

¿Qué? Podcast, Season 3, Episode 12

Simon: And this is Qu..é *laughter*And this was Qué *coughing*

Music interlude

Simon: Hello everyone! My name is Simon Hunter, I'm the editor of the English Edition of EL PAÍS, and this is ¿Qué? A podcast from El País that will shimmy down the chimney of Spanish news to bring you a seasonal current affairs gift.

Whether you're busy wrapping presents, busy writing Christmas cards, or busy drinking all of Santa's jerez, we're here for you, es la época en la que estamos alegres - that's 'tis the season to be jolly in Spanish *laughter* which sounds rubbish!

So sit back, relax, and let us break down all the Spanish stories that make you say,

Sound bite of Alan Rickman: Now I have a machine gun, Ho Ho Ho.

Lovely to hear a bit of Alan Rickman there - from Die Hard which of course is the best Christmas film ever, as any fule no...

Today is December 17, 2019 and I am here as ever with the Mrs Claus to my Santa, Melissa Kitson! How are you Melissa?

Melissa: Hi, I'm good thanks! Looking forward to Christmas

Simon: Yeah, what's the plan?

Melissa: err...castañas,

Simon: Castañas?

Melissa: And sleeping in

Simon: Hang on what's castañas

Melissa: Did I say that right? Like the walnuts

Simon: Castaños! Castañas or Castaños José?

José: Castañas

Simon: Castañas! Oh I do, I...as the man with the orthopedic shoe said, "I stand corrected," I do apologize. You were right, castañas, lovely!

Melissa: Yes that's all the plans we have so far *laughter*

Simon: That's all you've planned so far.

I'm also delighted to say we've got another Christmas elf in the studio this week, who I've just grabbed off her desk, it's Alicia Kember! Hello Alicia!

Alicia: Hello! This is so strange haha

Simon: How was your association with the podcast?

Alicia: I have been writing up the transcripts for the podcast every week!

Simon: You are our transcript hero! You took over from our friend Ryan V, our beloved listener who used to do the transcript. So, Alicia, what have you learnt over the last three months of doing podcast transcripts?

Alicia: I have learnt how to type a lot faster than I did at the beginning *laughter* to get the transcripts out and I have been learning about all the stories you've been talking about

Simon: Well that's great, well I hope you've enjoyed it, it's a horrible job but someone had to do it *laughter*

Alicia: It's the highlight of my week *laughter*

Simon: Absolutely! I just see you chuckling away while you're typing.

And also, you've been doing an internship here on your Erasmus year, why don't you sell it to potential future interns? Just tell us how much fun have you been having!?

Alicia: How amazing it is! *laughter* No, I have loved working here, in all seriousness, it's been amazing. It's helping my Spanish, it's helping my journalism, it's been amazing working with you guys, it's a really nice atmosphere...no, I cannot be nicer about it!

Simon: Fantastic, ok here's your money *laughter*

Well thank you very much Alicia and it's nice to be able to have a chance on the podcast to say thank you so much for all your work!

Alicia: Yeah thank you!

Simon: Thank you in particular for doing the podcast transcript because that was a huge help!

Alicia: It's my pleasure

Simon: Best of luck, you're off to Italy now?

Alicia: Yeah, off to Italy in February to do University at Milan

Simon: Well best of luck, and good luck with the whole Brexit thing *laughter*

Alicia: Yeah god thank you, I'll be out of here before then!

Simon: Let's see how that works out, and stay in touch!

Alicia: Thank you!

Music interlude

Simon: Alright so as usual, let's have a little look at some correspondence.

It's been a pretty quiet week but as always, a week never goes by without us hearing from Mythical Sea Monster Chris Thompson. @Culebronchris on twitter if you want to go and follow him.

He says: "#Quepodcast - you have access to investigative journalists. You could maybe find out why Antena3 and la Sexta consistently mislead about their programme start times. If they want to start the film at 22.55 fine, but why say it starts at 22.40? Bounders!"

