

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 21 1st of November 2008

Welcome to the November issue of the Dream Scene.

Last month I attended a presentation at the Ayuntamiento in Playa Flamenca. Its purpose was to roll-out the new address and road numbering system for Orihuela and in particular for Orihuela Costa. The presentation was made by the Chief Statistician of Orihuela, Dream Hills's own Stefan Pokroppa translating into both German and English and Mr. Aniorte, the councillor for Orihuela Costa also present.

The purpose of the change in the address system is to mirror the new addresses which appear in the official documents, such as the *padron*. It was also explained that the new address system would be of greater assistance to emergency services in locating the correct addresses.

In the introduction, the statistician - Maria Loriz(?) explained that there were 86,000 encribed (on the *padron*) in Orihuela, 28,000 of them on the Orihuela Costa. The Orihuela Costa has 4,000 individual streets with 37 different centres of population. The existing house numbers, she explained, were allocated by the builders and not by the town hall. It was planned to introduce this system some years ago, but was delayed due to the large volume of construction projects. In recent weeks the council has been placing numbered tiles on the main residential roads throughout the Orihuela region, even numbers on one side of the road and odds on the other. It is the number closest to your property on your side of the road, that you include in your address. The numbered tiles start at where the town hall believes the urbanisation or 'residential' begins. In Dream Hills this is up by Via Park 111, not down by the houses at the bottom of the hill. In some areas the post boxes will have to be moved to the start of the urbanisation. In these urbanisations, depending on certain circumstances, either the builder or the town hall will have to foot the bill. I doubt if ours will have to be moved as there is no spare space available! It is anticipated that there will be further changes to the proposed system because of anomalies, mistakes and possibly common sense; plus the town hall proposals have yet to be submitted to and agreed by the post office.

So for example, my new address would be as follows -
Michael Clifford

Calle Lagunas de Ruidera - 6,
Dream Hills Puerta 586,
Orihuela Costa,
Alicante 03189.

(The '6' being the closest numbered tile to the property)
(Puerta means 'door')

As the post office do not deliver mail to the individual properties on this urbanisation, they may in due course want the number '6' changed to number '4' as this is where the post boxes are. We will just have to wait and see as ultimately the address appearing on our banks accounts, utility bills, credit cards etc will have to be amended.

With regard to Dream Hills 2, I am not sure what is happening there as I don't believe the main road at the bottom of the urbanisation has been named yet. Once I find out I will pass it on.

I received good positive feed-back in relation to the survey on community fees payable in the Orihuela Costa/Torre Vieja areas. I will be reprinting it again in a month or so with some new additions and some minor corrections.

All the best, Mick, Editor.

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WHAT'S UP?

On the Spanish political front very little has been happening although both the major parties have just held their annual conferences, which were just as boring and unproductive as those in the UK & Ireland. The state of the economy, financial markets and institutions have dominated the media. The Governing party, the PSOE, however did manage to get its budget for the coming 12 months passed by just a majority of 7 votes in Congress, but only with the support of the Basque and Galician Nationalists. This will cost the government an additional 200 million euro in subsidies to both regions - after all there is no such thing as a free lunch!

Of the 350 deputies in the Spanish Congress, only 45 have it as their main and only job. There is little transparency and no register for the deputies to detail their outside sources of income. Absenteeism, which is chronic in Spain, is also rife in Congress. The newspaper El Mundo relates that at a parliamentary session this week to discuss the crisis and unemployment, less than half the socialist members turned up.

Latest numbers from the National Statistics Institute show a 36.8% fall in house sales in August of this year compared to last year and last year's figures were very poor. Only 37,744 deals were made over the month, and in the case of resale property sales numbers were down by 47.3%. The regions with the most sales were from La Rioja and Murcia, the fewest Ceuta (North Africa) and the Basque Country. Sales and new mortgages are now down by 50% in Málaga for the same period. With the failure of more construction firms, buying a property 'off-plan' is now a very big gamble.

Although the Spanish banks do not appear to be suffering as badly as their US & UK counterparts, bad debt has doubled to 1.55% of all loans compared to a year ago. Sports and events sponsorship is also drying-up due to the economic difficulties. The 29th European Ballroom Dancing Championships were held in Torremolinos on the Costa del Sol last February. None of the prizewinners have yet been paid by the town hall due to a lack of funds. Total prize money should have been 150,000 euro.

