



Newsletter 1st of January 2009

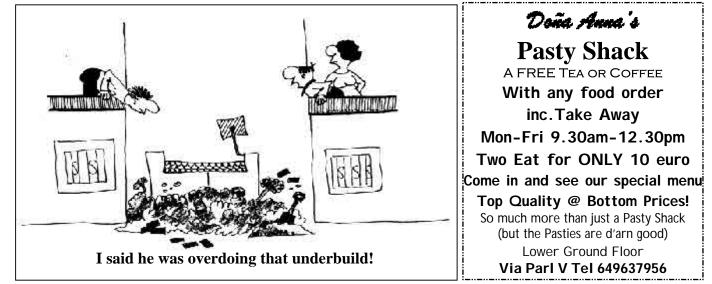
Issue no. 23

It has been very cold here for the last few weeks, although almost on cue Christmas Day and Boxing Day were sunny and warm. Average temperatures have been the coldest since 1971 and there have been at least four deaths throughout Spain due to problems with heating equipment. In a tragic case a young couple lit their barbecue inside their apartment to generate some heat and subsequently died from the fumes. Severe storms have hit the north eastern coast, with the Costa Brava being particularly hard-hit with a lot of damage to the ports and coastal installations. Fortunately, we always seem to miss the worst of the weather here in the Costa Blanca although we are on an earthquake fault line!

This year the Chinese New Year - the Year of the Ox, begins on the 26th January. The Ox is the sign of prosperity through fortitude and hard work. Well, I doubt if there will be much prosperity around for the next 12 months. Here in Spain, not only are property values continuing to dive (see report in page 7), but sterling is now almost on par with the euro. At the time of print the rate was 1.02 to the £. The poor exchange rate is having a massive detrimental effect on the standard of living of British expats in Spain, the majority of whom receive their income or pensions in sterling. Their spending power has been reduced by a third in one year. Belts are being tightened and luxuries limited. National currencies are seen as national virility symbols, but sadly sterling is in need of transfusion of economic 'viagra' to make the currency and the economy even mildly attractive to the investor. But parity with

sterling or even worse, seems to be a self-fulfilling prophesy at the moment. (Report on sterling in the next issue.) On the positive side, the days are getting longer, inflation has dropped to around 2.4% and will continue to fall, car fuel is the cheapest it has been for years and the urbanisation is looking very well. Many houses in both urbanisations have put up charming external decorations (even Chris H. broke her 'bah-humbug' tradition by putting an attractive display in her porch) and it was difficult to judge the best. Some people had very understated but striking decorations, while other had displays that were downright psychedelic! There were about ten truly top class displays, one with a large star placed on an extended TV aerial; but in the end the prize had to go to house number 76 in Dream Hills, who have been putting up a display for the past 5 years and have an excellent one again this year. Congratulations to Ron and Iris who had a choice of either a weekend for two in the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel (smoking room) in Mumbai or a bag of goodies. Fortunately they choose the latter.

Wishing you all a very Happy & Prosperous New Year, with special thanks to the president and committee of Dream Hills, to David the handyman, to volunteers, to our two security guards and to all our generous advertisers and readers.



WHAT'S UP?

The Spanish economy, which is now 'officially' in recession has been dominating the news in Spain. The government's budget for 2009 was rejected by the upper house and was only passed in the lower house with the Basque and Catalonian nationalist parties supporting the ruling socialist party. The leader of the opposition commented that 'PM Zapatero has once again dropped his trousers' for these parties.

French and Spanish police have arrested a number of ETA suspected terrorists. One notable arrest was assisted by the NSA in the United States, who deciphered encrypted e-mail messages for the authorities. An ETA activist, José Ignacio de Juana Chaos, is currently fighting extradition from Northern Ireland.