And, another one of our podcast heroes @MrAlanJones got in on this conversation. He said: "Is it just those two, Chris? It seems to me that most (all?) Spanish TV channels don't seem to have access to particularly accurate clocks."

I replied saying: "I think you guys deserve special recognition for actually watching Spanish TV. Because most Brits, especially the Brits down south, either have like a hooky Sky and BBC connection or they just opt for streaming, which is obviously the obvious option these days.

Alan replied, he said, "My family is only 50% British, we do watch BBC world news sometimes but even when we were in the UK we watched TVE International and ETB Sat" - I think that's the Basque channel isn't it? - "we got a dish put up especially."

I then replied and I said, “Look, the utter contempt Spain's channels shows for its viewers knows no bounds. We shall ask Natalia Marcos about this who is @cakivi. Natalia writes all about TV series basically, all about TV, and she's always complaining about this.

She replied, I was hoping she would have some kind of answer but she replied, she said: “I'm afraid I have no answer, and I think that nobody knows why they do it. In general, the Spanish channels don't have a lot of respect for their audience and they play on the limits of the law.”

What's it like in Australia, Melissa, are they very punctual?

Melissa: Yes! On the dot! Unless it's something live its, boom, seven o'clock

Simon: It's weird isn't it. I mean, the same in the UK, a programme will go out, unless there's some sort of news story that runs over it, a programme will go out at the time it's supposed to.

Also, one thing I noticed, it took me ages to realise this, but have you ever noticed, do you have in Australia what we call in the UK continuity announcers, the guy that comes on and says, “Next on the BBC we'll be going to Strictly Come Dancing.” Do you have that in Australia?

Melissa: I don't know if we have announcers, I think if it was a news programme, you know like, “Right back, we'll go to this particular story”

Simon: Yeah well we have them in the UK like every time a TV programme finishes a voice over, you know, the voice of God, comes over and says, “Next on the BBC we'll be going to Strictly,” and I suddenly realised one day that they don't have them here. And I really miss them! I like continuity announcers, but who knows, I guess it's a way of saving a bit of money.

But yeah, it is, it's really weird the way that they do that on Spanish TV but, I don't know, these days, you just hit a red button on your satellite box, or on your cable box or whatever and you can kind of record a film can't you and fast forward through all the ads and stuff like that. So I guess it's something that's less, unless you really want to watch something live, I guess it's something that's less and less of an issue as people switch over to cable options.

Alright, well we're going on a bit of a hiatus obviously over Christmas, this is the last episode before Christmas, but even so, we encourage you to get in touch with us.

You can find me on twitter @simoninmadrid you can use the #QuePodcast or you can email EnglishEdition@elpais.es

Tell us where you're listening from, why you're listening and suggest topics for us. And please leave us a Christmas gift of a review on iTunes or wherever you get your podcasts from. Share this episode on social media! Get the word out, please!

Now, we had a request last week from a listener to discuss the British elections and what it means for, well not just for Brits living in Spain but also Spaniards living in the UK.

Yeah, so we thought we'd leave it until this week because obviously last week we didn't know the result. I don't think we were quite, I certainly wasn't ready for that result! I wasn't expecting such a resounding victory from the Tories and of course, what that pretty much means, is now that Brexit is a pretty done deal.

Music interlude

Simon: We thought we'd focus first on Spaniards in the UK. So Melissa, we ran an article last week about what the fears of Spaniards in the UK are during this whole Brexit process so why don't you tell us a bit about that?

Melissa: Yeah so, Britons headed to the polls on Thursday to vote in a snap general election. But it was not just British people who were anxiously following the results. Spaniards in the United Kingdom were also concerned about how the election could affect their futures.

The outcome of the vote would decide more than the next prime minister, it would decide whether Britain would leave the European Union.

Boris Johnson, from the Conservative Party, was promising to push ahead with his Brexit deal, while Jeremy Corbyn, from the Labour Party, promised a second referendum on the UK's divorce from the EU.

