that appears in the contract is less than five years, it will automatically be prolonged to five years if the tenant so wishes.

The obligations of the landlord are basically to hand over to the tenant the property named in the contract and

maintain it in optimum living conditions. On the other hand, the tenant must pay the amount agreed to as well as any corresponding expenses, treat the property with due care, refrain from construction/building work unless authorised by the landlord, as well as taking care of small repairs whenever necessary or informing the landlord of any repairs that need to be done.

If the case arises that the tenant does not pay the rent, the landlord could lodge an official complaint before the trial court of the area in which the property is located requesting that the tenant be evicted and that the money owed be duly paid.

The rental contract and the documents which show the breach of contract should be submitted along with the official complaint, which must be presented by a lawyer or solicitor, plus a declaration from the landlord to say that he could halt the process if the tenant pays the total amount due, but this option can only be applied on one occasion.

One can appeal to the Provincial Court against the sentence passed, but the money owed must be paid up beforehand. Otherwise, the appeal will not be processed.

by David Piqué
any legal questions can be sent to davidpique@advocatsreus.org or The Olive Press direct

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GORDON Brown has taken personal charge of the escalating Nintendo Wii crisis which could force millions of British children to play outdoors with real friends this Christmas.

Mr Brown last night dramatically quit his own game of The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess to chair a meeting of the Cobra emergency committee, even though he was already in the mine under Death Mountain and well on his way to Fire Temple.

It is the first time a British prime minister has intervened in a toy crisis since 1985, when Margaret Thatcher fought a year-long battle with Arthur Scargill to ensure no child went without a Transformer on Christmas Day.

Mr Brown pledged his government would use all of its special powers



to defeat the evil forces ranged against it so that even poor children could point an electric stick at the television.

He said: "As a young boy growing up in Scotland I saw the social divide that is caused by gift inequalities.

"I saw rich children on spacehoppers bounce repeatedly on poor children. I saw one boy bounced on so bad his Clackers split in two."

But anti-Wii campaigners are urging parents to throw their children into the street.

Denys Hatton, of Wii Concern, said: "You could shell out the best part of £200 so your children can play virtual tennis while pointing a stick at the telly. Or you could just buy them A TENNIS RACQUET."







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CAPRICORN Dec. 22 - Jan. 20

December gets off to a slow start for you. This is probably a good thing as you recover from a somewhat stressful November and prepare for an especially busy and attention-getting January! Personal changes run deep as you explore your ambitions and need for control over your life.

AQUARIUS Jan. 21 - Feb. 19 -Networking, enjoying friends, and taking part in group activities are in focus this month, dear Aquarius. Love in December is connected with friends, online activities, or group associations. You are especially intuitive and in high demand these days!

PISCES Feb. 20 - Mar. 20 -Career matters are strong and in focus this month, dear Pisces, although work brings its fair share of challenges and complications, particularly from mid-month forward. Watch for worries about money, which can be alleviated by cutting back on holiday spending as much as possible- but your holidays need not suffer!

ARIES Mar. 21 - Apr. 20 -You begin December with a strong, adventurous spirit, but you should watch that you don't overdo,. Make the best of your energy in the first two weeks of the month, especially regarding professional matters, after which the need to rethink your plans becomes apparent.

TAURUS Apr. 21 - May 21 -Career matters strengthen in December. Support and opportunities seem to come when you least expect them, but when you need them most! Demands of family and your home life have been running high since October, and you've been coping well with all of the activity.

GEMINI May 22 - Jun. 22

Partnering, compromising, and negotiating are the primary areas of focus for you this month, dear Gemini. It's a time when paying close attention to others' needs, wants, schedules, and plans rather than your own is most rewarding.

CANCER Jun. 23 - Jul. 22

Work and practical matters come to the fore in December, dear Cancer. This is not the best time of year for you to take the lead, present your ideas, or to aggressively pursue personal plans. Instead, getting organized, paying bills, and negotiating with others are important activities for you in December.

LEO Jul. 23 - Aug. 23 -Love and relationships are strong this month, dear Leo. A partner or love interest may take special notice again, and singles could meet someone new. Romantic charm runs exceptionally high this month, particularly in the first half of December. Chance meetings are very possible now.

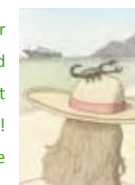
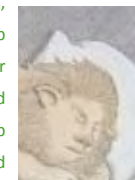
VIRGO Aug. 24 - Sep. 23 -Focusing on home and family this month is especially rewarding. Many of you are also enjoying the renewal of interest from a special someone in your life. Happily, this trend continues in December.

LIBRA Sept. 24 - Oct. 23 -A busy month of restructuring, tending to details, errand running, and learning is in store for you, dear Libra. You are certainly more serious these days, and you might find that you benefit from more attention to practical matters as well as re-organization of important structures in your life.

SCORPIO Oct. 24 - Nov. 22 -Money matters are strong for you this month, as you focus on making yourself feel secure. You are also likely to be held in high esteem by superiors, elders, and your partner in December. Gifts and bonuses coming your way may be more generous than usual this year!

SAGITTARIUS Nov. 23-Dec. 21

December brings attention from others, some of which involves adoration, rewarding friendships, and job opportunities, dear Sagittarius. Your charm is natural and easy with Venus, the goddess of love, in your sign until the 25th.

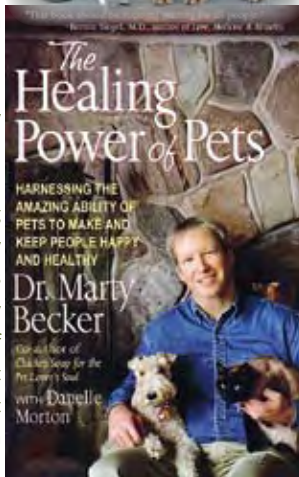




The therapeutic effect of pets is well known, since some of the earliest documented work unofficially done at a York asylum in 1792, officially in the U.S.A. in 1953, and in Spain in 1993 with impetus from the Affinity Foundation.

A dog or a pet may not have the ability or capacity to cure an ailment but they facilitate many treatment programs and help socialization just by their very presence. They help improve self esteem, self control, increasing feelings of affection, decreasing feelings of loneliness. Depending upon whether they are working one on one or with a group varied results may be observed. The increasing expressions of empathy, a patients discipline, sense of responsibility or increasing communication skills.

There are many studies demonstrating that working with trained dogs may bring about a reduction in amounts of medication a specific patient may require, thereby reducing the risk of coronary disease and hypertension. It is thought that this happens as a direct benefit of the simple act of petting an animal.



Interaction with an animal allows professionals to work with a patients habits or emotional states. They also help with work in prisons. An animal, just by its very presence, installs confidence and is not judgemental. A dog would not necessarily understand a prison and would certainly not distinguish between a convict serving time for murder from a petty thief, an arsonist or a cat burglar. They would, for the most part, greet any of these inmates the same way.

A child with cerebral palsy tends to relax around a happy dog with a waggy tail, which is key to reducing muscular tension. In the U.S.A. much work has been done with patients suffering from cancer, requiring the vigour's of chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy or other terminal conditions helping to reduce the stress. Working with patients in mental hospitals and those suffering from autism has also yielded positive results as has working with drug addicts. Those unmotivated youthful inmates in drug detoxification programs were aided by the companionship of a four legged friend



which also helped them better support the vigour's of abstinence. Dogs are not alone in their ability to lend themselves to these types of therapeutic situations. Cats have also proved useful, they are more manageable in many instances because of their size, being litter trained and in demonstrating affection hence more manageable in situations with people in retirement or nursing homes.

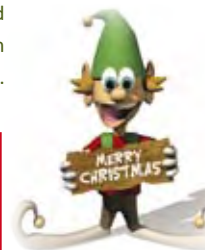
Work has also been done successfully with horses, mules, and donkeys sometimes with people suffering from partial paralysis or with autistic children. Other animals that have helped us out are turtles, goats, Vietnamese Pot-

bellied Pigs, and fish, how many dentist surgeries have an aquarium because of the relaxing effect this has been shown to have.

Many geriatric centres have birds which serve as something lively, pleasing to see and cheerful in an ageing environment. These animals require attention and provide motivation to interact with them and to get up every morning.

Ronald Rosenfeld D.V.M.

See extra important pet information for Christmas on page 23



"moral and cultural progress of a country is measured from its treatment of animals" (Mahatma Gandhi)

REMEMBER A DOG IS FOR LIFE NOT JUST FOR CHRISTMAS!



URGENT ADOPTION REQUIRED CALL ARCA TODAY. A.R.C.A. (Association for Refuge and Taking care of the Animals) it is a non-profit association operating since the summer of year 2001.

At this moment they have 300 abandoned dogs.