Despite lobbying from Brazil, Britain, France and Germany, President Bush has to date excluded Spain from the G20 summit on the world economy to be held in Washington in November. The Spanish are very, very annoyed. Spain feels that as they are the eight largest economy in the world, they should be at the summit. It is thought that Bush's snub relates to the withdrawal of the Spanish troops from Iraq following the Madrid bombings.

Almeria had 38 minor earthquakes on Monday 20th Oct, the strongest being a 4.6. Nobody was hurt but there was some damage to property.

In an intriguing legal case in Murcia, a judge has fined José C.R. €15,077.60 for breaking off his engagement with his fiancé 'without justification.' His 'ex' claimed that she had to move out of the flat and had incurred the following expenses - €1,619 for electrical items, €10,300 for furniture and €3,158.6 on other items. The judge rejected her claim for an additional €4,000 for curtains and lamps.

Ryanair have announced the closure of their base in Valencia with the loss of 70 weekly flights. The airline stated that the Valencian authorities refused to discuss promotional issues or meet with the airline and were subsidising other airlines at Ryanair's expense.

Q: What is the difference between a London banker and a pigeon?

A: A pigeon can still put a deposit on a porche.

Osama Bin Laden has just released a recording to prove that he is still alive. During the recording he comments that 'England are playing rubbish football at the moment.' British Intelligence - MI6 - have dismissed it as a fake saying that 'It could have been recorded anytime during the past six years.'

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On the 30th of October, ETA the Basque terrorist organisation, exploded a device in the University of Navarra injuring 31 people. This follows the arrest earlier this week of a number of suspected terrorists with about 100 kilos of explosives.

On a lighter note, a 45 year old metro train driver in Madrid has been suspended without pay for one month. In late August, between stations, he had oral sex with a transvestite prostitute. (I don't make these up - honest!) The real problem arose when the driver failed to pay the amount agreed and the prostitute called the police, causing a delay at the station. Metro authorities stated that they could not fine the driver for anything he did in the cab (?!!) but they could penalise him for the delay in service. Obviously the other train drivers breathed a sigh of relief at the good news and continued 'fornicating' in their cabs while driving the trains.

A Spanish driver was fined 60 € by the Guardia Civil in Cantabria, for talking to his brother - a passenger, while driving. The police stated that he was driving without 'permanent attention' to the road. The driver, a professor in the UK, described the action as a 'complete abuse of power.' Still with drivers, an 81 year-old who was questioned by the police for not stopping at a pedestrian crossing, revealed that he had been driving for 50 years without a licence. And my favourite, Rafael LP - a coach driver from Pontevedra, was astonished that he was taken to court and fined 4,320 € with 40 days community service, for driving a coach while holding only a moped licence. Señor LP stated that he 'had been driving coaches all his life and hand never got any complaints.' He was 'nabbed' during a random check while taking 54 passengers from the Levante to Galicia.

A 16 year-old in Granada has run up a 48,000 euro debt on an Internet based casino using his parent's credit card. I don't think he will be getting that new X-Box this Christmas after all!


The police in our province have been extremely busy lately. While driving to Cabo Roig via the N332 on the 24th I noticed two police road-blocks and several Guardia Civil vehicles patrolling the main road. Large drug seizures are now so common they scarcely make it to the newspapers but there is still plenty of non-drug related crime around. In Alicante Port, the police arrested a 45 year old Algerian who was driving a British registered Volkswagen Tourán with an altered chassis number. He also had more than 1,000 mobile phones and other equipment, all thought to have been stolen. The man and his vehicle were about to board a ferry for Algeria. Then last week police in Torrevieja arrested a gang of five Kosovans suspected of as many as 31 burglaries from factories.

Last week, the Deputy Mayor of nearby San Fulgencio was arrested for allegedly taking a 5,000 euro bribe from a developer. It now appears that he may have been the target of a 'sting' operation. The Deputy Mayor is a member of the AIM party. Incredibly, you can view a video of the actual sting operation on YouTube at



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o8-EJqzwp90&feature=related>

The local police chief in San Fulgencio was also arrested early this week. The lady Mayor of San Fulgencio together with two socialist councillors and two independent councillors from the APSF, have now been arrested as well. This means that the only members of the council who have not been arrested are two PP councillors and two British AIM councillors. The ex-pat councillor, 54 year old Mark Lewis, is presently acting mayor of the town. The mayor and four councillors were released on bail this Thursday. And to cap it all, the Socialist mayor of nearby Bigastro, the town secretary and two businessmen were arrested on Tuesday for corruption in relation to building contracts. An ex socialist deputy from Valencia is now also being investigated. It appears that he had a new house built for himself for 300,000 euro but the real cost was 530,000 euro. I don't want you to give you the impression that it is just the socialists who are 'dipping in the till' but they do seem to be operating a monopoly on it at the moment.

Again I am not making this up, but the town hall in Roses, Girona, is organising a special course for over-18's on how to use a vibrator. The week long course in January will also show students how to make a vibrator from recycled materials. The students will also be encouraged to discuss the content of the course with their families as a way of enhancing sexual education and reducing unwanted pregnancies. Five people have already signed on for the course. So if you have any broken lawnmowers or toasters at home here in Spain



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Restaurant Report - El Bulli by 'Wishful Thinker'.

One of the most famous restaurants in the world is *El Bulli*, which is situated near the village of Rosas on the Costa Brava. *El Bulli*, which holds the maximum three Michelin stars, is headed by the famous chef Ferran Adrià and has been voted best restaurant in the world again this year. The work of Adrià and his team has been compared to that of Dalí and Picasso for its creativity and innovation in cuisine and he has maintained the highest of standards for many years.

The restaurant has got 15 tables with seating for about 55 diners and is only open from May to September. For the remainder of the year Adrià experiments with new ingredients and processes in his culinary taller (workshop) in Barcelona. More than half of a million people try to secure bookings each year but only 8,000 are successful. Consequently the restaurant is already fully booked for 2009 although reservations only opened this October. If you are fortunate enough to secure a reservation you should re-confirm it a week ahead.

When you arrive at *El Bulli*, one of the waiters (of which there are dozens) will offer to show you the kitchens. The kitchens are large and partitioned into several sections where more than three dozen cooks quietly get on with their creative processes. The restaurant itself has a low ceiling of dark beams with several paintings and prints scattered throughout the walls and could be described as cosy although there is sufficient space between the tables for privacy. When you are seated the waiter will ask you if you have any food allergies or dislikes so that the food can be adapted accordingly. You will probably notice that there is no cutlery on the tables, it being provided when needed.

The meal, which varies slightly each day, consists of about 35 small courses, usually a bite or two, and the waiters will occasionally suggest how best to enjoy the food. Adrià's famous *esferificación* process, in which liquids are trapped in a thin alginate casing that bursts with flavours on your tongue, together with the quick drying of various foods with liquid nitrogen are just two of several techniques employed at *El Bulli*. Food morphing is also common. In one dish you are presented with a small jewellery box which contains what looks like a silver spring. You are asked to place your finger inside the spring and then place it in your mouth - surprise, surprise, as the flavours of freeze-dried and shaped foie gras bursts on your tongue. In another dish you are given what appears to be an 'olive' on a spoon. When you bite into the 'olive' you find that it is a gelatine like substance with a good quality olive oil concoction inside. No two tables get exactly the same food although there are recurring favourites from a selection of about 500 dishes which Adrià has created. Most of the earlier dishes you are expected to eat with your fingers, later a spoon or fork will be provided depending on the dish but knives are never to be seen!

The dishes provided range from the seemingly ridiculous to the utterly mystifying, but again the ever helpful waiters will provide interpretation and assistance when required. The dishes provided can include any of the following - Coconut-milk ravioli, yogurt jelly with raspberry muesli, quail egg with caramel sheet, oyster yogurt, tiny fried brioche with King Crab and coriander, a foam made of honey and pistachios sprinkled with wild flowers, 12 different types of seaweed in a cube of watermelon, sea-bream eggs encased in a meringue into which the waiter will inject sea-bream liquor, crispy-fried rabbit ears, boneless chicken feet wrapped in sea lettuce, a pancake of Iberian pork fat enclosing a mixture of veal bone marrow & cranberry, a sherbet made from blood oranges, peach soup and individual chocolates filled with mandarin sorbet! Should you wish to take a break during the meal there is a patio next to the restaurant. A meal here can last between four and six hours so a pause and/or a 'ciggie' might be welcome! Words cannot really do justice to the incredible fare offered at *El Bulli*. However, if you pop onto the 'net' and google 'El Bulli', there are hundreds of photos of the creations on view. Unfortunately their own web-site is a little out of date and difficult to navigate. It is fair to say that the flavours on some of the dishes can be very, very strong, particularly the fish dishes. While some of the meat dishes such as lamb brains in their own juice, can be equally challenging.