With so much at stake, Spaniards living in the UK, had a lot to say about the election. EL PAÍS spoke to some of them before Thursday's poll. Javier Domínguez, who works in the financial sector, commented that the focus on Brexit was a "double-edged sword." "People are burnt out, but the problem is that they will end up voting for the Conservatives just to resolve the situation," he said.

Spanish researcher Virginia Marugán said she had secured double nationality to avoid "discriminatory sensations" after Brexit. She explained: "I never thought that Brexit would be a setback for me because they would throw me out of the country, or I would lose my job... But I don't know what kind of quality of life there will be [after Brexit]."

Virginia went on to say that with an EU passport, she has the option of moving to 27 different countries – a possibility that will be more difficult for British people after Brexit.

Spaniards were not the only ones keeping a close eye on the British election. The vote was also being followed by people in Gibraltar, the British Overseas Territory in the south of Spain.

Nearly 96% of Gibraltarians voted against Brexit in the 2016 referendum, but they were not able to vote at the British election, even though the results will have [massive repercussions](#) on their lives.

When EL PAÍS journalist Jesús A. Cañas visited Gibraltar, or The Rock, as it is popularly known, he found that some people who had voted against Brexit, were now rooting for Johnson.

Conchita for instance, said Brexit was a “huge headache” but argued “We have to move forward now and leave. There’s no turning back.”

Marlene Hassan-Nahon, from the progressive Together Gibraltar party, also described Brexit as a “nightmare” but hoped it would be one Britain would wake up from.

But after the Conservative Party won an overwhelming parliamentary majority on Thursday, that is no longer a possibility.

Sound bite of Boris Johnson: “Let’s get Brexit done, but first, my friends, let’s get breakfast done.”

Simon: So yeah, I stay on the fence about most issues that we talk about but as I’ve said many times in the past, my feelings about Brexit are always very very clear and urgh, just what a disaster.

So that little glimmer of hope that we had that something could save us from Brexit seems to have disappeared.

So we thought this week we also speak to some people, some Brits in Spain who are very much related to the issue so first of all let’s have a chat with Sue Wilson who’s from the campaigning organization ‘Bremain in Spain.’

Sound bite

Simon: So Sue, a lot of people have been listening to our podcast will no doubt know who you are because you’ve been very visible since the Brexit vote back in 2016, but for those who don’t, why don’t you tell us a bit about yourself first and what you have been doing since the referendum?

Sue: Sure! Well, my name’s Sue Wilson I’m chair of ‘Bremain in Spain’ and Bremain was actually launched the day after the referendum but not by me. I was just a normal British immigrant living in Spain who voted in the referendum and was absolutely shocked and overcome with the result.

In fact it was three whole weeks before anything kind of made any sense to me. I think I went through all the stages of grieving, which many who feel like me will understand completely. It

was only after three whole weeks of being everything from angry, to sad, to depressed, to everything in between, I decided that I couldn't sit back and not do anything.

So, a friend who was also a remainer recommended Breain in Spain to me and I started to get involved with them. I became very active very quickly, that was just three weeks after the referendum and by September I was the chair. They'd asked me to take over the two ladies that started it because it had grown out of all proportion and they both were working people with young families.

So I've been chair of Breain ever since and been giving 50-70 hours of my time to it on a voluntary basis since September 2016.

Simon: That's incredible, I take it you, your personal situation, you'd retired to Spain, basically, is that what you're suggesting?

Sue: I haven't retired to Spain, I'd moved to Spain. I only retired last year.

Simon: Right

Sue: But to all intents and purposes I've done nothing but this for the last three and a half years. I didn't have time for a job as well!

Simon: No, absolutely, and I guess the election result from last week for you has brought back many of the feeling that you had at the time of the referendum?

Sue: It did. Although, many of those feelings are exactly the same, but the one thing that is different is what we've lost this time is the uncertainty. So that, in a way, is a positive, if you can say anything is positive about this whole experience, at least we're no longer in that awful living in limbo situation that we've been in all this time. We know more now what the future looks like and we know more now what we have to deal with.