They are in Tortosa in the province of Tarragona (Spain). All the material aid comes from the much appreciated donations but with each new arrival more donations are needed. If you want to donate to Arca if only by 5€ each month, minimum, please send an e-mail with your personal data and account number or call or write. Or just become a volunteer to help with the dogs.

email: protectora.arca@wanadoo.es ARCA : Post office 496, Tortosa, (Tarragona) or contact: Maeve (English) 678 975 816 Cinta 625 915 605 Carmen 655 040 359



A. M. P. A. R. E. The society for the protection of animals Ebro region. Based

A.M.P.A.R.E. PROTECTORA D'ANIMALS DE LA RIBERA D'EBRE Based in MORA LA NOVA

CONTACT | Lynn: 638 731 434 English
Isabel: 977 404 720 / 657 905 465 Spanish/ Catalan
www.naturahumana.com/ampare

in Mora La Nova. We desperately need to re-home dogs to make room for more! We have over 200 dogs for adoption. Lynn 638 731 434 English Isabel 977 404 720 Spanish/ Catalan Donations always appreciated.

I have adopted an abandoned dog. Have you?

Alberg d'Animals de les Terres de l'Ebre

657 18 14 37
619 84 87 78

www.albergdanimals.com

"Hello, I Am Encarna From 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....."

Association for the refuge and Care of Animals

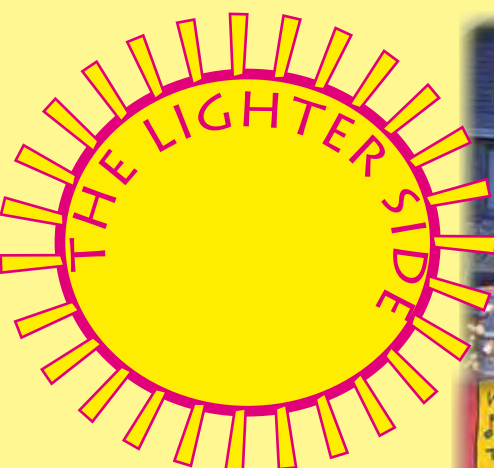
Arca

Hundreds of lovely dogs need homes
Donations and Volunteers needed
Maeve (English) 678 975 816, Cinta 625 915 605
Sue (English) 630 791 918, Carmen 655 040 359
protectora.arca@wanadoo.es
http://www.protectoraarca.org/

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

Please Donate Today!

To Help Us Find Homes & Stay Healthy




CHOCOLATE CALCULATOR

I am not sure how or why this works but it does! Something fun to play with for a minute or two.

YOUR AGE BY CHOCOLATE MATHS

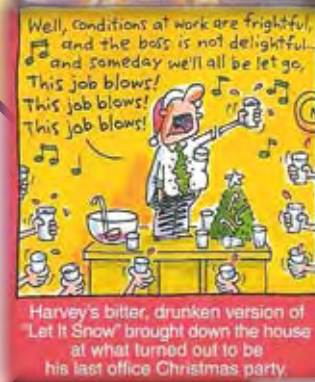
Don't tell me your age; you'd probably lie anyway-but the Hershey Man will know!



The English Penny
EU Directive No. 456179

In order to meet the conditions for joining the Single European currency, all citizens of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland must be made aware that the phrase 'Spending a Penny' is not to be used after 31st December 2009 .

From this date, the correct terminology will be: 'Euronating'. Thank you for your attention.



Good Housekeeping Tip
Another Maxine Tip...

Always keep several
Get well cards on the
mantle...
So if unexpected guests arrive,
They will think you've been sick and
unable to clean




YOUR AGE BY CHOCOLATE MATH

This is pretty neat.

DON'T CHEAT !

It takes less than a minute .
Work this out as you read .
Be sure you don't read the
bottom until you've worked it out!
This is not one of those waste of time things,
it's fun.




What did Adam say on the day before Christmas ?
It's Christmas, Eve !
How do you make an idiot laugh on boxing day ?
Tell him a joke on Christmas Eve !
What do you have in December that you don't have in any other month ?
The letter "D" !
What does Father Christmas suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney ?
Santa Claustrophobia !
What do you call a letter sent up the chimney on Christmas Eve ?
Black mail !
Who delivers cat's Christmas presents ?
Santa Paws !
Why does Father Christmas go down the chimney ?
Because it soots him !
Who delivers elephants's Christmas presents?
Elephanta Claus !
How many chimneys does Father Christmas go down ?
Stacks !
Why is Santa like a bear on Christmas Eve ?
Because he's Sooty !

1. First of all, pick the number of times a week that you would like to have chocolate (more than once but less than 10)
2. Multiply this number by 2 (just to be bold)
3. Add 5
4. Multiply it by 50 -- I'll wait while you get the calculator
5. If you have already had your birthday this year add 1759 ..
If you haven't, add 1758.
6.. Now subtract the four digit year that you were born.

You should have a three digit number
The first digit of this was your original number (i.e., how many times you want to have chocolate each week).

The next two numbers are
YOUR AGE! (Oh YES, it is!!!!)

THIS IS THE ONLY YEAR (2009) IT WILL EVER WORK, SO SPREAD IT AROUND WHILE IT LASTS.



HEALTH SELF-HELP TOOLKIT: MEDITATION - TRAINING THE MIND



This month I have come across all kinds of venues where people are using meditation as a body-mind linking tool to restore health and balance to their lives, from Mora to Vilafranca. These places offer useful

practices which can stand alone, along with or without any other belief systems. This is a refreshing & medicinal development in these complex & demanding times. A poster I saw for an upcoming weekend meditation workshop puts it well:

"TURNING YOUR MIND INTO AN ALLY

The majority of us are slaves to our own mind. Our own mind is our worst enemy. We try to keep our centre, but our mind scatters. We try to keep stress at bay, but our anxiety keeps us awake at night. We try to be good to the people we love but we forget

& end up more preoccupied with ourselves. And when we want to try and change our lives we hurl ourselves into spiritual practices, hoping to get immediate results, but lose our way once our initial desire for change cools down."

By training our mind through the practice of meditation we can stabilise and forge an alliance with ourselves which allows us to use our mind instead of it using us. It is a simple practice which anyone can do. If we want to lessen our confusion & the pain we habitually feel and be of help to others & the planet, we need to accept the responsibility to learn what our mind is and how it functions, independent of any of our belief systems. When

we see how the mind works, we also see how our life works. That transforms us.

And a group started on a monthly basis in my local village of El Perelló to do a full moon meditation, organized with the help and blessing of the local Ajuntament. There were 45 of us in the room, about 30 Catalan women and assorted others, a fine turnout. We were given a beautiful, clear description of the mindfulness meditation technique used by Tibetan buddhist schools as a grounding presence practice, by Antonio Grandon of the Kagyu Samye Dzong school. The

introduction to the practice was in Castellano, which we English-speakers all managed to understand enough to do pretty much what everyone else was doing (I think!) & in future there will be a resumé in English if needed. The room was like a deep quiet river at times, the questions/answers afterwards were great - completely

unphilosophical, about how this related to our everyday lives - and it felt very sane.

The full moon meditations will explore meditation techniques from various traditions, the next one being asana techniques used in the yoga path. This broad approach perfectly embodies the respect needed for the multiple wisdom traditions which exist that needs fostered so dearly to get us through these coming times.

Taru Burstall, M.A. Psych, Dip. Massage, Licenced Acupuncturist, 629 301 509, taruyes@gmail.com

Please feel very welcome to contact me & for details of any of the above workshops/meetings.



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M1062 - L'Ampolla
138m² Country House
3 beds, 2 baths,
Sea Views!
5.600m² parcela
Price: 160.000 euros



M1134 - Miravet
300m² Detached House
- Ideal B&B
5 bed with en-suites
Sep. dining room,
lounge, roof terrace,
Price: 283.000 euros



M1139 - Camarles 10 mins
115m² Country House
2 bed, double shower
room, lounge / diner
20.000m²
Sea Views
Price: 150.000 euros



M1054 - El Perello
233m² Country House
3 Beds 3 Baths (incl.
private guest accom.)
10.000 m² parcela
Price: 270.000 euros



M0076 - L'Ampolla 15 mins
90m² Country House
3 beds, bathroom
Lounge / diner
15.000m² plot
Price: 95.000 euros



M1131 - Tres Cales / L'Ametlla de Mar
118m² Villa . 3 beds,
bathroom, Sep.
Lounge, Kitchen /
Diner. Swimming Pool
Sea & Mountain Views!
330m² parcela
Price 290.000 euros



M1123 - El Perello
Villa 5 mins from
village,
70m² Chalet
2 beds, bath
10.000m² plot
Price: 140.000 euros



M1081 - Jesus
Riverside 3 bedroom
bed and Breakfast plus
2 bed self Catering
cottage for sale! Direct
River Mooring-
Furnished. 3000m²
parcela
Price 275.000 euros



M1095 - El Perello
Lovely Country House
of 120 m.² Bedrooms 2,
Bathrooms 2
Auto system installed,
Water
Courtyard & workshops
14,200m² of land
Price: 198.000 euros



M1129 - Tivenys
5 mins River Ebre
100m² Chalet with 4
double bedrooms, full
bathroom, large lounge
diner, 2 garages.
Mains electric & water
6500m² plot
Price: 189.000 euros

Av. Generalitat 70, 43500, Tortosa,
Tarragona, Spain
email: info@myspanishhome.com

+34 977 446 655 office
+34 639 041 277 mobile Stephanie
+34 679 499 316 mobile Steve

DIA DE LA CONSTITUCION- NATIONAL HOLIDAY DEC 6TH

The constitutional history of Spain dates back to the constitution of 1812. After the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, a general election in 1977 convened the Constituent Cortes (the Spanish Parliament, in its capacity as a constitutional assembly) for the purpose of drafting and approving the constitution.