In his Christmas broadcast to the Spanish people, King Juan Carlos called on all to be united in the fight against terrorism, with special words for all the victims and their families. He told the Spanish troops that 'Society is with you. Terrorism can have no place in a free, democratic and plural society such as the Spanish one'. (Despite this, the government refuses to send any more troops to Afghanistan.) He also noted the 30th anniversary of the Spanish Constitution, saying that Spain had seen 30 years of clear democracy with progress and modernisation. In relation to the current economic crisis he commented that there was a need for more efficiency and competitiveness, otherwise it would be impossible to return to sustainable growth. The labour/employment laws in Spain are very restrictive. For example, if a business wishes to lay-off workers, they have first to apply to the government for approval. Last week, Ford Espańa applied for approval to lay-off of 4,500. The onerous employment requirements has led to an abundance of temporary employment contracts, which give employers greater flexibility but do little for job security. Many economists and international agencies such as the IMF have called for greater flexibility in the Spanish labour market.

Electricity prices are expected to increase by around 3.6% this month. A full time resident can expect to pay around an additional two euro per month on their electricity bill.

One of the Spanish newspapers notes that mortgage rates in Spain will be up to 34% cheaper next year, and states that the Euribor rate, on which the mortgage rate is based, will fall to about 3.4% this month and that in 2009 experts say it will be between 2.5% and 3%. Monthly payments on the average mortgage will be down more than 100 euro this month.

In a rare show of cooperation and solidarity, the ruling PP and opposition PSOE in Orihuela, joined in a protest against the proposed route for the new AVE high speed train through Orihuela. The protestors want the line to be placed underground locally, while the plan is for a bridge to take the trains some 14 metres above the Tajo-Segura water transfer pipes. Around 12,000 took part in the protest on the 21st. However, the PP presidents of the Valencia and Murcia regions want the AVE link to be completed as soon as possible, to improve communications between their regions and Madrid. Where AVE links have been established to the capital, it has resulted in the decimation of the established airline service on these routes.

Ford in Spain are offering a 25% discount on 6,000 of it's estimated 25,000 cars in stock. The discounts do not include the new designs of the Ka, Fiesta and Kuga models. The offer ends on January 24th.

The regional governments of Murcia and Andalucía, have allowed the January sales to commence on the 2nd of January, rather than after the 6th, in an attempt to help trade.

Police patrolling in Marbella found it hard to believe their eyes when they spotted a car travelling at around 120 kilometres per hour with a woman clinging onto the bonnet for dear life. With the help of another patrol car the police eventually managed to block the path of the vehicle. The woman, a 31 year old Brazilian, told officers that the driver, her boyfriend, had tried to kill her. Apparently she had climbed onto the bonnet when he had attempted to run her over. The driver, a 34 year old Spaniard, was arrested for attempted murder.

In a scarcely reported incident the Minister for Agriculture visited an experimental farm near Los Montesinos, where scientists have managed, through gene manipulation, to breed four-legged turkeys. When the minister asked the farm director what they tasted like, he replied he didn't know as they hadn't managed to catch one yet!!



Whats Up? continued

Residents in an apartment block in Alicante called police after they heard what they thought was a child crying continuously. When the police arrived they could not gain access, so called the fire brigade, who after climbing in a balcony found two goats wandering about the flat!

New software has been developed by a firm in Barcelona which claims to be 95% successful in de-ciphering the scribbles and abbreviations by doctors in prescriptions. It's that extra 5% which would worry me. With my luck if the prescription should say 'take ten tablets for anaemia,' I would probably end up with 'take him for ten enemas!!'

A family court judge in Murcia has been banned from office for two years and fined 6,000 euro for delaying the adoption of a child by the mother's lesbian lover. His punishment contrasts sharply with that awarded to the incompetent judge in the case of the alleged killer of Marie Lúz, where although the judge's clerk was banned for two years, the judge only received a 1,200 euro fine.

Madrid Zoo have placed their Nativity Scene of nine figures in an aquarium tank with thirteen sharks!

A British tourist is suing the Barcelona Town Hall for 632,636 euro. The tourist was walking on the pavement when he was hit by the wing mirror of a bus. He then fell under the bus and lost his right leg.

Spanish eating-grapes are now considered the finest in Europe, particularly those grown in the Murcia region. More than half the produce is exported to Germany, while 80% of the seedless varieties are sold abroad. In the last few years the growers in Murcia have dropped the use of pesticides and relied on non-chemical solutions to pest control. They succeeded in controlling the principal pest - the grapevine moth - by techniques of sexual confusion. Don't ask! They probably dressed up the male moths in black stockings and heels!