Simon: Yeah, so there's a sense of inevitability. You said, I think you said something about barring a Christmas miracle, there's a sense of inevitability now to Brexit whereas before we just weren't sure whether it was really going to happen.

Sue: Yes, and some of those things that many of us have been very concerned about, some of those citizens rights issues like the health care, like the pensions, for example, those are in the withdrawal agreement so when we get past the 31st of January those things are secured.

But, obviously, not all of our rights are secured, there's still those issues about the future relationship and in particular the one that concerns most people the most and that's the freedom of movement. So even though we know that Brexit's going to happen, we still don't know what Brexit's going to look like.

And there's still a lot to fight for to make sure that we get the softest Brexit possible and one of our objectives will also be to work on extending the transition period. But of course the news this morning from Boris Johnson that he's going to make that illegal, gives us another big challenge.

Simon: So how will your campaigning take shape from now on do you think?

Sue: Well we stand by all the things that we stood for before which is that we believe the relationship that the UK should have with the EU is a strong partnership. Now obviously we've been working towards that as a member of the EU for a long time, if that's not going to be the case in the short term what we have to do is to still fight to protect that goal of having that strong relationship. A relationship that protects as many of our rights as possible.

But we also have to fight against the demonization of immigrants, the hate and the division that's happened as a result of Brexit is going to be a hard fight, it's going to be a long fight. So we have to make sure that the changes that have been made are not going to be with us forever, that we have to turn around this demonization of immigrants.

Simon: And, just to go back to the election, what were you expecting last week, what did you think that the result was going to be like.

Sue: Well I really thought we were in hung parliament territory so the fact that Johnson won was a bit of a shock, the fact that he won by such a huge margin kind of knocked us all for six. We knew it was a possibility but we didn't think it was pretty likely.

Simon: No, it was quite a surprise I have to say, for everyone I think. And what are your worst fears for the future? What do you think could be the worst case scenario facing the British community living particularly in Spain?

Sue: Well I think that for many this latest shock has made people think about becoming Spanish citizens, even if it's at the cost of their British citizenship. I think it's all made us appreciate, well the whole process of the last three and a half years have made us all appreciate just exactly what's at stake and what we value about our life in Spain.

And I think for many this might be the point at which they turn their back on the UK completely. I've never wanted to do that but it's been coming closer all the time. I still have family there, as do many of us, so it's the issues about is it going to be more difficult to travel? Are we going to see less of our family in Spain because it's more difficult for them to come and see us? More expensive? And from a democracy point of view obviously one of the fights we will continue with is the fight to get back our democratic voting rights.

Simon: Yeah absolutely because lots of people, well like myself, I've been out of the UK for more than 15 years and I can't vote here, I can't vote there, I couldn't vote even if there were to be another referendum I wouldn't be able to vote and I think that's a massive issue for many people isn't it?

Sue: Well I've been out for almost 13 years so in effect I've probably just voted for the last time. But Johnson seems very keen to keep saying, "as we said in our manifesto this is what we're going to do," we have to hold him to everything in his manifesto including his promise to restore our voting rights. So that's a fight that's not going to go away any time soon.

Simon: Absolutely. Well thank you very much for your time Sue and on behalf of, I'm sure, many of our listeners who have been following your campaigning over the last couple of years, thank you very much for all the work that you are doing and yeah, best of luck!

I hope you have a lovely Christmas and New Year and that this latest setback doesn't put too much of a damper on it.

Sue: I'm not going to let it spoil Christmas,

Simon: Good for you!

Sue: and it's not going to take me three weeks like it did after the referendum to recover from this shock because there's still a lot of fighting that needs to be done! And I'm a bit of a completer finisher so I'm not about to quit any time soon.

Simon: Fantastic, alright well thanks so much Sue

Sue: And Merry Christmas,

Simon: And to you!

Sue: And thank you!

Music interlude

Simon: And now let's speak to Karen Welch who is a Scottish long-term resident of Spain who has actually been going through the process of applying for Spanish nationality.