The 'tasting' menu for one costs about 220 euro and if you want water, coffee and wine expect to spend at least another 40 euro. The wine list is extensive, starting at about 10 euro for a half bottle of local plonk. If you want a copy of Adrià's cookbook, it will set you back about another 300 + euro!

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OOPS!

An elderly lady call 112 on her mobile phone to report that her car had been broken into. She was hysterical as she explained the situation to the dispatcher.

'They've stolen the stereo, the steering wheel, the brake pedal and even the accelerator!' She cried.

The dispatcher said. 'Stay calm. A *guardia* is on the way.'

A short while later the *guardia* radios in.

'Disregard,' he says. 'She got in the back-seat by mistake.'

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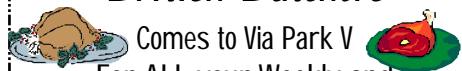
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Out & About

Saturday the 1st of November is a national holiday called *Todos los Santos* (All Saints Day) in Spain. This is a *fiesta* occasion when Spanish families visit *en masse* their departed relatives and friends in the cemeteries. Florists do more business on this day than any other of the year including Mother's Day and Valentines Day. In Madrid, more than one million people visit the city's 22 cemeteries over a two day period. The bakeries provide a number of seasonal items to celebrate the Day including *huesos de santo* (bones of the saint) which are marzipan bones filled with sweetened egg yolk and fried small doughnuts called *buñuelos*, which are filled with cream or chocolate. According to tradition

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for every one of these eaten, a soul is rescued from Purgatory. Every region has its own specialities for the day, the worst probably being in Jaén where a type of gruel called *gachas* is made from flour, water, milk and honey. If there are any leftovers (and I am sure there are plenty!) the children in some villages glue up the keyholes with the *gachas* to 'keep out wandering souls.'

Down at Punta Prima, the large new building that has just been erected is supposed to be a new outlet of Ardy the *bricolage*. The Plus in Punta Prima has just closed down (only open for about a year) and the closed MasYMas building at the base of Los Altos will be reopening shortly as a massive Chinese Todo (non-food) supermarket.

Back in Dream Hills a couple of real headaches have recently emerged. Problems with dog barking seems to have increased significantly with many more animals now adding to the chorus. Dave the handyman also tells me that he is having to pick up large amounts of dog crap as well from the walkways. I do wish the town hall would start its promised poster and fine campaign on these issues. The second problem is the amount of youths who congregate around the casita in the early evening. Now, not all these youngsters are problematic, some are very well behaved, but there are a number of little ba****ds there from the urbanisations of Inspiration, Lago Jardin 2 and others, who seem quite happy to throw stones at houses, play football against a neighbours wall and climb all over the casita roof. The president Maribel has remonstrated with the Spanish element of these on a number of occasions and received verbal abuse that would embarrass a 'squaddie.' The security guards have chased them off the roof of the casita many times and then chased them off the urbanisation. However the road by the casita and the childrens play area are both public areas and there is no prohibition on groups of youths gathering there even if on occasions these group number as many as 18.

Our David

David Beckham decides to try horseback riding, even though he has no lessons or prior experience. He mounts the horse unassisted and the horse immediately springs into motion.

It gallops along at a steady rhythmic pace as Posh stands back in admiration, but then he begins to slip from the saddle. In terror he grabs the horse's mane, but cannot seem to get a firm grip. He tries to throw his arms around the horse's neck, but he slides down the side of the horse. The horse gallops along, seemingly impervious to its slipping rider. Finally, he gives up his frail grasp and he attempts to leap away from the horse and throw himself to safety. Unfortunately, his foot has become entangled in the stirrup, now he is now at the mercy of the horse's pounding hooves as his head is struck against the ground over and over.