On the 23rd, Mayor Mateo of Torrevieja unveiled a new plan for a vast sports and leisure zone in the town. It would be an understatement to call it ambitious. It is to be located around the Infanta Cristina sports palace and the Vicente Garcia football stadium. The following are some of the facilities planned by the mayor - a tennis centre with 10 courts plus a large central court for big competitions, squash courts, a gym, an outdoor 'semi-Olympic 25-metre swimming pool, a 3,000 seater rugby stadium, an ice-skating rink, a sports hotel with a specialised sports' medical area. The existing football stadium will be refurbished to take 10,000 spectators and the current athletics stadium will be modernised with a new track. An 80,000 square metre area will be set aside for the Friday market which will also be able to accomodate concerts. The mayor stated 'This project is not something for the future, it is something for now. Part of it has been included in this year's budget and will be carried out this year.' So where is the money for this going to come from? The town finances were heavily stretched last year and they could not meet some of their obligations. This is not a situation which will improve in the short to medium term. Also going to the private sector in this current financial climate will be a waste of time. None of the usual milch cows such as the Spanish builders, developers and estate agents will be in a position to help and I do not believe the banks will touch it - unless they are forced to.

It seems the economic crisis is now affecting wine sales in Spain, with sales of crianzas and reservas in bars and restaurants down 20%. However the sales of Don Simón and other cheaper table wines, often sold in cartons, have increased by 30%.

So far this year 77 women have died in Spain at the hands of their partners, three of them on Christmas Eve.

An 18 year old British man was found dead in an irrigation canal between Villamartin and San Miguel early Monday morning. It is believed he crashed against the barrier in his moped and then fell into the canal.

A heart-warming story from Barajas airport in Madrid. A two year old Beagle dog called Trus, ran off on the 17th, while being transferred between flights at the airport. His owner, Manuel García Coego, a 46 year old construction worker spent five days & nights camping out at the airport while searching for his dog. Manual said 'I would be a traitor to abandon him.' Happily the dog was found and they were both reunited on the evening of the 22nd. The 'mutt' probably fancied a weekend away in Barcelona!



Spanish New Year - Traditional Customs.

31st December or NocheVieja. This is one big party night and it is traditional to wear red underwear for good luck. Another custom is to eat 12 grapes at midnight, one at each stroke of the clock. This practice is said to be about 100 years old but it became more widespread after TVE, the Spanish state TV station started broadcasting the new year chimes from the Puerta del Sol in Madrid from 1962. The chimes, which now give you about 38 seconds to eat your twelve grapes, caused a considerable amount of choking in 1997 when, due to a mechanical error, the chimes lasted only 17 seconds. Other New Year's Eve customs which are not as popular include eating lentils to ensure wealth, putting money in your shoes to obtain fortune and going for a walk with suitcases, to ensure that you will travel in the coming twelve months. Do that around our area and you will be labelled a 'looney' or investigated by the police!

On the evening of the 5th of January there will be processions with floats throughout Spain. This is always a fun occasion and heralds the arrival of the Three Kings - *Los Reyes Magos*. The procession in Torrevieja is always very enjoyable with lots of elaborate costumes and floats. It is held in the early evening and is always great fun for the younger children who get to collect loads of candied sweets. Make sure your kids bring a plastic bag for the sweets and that you have a good cheap dentist.

The 6th of January is the Feast of the Epiphany (*Epifania*), when the children get their toys and presents brought to the house by the Three Kings not Father Christmas. Children leave a pair of shoes outside the front door the previous evening to indicate to the Kings how many children are in the apartment or villa. If they have been good they get pressies, if not, just a lump of coal or charcoal.

On the 6th it is also traditional to eat Roscón de Reyes. This is a circular shaped cake with a hole in the middle and resembles a large ring doughnut. There is cream inside the cake and it is decorated with candied fruits. Hidden inside the cake is a toy king or crown and a bean. If you get the crown you are king for the day and there is usually a paper crown included in the box. If you get the bean, it means you have to pay for the cake. You will find these cakes at most Spanish supermarkets and Carrefour have a very good one for about 3 euro. The European H & S police have tried unsuccessfully to ban the cake because of the 'toys' inside.