Music interlude

Simon: Alright, so now on the line we've got Karen Welch. Karen, hello! How are you?

Karen: Hello, good morning!

Simon: First of all, tell us a bit about yourself, what do you do, how long you've been here in Spain, for example?

Karen: Well I've been in Spain for 32 years

Simon: Wow!

Karen: Yeah yeah *laughter* which kind of basically means that here I have my home, my friends, my flat, you know in terms of my future, I have also been paying in for all these years to Spanish pension systems so you know my economic, personal and emotional reality is very tied to Spain. I'm a translator and I work freelance but I work mainly for a foundation that specialises in science and culture.

I think that's about it Simon, I mean obviously I'm getting near retirement age now so that for me is one of the prime considerations and obviously, breakfast, Brexit...breakfast! Sorry! *laughter* Brexit doesn't affect that directly but it may do so in all kinds of indirect ways so that is a concern of course.

Simon: What were your expectations last week ahead of the general elections, what did you think was going to happen?

Karen: I'm getting a lot of information from my press and my Facebook and I think in my kind of little echo chamber I thought the result was going to be closer. But then I wasn't surprised when I saw it. I did expect a Tory victory, I didn't think the margin would be so quite big but there we have it, it does clarify some things.

Simon: Absolutely and how did you feel when the result was confirmed?

Karen: Personally, a bit gutted. But, obviously as UK citizens in Europe and the European Union we do assume that this means at least we have the certainty, that a deal, that we will be leaving the EU with a deal on, whenever it is, the 31st of January no?

Simon: Exactly yeah, and what have you been doing personally to try and protect yourself from the effects of Brexit?

Karen: Basically, I mean my strategy, right on the day, on the day of, well the day after the referendum vote I met a friend for lunch and we decided to apply for a Spanish citizenship on the basis of long-term residence. And I did that. I took the exams, I prepared the paperwork and I handed in my papers to the Registro Civil in May 2017, so that's been two and a half years.

Simon: And what? And you just haven't heard back? How's the process been?

Karen: The process of getting the papers together it's laborious but not especially difficult but basically since that day, since the day in May in 2017 that I presented these papers, I have heard nothing.

So the logic would be to assume that everything is in order but I don't even know if I can rely on that. I mean, supposedly I should have heard 10 months after registering the application, I

should have heard, I should have been given a tracking number of some kind. I have not even received a tracking number so I'm a bit anxious, a bit concerned, feeling a bit in limbo basically.

Simon: Well yeah I mean you've in limbo with the whole Brexit process in itself and then in limbo with this application for nationality as well, it's extraordinary.

Karen: Exactly, doubly in limbo

Simon: You're not the first person that I've heard of that's in this situation. I mean, do we know why these applications for nationality are so backed up? Do we know what's going on?

Karen: Honestly no. One part of the problem seems to have been that the online application system didn't get going properly until relatively recently and it could be that some applications that were put in earlier, like as mine was, are kind of languishing in perhaps a cupboard somewhere. Or they have not been given priority over later applications that were made through the online tool which is also a little upsetting because one tends to have the expectation that the further ahead you are in the queue, the sooner you'll be dealt with. So, you know, in my case certainly that hasn't happened.

Simon: So what do you plan to do? Are you able to take any action? What's your plan?

Karen: Well actually, I don't know if there's much individuals can do, but anyway, when I heard a friend of mine who applied three months ago actually had nationality granted in three and a half weeks

Simon: Wow

Karen: Yeah. So, I'm very happy for him but my reaction was to think well you know this can't be right. I did go to the Ministry of Justice, I've put in a written complaint there, I haven't heard back yet. And I also got in touch with the Ombudsman in Spain, the Defensor del Pueblo, and apparently they actually have, well I know because I've seen it, they actually have a dedicated section on their website for this problem. There are so many complaints. Obviously the Brits, we're not the only people in the queue, I presume it's a long queue but obviously there has been a problem of resources, or they wouldn't have taken so long.