Posh just stands there frantic and screaming, unable to do anything to help as his head is battered against the ground. He is mere moments away from unconsciousness when to his great fortune the Sainsbury's security guard sees him, leans over and unplugs the horse.

Country Boys

Two rednecks were sitting around talking one afternoon. After a while the first redneck says to the second, "If'n I was to sneak over to your trailer Saturday and make love to your wife while you was off a huntin', and she got pregnant and had a baby, would that make us kin?"

The second redneck crooked his head sideways for a minute, scratched his head, and squinted his eyes thinking real hard about the question.

Finally, he says, "Well, I don't know about kin, but it sure would make us even."

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New Changes in the Motoring Law.

It has recently been announced that drivers in Spain do not need to carry a 'proof of payment of insurance premium' with them in the car. If police officers now carry-out a spot check on your car they can search the new Insured Vehicles Record System (FIVA) to determine whether your insurance payments are up to date. Failure to carry this used to attract a 60-euro fine.

The government are also trying to abolish the requirement of carrying a set of replacement headlight bulbs & tools necessary to change them, in the car. Modern headlights, they argue, are far too complex for the driver to change. In the last two years over 20,000 drivers have each been issued with a 150 euro fine for not having the replacement bulbs!

All motorbikes and scooters of more than three years old must now undergo ITV tests to check emissions of noise and fumes. It used to be after five years or two years for 'rentals.' If your 'hogg' was registered prior to October 2005, it will have to be tested by Jan 21st 2009. Failure to comply will result in a fine of 150 euros for not holding a valid ITV and a further 150 euros if the emissions are above the recommended levels. The test costs 23 euro.

Civil Damages - Take Note!

The Criminal Courts in Spain can, and often do, award substantial damages to plaintiffs, particularly in motoring accidents. These are limited up to about 350,000 euro for personal injuries and up to about 100,000 euro for damage to assets. However, it is worth remembering that the plaintiffs can still take out a civil case if the injury or damage costs were actually higher. Although your insurance policy will only cover up to a certain limit, anything over this you will have to pay out of your assets together with any further legal costs. This can happen if the driver does not insist on the wearing of a seat belt, or if the driver is drunk, or if the car has faulty tyres etc. Consequently, the injuries would have been deemed to be less serious, or not at all, if the person had been wearing a seat belt, the driver not been drunk, etc. And here is the real 'kicker' - the owner of the vehicle is also liable for these extra costs even where the driver is not the owner but is driving the vehicle with the owner's permission.

(Source - Motoring in Spain by B.J. Deller)

Ten Ways on How to Make a Marriage Last By Bill A.

1. Twice a week we go to a nice restaurant, have a little wine, some good food and companionship. She goes Tuesdays, I go Fridays.
2. We also sleep in separate beds. I'm in the master bedroom, she's at her mother's.
3. I take my wife everywhere but she keeps finding her way back!
4. I asked my wife where she wanted to go for our anniversary. 'Somewhere I haven't been for a long time,' she said. So I suggested the kitchen.
5. We always hold hands. If I let go she starts shopping.
6. She has everything electrical, blender, toaster, bread-maker. She said 'There are too many gadgets and no place to sit down.' So I bought her an electric chair.
7. Remember - Marriage is the number one cause of divorce. 100% of all divorces started with marriage.
8. I married Miss Right, but didn't know her first name was 'always'.
9. I haven't spoken to my wife for 18 months, I don't like to interrupt her.
10. The last fight was my fault. My wife asked 'What's on the TV?'I said 'Dust!'

Little Johnny & the Rooster

Little Johnny came home from school to see the family's pet rooster dead in the front yard. Rigor Mortis had set in and it was flat on its back with its legs in the air. When his Dad came home Johnny said, "Dad our rooster is dead and his legs are sticking in the air. Why are his legs sticking in the air, Dad?"

His father thinking quickly said, "Son, that's so God can reach down from the clouds and lift the rooster straight up to heaven."

"Gee Dad that's great," said little Johnny.

A few days later, when Dad came home from work, Johnny rushed out to meet him yelling, "Dad, Dad, we almost lost Mum today!"