Finally, a word of caution. If you are wishing your Spanish neighbours a Happy New Year, take great care with your Spanish pronunciation. The correct expression is 'Feliz <u>Ano</u> Nuevo!' NOT 'Feliz <u>Ano</u> Nuevo!' In the former correct phrase, 'Ano' is pronounced 'angno.' If you use the second expression you will be wishing your Spanish friends 'Happy New ****-hole' as 'ano' is Castillian for 'anus!' This is probably why your Spanish neighbours would not speak to you last year!

What's Up, Doc?

An Israeli doctor said " Medicine is so advanced in my country we can take a kidney out of one person put it in another and have him looking for work in just 6 weeks "

A German doctor replied "That's nothing we can take a lung from one person put it in another and have him looking for work in only 4 weeks "

The English doctor said " Hah ! We can take an arsehole from Scotland put him in 10 Downing street and have half the country looking for work in 24 hours ".

A grandad asked his grandson what he wanted for Christmas. "I want a bike, an iPod, some football boots and a Nintendo Wii," he replied. "When I was a boy," said grandad, "all I got was an orange and an apple."

"Blow me!" said the grandson, "a mobile phone AND a computer?"



The World's Richest Lottery!

This takes place in Spain before Christmas (22nd December) *Lotería de Navidad*, and the top prize is called *El Gordo* (The Fat One). This is a hugely popular event and little work is done until the draw is finished. Although the draw takes several hours, it is televised and schoolchildren from a Madrid school sing out the lucky numbers in Gregorian chant.

Lottery tickets in Spain are expensive, but most people buy a *decimo* for around 20 euro This year there was a total payout of 2.32 billion euro in 13,000 tax-free prizes. Rather than a single jackpot, the lottery aims for a share-out in which thousands of numbers yield at least some kind of return. Tickets are also sold on-line to more than 140 countries.

The top prize went to holders of tickets bearing the number 32365 - which appears on 1,950 tickets (decimos), each winning 300,000 euro. The top prize numbers were sold across seven of Spain's 52 provinces. Ten of the winning tickets were sold in Torrevieja, one purchased by 64-year-old British man who bought his ticket in October. In the central town of Soria, Richard Jimenez's bar sold all 1,950 of the third prize tickets, spreading some 97 million euro among customers, family and friends. Ricardo bought 15 winning tickets worth 750,000 euro himself.

Four out of five Spaniards participate in *El Gordo*; the state lottery agency estimates per capita spending of about 62 euro on it with the most money per capita being spent in the province of Alicante.

Spain established its national lottery system in 1793 and the Christmas Lottery has been running since 1812. Seventy percent of lottery sales goes back out in prizes and 30 percent goes to the state.

Spain holds another big lottery on January 6th to mark the Feast of the Epiphany. This draw is known as *El Nino* (The Child) in reference to the baby Jesus.



Fly Boy

A photographer for a national magazine was assigned to get photos of a great forest fire. Smoke at the scene was too thick to get any good shots, so he frantically called his home office to hire a plane. "It will be waiting for you at the airport!" he was assured by his editor.

As soon as he got to the small, rural airport, sure enough, a plane was warming up near the runway. He jumped in with his equipment and yelled, "Let's go! Let's go!" The pilot swung the plane into the wind and soon they were in the air. "Fly over the north side of the fire," said the photographer, "and make three or four low level passes." "Why?" asked the pilot.

"Because I'm going to take pictures! I'm a photographer, and photographers take pictures!" said the photographer with great exasperation.

After a long pause the pilot said, "You mean you're not the instructor?"

Out for a Duck!

A couple go out for a Chinese meal. They decide to order the Special Chicken Surprise and are intrigued when the waiter arrives at their table with a large pot, complete with lid, and then leaves without a word.

As the man looks around to see if the waiter is coming back the woman sees the lid of the pot rise up and two beady little eyes stare at her. She squeals and the lid closes.

"Did you see that?" she asks.

"See what?"

"Look! There it is again!"

Once more the lid rises and the beady little eyes peer out.

The man shouts for the waiter. "What the hell is going on?" He demands. "What the hell is this you've given us?"

"Oh, is not wha' you order?" asks the waiter.

"We ordered the Special Chicken Surprise," says the woman.