Simon: Absolutely. So you've gone from one limbo to another. Well, I'm very very sorry to hear that Karen and it's just another of these stories that we've heard from lots of different people about the effect that Brexit has had. So, I hope that the result of last weeks election and the situation is not going to get you down too much over the Christmas period

Karen: No, not for Christmas no

Simon: *laughter* Much more fun things to think about! So yeah, I wish you all the best of luck, I hope that you manage to get it sorted out, let us know when something happens.

Karen: Of course I will, of course I will, that would be very useful to have that contact. Thank you Simon.

Simon: No worries, we'll have you back on the podcast and you can tell us how it's going because I'm sure a lot of our listeners in Spain would be very interested to hear how this process is going.

Alright, well thank you so much for your time and yeah, like I said, we'll keep in touch.

Karen: Ok, right, thank you for the call!

Music interlude

Simon: Let's hope that these two people can have good Christmasses and not let current affairs cast a long shadow over the festivities. I certainly will be switching off my phone and deleting the Twitter app come Saturday when I go off on my hols and then lets see what sort of panorama we come back to after the holiday season.

Alright, so let's turn to our second issue today. Now we've been running articles regularly over the years about the issue of depopulation facing Spain. And last week we ran an English version of a very interesting article which addressed the issue of the local bar and how in some places it's become more difficult to keep bars open because of depopulation so Melissa, tell us about that please.

Melissa: Certainly, well Spain is famed for its bars, but 20,000 locals have in fact closed down since 2010.

This problem is hitting Spanish villages particularly hard. In places like Villalbarba, where there are only 132 residents, a bar is not just a place to go for a drink – it is the center of social life. It's where people come together, play a game of bingo, and catch up on the latest village gossip.

But for several months, there was no bar in Villalbarba. During that time, the locals either stayed at home, or went for solitary walks. As one local put it: "If there is no decent bar in a village, nobody sees anybody.

To bring back the local, and revive the village's struggling social life, the town council came up with a novel idea. It put out a call on Facebook asking for applicants to run the bar in exchange

for rent-free accommodation. The chosen person would also not have to pay any rent on the spot.

Villalbarba's mayor Carlos Martínez explains: "A village without a bar is a dead village. A bar offers a public service."

Some 600 people sent in applications from across Spain, from as far afield as Barcelona and the Canary Islands. In the end, the job went to Yasmin Colino, a 31-year-old from Zamora. But although she does not have to pay any rent, she still has expenses, which are not being covered by the scant business.

For now, she plans to stay put for a while to make back her investment, but if the customers don't start coming in, she will have to make some difficult decisions.

But Villalbarba is not the only Spanish village with this problem. Herguijuela del Campo, a village of just 83 individuals in the province of Salamanca, also lost its only bar. In this case, the mayor Dionisio Cañera came up with a different solution – a self-service bar that trusts locals to pay for their food and drinks. Not only has the initiative lasted four years, the bar also doubles as a social center and can be booked for birthdays or parties.

The place only makes around €40 in profit a month, but that's not the point. It's about reviving the sense of community. "If it wasn't for the bar, we wouldn't see one another," says the mayor. The population of more than 60% of Spanish towns fell between 2011 and 2017.

Depopulation has become an increasingly important issue in Spain. Across the country, struggling villagers are doing what they can to survive. Some are trying to attract more migrant workers, others are offering cheap lots of land, and in Pescueza, the village has turned itself into a nursing home. But for now, most villages are just hoping to keep their only bar open.

Simon: Yeah, I mean you really can't underestimate the importance of the Spanish bar. I swear to God, if it weren't for the Spanish bar I might have moved back to England *laughter* quite a long time ago.

Well, I love my local bar, I mean it's like walking into the 'Cheers' bar, you know, all the barmen know my name, they know the kids names, I've gotten to know loads of people from out neighbourhood just from going in there and having a few beers and some tapas.

And it really is, it's just such a focal point of Spanish life. I love Spanish bars! Me and my wife have often talked about exporting, going back to the UK and opening up some, you know, like a Spanish bar, a Spanish style bar locally to where my parents live. I just love them!