A seven-member panel was selected among the elected members of the Cortes to work on a draft of the Constitution to be submitted to the body. These came to be known, as the media put it, as the *padres de la Constitución* or "fathers of the Constitution". These seven people were chosen to represent the wide (and often, deeply divided) political spectrum within the Spanish Parliament, while the leading role was given to then ruling party and now defunct Unión de Centro Democrático.

The writer (and Senator by Royal appointment) Camilo José Cela later polished the draft Constitution's wording. However, since much of the consensus depended on keeping the wording ambiguous, few of Cela's proposed re-wordings were approved.

The constitution was approved by the Cortes Generales on October 31, 1978, and by the Spanish people in a referendum on December 6, 1978, before being promulgated by King Juan Carlos on December 27. It came into effect on December 29, the day it was published in the Official Gazette. Constitution Day on December 6 has since been a national holiday in Spain.

It set out how government would be run, what powers they had and determined the governmental system that Spain operates on today. Constitution day is a celebration of the day Spain became a democracy. Other constitutional provisions recognize the right to adequate housing, employment, social welfare provision, health protection and pensions. Since 1978 the constitution has been reformed just once in order to give citizens of EU member states living in Spain the right to vote and stand as candidates in local elections. This day is principally



seen as the start of the December holidays and a long weekend is normally taken in conjunction with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. In recent years however, Constitution Day has become more popular for protest marches and political statements.

The flag of Spain, as it is defined in the Spanish Constitution of 1978, is divided into three horizontal stripes: red, yellow and red, the yellow stripe being twice the size of each red stripe. The state and war flags and ensigns must be charged with the Spanish coat of arms, while the civil flag and ensign leaves the inclusion of the coat of arms as optional. The coat of arms must be placed at 1/3 the flag's length towards the hoist, and the height of the coat of arms should measure two fifths of the flag's width (i.e. hoist).

Throughout the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, this colour scheme remained intact, being the only changes centred on the coat of arms. In the modern flag, the coat of arms is greatly simplified as compared to previous variants.

The coat of arms consists of a crowned shield. Each of the four quadrants represent one of the four kingdoms that were merged to form a unified Spain at the end of the 15th century. Namely, the kingdoms are: Castile, represented by the castle, León, represented by the lion, Aragon, represented by the vertical alternating red and yellow stripes (four red stripes, five yellow stripes), and Navarre, represented by the linked chains. Also the moorish kingdom of Granada is represented by the pomegranate fruit in the bottom of the coat of arms. The impaled fleur

de lys represents the ruling House of Borbón. The two columns with the "plus ultra" ensign (meaning "there is more beyond" in Latin) represent Spanish discovery and colonization of America, the columns being the mythological Pillars of Hercules (of the Strait of Gibraltar, gateway to the Atlantic Ocean). The "Plus Ultra" phrase replaced the former "Non Plus Ultra" (something like "No further from here") before the discovery of America, since Spain was considered "the Westernmost point" on Earth (thus, "no further from here")

"IMMACULATE FESTIVAL & COMMEMORATION OF THE SIEGE OF 1640 IN CAMBRILS"

December 8-Feast of the Immaculate Conception (Inmaculada Concepcion –National Holiday) This holiday in Spain is typically a day of additional church services in and around Madrid as well as in the rest of the country. This Spanish holiday is based on the Catholic dogma that states that while becoming pregnant the Virgin Mary did not suffer the "original sin" as she was "filled by god" and as such the conception was "immaculate". Note that between the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the Constitution Day the Spanish get two days off during this week, so many take the whole week off in the biggest puente of the year.

Immaculate Conception

Our Lady was conceived without original sin. She had a perfect purity, with no bad inclinations. Therefore, she had a great facility to correspond entirely with the grace of God at every moment. Natural and the supernatural grandeur merged together in her soul in a profound and extraordinary harmony. Above all others creatures, she had the highest notion of the sanctity of God and His correspondent glory. She also had the clear notion of what Creation owes to that glory. She knew that all created beings should glorify God.

* The Church celebrates the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on 8 December, exactly nine months before celebrating the Nativity of Mary. The feast of the Incarnation of Christ, also known as The Annunciation, is celebrated on 25 March, nine months before Christmas Day. Mary was not the product of a Virgin Birth herself; Christian tradition identifies her parents as Saints Joachim and Anne. In fact, both Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy have condemned the belief that Mary was the product of a virgin birth.



INMACULADA FESTIVAL

In December, the Castellars week takes place. On the 8th, the Inmaculada Festival is held, with a public mass in Santa Maria Church and an interesting procession with dwarves and giants, along with many other shows. The program has many different activities for residents and visitors through the streets allowing you to enjoy the customs and traditions. Theater, children's shows, concerts, sporting events, delivery of the Research Grant Awards and painting, photography id'escultura displays.

There is also the commemoration of the events of the Cambrils Siege in 1640,. The livelihood of the township was put in serious jeopardy in December of 1640, when the people of Cambrils experienced one of the worse episodes of the Catalan Revolt (**Guerra dels Segadors /war of the Reapers**) in which Catalonia clashed with King Felipe IV. Faced with a superior army, the townspeople of Cambrils resisted a terrible three-day siege before surrendering. Contrary to agreement, the occupying forces killed a large number of the defenders who had already surrendered and a good part of the town wall was destroyed. Unfortunately, this is one of the most significant historical events that has ever occurred in the town, which is why it is commemorated year after year in the Plaça del Setge, in front of the remains of the walls.

Beginning with the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), one gives the *tió* a little bit to "eat" every night and usually covers him with a little blanket so that he will not be cold at night. The *Tió de Nadal* (roughly "Christmas Log"), also known as "*Tió*" (trunk or log, a big piece of cut wood) or "*Tronca*" ("log") and popularly called "*Caga tió*" (pooping log in English), is a character in Catalan mythology relating to a Christmas tradition widespread in Catalonia.



Blacktower Financial Management Group 'Pension Changes'

Your column where you can send in your financial questions and receive a professional answer.

Please send them directly to Ian Whitby or to the editor of

The Olive Press magazine and we will aim to answer as many as we can.

In 2006 the Government announced some significant changes to when and the way, in which you can take the benefits from Personal Pensions, Company schemes and State benefits.

Unlike most changes in legislation this was retrospective. Most individuals in the UK will have received confirmation from their provider that the changes are imminent. However, we have discovered a number of clients living here in Spain who have not received any notification.

This may have occurred due to changes of address not being notified to the provider.

The main changes which could impact on individuals are detailed below.

When can you take your personal pension?

By April 2010, the minimum age at which you'll be able to take your company or personal pension will have increased from 50 to 55. You can put off taking it until age 75. However, you may still be able to take your pension before age 55 in certain circumstances, for example if you are unable to work due to

ill-health. Your pension administrator will be able to tell you what your scheme allows.

Options since 2006

Following changes made to pension rules in April 2006, there is now more choice for how and when you can take your pension benefits. But bear in mind that pension schemes are subject to individual rules so you'll need to check with your pension administrator what your particular scheme allows.

A more generous tax-free lump sum

You can now take up to 25 per cent of the value of your total pension savings from all sources as a tax-free lump sum when you retire, up to a maximum of 25 per cent of the 'lifetime allowance' for that tax year.

For the tax year 2009-2010 the lifetime allowance (tested against your total pensions savings) is £1.75 million, gradually rising to £1.8 million by 2010-2011. If your total pensions savings exceed the lifetime allowance you can take the excess as a cash lump sum, subject to a 55 per cent tax charge.

Lump sums from small pension funds

If your total pension savings from all sources was £17,500 or less (one per cent of the 'lifetime allowance') you may be able to take the whole amount as a cash lump sum, with 25 per cent tax-free.

The limit for being able to take the whole fund in cash will gradually rise to £18,000 by the 2010-2011 tax year.

Drawing an income from your pension

You have the following options (after you've taken any tax-free lump sum):

- use the (remaining) fund you've built up to buy an annuity (a regular income payable for life) from a life insurance company; this does not have to be the same



company that you have your pension plan with

- draw a taxable income directly from your pension

fund, as an 'unsecured pension' before age 75

- draw a taxable income directly from your pension fund, as an 'alternatively secured pension' from age 75 (similar to income withdrawal but with lower withdrawal limits)

If you would like more information on these changes or indeed have any questions about your Personal Finances please contact Ian Whitby at Blacktower Financial Management International on 0034 968 959 331 or email him at ian.whitby@blacktowerfm.com

Remember to send in your questions!





