

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 24 1st of February 2009

Bienvenido and welcome to Issue 24 of the Dream Scene. Thanks to your financial support and the patronage of our advertisers, toner and paper costs are now being met during the winter months. Summer months can be a problem due to the larger number of copies printed.

This month's issue is a bumper 12 pages - never mind the quality, feel the width! I have started a new series called Spanish Vignettes which will join the History of Spain as a permanent feature. In the vignette series, starting on page 3, I hope to share observations relating to nuances, customs and features in relation to the wonderful Spanish and living in Spain. Each month will also include a brief report on some of our advertisers to help you understand what they have to offer and hopefully boost their trade as well. All the food outlets are now doing special offers with great value to be had.

I also include a list relating to the new postal addresses on page 8. Now there is already a lot of debate, confusion and unhappiness in relation to these changes. Frankly, the post office or 'who-ever' have made a 'dogs dinner' of it all. The list I re-produce is based on the information which the postal authorities have given to the town hall. If you are not happy with it, then it is down to you to sort your own postal address out. To say that the post office and the town hall are issuing conflicting instructions would be an understatement, so don't blame the messengers! The Playa Flamenca post office is now holding a bag of post with what they say are incorrect addresses. They know which urbanisations the post relates to, but they will now send that post for incineration rather than deliver it! This is absolutely scandalous!

Problems with the behaviour of youths on the urbanisation is becoming a real issue, particularly around the children's play area by La Casita. They prefer this area as it is not seen from the main road. These are generally not youths from this urbanisation although they do have a few 'camp-followers' both male and female from Dream Hills. They have caused considerable damage and nuisance, and downright intimidation of one owner, who has issued a *denuncia*. Both Stefan and Maribel have spoken to the police on a number of occasions and the police have increased their patrols, but they scatter as soon as the police arrive. Our security guards confronted the youths on at least 18 occasions in December alone and have also spoken to the police. The police have advised the guards that they are aware who the main culprits are and where they are from, but appear helpless to do anything about it. The police have now spoken to some of the relevant parents and have got promises from some of the offenders that they will not return to this urbanisation. but the police have stated that this is a problem now on a number of urbanisations, which is no comfort.

Next month's issue will begin a new year's subscription. If you would like to have the next 12 issues of Dream Scene delivered to your post box or to your door in either Dream Hills or Dream Hills 2, then I request a donation of 5 euro towards the printing costs. If you live abroad and would like to receive the Dream Scene by e-mail in PDF, I ask for a contribution of £5 sterling through PayPal towards the costs. Others may prefer to arrange to pay when they next visit Spain and that is fine by me. Several hundred free printed copies are available in our advertisers in Via Park 3, Via Park V and Los Balcones. I can be contacted at number 586 Dream Hills or on 966 798 847 - please respect *siesta* hours - or at Mick.dreamscene@gmail.com

Mick, Editor.



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WHAT'S UP?

The expression 'unseasonable weather' - a cliché - has brought plenty of snow throughout Spain in early January. The Barajas airport in Madrid was closed for several hours on the 9th due to heavy snow - the first time ever. Add to this the unofficial work-to-rule by the Iberia pilots and a rash of sick leave among the air traffic controllers....result - chaos! British Airways have now decided not to merge with Iberia, citing the weakness of sterling as one of the reasons.

Spain sold military material to Iran worth 36.4 million € at the beginning of 2008. Red faces all around!

The latest Padrón list in Torrevieja reveals that foreigners now make up 53.7% of the population. One in eight of the people who live in Torrevieja was born in Britain. 2009 begins with 104,700 foreign residents on the Padrón list in Torrevieja. There are 12,871 Britons, followed by 3,813 Germans and 3,393 Moroccans. Then in order come the Russians, