



## Pre-Christmas roaming

Roger Wheeler – *The roaming pen...*

### Ho, Ho, Ho its Christmas, Santa's been roaming around and he's found some Credit Crunch Christmas Crackers.

Its booze cruise time again and of course there are lots of so called 'special offers'. Whilst we love Dieppe, it's my favourite Normandy town, but that four hour crossing on Trans Manche Ferries from Newhaven can be tedious; they have also planned their timetable to prevent anyone thinking of a day trip, unless you really are a masochist, returning at 3.00 am, plus charging in the region of £90 for the pleasure. So you might as well spend the time driving to Dover and hopping on seaFrance to Calais for £25.00 return for the car and up to five passengers. P&O want £27 for the same trip but including nine people. Speed Ferries will charge you £29 for a day trip to Boulogne; their crossing only takes 55 minutes, also for car and five people although with that number of passengers where are you going to put the booze?? Still without doubt you can save quite a bit on wine, spirits etc., and, if you're lucky with the weather, it is a nice – but very long - day out. If you're thinking about stocking up on cheap Champagne this Christmas, please don't, it is simply not nice and certainly not even worth the 'cheap' price. You are much better buying a white fizz like a Cremant de Bourgogne, Gaillac Brut from Mas d'Aurel or our favourite - Blanquette de Limoux; they will all cost less and are better than any cheapo Champagne. If you are really hell bent of taking a serious trip during December and haven't booked yet then take a look at those wonderfully old fashioned shops called 'travel agents', we thought that they had gone the way of foil wrapped Kit Kats and bank managers. Friends tell me that despite the rise and

rise of the interweb and other associated modern devices, travel agents are staging a comeback and beating the internet at its own game. A week self catering in Crete booked through Thomas Cook including flights, car and fabulous villa was about half the price than when booked direct with the airline, car rental company etc.. Quite a surprise. And now in another surprising development Brighton & Hove Buses have introduced their 'PLUSBUS' tickets. Don't think that they have suddenly become generous and reduced their fares, heaven forbid. No this a National policy where if you are travelling anywhere by train you just ask the bus driver (!) will sell you a train ticket and for an additional £2.00 will include unlimited travel by bus at your destination. So, theoretically you could jump on a bus anywhere in Brighton and ask for a Southern Saver and it will cost you just £12.50\*, for travel anywhere on the Southern Railway network plus your travel to and from the station. Although as we know a Southern DaySave costs just £10 so B&H Buses have got their sums just a tad wrong by only 50p, but it is still a saving of £1.00, not a lot, but something. (\*A 'City Saver ticket currently costs £3.50) The Christmas Quiz – did anyone get the answers?, what is the connection between the Japanese Yen, the Turkish Lira, the Thai Baht, the Euro and sheep, none of them have a plural. But wait a minute, I hear you cry, everyone knows that, but the Euro must have a 's', no it doesn't, despite the fact that virtually everyone says Euros, everyone that is except the Irish, the Dutch and Belgians who know about these things. Euro is a European word, invented by the EU with no plural. Don't believe

me, take a look at a euro note and compare with a sterling note, there you will see that it's 'Five Euro' and 'Five Pounds'.

So if you're lucky enough to have one of those rare notes you really will have a Very Happy Christmas. Take it easy – but make sure you take it!

## Remember and celebrate

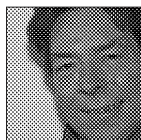
Paul Thomas

### Many moons ago I left a dull backwater for Brighton and like many others here I shared a flat.

Carlos and Lynne were lively and interesting. Carlos was a handsome man from Chile and Lynne was an icy blonde from Manchester. A striking couple, they met and fell in love at Art College before travelling around Europe, involved in art, music and fashion. They made Brighton their home and sold vintage clothes before glossies made it fashionable. They opened their home to me. Their relationship was tempestuous to put it mildly with Carlos being both wildly jealous and bisexual. Frequent arguments were had in heated Spanish to be followed by affectionate making up. Home was never dull. Over the years, however, Carlos and Lynne went their different ways. Sadly, Carlos contracted HIV and later died of AIDS related illnesses. At this time of year with World Aids Day on 1st December, my thoughts are with Carlos who died before the advances in medical treatment for HIV might have made a difference. Alongside the friends, families and agencies that make a difference, let's be thankful for the NHS whose drugs are keeping a lot of people with HIV living longer than they used to.

A chance to remember and celebrate those lost to HIV/AIDS as well as those who are living with the still incurable disease takes place at St Mary's Church, corner of Upper Rock Gardens and St James Street on Sunday 30th November at 6pm. Brighton Gay Men's Chorus, Rainbow Chorus and the children's Stagecoach Choir are performing selections from Carl Orf's Carmin Barrina. This amazingly rousing music is sometimes better known as the Old Spice ad soundtrack and is frequently heard on X Factor. Tickets are £3 and all profits go to The Sussex Beacon, the HIV/AIDS care centre based in Brighton.

For details on tickets see [www.singbrighton.com](http://www.singbrighton.com) website of the Brighton Gay Men's Chorus



## Grumpy old git, Gary

Ginger whinger

### With the festive season almost upon us, as usual I shall use my awesome intellect to solve some of those problems that arise at this time of year.

Q) Every year I get a Christmas card from at least one person that I haven't sent a card to. How can I avoid this happening?

A) It may cost a few quid but you will easily recoup this by using my method. What you do is this: About three weeks before Christmas, you send in your own obituary to the local paper. This has two advantages. 1) You can say nice things about yourself and 2) You won't have to buy any cards at all, thus subsidising your expenses. After all, who expects a card off a dead person?

Of course, this has the drawback that in order to avoid bumping into anyone you know you'll have to move to a new area and assume a new identity; again, this can be done at no expense to you at all. What you do is infiltrate an evil criminal gang then grass them all up. In this way the government will pay all your re-location costs etc, under the witness protection scheme.

I know this may seem a tad extreme, but isn't it worth it to avoid that Christmas-card embarrassment?

Q) I am a 44-year-old woman. Every year my partner buys me an array of stockings, suspenders, sexy shoes etc. When what I really want is a winceyette nightgown or some slippers. How can I get this across to him without sounding ungrateful?

A) Simple. Just buy him a thong then laugh hysterically every time he wears it. Problem solved, I think you'll find.

Q) Every time I get pissed-off at all those people that dress up in Santa hats and tinsel and I feel obliged to smile in an amused manner. Is there an antidote to this?

A) Yes, what I do at this time of year is plaster myself in white make-up and dress as the grim reaper and tell them their time has come. That wipes the smile off their face. Especially if I use my scythe on them. This is really effective with children in pubs by the way. (Two of the many things I really hate are screaming kids in the pub and people who say, "Can I get" instead of "can I have"! As in "can I get a pint of lager" or "can I get a packet of peanuts" or whatever. So if you do or both of these beware, the angel of death is easily miffed.)

Q) Every year I go to the Christmas company do and every year I'm seeking new employment by the 27th December, with no clear memory why. Am I doing something wrong?

A) Probably not. My view is that if the management would rather not be called twats and told how to run the business by someone who's just drunk the best part of a bottle of woods navy rum, and consequently has bread sticks stuck up his nose, they shouldn't go, should they? Let them have their own do where they can shag their own secretaries and stick their managerial arses in the photocopier.

In the meantime, peace and goodwill to all men.

(Except Jim Davidson and Chris de Burgh, obviously. I wish them all the happiness and cheer they've brought me, he, he!)

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