"Oh, I so sorry, I make mistake with you order: I bring you Peeking Duck!"



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The History of Spain. Part 3 - The Visigoths.

It was around 409 AD that the barbarian tribes, the Alans, the Sueves and the Vandals, invaded the peninsula. There were few Roman troops remaining due to commitments in an extended empire which was already crumbling. Within a short time these barbarian tribes took possession of most of the peninsula, the Sueve storming across the Pyrenees into Galicia and the Vandals invading by boat in the south.

In 410 AD, the Visigoths (West Goths), a Germanic tribe sacked Rome and installed a puppet Roman ruler. The new ruler, anxious to recapture the peninsula, commissioned the Visigoths to eject the other tribes in 415 AD. The Visigoths defeated the Vandals in the south, who moved on to and settled in North Africa. The Suevi were also defeated and moved to the northwest of the peninsula, where they remained and ruled in a much smaller area for a further 180 years. The Visigoths were then called to Gaul (France) to settle matters there, where they established their kingdom north of the Pyrenees in Toulouse, which became, for a brief period, the largest in Europe.

However, when the Roman Empire finally collapsed in 476 AD, the Franks threw out the Visigoths from Gaul, who then returned to Hispania and choose Toledo in the *meseta* as the centre of their new kingdom. This was the first time that a conqueror or leader choose a central inland location as their base - a practise which continues to this day, previous leaders preferring to establish their bases near the coastline.

The new blond and hairy barbarian rulers probably numbered no more than 200,000 whereas there were several million Hispano-Romans. Except for taxation, the Visigoths initially left the indigenous population to their own laws and customs, in what was already - thanks to the Romans, a stable and well established society. When they first arrived, the Visigoths did not have a written language and were somewhat in awe of the legacy left by the Romans. The Visigoths practised a form of Christianity called Arianism (which denied the Trinity) rather than the Roman variety which was, aside from Paganism, the main religion in the peninsula. Visigoth law was notoriously harsh. For example, the punishment for homosexuality was castration, for tampering with public documents you would get 200 lashes, a shaved head and amputation of your right thumb. Rape was punished less severely - with public circumcision, and magicians, makers of spells, anyone invoking storms or who inquired into the future or offer sacrifices by night, were executed. One curious custom they introduced was the 'ordeal of hot water'; here, those accused of theft were questioned while being submerged in boiling water. Needless to say confessions were fast and furious. Intermarriage between the Visigothsand the Hispano-Romans was also a capital offence.

In 554, the Byzantines invaded the south coast and held on to part of the coastal regions, which they called *Spania*, before being defeated after decades of skirmishes in 624 AD. The Visigoths, then under the rule of King Leovigild, also removed the remaining Suevi from the northwest and, except for the Basque lands, now controlled the whole of the peninsula under one ruler. Leovigild was the greatest of the Visigoth kings and although at one time a rabid persecutor of the Catholics, he now converted to Catholicism and forced the remainder of the Visigoths and their bishops to do likewise. Leovigild also cancelled the ban on intermarriage and moved the bishops to Toledo, making the city not only the regal court but also the religious centre.

Unfortunately, following the first anti-Jewish treatise in the West (written by a Spaniard - St. Isidore) and with the encouragement of the bishops, Jews had to either convert to Catholicism or leave. The Jewish population probably outnumbered the Visigoths at this stage, having built up an industrious and successful society since around 100 BC. Naturally these persecutions were deeply resented and those who refused to convert moved to North Africa.

In 675 AD, the Moors made a half-hearted attempt to invade the peninsula, but were turned back before they could disembark. A plot was 'discovered' where leading Jews invited the Moors to invade the peninsula and subsequently many Jews were slaughtered with the approval of the then Gothic king, Wamba. Wamba then made another mistake by calling up all the priests for military service. The priests joined a hostile band of nobles led by Ervigius who drugged and kidnapped Wamba, shaved his head and dressed him as a monk. When the king awoke he was so embarrassed he did not dispute this power grab and Ervigius became king. Later, Ervigius tried to pass the throne on to his own son but



Airport Services, Local and Tourist Trips Hen & Stag Nights, Benidorm, Markets Golf Outings and Much, Much More Party Nights a speciality! Tel: Peter 617 096 374 the nobles had other ideas and after a civil war, installed their own man Roderick. Of 34 Visigoth kings only 15 died of natural causes. Between 531 and 555, four successive kings were murdered. One notorious womanising monarch was dining in company one evening when the lights were suddenly dimmed and his life was similarly quenched by a dozen sword thrusts from outraged husbands and fathers.