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You can now transfer your UK scheme to an International Pension arrangement and could improve upon the benefits you receive.

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Plenty fresh orange juice
Cointreau
Ice cubes

Horchata de Chufas

1 cup of water
1 lemon peel

Queimada

4-5 bottles Spanish Orujo (or other distilled liquor)

A few pieces of finely sliced lemon peel
You need a huge flameproof
earthenware casserole dish for this.
Pour in all the liqueur, about two-thirds
of the sugar and the lemon peel. Stir
well, bring to the boil and allow to
bubble for about 15 minutes.

Take a tablespoon of the reserved sugar in a large serving spoon and take up some of the hot liquor from the pot. Set fire to the spoon, holding it over the pot (careful - wear an oven glove!), and when the sugar begins to bubble, lower it into the casserole, which will ignite. Repeat this another couple of times.

The longer this burns, the more alcohol with disappear... Ladle into small earthenware mugs to serve.

Christmas Tree Shooter

1/4 oz Grenadine
1/2 oz Green Creme De Menthe
1/4 oz Sambuca

Pour in that order in a Cordial or Shooter glass and flame it, (ignite the Sambuca with a match).

Note: This shooter is sometimes called a "Flaming Christmas Tree". Having seen flaming shooters go horribly wrong I strongly suggest that you enjoy this shooter by blowing out the flame soon after you serve it or without flame.



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 Placa Francesc Macia 1, 43895 L'Amplola,
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 BOOKING ESSENTIAL FOR FRIDAY EVENING
 AND SUNDAY LUNCHTIME Tel: 977 460 387

**Christmas at
 Bar Estacion L'Amplola
 Menu**

Glass of Cava on arrival
 Homemade Sundried Tomato Soup & Cream
 Prawn & Melon Cocktail or
 Paprika Egg Mayo on sale

Traditional Roast Turkey,
 Prime Silverside Beef or Pork Loin
 Served with Roast Potatoes, Roast Parsnips, Mash
 Potatoes, Lincolnshire Sausages wrapped in bacon
 selection of 6 vegetables, Chestnut stuffing &
 Bar Estacion homemade special Gravy

Trifle
 Sherried Bananas
 Hot Chocolate Fudge cake or
 Christmas Pudding with Homemade Brandy Sauce

Coffee with Mince Pie & After Eight
 24.95 £ inc glass wine

Available from 12-24 December lunchtimes & Eves
 Christmas Day call for more details
 977 460 387

Coming soon to a village near you!
Christmas is coming and the need for a traditional Christmas comes to mind.

MasterMac Foods is now supplying & delivering a range of UK products to the Ex Pat Community.

From El Paredillo to Penicola - Mora to Tortosa

New Zealand Lamb Steaks cut UK way Back Bacon Cumberland Sausages Lincolnshire Sausages Garnon Pork with Crackling ½ Kilo Pork Pies	Christmas Fare Fresh oven ready Turkeys Xmas Puddings Xmas Crackers Cranberry Sauce	British Bread Crumpets Scones Cheddar Cheese Bisto Gravy Fruit Tea Cakes Large Pickled Onions Corned Beef
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***All this and
much more.***

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NEWS HOUNDS & MORE...PETS AND CHRISTMAS BY DR. RONALD ROSENFELD D.V.M.



The holiday season is fast approaching, with it lots of savoury delights, just as we need to take care in what we indulge in so should we be aware of what treats our four legged family members are feasting on as well! Be careful with overdoing the table scraps, there is a tendency to be generous with turkey skins, cracklings or other fatty cast off bits, they may lead to serious pancreatic problems. 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. Think about some of those gifts that keep on giving. Please consider carefully the concomitant care required in animal gifts for the holidays - they are for the life of the animal, not just



a few weeks, months, or years! The shelters are overcrowded with abandoned pets without passports whose families had to leave Spain, due to the hard economic times, and did not have the forethought to consider the need of having up to date passports or who had the passports but could not afford or be bothered to cover the costs of a ticket!



Rock and Roll Pets A new calendar

Thanks to the creativity of a British company, Takkoda, your pet can be changed into your favourite rock star and maybe converted into part of the Pets Rock Calendar 2010! The photos are taken by their owners in the comfort of the home environment and then matched with the celebrities they most resemble! www.takkoda.com





RESTAURANTE - BAR - CHILLOUT- COCKTELERIA
Mediterranean-French Restaurant with a wonderful terrace
overlooking the sea at Playa Cristal
Chill out space where you can enjoy our selection of cocktails ...
Mojito, Tequila Sunrise...

New Menu ~ **Newly decorated**

We are open all year

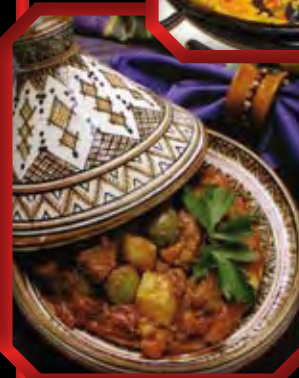
We only work with daily Fresh produce



NEW Opening hours 11am until closing
time. Tuesdays closed but please note
we are open on the 8th December
Lunch time 12hr until 16hr
Daily menu 10.50€
Daily menu for businesses 14,50€ 12
menus & 1 for free
from Monday to Friday

Dinner from 18hr 23hr
A La Carte, Specialities: Argentine meat,
menus Paella, Tagines, Couscous...

All prices
include "iva"



New Year's Eve Menu

Welcome apéritif with canapés

Scallops with Crab and Black
Truffle cream

Veloute "a la flamenca"

Trou Normand (palate cleanser of
calvados)

Tenderloin of Venison with 'Gran
Veneur' sauce,
Duchess Potatoes and Pear and
Blueberry delight

or
Fillet of Turbot with Leek
mousseline and Sea Urchin
Caviar

New Year's Cake
Coffee

Grapes and Cava
69.00€ with our wine service and
VAT included

Music and Dancing
31st of December (night)
1st of January (day and night)

Christmas Menu

Apéritif and Mise en bouche

Trio of Delights

Lobster Veloute

Trou Normand (palate cleanser of
calvados)

Main course:
Swordfish "Rossini" with gratin
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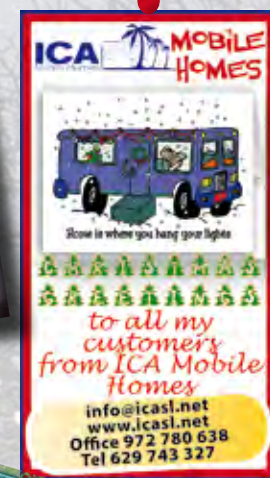
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Bob and all at the Olive Press would like to wish all our readers, contributors and advertisers A Merry Merry Christmas & A Very Prosperous New Year plus a big thank you for all your support during 2009

PERELLÓ PROPERTIES DIRECT S.L.
Good Wishes for Christmas & Every Happiness in the Coming Year
from all at Perelló Properties and Independent Power Systems



Press Release: Christmas Downsizing

Today's global challenges require the North Pole to continue to look for better, more competitive steps. Effective immediately, the following economy measures are to take place in the "Twelve Days of Christmas" subsidiary:

1. The partridge will be retained, but the pear tree never turned out to be the cash crop forecasted. It will be replaced by a plastic hanging plant, providing considerable savings in maintenance.
2. The two turtle doves represent a redundancy that is simply not cost effective. In addition, their romance during working hours could not be condoned. The positions are therefore eliminated.
3. The three French hens will remain intact. After all, everyone loves the French.
4. The four calling birds were replaced by an automated voice mail system, with a call waiting option. An analysis is underway to determine who the birds have been calling, how often and how long they talked.
5. The five golden rings have been put on hold by the Board of Directors. Maintaining a portfolio based on one commodity could have negative implications for institutional investors. Diversification into other precious metals as well as a mix of T-Bills and high technology stocks appear to be in order.
6. The six geese-a-laying constitutes a luxury which can no longer be afforded. It has long been felt that the production rate of one egg per goose per day is an example of the decline in productivity. Three geese will be let go, and an upgrading in the selection procedure by personnel will assure management that from now on every goose it gets will be a good one.
7. The seven swans-a-swimming is obviously a number chosen in better times. Their function is primarily decorative. Mechanical swans are on order. The current swans will be retrained to learn some new strokes and therefore enhance their outplacement.



8. As you know, the eight maids-a-milking concept has been under heavy scrutiny by the EEOC. A male/female balance in the workforce is being sought. The more militant maids consider this a dead-end job with no upward mobility. Automation of the process may permit the maids to try a-mending, a-mentoring or a-mulching.

9. Nine ladies dancing has always been an odd number. This function will be phased out as these individuals grow older and can no longer do the steps.

10. Ten Lords-a-leaping is overkill. The high cost of Lords plus the expense of international air travel prompted the Compensation Committee to suggest replacing this group with ten out-of-work congressmen. While leaping ability may be somewhat sacrificed, the savings are significant because we expect an oversupply of unemployed congressmen this year.

