

SMALL TALK

NICOLE MILLAR nmillar@cataloniatoday.cat



Rolling in wine

Tell me how you came to live in Catalonia.

I used to play roller-hockey. Well, I still do sometimes as a veteran. I try and get away at least once a month now and have a match. From the age of seven I started playing in England and by the age of nine I was playing for the England Squad. One year we went to Portugal and the next we came here to a tournament in Vilafranca.

Who did you play against?

Against all the local teams and a few big names too, like Barcelona. We did very, very badly, in England roller hockey isn't the best.

Were you the captain?

Yes I was! What they used to do in England was give out tournaments to all the teams so that we could travel abroad. The level of roller hockey isn't that great! Field hockey is really big in the UK but roller hockey is a minority sport.

I had to look on Google, I hadn't heard of roller hockey. But is it professional?

Here in Spain, it's bigger and professional, not in England. So we came here when I was 12.

To play professionally?

Yes, I came over first of all with just my mum. It was a bit of trial and error. We didn't want to move the whole family if it wasn't going to work out. We hopped around from flat to flat and shared with other English families. It was tough to start, especially for mum, but we are still here and together with my mum we have three English Academies now. But for four years at the beginning, dad stayed in the UK. We only went back for Christmas and summer. Flights were really expensive and we went on the coach service. It was horrendous, 25 hours of travelling.



Andrew Ashurst with Nicole Millar on EL PUNT AVUI TV. / ARCHIVE



Andrew Ashurst.

On Friday afternoons on El Punt Avui TV, Nicole chats with an English-speaking expat. Here she interviews Andrew Ashurst from Saint Paul's Academy in Vilafranca del Penedès.

You are originally from Plymouth. You actually say there are similarities between Catalonia and Plymouth?

With Plymouth you are talking about a rural area, with a lot of agriculture. It's a coastal area and there are a few wineries and a gin distillery down there, too.

So four years later your dad joined you. That is quite a sacrifice that your parents made for you?

Yes, it is amazing. They are still here now. We all fell in love with Catalonia. Mum and dad pop back to the UK three or four times a year but every time they come back they say they would never move back – sorry!

Your wife is Catalan.

Yes, I married someone from Barcelona. But we live near Vilaf-

ranca, about 45km from Barcelona, in a rural area.

Lets move on to St Paul's Academy. Tell me about your Academy.

It is an English Academy. My mum and I started it after I finished my education. We are a certified exam preparation centre for Cambridge. So we teach people exams from the start all the way up to proficiency. We teach over 600 students a year, the ages ranging from six years old and up.

Tell me about the wine section of the academy. When did that happen?

Our first student was a worker from the Torres factory. Slowly but surely we started teaching the whole company. Then one day I was giving a class to one of

the directors and I asked him: What do you think about creating a course book specifically about wine and the wine sector in English? He liked the idea and said there was nothing in the market like it but I would have to start studying.

And you do a course for Gin Lovers, too?!

Yes we do. So English for Gin Lovers could be for anyone who wants to get out of the norm of learning English. And then we have more specific courses, English for Wine Aspects, English for Wine Makers, English for Cava Makers and English for Wine Tasters. We created the books. Some big names helped us. The first one was with Torres and then lots of people came on board.

And now you move around and teach?

Yes, we go everywhere to teach the wine courses, all around Spain. They are not just based at St Paul's Academy.

How long is a course?

Cava Makers and Wine Makers is 30 hours, 18 hours for Wine Tasters.

You have a tasting room?

Yes, at St Paul's, For 18 people.

When did the academy start?

In 2004 and then in 2009 we came out with this project. We started the classes in 2010 and it hasn't stopped since. I am trying to generate a little bit of international wine culture. When you are in a producing area, it is very difficult to be international as you have to try and drink your own, local produce. I am now creating English for Wine Lovers. People like wine and learning about it and people like English too.

More information: Stpaulsenglish.es