

# Monsieur le Coq

The French have a word for it, which is don't complain about our cockerel when he wakes you up at dawn<sup>1</sup>. city incomers have been warned by the Mayor of Cesny- aux- Vignes, a small Normandy village, that they should respect the sounds of the countryside. Although the new neo-rurals may not enjoy unfamiliar, often strident, sounds, complains are out. Neo-rurals must adapt to the countryside, which is not going to change to suit them.

Indeed, a French judge has ruled in favour of a cockerel, following complaint from neighbours who sought €1500 compensation for sleep disturbance from the daily awakening. The claim for compensation turned into a €400 bill for costs of the trial leaving the cockerel as clear winner. On the other hand, British cockerels have been given noise abatement orders and their owners fined for non-compliance.

The town and country clash on noise is an interesting vignette in the balance between opposing lifestyles. The countryside is attractive in the belief that it is free of the irritations of urbanisation - you sit on the terrace, glass in hand, and breathe clean air in virtually noise-free surroundings, remote from traffic, industry and your neighbours' music, with no more disturbance than a gentle chug-chug from a far-off tractor, barely visible in its distant field. This is the dream of the new neo-rurals, who are then dismayed to find that the countryside is full of people who actually work in it, start early, use diesel powered machinery, and who own animals which make their own noises. Many of the existing rural inhabitants would welcome new industry, along with its noise, in order to stop the drift from the countryside, which is what leaves empty cottages for the incomers to take over.

Rather than oppose each other, the rurals and the neo-rurals should work together in order to care for what can be preserved of their remaining tranquillity, accepting that the countryside must change by development of its land, whether it is the noisy new wood yard, the new industrial zone or the new wind farm.

<sup>1</sup> The cockerel has long been part of French national culture, appearing on coins, military uniforms, postage stamps etc and is now used in logos for national sports teams.

noise  
notes

THE BELLS, THE BELLS!

Italians whose ears are ringing from church bells tolling every quarter-hour are suing their noisy neighbours. Msgr. Paolo Urso of the Italian Bishops Conference Judicial Office confirmed that lawsuits have been filed over the pealing bells. "What we have advised is that priests do not chime bells before 7 a.m. and after 10 p.m. But I understand in some cases this has been breached, especially in the early morning," Urso said. Retired professor Flora Leuzzi sued over the noise coming from St. Stephen in Lavagna, near Genoa. "I bought the place so I could enjoy my retirement and have some peace and quiet. But the bells ring every 15 minutes form 5:15 a.m.," he said. "I asked the priest if he could start later but he refused, so in the end I brought a complaint of noise pollution against him. I cannot listen to the television or the radio, and reading a book or a newspaper is out of the question".

HARRISBURG

A new noise ordinance introduced in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, allows for fines of up to \$1000 for excessive use of the car horn. The ordinance also bans blaring car radios and sets limits to the times of day construction work can be carried out. Cabbies have complained: Spokesman Lee Bigelow said "a couple of beeps on the horn is the best way to summon a fare, and the safest for the driver... but now, if I honk my horn, I get nailed." Councilwoman Gloria Roberts is unmoved, "there are a variety of loud noises that are impediments to enjoying the home environment."

ROBINS

A study of European robins in Sheffield, England, suggests that it is noise, not light, that drives birds to sing. The study, by Richard A. Fuller and colleagues at the University of Sheffield, measured noise levels and singing at 67 sites around the city, where on average ambient noise was an order of magnitude lower at night than during the day. They found that birds sang only during the day at 49 of the sites, and both day and night at 18. Daytime noise levels at these 18 sites were significantly higher than those at others.

URBAN WIND TURBINE

In London, a wind turbine has been installed on the Heygate Estate as part of a four-month pilot for the Elephant & Castle regeneration scheme. Southwark Council says that the turbine is the first of this scale to go on a council building in the capital. The trial – carried out in partnership with London South Bank University – will be used to assess the viability of building-mounted units in an urban area and to measure any impact on nearby homes for noise levels and possible vibration.