Few people felt any allegiance to the various kings and there were numerous revolts by generals, bishops, popular local uprisings, economic disruption and general mayhem. There were also massive numbers of escaped slaves roaming the kingdom, the Catholic church was then the largest slaveholder, and this all added to the chaos. King Roderick's reign would be a short one. He failed to unite any of the warring factions behind the throne. But ultimately it was Roderick's heart or probably groin area that brought about the demise of Gothic Spain.

Legend has it that Roderick fell madly in love with a beautiful aristocratic girl called Florinda and overcome with lust 'took' the beautiful maiden on a river bank after she bathed in the Tajo. Florinda's father, Count Julian, the governer of Septum (Cueta) collected his daughter. Roderick, unaware that his crime was known, asked Julian to send him a certain breed of African hawk. The count promised to send 'hawks' such as the king never dreamed of! These 'hawks' would stay for more than 700 years! Next month - The Moors.

Spanish Property - the Outlook.

It is difficult to get any crumb of comfort from the property market at present. Demand continues to be negligible as the various European economies 'batten down the hatches' to deal with their own recessions. Within Dream Hills there are at least 20 repossessions by banks going through the system, but I would not be surprised if that number would at least double in the coming year. The standard default period seems to be three months payments before the banks start the repo-process, which can take some time. This of course will mean less income in fees for the urbanisation as well. I would expect the position to be more severe in Dream Hills 2 where the percentage of full time residents is much lower. Funding euro mortgage payments in sterling is significantly more expensive than it was a year ago and together with the dramatic fall in property values, many owners will just walk away from their property. The British have traditionally been a major purchaser of property on the Costas. The current financial constraints and in particular the weakness of sterling against the euro will delay any recovery to sales and is already having an effect on the rental and tourist markets. A press release by a federation of Spanish estate agents stating that they are going to re-direct their marketing strategy and aim it at the Russians. This shows little grasp of the realities and extent of the world-wide recession.

Although there are almost one million empty properties in Spain, the government has stepped up its program of building subsidized property rather than purchasing and adapting the existing stock. They have also promised to change the current rental legislation which heavily favours the tenant. However the leaden-footed courts will probably negate any improvements coming from this initiative. If, as it is agreed by the cabinet (but not yet passed by congress), the new law allows landlords to evict a tenant who misses one month's rent, it could take at least a year for the case to come to court.

Two recent reports by the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) and Credit Suisse take a very pessimistic view of the future of Spanish property values. Both banks believe that there will be a further reduction in real terms of 30% over the next few years and that the current oversupply will not be absorbed until 2011. UBS argue that a price drop of 30% is the <u>only way to stimulate demand against</u> a background of rising unemployment, which they feel will reach four million in



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Don't forget Sunday Roast is Served from 12.00 till 9 pm Internet & Lounge Area Tel: 966 798 122 Spain or 16% of the active population. After a visit by an expert team to Madrid, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has concluded that the recession in Spain will be more severe than forecast. The I.M.F. also warned that unless profound reforms were carried out, the Spanish economy would enter a cycle of low growth and high unemployment with stagnation for several years.

Despite its comments the I..M.F. considers the response of the Spanish Government so far has been 'energetic' and quicker than other European countries, but it urges Spain to bring more flexibility to the labour market. It says the Government's strategy needs to be 'better defined'.

Regarding the government's initiative in the Real Estate sector, the Fund welcomes the help to the unemployed to meet mortgage payments, but is critical of the program to build more council subsidised housing as it will create even more homes and send real estate prices even lower.

Identification.

Paddy and Mick are taken to the morgue to identify a body police think might be their friend Shamus. The deceased has been in an accident and his face is disfigured. Paddy goes in first and asks the attendant to turn the body over so he can see its backside. He has a look and says, "No, that's not Shamus." Mick then goes in and he too asks the attendant to turn the body over so he can see its backside. He too says, "No, that's not Shamus."