11. Eleven pipers piping and twelve drummers drumming is a simple case of the band getting too big. A substitution with a string quartet, a cut back on new music and no uniforms will produce savings which will drop right down to the bottom line.

12. We can expect a substantial reduction in assorted people, fowl, animals and other expenses. Though incomplete, studies indicate that stretching deliveries over twelve days is inefficient. If we can drop ship in one day, service levels will be improved.

Regarding the lawsuit filed by the attorney's association seeking expansion to include the legal profession ("thirteen lawyers-a-suing"), action is pending. Lastly, it is not beyond consideration that deeper cuts may be necessary in the future to stay competitive. Should that happen, the Board will request management to scrutinize the Snow White Division to see if seven dwarfs is the right number.

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Christmas is coming round again and the end of the year looming fast — where does the time go!? While 2009 hasn't been an easy year in the property world, things are starting

to move again. Time to take stock and look forward to the New Year, so here goes...

How low can prices go?

While Spain's economy remains in poor shape and unemployment sadly continues to rise, indications are that property prices are now dropping at a substantially slower rate. The October 2009 valuation index from Tinsa —Spain's leading appraisal company and one of the few sources of reliable information— confirms this.

We are seeing a gradual but steady increase in enquiries and sales, with interest from Spanish, French, Dutch and Belgian buyers, mainly looking for second homes. They all have one thing in common: they are after a bargain and only buy if they feel they have a really good deal.

The perception is that prices will bottom out towards the end of 2010, so these buyers are starting to look now.

While the banks are still extremely cautious we are seeing more mortgages granted, an encouraging sign.

Which properties will sell in 2010?

Barcelona area buyers will be looking for cheap 2-4 bed townhouses in villages, especially those less than two hours' drive from the city. In Tarragona province they will pay up to 130.000 Euros for houses in good condition, less if renovation is required. Picturesque and well-known locations like Miravet, Tivissa and la Vilella Baixa are always popular, as is anywhere near the coast.

French, Belgian and German buyers will continue to buy easy-to-maintain and rentable second homes along the coastal strip, whether in the countryside (not too remote) or on popular estates like Les Tres Cales.

Many Dutch, Irish and Brits will still look for good deals in scenic locations in inland areas. Media coverage of illegal properties in Spain mean that buyers are very aware of potential problems. If you plan to sell a country house in 2010, be sure to deal with any potential obstacles as early as possible.

Increased interest in rentals

Rental enquiries are up from Spanish and French clients looking for long-term lets. While many people in countries

like France rent rather than buy their homes, Spain has one of the highest percentage of home—and second home— owners, so perhaps the Spanish government's efforts to foment rental culture are working.

Right now we have a few Catalan clients looking for nice farmhouses with land in production, available for long-term lets of up to five years. I'm also seeing more enquiries for rentals for small tourism-based businesses.

Finally, it's worth bearing in mind that rentals with option to buy are becoming very popular with Spanish buyers, particularly those that can't get finance to purchase right now.

Grants for refurbishing your home

Every spring the Generalitat —Catalonia's autonomous government— makes a limited number of grants available for reforming older properties.

They are for first homes of full-time residents of Spain, aimed to help with things like making houses compliant with habitation and sanitary standards, re-wiring, insulation, installing new bathrooms and adapting dwellings for the handicapped.

As you might expect, they will involve bureaucratic procedures and a fair amount of paperwork...

They could make all the difference to the viability of a renovation project though, so if you are planning to refurbish check now to see if you qualify and get information ready for next year.

Funds available in any year are limited, so it's vital to get your application in as soon as grants become available.



For more information, call the Generalitat's 012 information helpline and ask to speak to the 'habitatge' department. English and French-speaking agents are available.

Renegotiate your mortgage

With the Euribor index at a historic low, now is an excellent time to renegotiate or change your Spanish mortgage.

Check out rates at overseas-based banks that are keen to increase their market share in Spain, like Deutsche Bank or Barclays.



Maximise your currency exchange

For anyone selling a property and moving back to the UK the current sterling-euro exchange rate is a blessing. But I'm still surprised how many sellers negotiate a good sale price but then don't use a currency exchange service to maximise the money they make.

The right exchange rate can mean making or losing thousands on a transfer, and you can fix a rate for a set period in the future too.

If you're buying a property here then a good exchange rate is just as important, while new services mean you can also save money on smaller transfers like pension payments.

Drop me an email at jeff@fincasdirect.com if you would like more information. Finally, I'd like to wish all Olive Press readers a Bon Nadal/Feliz Navidad/Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year! Jeff Greensmith runs www.fincasdirect.com and is a registered estate agent and experienced Spanish/Catalan translator and interpreter. He has lived in Catalonia since 1986.

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YOGA FOR ALL

Maintaining a strong immune system in the body is a basic requirement for staying healthy in the winter months. To avoid falling sick and to maintain good health, Ayurveda advises a number of simple formulas which are very effective to increase immunity or 'Ojas'. Along with a healthy diet and regular yoga you may like to try some of these tasty tonics.

These simple Ayurvedic tonics bring balance back to the body for all 'doshas' (body types). These are especially beneficial for those who are physically weak, underweight or suffering from colds and flu. The tonics given below nourish not only the body but the mind too, and all ingredients are easily found.

Eat 3 or 4 figs and drink 250ml warm milk in the morning. One or two teaspoons of honey may be added to the milk for sweetening. Soak the figs in water if they're dry. Its a very good tonic and also cures constipation and anaemia.

Take 2 walnuts, 4 almonds and 7 raisins. Soak them overnight in water and eat the next morning with 250ml of warm milk. Chew well. It's good to add one or two teaspoons of honey to the milk for sweetening.

Take 1 part dry dates (without seeds), 2 parts dried coconut and 3 parts honey and mix together. Take about 50 grams

of this mixture every morning. It's specially good for children and the elderly and prevents common ailments like tonsillitis, cold, cough, and indigestion. The dose for children is 2 teaspoons and 4-5 teaspoons for adults. Do not drink water immediately after eating this mixture.



Take equal quantity of unpeeled apples and carrots grated. This mixture should be taken on an empty stomach in the morning. Dose can be up to 200 grams. Do not eat anything for 2 hours after eating this mixture. It is very effective in reducing extra fat, specially for women. For increasing weight the same mixture should be taken immediately after lunch.

Special Ayurvedic tonic for infants:

Take 1 almond and soak it in water overnight. In the morning remove the skin of almond and make a fine paste by grinding it. Mix in 1 gram of honey. Give to babies who are 4 months or older. It is a nice tonic for both mental and physical development of the child.

Take 2-3 dry dates and soak them in water every morning. In the evening boil them in 250ml milk until half the quantity of milk remains. Cool and add one teaspoon honey as a sweetener. Eat the dates and drink the milk. This can be taken one hour before going to bed. This tonic helps to give strength to lungs, increases blood circulation, cleans the bowels and alleviates Vata and Pitta imbalances.

Anti-Cancer Ayurvedic Drugs



Sarah Good is a Sivananda trained Yoga teacher offering weekly classes in the area. Please call for more details on 663 140 297 www.yogaholidayspain.com



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.

Following last months actress focused double bill, this month is the turn of the boys with Mexico's favourite son, Gael García Bernal....

Since his acting debut in 2000, his rise to "Hollywood A list" has not quite succeeded with many near misses staring along side big hitters like Brad Pitt. But it was with the magnificent indie favourite 'The Motorcycle Diaries' where

Gael first stepped in the world cinema spotlight. But I will highlight two of his films spanning his film career. Y tu mamá también "And Your Mother Too" (2001) is a 2001 Mexican drama film directed by Alfonso Cuarón and written by Carlos Cuarón. The film is a coming-of-age story about two teenage boys taking a road trip with a woman in her late twenties. The film is set in 1999, against the backdrop of the political and economic realities of present-day Mexico, specifically at the end of the uninterrupted 71-year line of Mexican presidents from the Institutional Revolutionary Party, and the rise of the opposition headed by Vicente Fox.

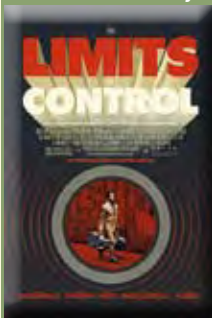
The film is known for its controversial, unabashed depiction of sexuality, which caused complications in the film's rating certificate in various countries. The film was released to English-speaking markets under its original Spanish title, rather than the literal translation to English, and opened in a limited release in the United States in 2002. In Mexico, the film took in \$2.2 million in its first weekend in June 2001, making it the highest box office opening in Mexican cinema history.

In the United States, the film went on to gain nominations for Best Original Screenplay at the Academy Awards, as well as a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the Golden Globe Awards that year as well as helping Gael launch his film career into the international market.

The Limits of Control (2009) This second film directed by Jim Jarmusch, director of such classics as 'Night on Earth', 'Coffee & Cigarettes', & 'Broken Flowers'. It stars Isaach De Bankolé as a lone wolf criminal undertaking a job in Spain while encountering many typically Jarmusch styles characters along the way including Gael in a role simply titled as 'Mexican'. Filming began in February 2008, and encompassed locations in Madrid, Seville and Almeria. The film was distributed by Focus Features. At the time of this

article it has yet to receive a formal release date but snippets can be seen on Youtube. But being a Jarmusch film it is sure to be granted a classic underground status almost immediately.

