

## George East in France Online

**George East Books**

### French Lessons

Price (piece): ~~£8.99~~ £7.99

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He's back- and this time it's *really* serious.

Failed rock legend, pickled onion manufacturer, air hostess and euro-entrepreneur George East takes us through another eventful year of his doomed attempts to make a living out of living in rural France. Fleeing from the Mill of the Flea with creditors in hot pursuit, our hero and his long-suffering wife arrive at a rambling manor-house on the vast and brooding stretches of the Normandy marshlands.

The cunning plan is to set up a fox sanctuary, chicken farm and arts & crafts commune for the creatively challenged, but the East's new home soon reveals its grim secrets.

A lifeline is offered by a stranger with a scheme to bring the delights of the Great British Pub to homesick expatriates. The George Inn ( Sometimes) will be the first of a chain of hugely successful anglo-pubs stretching from Normandy to Nice and beyond.

At least, that's the idea. As the clock ticks towards opening time and final financial meltdown for the ultimate innocent abroad, we encounter another host of improbable -and frankly sometimes unbelievable- characters and situations.

The amazing thing is that any of it is true. Will George find fame, fortune and contentment, or has this modern Micawber taken his final drink in the Last Chance Saloon?

*The days grow shorter, the air clearer, and there is an almost luminescent quality to the great plain on our doorstep. Yesterday, I sat and watched a man working on a roof in a hamlet at least a mile away. Appearing to over-reach while replacing a ridge tile, he stumbled, slid down the steep pitch of the roof and disappeared. I could not see how far he fell or how hard he landed, but he did not reappear again, so I phoned Albert*

*Poubelle, who said he would drive by the house and see what had happened.*

*If my description of the man and the location of the house is accurate, it is almost certain that the victim is a renowned toper and will have come to no harm. It is, as the guardian of the marais says, remarkable how a skinful of booze can often be better than a parachute when it comes to breaking a fall. At the moment I am sitting on the balcony and cleaning fox droppings from the sole of my boot. It is my left boot, and according to my neighbour, this is a lucky omen in France.*

*As he has dozens of dogs on his premises, I suppose Mr Querville would consider himself lucky to have such a problem with only one foot at a time. If the culprit were his giant Newfoundland, I suspect he would be up to his knee of whichever leg was involved. Apart from this convenient superstition, the rural French tend to accept the waste product of animals as a part of the landscape.*

*Last summer, one of the main attractions at our village fete was based on the bowel motions of a cow. A field had been marked off in metre-wide squares, and before the animal was shooed in, a book was run on the square in which she would make her first deposit. My prediction was hopelessly inaccurate, and there was some ill-feeling when the person who scooped the cash prize was revealed as the owner of the cow.*

*One of the gamblers made an official protest that the man had an unfair advantage as he would know the movements and motions of his animal. There were even allegations that the farmer had set up a grid of baling twine in one of his own field weeks before the event, and trained his cow to do its business in a particular spot. \* Donella is at a meeting with our new bank manager, and work has begun on the accommodation centre.*

*Or rather, work will begin when I have resolved the pigeon situation. Mr Balourd arrived at the exact time promised, and is obviously a conscientious worker. As we are paying him by the hour, I hope he will not prove too conscientious. He seems unusually fastidious, and the only craftsmen I have met who washes his hands before starting work. He also wears a worn but clean and neat suit and tie beneath his overalls.*

*These characteristics sit oddly with his extreme cackhandedness, or have perhaps developed because of them. He is probably so deliberate in his actions to try and keep injuries to the minimum, and wearing the suit means he will not have to change from his working clothes to visit the doctor when he has one of his regular accidents.*

*After checking and laying out his tools like a surgeon about to undertake a demanding operation, he asked me to walk around the stable block with him so we could talk through the first stage of operations. Although I thought I had blocked up all pigeon-sized holes in the roof and walls of the old building, we got no further than a few steps inside before the bombardment started.*

*Retreating to the kitchen, we wiped each other down and took a reviving glass of cider while discussing how best to rid the stable block of the squatters. Mr Balourd said it would be a matter of moments for him to fetch his shotgun from home, but I explained that Donella would not approve. I did not say that letting him loose with a twelve bore in a confined space would not only be extremely dangerous but the damage caused could make the reconstruction work much more expensive.*

*I also vetoed the idea of poison because of my wife's sensibilities. Eventually, we agreed that I would spend the rest of the day evicting the pigeons and boarding-up any other points of entry. Mr Balourd would go home for a bath, and be ready to make a fresh start in the morning.*

*Round one to the pigeons, and I am sure my neighbour is now convinced I am quite mad. My first job being to get the messy birds out of the stable block, I tried some energetic shouting and waving but this had no effect other than causing a renewed hail of droppings. Remembering the effect music can have on animals, I took my CD player into the stables and tried a selection of tunes played at very high volume.*

*Rather than frighten the squatters off, my choice of lolanthe followed by The Birdie Song merely brought about a spate of contented cooing from the rafters. It was as I stood beneath an umbrella shouting and throwing stones at the rafters that Mr Querville appeared and asked me if I was feeling well. He said that he had heard the noise and screaming so had come to see if I was having a fit.*

*When I said I was preparing the building for some restoration work, he said that unless it was a traditional ceremony in my country, throwing stones at and abusing a building did not seem a good way to make a start on restoring it. On a more practical note, he had heard I was going to try and persuade British holidaymakers to pay huge sums of money to sleep in a stable, so perhaps I would send him any spare customers as he could always find a space for them in his kennel block.*

*When I explained the problem with the unwanted birds, he sucked his teeth, shook his head and asked if there was not an expression in my language which referred to setting a cat amongst pigeons. Rather than admit I had not thought of such a simple solution, I said that my wife was, like him, an animal lover and would not want to see the birds harmed.*

*After saying that pigeons did not count as animals, he said that if I wanted to frighten them off without causing any physical harm, I could just show them a photograph of my devil-cat.*

### [Vendor Information](#)

**Customer Reviews: John Davies (Sunday, 16 December 2007)**

**Rating:**

**I am treating Georges new book as I would a bottle of vintage wine; slowly a sip at a time in order to prolong the pleasure and laughter it is giving me. These short doses are because in the past all Georges previous books taken in larger doses have been both bad and good for my health. As required reading and first choice in the loo they dramatically reduced the circulation in my legs, (bad) whilst the convulsive laughter proved a boon for clearing the occasionally blocked personal plumbing. (good). George, keep the books coming they are GREAT !!!**