So yeah, one of these issues about depopulation is the fact that bars like this could disappear and it would just be such a shame. I love the initiatives that people are coming up with, you know, offering rent and offering a room free of rent for someone who can run a bar.

This is a massive issue more than 4,000 towns and villages are at risk of becoming totally deserted in Spain. Many don't even have enough children to keep their schools open.

But, it's not all bad news, at least we are seeing positive measures like the ones you mentioned Melissa from the article; but also the people in these places are mobilizing. In April this year there was a demonstration, tens of thousands of people gathered in Madrid to demand a solution to the problem of depopulation.

And then we've got this sort of quirky anecdote about Teruel Existe. Teruel is a province in the region of Aragon and Teruel Existe was founded in 1999 as a citizen action group. That was at a time when the province had no motorways, just one train line, which wasn't even electrified, and the train that did run on it had derailed 8 times in one year!

So they were really suffering, but now what started as an action group has actually become a political party and actually won one deputy in Congress and two senators in the Senate at the November 10 election. So that's great, I mean that's obviously very positive, it will allow them to do more direct actions rather than just being out there and campaigning.

Also we've run so many stories about this. There was that one that we ran recently about towns in the Sierra Norte, so the mountainous area north of Madrid, which are seeing somewhat of a boom in population as people opt to leave the city and go out and live there.

And then of course there's the perennial story that always seems to appear about buying up deserted villages. This has been a big thing. Even Gwyneth Paltrow got on her soapbox on, what's her lifestyle page?

Melissa: Goop

Simon: Gloop. Goop! Not gloop! *laughter*

We'll they're both equally ridiculous words so yeah you'll be forgiven for saying gloop! She recommended buying up a deserted Galician village which actually did happen, someone did buy up that village.

And there was that other one about that sleepy Spanish Hamlet near Segovia in Pinilla de Ambroz, in which an Argentinian doctor bought a house there 20 years ago. And now she's been followed by a flow of professors, architects, artists and intellectuals from all over the world who are basically buying up houses there and turning them into their holiday homes.

So yeah, I mean it's not all bad news, but let's save our bars! Anything that can be done to save our bars is positive because, like I said, such an important part of Spanish life.

Christmas music interlude

Simon: Right, ok, well, as we are nearly at Christmas time it wouldn't be right to finish this podcast without giving you a little present Melissa!

Melissa: Aw!

Here is your first article in print in the Tuesday 17 December edition of the Madrid section. Melissa has written a fantastic article, it's an interview with a man called Michael Damanti, who's been taking pictures of the members of the Romani community who are often seen out on the streets in the Puerta del Sol.

So I recommend you go and check it out, it's on our web page obviously, and it's a really interesting read, so congratulations Melissa!

Melissa: Ah, thank you!

Simon: A little early Christmas present for you there!

Music interlude

Simon: All right, so let's wrap up season three!

Melissa: Wooo!

Simon: Episode 12 of season three, that is it for this year! Thank you ever so much to all of you who have been listening.

I think we only started in January...it feels like we've been doing this forever *laughter*

We started this year didn't we? We started the podcast in January, and the response has been absolutely fantastic from all of you listeners who have got in touch with us.

We love you all! Very Merry Christmas and thank you so much for listening!

My name is Simon Hunter -

Melissa: I'm Melissa Kitson

Simon: And give us another one

Melissa: I'm a little kitten!

Simon: Thank you! And this was ¿Qué? A podcast that tries to explain what happens in Spain to those of us who sometimes get a little bit lost in translation.

This is an EL PAÍS production, it was recorded right here in the Madrid newsroom, under the guidance of our expert producer José Juan Morales (who for Christmas, is going to give us an extra long podcast!), you can listen to it on your favorite podcast app.

You can also request it via Alexa, Siri or your Google Assistant. We'll be back next year with a brand new host of issues. Thank you for listening, feliz navidad, feliz año nuevo, y adios!

Melissa: Ciao!