"What do you mean?" said Dad.

"Well Dad, I got home from school early today and went up to your bedroom and there was Mum flat on her back with her legs in the air screaming, "God! I'm coming, I'm coming" If it hadn't of been for Uncle George holding her down we'd have lost her for sure!"

History of Spain Part 2 - The Romans.

Even though Hannibal was away campaigning in Italy with Rome as his ultimate goal, the Roman army, which arrived in the Iberian peninsula in 218 BC, was making little headway against the Carthaginians. Both the Roman generals were killed in action and it was not until Publius Cornelius Scipio (later called Scipio Africanus) arrived in 211 BC that the tide turned for the Romans. Instead of campaigning into the Iberian interior, he launched an all-out attack on Cartagena. (This battle is celebrated every year in Cartagena.) After its rapid capture the Punic generals began to feud among themselves. Scipio took advantage of their disorganisation, and by 206 BC the Carthaginians had been chased out of the peninsula. It is not generally known but Hasdrubal, Hannibal's brother, also crossed the Pyrenees and the Alps in the hope of assisting his brother in Italy. However his messengers were intercepted and his army was devastated in Italy. His head was later thrown into Hannibal's camp.

Scipio then returned to Rome in glory and went on to become one of its greatest generals. Hannibal remained in Italy for 15 years of battles and skirmishes. Despite his many victories he could never take Rome and despite many requests never received reinforcements from Carthage. In 203 BC he was recalled to Africa.

Now that the Carthaginians were gone, the Iberians expected the Romans to depart. But this of course was not the case. The Romans had many economic reasons for remaining, among them the extraction of 10,800 pounds of silver annually from the mines in Cartagena. From 210 to 50 BC successive waves of Roman forces occupied the peninsula, which they now referred to as 'Hispania' and it would remain in Roman hands until 409 AD. Although it took just twelve years to rout the Carthaginians, the Romans found that the conquest of the Iberians and the Celtiberians would take two centuries of sanguinary battles and the lives of some 150,000 Roman soldiers. In one battle alone for the Celtiberian town of Numantia, the Romans lost over 20,000 soldiers. The loss of life among the native tribes must also have been horrific, the Romans having few scruples with dealing savagely with what they classed as barbarians. The peninsula was finally subdued around 19 BC. The Romans divided the peninsula into two main provinces, 'Hispania Citerior' and 'Hispania Ulterior', with Cartagena and Cordoba as their respective capitals. Gradually Hispania was colonised although the Basque region was never Romanised like the rest of Spain. Under the Romans, Spain flourished becoming the Roman Empire's second most important nucleus next to Italy.

Hispania produced a number of Roman emperors from the south - Trajan, Theodosius, Hadrian - and probably Marcus Aurelius as well. It was while Julius Caesar was in the region that large scale settlement by Roman citizens was encouraged with over 22 *coloniae* established. Later he started his drive to become emperor. He was a popular Hispanic leader and in 49 BC he led a rebel army which started a civil war against Rome. Near Cordoba, he routed the Roman army in battle and went to Rome to claim the seat of power.

Mining continued to remain important with the Sierra Morena producing silver and copper, with gold being mined in the north west. At peak production, the area produced a reported 60 tons of gold per annum. Other exports were wine, wheat, lead, wool and woollen garments, *Garum* - a popular condiment made from fermented fish, and olive oil. This is an entire hill in Rome called the Monte Testaccio, which is composed of broken Andalusian oil amphorae. One unusual export was apparently dancing girls from Cádiz!

The Roman contribution to the peninsula was immense. First of all they had established law and order in a

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notoriously unruly population. The building of some 12,000 miles of road linking 360 towns improved communications and trade, and endured as the best road system in Spain until the 20th century. One road, the Via Augusta, ran from Rome to Cádiz. Bridges, aqueducts, baths and stadiums were also built together with impressive public buildings. The Latin language provided the base from which the region's romance languages evolved. It is unclear when Christianity first arrived in Iberia but paganism was banned by the Spanish-born emperor Theodosius the Great in 392 AD, who was the last ruler of the unified Roman Empire. In 407, armies of the pretender Constantine the Third successfully invaded the peninsula displacing the Roman incumbents, but the new victors then rebelled against Constantine and established a local Spanish aristocrat, Maximus, as the 'Emperor of the Spains.' Taking advantage of the chaos now reigning in the Empire, the barbarian tribes of the Suevi, Vandals and the Alans poured into the peninsula. Maximus fled and the barbarians were now in control of most of the peninsula.

