



2017 AGM BRINGS CHANGES

A new President and the membership given more say in whom is chosen for main Management Committee roles

Just like in the UK, charities operating in Catalonia have to be registered with the local authorities and their statutes of operation agreed as being legally appropriate. Those statutes can only be changed with a majority agreement of the charity's membership at a general meeting and then through ratification by the local authorities. Deciding on changes to the BBA Statutes was one of the main tasks of the BBA Annual General Meeting (AGM) this year.

Since its inception the BBA has held its AGMs usually in May, and advertised them to all members both on the website and via email. To encourage attendance at the meetings, for the last few years, the AGMs have been held in turn in the south, centre and north of the Girona province – Lloret de Mar, Girona and Empuriabrava. At the AGM, held in Empuriabrava this June, the turnout of ordinary members was still rather disappointing for a volunteer led organisation. Whilst the cycling of venues was seen as a positive, not surprisingly the actual date of the meeting came under discussion. Would the member attendance increase if meetings were held earlier in the year, before people got into summer holiday mode? It was decided to try next year.

The BBA is run on a day-to-day basis by a Management Committee, which holds roughly five meetings a year, at the offices of the Honorary British Consul in Girona, to decide on operational issues and make plans for the Charity's development. Each member of the Committee is voted on at an AGM and stays in post for two years before requiring re-election. Only the President's post was previously voted for at the AGM, all the other roles were shared around at the first Management Committee meeting after the AGM.

But this was just one of the changes to the BBA statutes adopted at this year's AGM –

Quiz night with a twist at Can Carbonell

You might think ordinary quiz nights are testing enough, but the one held in April at Can Carbonell, near Llagostera, had an extra twist. Not only did you have to answer the questions, you also had to enter your answers onto a grid. Then an element of luck comes in as bingo balls are drawn to decide on the order in which the correct answers are read out. If you are the first team to mark off a line of right answers you win. Get it? You really have to be there!



The event was such a huge success, plus it raised €348 for BBA funds, that by popular demand a second event was organised in June. This time €275 was raised and again a very enjoyable evening reported.

The BBA's thanks go to Anne Collier and Jason Daza for organising the events, the Can Carbonell Club House for providing the venue and Roger Arndell the quizmaster. Look out for the next one, as we said, "You need to be there!"

now voting for the posts of President, Secretary and Treasurer have become the annual responsibility of the members at each year's AGM. The other changes to the BBA Statutes that were approved at the same time were minor corrections for the most part – like updating the Charity's postal address. If you want to check them out the full Statutes are on the BBA's website.

A surprise announcement at this year's AGM was that Anny Linnell, after five years of hard work on the BBA's behalf, proffered her resignation. In line with the Statute changes, Veronica Wheeler was then voted in as new President along with Alan Wallace for Secretary and Christine Dearnley as Treasurer. Both Alan and Christine were being ratified in posts that they have held for sometime. And then another year of hard work began, when the new Management Committee met for the first time the following Wednesday, to organise role responsibilities and start forward planning for the rest of 2017 and 2018.

THE NEW BBA MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

President

Veronica Wheeler

Secretary

Alan Wallace

Treasurer

Christine Dearnley

Volunteer Co-ordinator

Veronica Wheeler

Deputy Volunteer Co-ordinator

Diana Buckley

Fundraising Manager

Carol Knights

Membership Secretary

Patrick Knights

David McMurdie

Anne Collier

David Moran

Griff James

Meet the BBA Committee

In each issue of the BBA Newsletter we will be introducing you to members of the BBA Management Committee. First up is our new President, Veronica Wheeler.



Veronica's family couldn't be more spread around the world if they tried: one son in London, a daughter in Costa Rica and a second son with a baby daughter in Vietnam. Not surprisingly she has become an experienced world traveller as she jets around visiting them as regularly as she can.

Her third son, his wife and two grandsons live a lot closer, just next door to her in Lloret de Mar. The two houses share a garden where Veronica can indulge her love of gardening and particularly vegetable growing. Her other great love, wine, is enjoyed with her Lloret based, award winning sommelier son. *"I collect wine and go to as many wine tastings, both here and in the UK as I can"*, she told us.

Veronica has lived in Catalonia for some fifteen years after having retired from the UK NHS. Starting as a nurse at the age of sixteen, she ended her career having experienced senior management in both hospital and community healthcare settings. Joining the BBA three years ago she was quickly co-opted into the role of Volunteer Co-ordinator. A role that at least in the medium term she hopes to retain even after her recent election as the BBA President. *"We have now got a team of people managing the volunteer activity rather than just one person, so I can take on a more strategic responsibility and that I think will fit fine with also being President. But we'll see, it will be up to the next AGM to decide if I'm right!"*

Brits in Spain: staying or going?