Outside, the policeman thanks them for their trouble but says he is intrigued by their method of identification.

Paddy explained: "Oh, the three of us were best mates - we went everywhere together, and wherever we went people always said, 'Oh look, here comes Shamus with the two arseholes!'"



Electric Water Boilers

An owner has asked me to relay the following incident out of concern for the safety of fellow owners and their families, following an accident in their property.

During the early morning hours recently, our security guards heard an alarm go off and attended a property in the 200's at around 4.30 am. The house was unoccupied, the owner being abroad. The guards checked the house and managed to see in with torches, as a shutter was partly raised, They saw water spraying freely onto the walls and floor from what looked like a hose. The guards managed to find a key-holder amongst the neighbours after about 45 minutes, and when they managed to enter the property with a neighbour they found that the entire ground floor was flooded to a depth of a few centimetres. They located the mains water tap and turned off the water supply.

An inspection revealed that the boiler had come away from the wall together with the tiles, breaking the water flexi-hoses and electrical cable connection, that was plugged in to the wall socket. The weight of the tank caused the whole lot to crash to the floor. The electricity in contact with the water blew the electrics which in turn set off the house alarm, In this case the fact that the alarm alerted the security to investigate was helpful in minimising the damage to the property. An inspection of the boiler highlighted that the boiler was screwed into the tiles and cavity only and not into the wall behind the tiles!

There were some children due in the house the following day and one dare not imagine what would happen if the boiler fell on one of them.

The lesson is clear. If you have a boiler, check that it is retained securely to the wall and why not unplug non-essential electrical sockets and turn the water off if you plan on being away for some time.

A Rhyme for the Time

Now everything's gone down the pan, Deep in the brown and smelly. And even when you turn your dish, There's nothing on the Telly.

Headlines scream out tales of woe, And leave you feeling blue. Spinning round in circles, Thinking, Oh what shall we do??

Take a look around you, The beach, the sea, the sun. All it needs is YOU to smile, Go out and have some fun.

We'll chain the twats behind their desks, The ones that caused this trouble. Let's hope they sink without a trace, Now that they've burst their bubble.

Dave Wade @ Dońa Anna's Pasty Shack Via Park V. A friend of ours built a small shelf above the taps in the bathroom. When they returned to their house in DH after a few week's break they found that while they were away, the shelf had collapsed and while falling turned the bath tap on. You can imagine the size of their next water bill!! Insurance will not cover you for water loss.

appy New Year!

What a coincidence!

A chicken farmer went to a local bar, sat next to a woman and ordered a glass of champagne.

The woman perked up and said, 'How about that? I just ordered a glass of champagne, too!'

'What a coincidence' the farmer said. 'This is a special day for me. I am celebrating.'

This is a special day for me too, I am also celebrating,' said the woman.'

'What a coincidence!' said the farmer.

As they clinked glasses he added, 'What are you celebrating?'

'My husband and I have been trying to have a child, and today my gynaecologist told me that I am pregnant!'

'What a coincidence!' said the man. 'I'm a chicken farmer and for years all of my hens were infertile, but today they are all laying eggs.'

'That's great!' said the woman, 'How did your chickens become fertile?'

'I used a different cock,' he replied.

The woman smiled, clinked his glass and said, 'What a coincidence!'



More jokes to offend almost everyone.

An English woman was up in court for shoplifting when the judge asked her if she was ambidextrous?

'No,' she replied, 'Church of England!'

While she was married and living in England, Madonna said that she wanted to be a bit more British.

Now she is a single mother with three kids, all from different fathers and one of them is black.....JOB DONE!

Got an advent calendar from Wollies, but all the windows were boarded up and there was bugger-all inside!

Paddy takes his new wife home on their wedding night, she strips off and lies on the bed spread eagled and says, "Paddy you know what I want"

Paddy replies, "the whole feckin' bed by the look of it"

Congratulations to Barack Obama on becoming the next president of the U.S. He will be the first black man to go into the White House who was not carrying a mop.

Did you hear about the Englishman who joined the navy to see the world and spent five years in a submarine?

And of course the English student who stayed up all night studying for a blood test.