Next month, Part 3 - The Visigoths.

And you think you've got problems!

1. Sausage rolls

A picnic in the park turned into an expensive event for Mum Sarah Davies, from Hull. While feeding her four-year-old daughter a piece of sausage roll fell to the ground. The missed-mouth incident was spotted by council wardens and Ms Davies was fined £75, even though pigeons immediately ate the evidence.

2. What a load of rubbish

With photographic evidence and stab-proof vests, Cumbria council's bin police confronted Gareth Corkhill with the terrible crime of ... putting too much rubbish in his bin. The father of four was given a whopping £210 fine, plus a £15 victim surcharge and he now has a criminal record.

3. Oops...

Litter lout Christopher Murphy dropped a single crisp packet on the ground in Ireland and ended up in court with a 600 Euro (£480) fine. While the term litterbug is no doubt a bona fide insult, this is an example of where the fine perhaps doesn't match the crime.

4. Trying to be creative

Pretty hearts and rainbows may seem innocent enough, except if you work for North Wales police. Two teenage girls from Bangor were charged £80 for "graffiti" after drawing chalk pictures on a pavement, Mary Poppins style, which were completely washed away by the rain soon after.

5. Keeping the kitchen tidy

Nowadays using a public bin can get you into trouble. Detectives hunted down pensioner John Richards from Lincolnshire after he carefully placed some household rubbish into a bin on a lamp post. They traced Mr Richards from an addressed envelope that was in with the kitchen scraps and accused him of fly-tipping, which attracts a fixed penalty of £75.

6. Putting your feet up

Getting comfy on a Chester-bound train can get you a criminal record. Babiker Fadol put his feet on a train seat and was arrested for anti-social behaviour, despite taking his feet down as soon as he was asked. After appearing at court charged under the 1889 Railway Regulations Act, he was forced to pay £50 and was given a criminal record.

7. Keen to help the environment?

You still won't escape the wrath of Swansea's eagle-eyed council officials. Michael Reeves made a grave mistake when he accidentally left a piece of paper in a recycling bag reserved for glass. He was promptly taken to court and fined £200 and swears he'll never recycle again.

8. A quick fag

Fancy a quick ciggie in your break? Think again if you're in the taxi trade. A lone fag cost cab driver Alan Cross £715. Mr Cross was spotted smoking a cigarette in his taxi by a Thurrock Council Enforcement Officer. The matter went to court and he was slapped with £300 of fines, £400 in costs and a £15 victim surcharge.

9. Defrosting the car on a winter morning

One cold winter morning Ken Hardman from Lancashire nipped outside to his car, turned the engine on to defrost the windscreen and then returned inside to wait. A local police officer charged him with "quitting" (leaving a car unattended with the engine on) and fined him £30.

10. Answering a phone call safely

Unlucky Nick Tubbs was fined £120 for the crime of ... speaking to his mum on the phone. He was driving in Westminster when his mother rang so he diligently pulled over to the side of the road to take the call. He spoke for one minute and 23 seconds then immediately drove away. Sadly for Mr Tubbs, Westminster council tracked him down from CCTV footage and accused him of "parking" on a single yellow line.

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New Changes to the *Empadronamiento* applications.

The Town Halls in both Torrevieja and Orihuela Costa have now advised that it is no longer necessary to have *Residencia* before applying for the *Padron*. The supporting documentation for the application has also been simplified. The new requirements are now on the notice board at the Ayuntamiento in Playa Flamenca.

For British & Irish nationals, the requirements are as follows -

National ID document OR Passport OR Residence Card/Certificate AND one of the following documents - Deed of your Spanish Property or electricity bill, or water bill, or fixed telephone-line bill, or SUMA bill etc in your name & address, or where appropriate Rental Contract.

If you are registering a minor you also need to provide authorisation from the parents, passport (or *residencia*) and birth certificate.

If you require your existing *Padron* registration changed for whatever reason, you will need to show your passport or residence card/certificate together with the document to prove the change.