Whilst the plight of refugee and economic migrants to Europe has been much written about recently, there is another less discussed migrant group prevalent here in Spain – the British retirement migrant. British citizens are not surprisingly very attracted to Spain with its warmer climate, which encourages outdoor activities and provides a lifestyle that enhances their social participation. What better vision of retirement than enjoying a glass of chilled wine whilst sitting in the sunshine, with friends, in a restaurant overlooking the blue Mediterranean Sea? And whilst the cost of living may have increased here over the last few years, most of the basic costs of life – including that glass of wine – still generally remain lower than in the UK, allowing fixed incomes like pensions to go further.

But there can be difficulties with choosing to live the ‘good life’ in Spain, problems that can lead to those retirement migrants either wishing to, or actually, returning to the UK. Some British newspapers in the last few years have reported an upsurge in Britain bound returnees, but little formal research has been undertaken into what is actually happening. Three academics from the universities of Valencia, Birmingham and Northampton – Jordi Giner-Montfort, Kelly Hall and Charles Betty - decided in 2014 to remedy this by undertaking a series of Costa Blanca based surveys plus analysis of Spanish registry data between 2008-13. They had already ascertained in a previous study that, *“as people age there may be issues such as the death of a partner, loneliness, physical and social isolation, loss of purchasing powers, disabilities, the need for health care and/or social care can make some people consider returning after some years of more or less continuous residence in Spain.”*

An immediate problem was the lack of data on the numbers of retirees arriving in Spain, let alone the numbers that after a period return to the UK. The numbers game is even more confused by the large influxes year on year of British seasonal visitors, tourists, seasonal residents and trans-national workers that enter the mix.

Plus, British citizens as a group are notorious for not registering their local residency here, *“The British Embassy estimated in 2010 that 75% of the British community living in Spain is unregistered”* despite there being a legal requirement for anyone living here for more than six months to register with the ‘Padrón’. This, *“occurs when people do not want to lose their right to welfare support in the UK or think they might have to pay additional taxes.”*

- Population of older British migrants to Spain still increasing but at a much slower rate than previously
- 385,179 registered British Citizens living in Spain (2014)
 - 52% over 55
 - 44% over 60
 - 10% over 75
- An estimated 75% of actual British residents may not be registered
- 61% of over 55 year olds live on the coastline from Malaga to Alicante. *“at a local level, some municipalities have more than 30% of British citizens.”*
- On a lesser scale similar groupings are found on the Costa Brava

The ‘Padrón’ registration is an important part of being a recognized resident. Without it health, social and other resident benefits are not accessible. What many British people living here don’t realize is, that since a new 2009 law was implemented in 2012, European Union migrants in Spain have to confirm every five years their continuing presence on the ‘Padrón’. If they don’t they are automatically removed from the register – between 2008 and 2013 78% of both personally and automatically de-registered British have been recorded with an unknown destination. They may have returned to the UK, moved to a third country, moved within Spain or, just as likely, not known about the need to confirm their registration.

Once they had a handle on the figures, the authors decided to conduct an online

survey amongst retired British immigrants in the northern Costa Blanca to estimate the numbers who intended to return to the UK and what sort of things might contribute to them actually going. Of their sample it seemed 28.7% intended to return to their home country in the next few years.

The most likely trigger was an *"inability to run the home."* Which of course encompasses all sorts of things from their physical health to the finances they have available. None of which are in their direct control and exacerbated by the economic crisis, exchange rate fluctuations and a rising cost of living. It also seemed that if they had kept up regular visits to the UK they were 2.2 times more likely to intend returning and if they had retained property in the UK, 1.5 times more likely. Perhaps surprisingly, whether they were able to speak the Spanish language or not had no significant impact on their intended return.

- Between 2008 and 2013 the numbers of returnees increased 190%
- Nearly 50% returning are over 55.
- 10.09% of registered over 55s have returned.
- Over a third of returnees are over 70 and likely to need health, care and other welfare services.
- Individual issues are important factors in return intentions, especially being unable to run a home.