Jason.M.Berry 17/11/2009
Contact e-mail: gatchajay@hotmail.com



CHALLENGES OF GARDENING IN CATALUNYA

© GARDENING Practical up to date advice by CLODAGH and DICK HANDSCOMBE active gardeners and gardening authors living in Spain for 25 years. "SNAILS ARE BACK AFTER SUMMER SLUMBERS....But luckily eco solutions are around."



SLUG AND SNAIL KILLER



After the recent rain snails have woken from their summer survival slumbers to escape the hot dry weather. They are now round and about looking for succulent plants to eat - including those emergent from your recently sown vegetable seeds - and new sheltered homes especially early in the morning and late evening so you may have missed them so far. And of course not only snails but slugs that can lie unseen in the earth or in pots in the green house if you are not careful.

So now is the time to start to take action and continue to do so through the damper cooler months ahead.

Typical actions include using chemical slug bait pellets that kill snails and slugs on contact and the vegetable plot flower beds and green house shelves can become covered with dead snails and unsightly slimy trails from dying snails. Not a pretty sight!

Beer traps made by sinking plastic beakers into the ground and filling them with beer and circles of comfrey leaves can also work but with the same problem of dead snails that need to be collected up.

But now there is an environmentally friendly product for killing snails and slugs - called Ferramol Antilimacos manufactured by a 150 year old German based company Neudorff and distributed/ marketed by Seipasa in Spain. We met with the Product Manager recently and discovered the following facts for you.

1. Eliminates slugs and snails quickly – which it has done when we tried it out.
2. Snails and slugs disappear to die so there is no unsightly mess.
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4. Not harmful to environment, pets and wildlife including birds and worms .
5. Only need to scatter 5 grams per square metre of soil and not place in small heaps.
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9. Naturally occurring ingredients - no manufactured chemicals.
10. Satisfies EU ecological requirements.

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Remember our books for Christmas.
The Christmas present buying season has arrived and this year cost saving presents will be much appreciated.
So why not go for the books 'Growing Healthy Vegetables in Spain', ' Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain' and 'Your Garden in Spain' to the recipients to live not only less expensively but also healthier in 2009. You will find them in bookshops and Carrefour and for convenience if inland they can be purchased by mail order on 952-485838, www.santanabooks.com or www.gardeningspain.com.



CHRISTMAS AND COMMUNAL GARDENING FOR HEALTH A Christmas challenge for 2010 if not achieved in 2009-11-09

How quickly Christmas comes round again. A time to be merry and eat well in spite of the economy. Luckily if the family are holistic gardeners and see the sense to grow not only grass and flowers much of the Christmas food can come from the garden. For us following the advice of our own books 'Your Garden in Spain', 'Growing Healthy Fruit in Spain' and ' Growing Healthy Vegetables in Spain' the following is possible without spending many hours a week growing the Christmas fare. If they are not all available to you this year they could be next year.

Some of the Christmas things from our garden.

- A diversity of fresh ecologically grown fruit and vegetables.
- Herbs for Christmas stuffings, infusions and mulled wines..
- Flowers, plants, pine cones and evergreen garlands.
- Logs for the fire.
- A turkey that has enjoyed fresh vegetables as well as grains for Christmas day and partridges or rabbits for Boxing day.
- Fruit herb and nut flavoured liquors and wines.
- Almonds olives and vitamin packed carob pods . The latter are good to chew on a Boxing day walk. Remember they were the forerunners to Christmas.
- Dried fruits for making the Christmas pudding, cake and mince meat. We have dried grapes (raisins), mandarins, lemons and almonds about to be mixed.
- Fresh eggs.
- Pecan, walnuts and almonds for the nut crackers.
- Fresh mandarins lemons and tangerines.

Establish a GROWING CIRCLE for 2010
Recognising that not everyone has the motivation, experience, space and

interest in growing everything and that many Expats are looking for company, we launched the concept of Growing Circles in our November article on our website www.gardeningspain.com.

No not the circles of flattened grain crops that still mystify agriculturalists but small groups of friends and neighbours each growing one or more crop on behalf of other members of the circle and swapping on a barter basis..

The idea is especially practical for groups of neighbours and friends living in:

- The same village
- the same block of flats - especially if all on the same or two floors
- the same urbanisation – especially if all are in the same street or zone
- the same gardening club – who can swap crops at weekly meetings
- the same school gardening club – where groups of pupils could specialize in growing specific crops.

Remember that many fruits and vegetables can be grown in containers on apartment terraces and village house roofs if members of a circle don't have room for a raised bed or traditional vegetable plot. Naturally it is also possible that a group of friends share an allotment or adjacent allotments which are becoming available in several towns and villages for young and retired people or working part of the large garden of a friend who can no longer cope with their large garden due to infirmity.

Hopefully this idea is discussed over a few glasses of warm mulled wine during the end of year non gardening season and our books are found in a few Christmas Stockings to support the idea and enable us to buy some new vegetable seeds for spring planting.

Happy Christmas, New Year and Three Kings to all. © Clodagh and Dick Handscombe November 2009.



The thing is that the Post Office has been going slowly pear shaped for several years. Remember when they introduced First and Second class mail back in '68? I've yet to come across a class-ridden postal service anywhere else. Presumably Second Class mail would be transported on foot by a spotty youth "in a cleft stick", whilst First Class is borne on a silver tray by a butler; at least it should be for something like 6 shillings in old money it now costs to send a letter. More recently the system has been further complicated by the introduction of different size 'slots'. Whilst weight still plays a part in determining the cost of sending a letter now it has to be able to pass through the eye of a needle if it is to travel at minimum rates. For anything fatter than a gnat's dangly bits you get charged more.

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Carbon block	NO	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Ultraviolet radiation	?	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Distillation	?	YES	YES	?	YES	NO	NO
Reverse Osmosis	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO

? Above Comparison is only
 identifying capabilities within each specific product

? Comparisons are from general information Performance varies widely within categories.
 => Usually not effective against organic contaminants ordinarily found in drinking water.
 Check manufacturer's claims and test results for specific information

VIOLENCE in cartoons is causing children to drop massive anvils on each others' heads, stockpile TNT or mess around with huge magnets, a new report has warned.

The study also recommends the Acme corporation withdraws a number of products from sale immediately, including its big round black bombs with BOMB written on them and long rope fuses that go out a lot.

Henry Brubaker, of the Institute for Studies, said: "Our research shows a worrying increase in children trying to ambush each other with elaborate traps involving boulders, detonators and seige catapults.



"These invariably backfire, leaving the children with concertina-ed bodies, singed fur or squashed flat as a pancake for a few seconds before they scuttle off on their now-stunted legs, which make a strange tinkly sound." Additionally, parents' groups have recommended that cartoon violence be more realistic to deter children from emulating talking animals.

A spokesperson for Parents Against Bad Things said: "When Wile E Coyote's 'Instant Leg Muscle Vitamins' give him enormous lower limb trength and he powers straight off a high ledge into a ravine, he returns unscathed in the following scene. "Surely we should see his broken, bloodied body at the bottom of the cliff, twitching slightly as the life ebbs out of it? It's vital that children learn about the perils of gravity and the consequences of Instant Leg Muscle vitamin abuse."

A spokesperson for the Federation of Haunted Castle Caretakers said it supported the campaign for greater realism in cartoons: "Our members should be able to go about their work without being labelled 'skull-faced phantoms' by groups of pesky kids and their anthropomorphic canine companions." He added: "Not that it's interfering with our dastardly plans or anything."



PENSIONERS have declared that they don't like a new PC designed for them, despite it not being released yet.

Easy-PC is a new computer offering simplified functions designed to make it easier for senior citizens to complain about Pakistanis.

But despite the manufacturers bending over backwards, pensioners have decided collectively that they don't like it, never will like it, and if anyone tries to give them one for Christmas they will throw it straight in the bin with all the other rubbish, which is exactly where it belongs.

Dennis Fynch-Hatton, 83, said: "I hate it. The people who make this tripe, whatever it is, should be taken out in the street and shot, and their bodies left to be picked clean by rooks.

"I've never owned a computer, but if I had, then the one I had before would definitely have been better than this one, and whatever the old one had been like, that'd be what I'd want."

He added: "If anyone comes near me with one of these computers I shall disengage my colostomy bag and squirt its contents all over them with a loud 'tally-ho'. Computers? What did you say? Leave me alone."

Margaret Gerving, a retired headmistress from Guildford, said: "During the war, I had ever such a lovely PC. It was made of good strong Hampshire Bakelite - by white people - and it had pedals.

"You don't get better than that, and if any strange man or relative tries to give me one of these Easy-PCs I shall shout 'rape' and do everything I can to ruin their lives."

A spokesperson for Easy-PC said: "We're starting to wish we hadn't bothered."