Remember, all documents presented must be the originals together with a photocopy of the originals.

UK Dept of Works & Pensions

The Department of Works and Pensions gave a series of talks throughout the Costa Blanca last month. It was an excellent opportunity for them to explain the changes in rules and legislation covering benefits and the state pension. There was also an opportunity for attendees to take part in a 'Question and Answer' session afterwards.

The department states that they estimate that there are about one million British residents in Spain and 300,000 of them are living in the Alicante region. Of the million Brits here, it is estimated that 650,000 of them are over the age of 50.

The talks covered a vast range of topics, (health-care being a concern of many) far too many to discuss here, but if you go to the web-site www.ukinspain.fco.gov.uk you will see some very informative and pertinent advice.

The situation concerning the 'winter fuel allowance' was clarified. If you are resident in Spain, it is payable provided that you were entitled to receive it before you left the UK, even if you did not claim it, but it is not payable if you only became eligible for it while living in Spain.

Quick calls

I called a phone sex line last week. This bird says, "what can I do for you, darling?" I said, "well, you can call me back for starters, it's a hell of a lot cheaper."

Was so depressed last night, I rang Lifeline. Got a call centre in Afghanistan, told them I was suicidal. They got all excited and asked if I could drive a truck.



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Penance

A married man goes to confessional and says to the priest, "Father, I had an affair with a woman... almost." "What do you mean almost?" questioned the priest. "Well, we got undressed and rubbed together, but then I stopped." "Rubbing together is the same as putting it in," explains the priest. "You're not to go near that woman again. Now, say fifty Hail Mary's and put £50 in the poor box."

The man leaves the confessional, says his prayers, and then walks over to the poor box. He pauses for a moment and then decides to leave. The priest quickly runs over to the man and exclaims, "I saw that... you didn't put any money in the poor box!" "Well Father, I rubbed up against it and, like you said, it's the same as putting it in!"

Notes from La Casita

Petanca has now reverted to the winter playing time - starting at 3 pm. Anyone wishing to join in to play (or learn) please arrive by 10 to 3 in order to draw for teams.

New this month in La Casita!

Starting 30th October - The return of the fun darts evenings, on Thursdays, at 7:30 pm. New players welcome, just come along or telephone Ann on 966722968.

Starting 3rd November - Total Fitness - fun workout classes. See the notice board for details of the new exercise classes on Monday and Fridays at different times. Or you can telephone Marcia on 966799244 or 658323423.

A full programme of the regular weekly events is now posted on all the Dream Hills notice boards. Check it out and see what groups you can join!

Although we are now adding several new events, there are still times available if anyone has an interest or hobby and would like to us La Casita for meetings.

Enquiries have been made for a chess club and a camera club.....over to you!

If you are interested in joining a group of Spanish and English-speaking people who will meet in La Casita to practise and improve what they have learned in language lessons, please contact Joyce Sinclair on 966799544.

Cost just one euro - one evening per week.

Turps V Holy Water!

A little boy was sitting on the curb with a pint of turpentine, shaking it up and watching all the bubbles.

A while later a Priest came along and asked the little boy what he had.

The little boy replied, 'This is the most powerful liquid in the world, it's called turpentine.'

The Priest said, 'No, the most powerful liquid in the world is Holy Water. If you take some of this Holy Water and rub it on a pregnant woman's belly, she'll pass a healthy baby.'

The little boy replied, 'You take some of this turpentine and rub it on a cat's ass, he'll pass a Harley Davidson.'

FINANCIAL NEWS - LATEST

Following the recent economic upheavals, there have been significant financial developments in Japan. In the last few days the Origami Bank has folded and the Sumo Bank has gone belly-up, while the Bonsai Bank plans to cut some of its branches. On Tuesday the Karaoke Bank was sold off, its shares going for a song, while today shares in the Kamikaze Bank were suspended after they nose dived.

The Samurai Bank is soldiering on, despite sharp cut-backs, and the Ninja Bank is reported to have taken a hit but is still in the black. There are also reports that the 1,000 staff at the Karate Bank got the chop, while analysts report that something fishy is going on over at the Sushi Bank, where it is felt that shareholder and staff will get a raw deal.

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