But the majority of the sample does intend to stay, perhaps because of *"strong links built within the British community, something that may increase solidarity in the worst scenarios and make it easier to face difficulties."* But if things change the pressures to go may increase, for example, though *"It is widely recognized that the Spanish Health System is highly regarded among British residents ... a diminution of the quality would prompt some to leave Spain."*

What does this research mean? For Britain: that there is likely to be an increasing

number of older returnees. People that will need higher levels of healthcare and social support, when these are the very public services already overwhelmed in the UK. It is not hard to envisage that many of the returnees will also find out that they no longer have sufficient personal income to pay for their housing and living needs in Britain.

For Spain when it comes to the returnees *"the main problem is to assure a safe exit from the country, which in some cases could be assumed by the local councils or British charities, but also to face the loss of population. As long as the local budgets and some essential services are set from the amount of inhabitants, some towns could face losses in both of them. Moreover, some private services and businesses, mostly run and oriented to British citizens would have to downsize or even close due to the loss of population."*

Added to which, with their own aging population, albeit in a country where the extended family taking care of their older members is still the norm, there is going to be a significant additional draw on Spain's health and welfare services. Under EU rules Spain can claim back from the UK state healthcare costs for British pensioners registered here – but not for those that have failed to register or are under-registered.

No similar research has been done in the Costa Brava, but it is not hard to draw parallels with the findings from further south. Over the last few months, referrals to the BBA of older British residents have significantly grown and worryingly there has also been an increasing number of BBA clients who have had their situation worsened by their lack of proper registration. Then came Brexit and who knows what impact that will have on the retirement migrants living here, but much more research would be welcome. Not only to help the BBA and other British charitable organisations operating here, but also the local communities, authorities and care providers.

Age in Spain

Acasa (Age Concern) has been helping older people in Spain for over 20 years. It has recently relaunched itself as **Age in Spain**. The organisation wants to reach out to more English speaking people who live in or plan to retire to Spain. They can offer case worker support if things go wrong and in some situations, can provide financial aid from UK charities where available. They can also help people avoid future problems by helping with realistic forward planning.

Their web page www.ageinspain.org gives information on how to get help. Founder Judy Arnold-Boakes urges, "The sooner people get in touch the easier it is to prevent a crisis. With the right information and support people can retain their independence longer and make informed choices about their future in Spain"

British Benevolent Fund (Madrid)

This fund was originally set up as a Madrid charity in the 1930s but has recently been expanded to allow grant applications from across Spain. They provide financial aid to British nationals in distress in Spain. They do this by working with partner organisations across Spain. The BBA has recently become a partner, which means we are able to carry out or help complete the assessment process necessary for an application to the Fund.

All completed applications from the Girona Province must be forwarded via the BBA to the Fund for their consideration. For more information visit their web site, www.britishbenevolentfund.org



In May BBA representatives attended a British Benevolent Fund Charity Workshop in Barcelona opened by Lloyd Milen, British Consul General in Spain.



The 1st June heralded the first open-air BBA Big Band Benefit Concert in Empuriabrava, with the *Hertfordshire Big Band* providing an evening of swing and jazz music in aid of BBA funds. The audience of over 400 not only got to enjoy the excellent music, but also were able to take part in a charity auction with lots ranging from an invitation to lunch with the British Consul General to a Wine Spa experience for two at the 5star Hotel Golf Peralada. The evening raised a magnificent €1,000 to add to BBA funds.



In 2015 the Alzheimer's Society reported that 7.1% of over 65s were suffering from dementia. This is 1 in every 14 of the population aged 65 years and over. And as they warned the incidence is set to grow and not just in the UK, but also here in Spain.

Dementia is a term used to describe a collection of symptoms, including memory loss. Normally people who develop dementia are over 65, but it can affect people much younger than this. At the BBA we are increasingly being asked to visit people who are at the early onset stage of the disease, either to give their carer a break or to help the affected person maintain a semblance of social contact and activity. For a volunteer, who has had no previous contact with sufferers, visiting somebody with dementia even in its early stages can be daunting. Ruth Milner, the BBA local volunteer coordinator in Selva, has written some pointers for our volunteers, which it is hoped will make them feel more confident whilst working with our clients, improving the experience for both the client and volunteer. Ruth has based her pointers, summarised below, on both her previous professional and personal experiences.

ROUTINE helps people when they are confused. So do try to develop a routine for your visits, but remember that it is their home and way of life, your visits should be trying to help them maintain their routine not for them to fit in with yours.

PATIENCE is needed by volunteers trying to build a rapport with dementia suffering clients - use eye contact and smiles, as non-verbal communication is a powerful tool. Also, if appropriate, remember we all need touch, be it in the touch of a hand or a hug. Patience is particularly important when a client is upset or agitated, being confused doesn't stop people feeling the same emotions as the rest of us, their difficulty is expressing them in a cohesive manner.