It was announced today that darts is to become an Olympic sport in 2012. Spokesman Fascisti Espano, said: 'Nations will be represented by teams of four darts players each, but certain regulations will be put in place to make this on a par with other sports.'

'Players must not be lighter than 200 pounds, and must smoke no less than 30 cigarettes during any one match. Before the ties take place all players must drink 12 pints of lager and eat two fish suppers, and any form of prematch warm-up exercises will not be allowed, nor any exercise within the last 20 years.'

'And of course all players must have a stomach that a sumo wrestler would be proud of, and must have their arms tattooed with words like 'I'M A SPORTSMAN, HONEST' and 'MUM'.'



The undisputed king of darts, Phil 'The Power Lunch' Taylor, had this to say about the Olympics. 'Of course darts is a sport, and it's only right that the Olympics should include it as a medal event. I just hope - pint of Stella, please - I just hope that they don't allow ridiculous sports to be included, such as pool and shove ha'penny, though topless darts might be a fun one. Spectators would pay just to watch all the huge breasts of the players wobbling and swaying about - and that would just be the male ones!'

But darts legend Jocky Wilson said: 'See thay Olympics, I'd only be interested in them if I could get away with their five gold rings, and hock them at my local pawn shop. Darts should stay where it belongs, being played in pubs by alxies in a room full of spilt beer and half-eaten mince pies, and drunken wives.' Phil, you require 23 - pints of lager.



There's not a lot about Osama Bin Laden the world doesn't already know. However all that changed today as western society's 'Most Wanted Man' announced that he is getting ready to independently produce a reality show about the sport of curling.

A reality show based on a sport largely popular in Nordic countries but not that well-known in the southern hemisphere would seem to be a bit of a challenge, but not according to Bin Laden.

"We have a lot of dust and dirt in the Middle East and so sweeping becomes a necessary pastime. It's just natural, then, that people of the Middle East would be fascinated by the sport of curling. It's not that big of a stretch." When asked what motivated him most about doing the show, Mr. Bin Laden responded, "Curling as well as reality television, much like state-sponsored terrorism, seems to really push the envelope when it comes to the tremendous lengths societies will go to alleviate themselves from the boredom of day to day living. It touches the existential side of me. Whether we end up building bridges or destroying them, well, that's for the television critics to decide."

Funding will come from The United Nations Committee for the Development of the Arts.

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PC TIPS: HOW TO WATCH BBC IPLAYER, ITV AND CHANNEL 4 IN SPAIN



One Question often asked here in Spain is how to be able to watch BBC iplayer, ITV And Channel 4 on demand, These are basically blocked as they all detect your location from

your IP Address due to TV licensing. However, you can get round this by connecting to a proxy or VPN server in the UK which you can do for free or there are premium sites to which you can subscribe to be able to use these services. If you download the following piece of software you can happily watch as much UK TV through your PC for free As long as you like. However, please do this with caution as it will re-route your internet traffic through an unknown server somewhere in the UK! So only connect when you intend to watch TV and always disconnect it when you are done, also make sure that you have a valid TV License©. If you still want to proceed with installing please go to my website at <http://www.ebrovalley-computers.info/bbc.html> and download freevpn using the link and follow the simple setup instructions. Once installed you will have a new shortcut on your desktop called

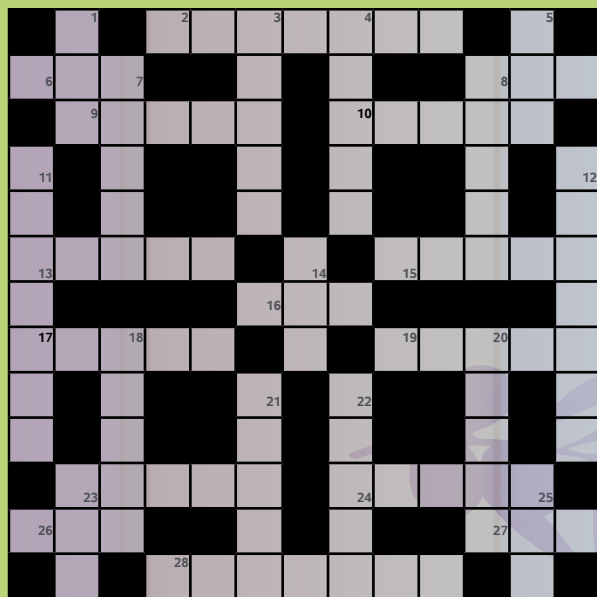


Freevpn. Simply click this before opening BBC IPLAYER and tell it to connect and select one of the VPN Servers in the UK, then open the websites for BBC iplayer, 4OD, or ITV Player and watch as much TV as you like! When finished Follow the same procedure to disconnect. Please note the only known problem with this software is that it will change your internet home page each time you connect with freevpn which is annoying but I think free UK TV Outweighs this annoyance. To set your Homepage back to normal after using simply open internet explorer and click on tools then type your homepage eg: www.google.co.uk then click ok. For help or advice call Paul on 653 408 962 or email: ebropc@gmail.com web: www.ebrovalley-computers.info

SPANGLISH?-ANSWERS NEXT MONTH

ACROSS

2. step
6. eye
8. two
9. order, command
10. awful
13. piece
15. pequeña isla (E)
16. bowl
17. rank
19. avaro (E)
23. ill-treat
24. raza (E)
26. vile
27. net
28. single



DOWN

1. garlic
3. sing
4. ascensores (E)
5. crew list
7. lunatic
8. date
11. separate
12. drummer
14. cabbage
18. level
20. novillo (E)
21. inscribirse (E)
22. mesa (E)
23. grape vine
25. of the

BY SARAH (E=translate to english otherwise to spanish)

ACROSS:

ANSWERS TO THE NOV ISSUE OF SPANGLISH

- | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------|------------------|------------|----------|
| 1. alcantarillar | 8. zinc | 13. gorila | 19. sty | DOWN: | 1. anteriormente | 4. lair | 11. tio |
| 6. tina | 9. agencia | 15. empatar | 20. down | 2. cana | 5. racionalmente | 14. mantas | 17. town |
| 7. age | 12. opalos | 18. near | 21. empenosamente | 3. angina | 10. cae | 16. camp | |

GARLIC BITES
VALERIE COLLINS & THERESA O'SHEA

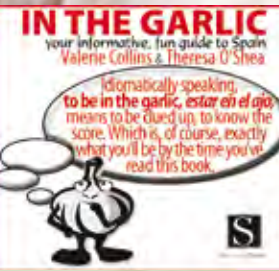


Belén Not content with a simple representation of the nativity scene, the Spanish recreate the entire town of Bethlehem and its environs. Many families have a "belén box" that goes back decades, full of lovingly-collected half-broken figurines, lumps of papier-mâché, bits of twig and silver paper, mirrors, corks and dried grasses; all ingeniously employed to recreate streams and bridges, paths and hills, carpenter's forges, fields of wheat and so on.

El Caganer The custom of placing a crapping peasant / shepherd in the belén originated in Catalunya, but the universal love for all things scatological has led to its spread throughout the rest of Spain. No disrespect is meant by the defecating figurine. On the contrary, the idea is one of regeneration, i.e., of putting something back into the earth. The tradition dates back to the 18th century and has spawned a massive collectibles industry. Present elect Barack Obama is the latest in a long line of public figures to join the caganer hall of fame.

Eguberri The Basque word for Christmas means 'new day' and was probably used in pre-Christian times for the day of the winter solstice.

Jamón Christmas is a grim time for pigs, especially the patiently-fattened acorn-eating variety. One false turn in Carrefour and you'll find yourself suddenly hemmed in by ceilings of swinging forelegs and hind legs, interspersed with extra-large, extra-phallic chorizos (sausages). Of all the festive foodstuffs it is the jamón, lovingly mounted on its cutting stand and covered with a damp cloth, without which the Spanish Christmas hamper would never be complete.



THIS MONTH:
NAVIDAD



Reyes Magos The names of their wizardly majesties are a bit of a mouthful, but are as familiar to the Spanish as Santa's reindeers are to fans of Rudolf the Red-nosed Reindeer. Melchor, Gaspar and Baltasar are said to represent Europe, Asia and Africa, respectively. There does seem to be some confusion, however, as to which one is which, and in some Three Kings processions it is Gaspar, rather than Baltasar who is the dark-skinned king. No matter, 'el rey negro' is always the favourite.

Tió, as in **cagar el tió.** Brilliant Christmas Eve custom in Catalunya that involves clobbering a blanket-covered log stuffed with presents. For days beforehand the children feed up the cagatió (literally, the crapping log) by placing titbits under the blanket. Then, on December 24, the violence starts. "Caga tió," they sing, "sinó et donaré un cop de bastó". Drop your load, log, or I'll give you a jolly good hiding.

Villancicos Christmas carols. Forget solemn. Think hand-clapping, foot-stomping, pub-type sing-a-longs and you've captured the essence of Spanish carol-singing. Traditionally takes place around the belén, with everyone banging on a medley of home-made instruments. Probably the catchiest of all the villancicos is the ubiquitous "Mira cómo beben los peces en el río." Look how the fishes are drinking in the river. Indeed.



