



September 2 2008  
Somewhat cloudy 28°

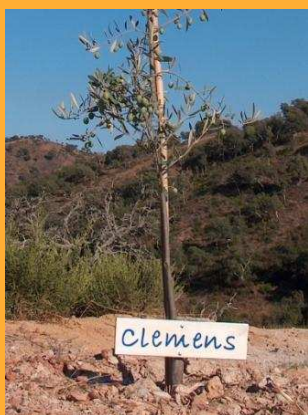
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Last week, an esteemed colleague and good friend was cremated in Almere. He passed away at too young an age and far too soon. He agreed to let us name an olive tree after him. Not a 'gnarled one that is still supple with oil' as he preferred (we don't have one like it), but a sapling, heavy with olives. A living symbol for everybody we have lost.



## 1. WATER

One of my major nightmares is not having any water. This is not entirely inconceivable, for this is Alentejo, where water is scarce. As our well doesn't yield enough water in the summer, and as calling the fire brigade again and again is not an option, we decided to have a new water well drilled, hoping it will yield more water.

It was a gigantesque project (see left-hand picture), which kept us on our toes till the very end. But water we found, 180 meters (60 feet) deep, yielding 700 liters per hour. We had to take quite a bit of trouble to get everything to work. Before long, you'll be able to read more about it on our website.



## 2. PEGO DAS PIAS

Even if water is scarce close to home, there are places where there is more than enough. For instance, there is the Mira river and its tributaries and there are huge reservoirs. Between São Luis and Odemira you'll come upon something really special: Pego das Pias, a succession of basins. You can walk around



them, but a truly special experience is to swim from basin to basin in really clear water. On either side the crags are high and at times the passage is very narrow.

## 3. FESTIVAL SUDOESTE

Björk, The Chemical Brothers, Franz Ferdinand, Gold Frapp, big names at a grand pop festival in a tiny village. At the beginning of August, Zambujeira do Mar welcomed a cool 40,000 music lovers for the tenth time in a row. Car drivers regularly got into traffic jams – unprecedented in these arts – and nowhere in the area was there any bread or beer to be had. The police directed the traffic around the

supermarket and it took hours to get petrol. Still, it was huge fun. The atmosphere was



great, the weather was warm and sunny and the performances were overwhelming. We'll be sure to go again next year.

## 4. CORK HARVEST

Our first very own cork harvest is a fact. Divesting the cork oak of its bark takes place in the traditional way. The harvest does not involve the use of machines, and daredevil feats are carried out. The cork is gathered in one place, where it must dry for a month, before being weighed. The scales that are used for weighing the cork wouldn't look out of place on a Dutch cheese market.

To Portuguese standards, the yield is modest at best, yet it exceeds our own expectations: 124 arrobas. And so you know how much that is in old money: an arroba is about 25 pounds.



## 5. HATCHING HAPPINESS

In my last newsletter, I told you about the swallow couple building its nest on an electric wire in our garage. Frankly, we had no hopes that it would work out, for every time we entered the garage, mum (or dad) would fly the coop. Therefore, it was a tremendous surprise to suddenly see three tiny beaks protruding from the nest. The fledglings have flown out by now, but they still come home every night. And they sleep next to each other perched on the wire.