RESPECT the person with dementia as an equal. Self-esteem and our dignity are important to us all but especially when we are

unwell, consider how you would wish to be treated in the situation. This might mean allowing them more time to undertake a task, even if you could do it quicker; not excluding them from social events, we all gain pleasure on different levels; not correcting any memory mistakes unless you really have to, and then being as sensitive as possible; and finally don't take someone's agitation personally, it might seem directed at you, but is more likely to be driven by their confusion and lack of understanding.

REALITY for the dementia sufferer maybe very different to what you actually know is true. But they aren't making things up or telling untruths, it is just a mechanism for filling in their memory gaps or rationalising things that no longer make sense to them. The anecdotes they can often most easily remember are those from long ago, so do allow the client to talk about past events if that is what makes them happy. Even if you have heard the same story many times before!



PHYSICAL WELL-BEING needs careful monitoring. Although dementia is caused by the deterioration of nerve endings in the brain, other things can have a significant impact. Being physically strong is important, yet many sufferers forget to just eat or drink enough. There could be changes in eating likes and dislikes - perhaps a sudden penchant for cream cakes or chips - the important thing is that they are eating enough of anything to stay alive. Research has highlighted that dementia sufferers need encouraging to continue interacting with the world around them, but if they can't hear what is going on they very rapidly become isolated into their own world. Hearing loss is very common in the elderly, tests easy to organise, and loss can often be compensated with hearing aids. But even where this is not possible other tactics based on their other senses - sight, touch and smell - can help maintain their communication with the world outside their own head.

Cheers to the Nags Head!

If you visit the Nag's Head bar in the Fenals area of Lloret de Mar you will find a giant whiskey bottle on the counter. Not that it's there to provide the odd dram to customers, instead it



collects any odd change they might like to leave behind. When the bottle is completely full, the bar's owners, Jane and Spooner, hand a carrier bag containing all the coins over to their chosen charity. Last

month they decided the BBA should benefit and Spooner was snapped handing over a very heavy carrier bag providing €94.58 to add to our funds.

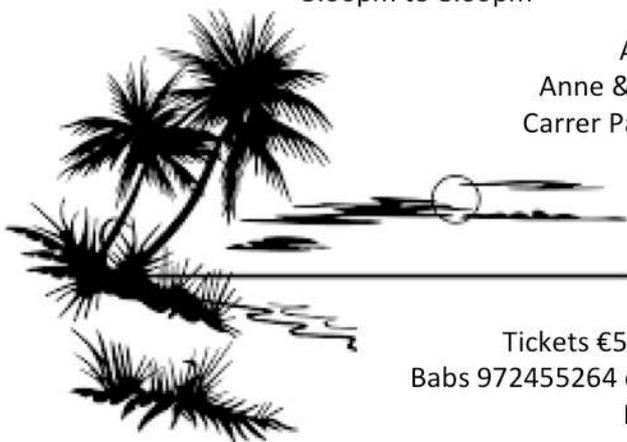
So cheers from the BBA to Spooner, Jane and of course all their customers.

British Benevolent Association, Girona

Annual Fundraising Sundowner

Sunday 10th September 2017
5.00pm to 8.00pm

At the home of
Anne & Geoff Martin,
Carrer Pallars Jussa 16,
Mas Busca,
Roses.



Tickets €5 available from
Babs 972455264 or on the door.
Free first drink.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Soon the tourists will have left and family visitors all gone home, and the BBA Volunteers' Coffee Mornings will begin again. Held each month, the venues are spread across the Girona Province to ensure as many volunteers as possible can attend. Each meeting is lead by the local volunteer co-ordinator and often also attended by the BBA Volunteer Co-ordinator and now President, Veronica Wheeler.

- Wednesday 13 September 11am
Roses, lead by David Moran.
- Tuesday 10 October 11am
Baix Emporda, lead by Diana Buckley.
- Thursday 9th November 11am
Selva, lead by Ruth Milner.

Look out for details of venues on our website.

The BBA is proposing to publish newsletters for their members and supporters twice a year - Autumn/Winter and Spring/Summer.

Any comments on this issue or possible ideas or content for the next BBA Newsletter, due December 2017, is very welcome.

Please contact the Editor at britbengirona@gmail.com.

WANTED

Do you know anyone who is au fait with the new communications tools of social media? Someone who in their spare time might be prepared to set up and service a BBA Facebook page? It doesn't matter where they live as the whole thing could be done remotely. Email: britbengirona@gmail.com.

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