Feliz Navidad, Bon Nadal, and Eguberri on. ©Theresa O'Shea

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ALL ANGLES: SUPPORTING WRITING IN ENGLISH IN TARRAGONA.

Tarragona now has a group for anyone interested in creative writing in English. 'All Angles' was set up in 2008 and meets monthly to hear members' latest work and to develop a

support network for writers in the Southern part of Catalonia.

'Whether it's a hobby or whether you see it as a job, writing is a solitary sort of activity,' says founder member Paul Connell, 'and it's good to have some contact with other authors, who can provide a sympathetic but critical audience for testing out ideas, as well as information on publishing and other opportunities.'

The play on words in the group's name reflects its openness to all comers.

'We have native speakers and those whose first language is Catalan and Castellano,' says Paul, 'and we have members working in poetry, prose, film scripts and radio comedy. We also seem to have a small library of unpublished novels between us. There's only a handful of us so far, but we've already had some success with a winner and a runner-up in a recent short story competition in Catalonia Today, the Barcelona based English language magazine.'

New members are always welcome and in future we hope to work with local writers in other languages and with those in dance, painting or music.

The group's web site:

<http://webfacil.tinet.org/allangles> gives information on future meetings and Paul can be contacted at pconnell@tinnet.org

ARE YOU HAPPY WITH YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION IN THE CATALAN SYSTEM?

Many families arrive from English speaking countries, without the slightest idea that their children will be taught in Catalan. Some of their parents only intend to spend a couple of years here for business, work placement and then are sent back to the U.K, U.S or other European countries..

THIS IS A HUGE HANDICAP FOR PARENTS WHO ARE USED TO HELPING AND ENCOURAGING THEIR CHILDREN'S SCHOOL WORK.

So, where does that leave us foreigners?, whose children would be at a complete loss in an English, Swedish, German school, where the English language is given a much higher priority.

Why do we not consider the fact that in Barcelona there are at least five International schools. Here in Tarragona nothing. WE NEED INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS FOR OUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION. English is the most spoken second language in the world as well as the MOST REQUIRED LANGUAGE WORLDWIDE to work, do business, study at University.

IT'S TIME TO REACT BEFORE ITS TOO LATE. THE COSTA DORADA NEEDS AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL. The plans can be made, contacts and negotiations have begun but: WE NEED NAMES. INTERNATIONAL SCHOOLS have to be viable.

IF YOU REALLY CARE ABOUT YOUR CHILDREN'S EDUCATION CALL US AND VOICE YOUR IDEAS, OPINIONS. LOOK AT MALLORCA FOR AN EXAMPLE, WHERE PARENTS FOUGHT AND ACHIEVED AN INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL. THERE ARE NOW 500 STUDENTS. THIS MUST BE FOR A GOOD REASON.....

Please contact the English secretary urgently on: 977 17 20 27

WHAT'S ON

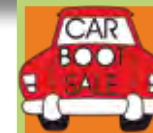
Agents d'acollida (welcoming agents)

When: This facilitation & information service will be available on Wednesday & Friday evenings from 5-7 pm
Where: Sala de exposició, Casa de Cultura, Carrer Colom, El Perelló (the first floor, underneath the library) How: Please phone the Perello Ajuntament on 977 490 007 & ask for an appointment to meet with Taru. People from other townships can ring their local Ajuntament to find out about the available agent d'acollida service for their area.

XMAS PARTY AT THE MORA PARK HOTEL, MORA LA NOVA, Sat 19th Dec, 9pm till 2am, 5 euros per ticket.(over 18's only) tel Paula 628779422. **THE READING CLUB** where an English spoken person reads a short English story- members consist of Spanish, Irish and English. Reading Club will meet In December, on the 14th, Monday, at 19:30. Hugh Edwards will read for us a short story, maybe about Xmas. In January, we will have a rest and in February we will meet again. at Marcel. li Domingo Public Library, Tortosa. **CAR BOOT | 1st Sunday** of every month 10am. stalls 5€. Refreshments, Camping St Jordi, Platje Ayellanes, L'Ampolla Tel 679 115 247 **•CAR BOOT SALE | 2nd Sunday** of very month. Situated Hipaca Escornalbou, Vilanova D'Escornalbou. Arrive 9am starts 10am. Bar & restaurant- **no fresh produce allowed!** Contacts: Cosme on 620215772 or Silvia 665159781 **•CLASSIC CAR MEETING** 1st FRIDAY of every month 6PM Call for more details and new location: 678 718 446 **•EL PERELLO FREESIA GROUP (working for cancer charities)** Next El Perello Freesia Group meeting. 3 December 2009 between 12 noon and 1.00pm At the Casa de Cultura El Perello. This will be followed by lunch at Casals restaurant. Price of the 4 course lunch will be €11. Please book in advance. For More information please phone 977475000 (Pam). The next El Perello Bookstalls will be held at the Homogenic bar on: Saturday 28th November 2009, Saturday 19th December 2009, Saturday 9th January 2010. The 5th annual Carol Service in the El Perelló Church

IESG INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH SPEAKING GROUP IESG

What is the English-Speaking group? - The group was originally started over three years ago as the 'English-Speaking Network' the name was recently changed as several prospective members thought it was solely a computer-based network; it's not. The IESG provides a social-networking facility for English-speaking people living in the vicinity of L'Ametlla de Mar. The ESG comprises friendly people of all nationalities and ages who speak English and enjoy each other's company. **What's our Aim?** - Our social activities enable people to meet, and to encourage good-will between the local community and newcomers to the area (we have members who live in El Perelló and L'Ampolla). At times we can offer advice and assistance based on our own experience; in addition the 'Problem Surgery' at El Perelló has also kindly offered their support on a case-by-case basis. **Who are the members?** - Members have included **American, Catalan, Dutch, English, German, Norwegian & Swiss.** **What do we do?** - We organise various activities based on members' wishes. Further suggestions are always welcome, but may require volunteers to organise them! Book reading/discussion; Informal barbeques/picnics; Visits to local places of interest; Art - practice and help; Walking - Strenuous or ambling; Guest speakers; Canasta; Petanque/Boule. **Where does the group meet?** Meetings are held at 6.30 pm on the second Thursday of each month (except for August) at: - Edificio Bahia Blanca, C/Paisos Catalans, 74, L'Ametlla de Mar. More information? Either tel: 977 267 418 or e-mail: enetlametlla@yahoo.com



Car Boot Sale
Saturday 12th December
Sellers 9am buyers 10am
Cars 3€, Vans 5€
At Mora Caravans C12, km 61
Mora La Nova to Ginestar road
977 400 375 or 659 418 317

will take place On Friday 11th December 2009 at 8pm. All Nationalities welcome. After the Service a celebration will be held at at the Music School Tickets will be €7 and will include a light buffet, free drink on arrival & Disco. All profits will go to the Children's cancer charity AFANOC. For further information please phone 977475000 (Pam). **•FRIENDSHIP CLUB |** for all nationalities meeting 2nd, Sunday of each month near Tortosa free stalls for those that have wares to sell, food & drinks available. Call Brian Parkin at 660990422 or 977059911 **•CAR BOOT SALE |** first sunday every month C/Garcia Restaurant Braseria Can Palomo MORA LA NOVA. **•MASONIC GROUP |** Logia de San Jorge A new English speaking lodge of Freemasons approved by GLE, has been established in this area. if you would like more information please telephone Edward Ward on 977416476 (Tarragona area) or Les Beech on 678357713 (Castellon area). logiadesanjorge@yahoo.co.uk **•Cof E CHURCH SERVICE |** 4th Wednesday of every month at 12.30p.m. in Ampolla village church, all welcome. Followed by Menu del dia lunch (optional) Enquiries: 977 593 219. The Anglican Congregation of St Christopher's, 5, Plaza Primero De Mayo, Vinaros-Services 10 a.m. every Sunday. During the week, also other activities i.e. Thursdays, a "Drop In" morning from 11.a.m.- 1.00 p.m. to meet for a coffee & a chat. **Paul Needle can be contacted on 964761641 or mobile 662482944 or e-mail paulneedle@aol.com for pastoral needs.**

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The Tió de Nadal (roughly "Christmas Log"), also known as "Tió" (trunk or log, a big piece of cut wood) or "Tronca" ("log") and popularly called "Caga tió" (pooping log in English), is a character in Catalan mythology relating to a Christmas tradition widespread in Catalonia.

A Caganer is a little statue found in Catalonia, in neighbouring areas with Catalan culture such as Andorra, and in other parts of Spain, Portugal and Italy

Cap d'Any (New Year's Eve) / "L' Home dels Nassos" 31

Wear red underwear for good luck! at midnight everyone stops swilling cava and starts stuffing 12 grapes into their mouths, one for every chime of the bell. If you are able to eat the grapes during the strokes it means that you will have a lucky year. At the end of the strokes they drink a toast with Cava.

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