An Iraqi T- shirt-maker is doing well with his new line ofSaddam Hussien T shirts. Despite being a bit tight around the neck, they hang well.



Both Dream Hills urbs have been very quiet over the Christmas period, Dream Hills 2 being particularly so. Except for fast-food outlets, restaurants everywhere have been very, very quiet. Someone told me that Eduardo's restaurant in Villamartin only had 16 covers in one whole week! Very few firms have been holding Christmas parties. Also bookings for Christmas Day have been well down.

Out & About

A number of local bars and restaurants are doing 'recession' specials and these are worth checking-out.

A new MacDonalds with 'drive-thru' has now opened in Punta Prima. A large Chinese 'todo' has also opened in the vacated Mas y Mas building at the bottom of Los Altos, selling the usual bric-abrac together with a number of new lines such as shoes and clothes.

Well, John K defied the bookies and made 60! We went to his 60th bash at the R Bar on the 22nd, where a very enjoyable buffet was provided. Margaret did a great job in organising the surprise party.

I have been asked to thank Chris & Pam for organising the celebration at the book-swap on the 18th. Needless to say for some, the celebration continued on until late in the evening and although the following day was a particularly dull one, the number of people walking around wearing dark glasses was very curious.

There were four 80-year-old men playing golf. One complained that the hills were too high, another that the bunkers were too deep, and the third said that the holes were too wide. The fourth one said, 'Shut up! At least we're still on the right side of the grass!'



'So I was in the jungle and there was this monkey with a tin opener. I said "You don't need a tin opener to peel a banana." He says, "No, this is for the custard." Tommy Cooper



Kevin Welcomes you to the

R Bar

Via Park V

Tuesday - Fun Darts All Welcome Wed - Liver & Bacon or Bangers & Mash Quiz Night - Thursday Friday - Live Entertainment Saturday - Home-Made Curry Superb Sunday Roasts Food served daily 10.30'till Late Take-Away Service available "There are no strangers at R Bar, only friends who haven't met!" Tel: 608 010 759

Notes from La Casita

Happy New Year everyone.

Activities in La Casita have been reduced over the Christmas period, but most groups are starting their meetings again next week (from Monday 5th January). Fun Darts will recommence on Thursday 22nd January. If you are looking for something to do during the winter evenings, why not join in with some of the social activities in La Casita.

To those of you with New Year Resolutions to tone up and want to lose a few of those kilos that you have gained over Christmas, why not look at the classes available in La Casita? Viviana teaches Pilates on Tuesdays and Fridays. Marcia is running a fun tone-up class with a choice of times on Mondays and Fridays. Give her a call to sort out which group is suitable for you.

Check out the notice boards for times and the phone numbers to call. (MN)

The Actors' Studio

The Actors' Studio will be performing their first show 'Laughter and Tears' at the Virgen del Carmen Theatre in Torrevieja, at 8 p.m. on Tuesday 20th January. This is an original show of both comedy and drama sketches which is written and directed by the talented David Whitney. Some residents from Dream Hills will be taking part in what promises to be a hugely enjoyable show.

Tickets are only 5 euro each and are available at the Municipal Ticket Office in Torrevieja (open from 11 am till 1 pm) or at the door on the night.

All proceeds go to the Alzheimers Association in Torrevieja.

<u>SUMA</u>

You can now pay your 'suma' on a monthly basis. For more information go to the Suma office next to the Ayuntamiento in Playa Flamenca. Alternatively call 965 292 000 or www.suma.es

Old is when



.....your wife says, 'Lets go upstairs and make love,' and you answer 'Honey, I can't do both!'

....a sexy babe catches your fancy and your pacemaker open the garage door nearest to your car.

.....going bra-less pulls all the wrinkles out of your face.

.....things you buy now won't wear out.

.....an 'all-nighter' means not getting up to pee.

As an airplane is about to crash, a female passenger jumps up frantically and announces, "If I'm going to die, I want to die feeling like a woman." She removes all her clothing and asks, "Is there someone on this plane who is man enough to make me feel like a woman?" A man stands up, removes his shirt and says, "Here, iron this!".

Last Wish?

.....your friends compliment you on your new alligator shoes - and you're barefoot.

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