

FROM CAMEL VALLEY VINEYARD

(March 2010)

Just as I thought – the weather did stop me going to Verona for the World Sparkling Wine Competition Awards. Snowed in for a week with no oil for heating or cooking, and no prospect of a delivery, the Keat family, to whom we are eternally grateful, very kindly helped us out on the fuel front so at least we could keep warm. With flights booked for both us, I made an early decision to stay at home and look after the dog, as it was impossible to get her to the kennels at Blisland, which was even more snowbound than Nanstallon. Right up until the last minute Bob was undecided – even if he could get out of the village and to Bristol, would he be able to get back again 2 days later?

In the end he took the chance, and had a wonderful time, as he knew he would. He came back with a massive Venetian glass trophy and a good Ryanair story. We had looked longingly at the beautiful Murano glass when we were in Venice in November, but decided we couldn't buy any as it would be too difficult to get it home without breaking. With only one piece of hand luggage allowed on the flight, Bob tried unsuccessfully to find the Post Office in Verona to send the trophy home. So he arrived at Bergamo Airport with his small case to check in, but what to do with the enormous trophy? He tentatively asked if he could use my pre-paid hold luggage ticket as I hadn't travelled, and nearly fainted with surprise when he was told, 'Yes, no problem.' And this was Ryanair, who charge for every little thing!

The only good thing about the freezing January weather was the clear sky night after night. The opportunity to see so many beautiful stars almost made up for the drudgery of pruning outside day after day in sub zero temperatures, but it had to be done by the middle of February in order to get away for some winter sun. Imagine our surprise on our first evening in Jamaica when a couple came up to us and said 'Hello Bob and Annie, we visited the vineyard in the summer, did the tour and bought loads of your wine – fancy seeing you here!'

Alan and Christine from Stamford are keen star watchers, and had us watching the Caribbean sky on the 28th February to see the amazing spectacle of the Space Station flying by. Bob and I realised we'd actually seen it before a couple of years ago at home in the early evening, without knowing what it was. Alan told us about a website – www.heavens-above.com – where you can put in your postcode, town or village, and it will show you what to look for in the sky at any given time. Look for the 'whole sky chart' at night, and it makes the spectacle so much more interesting.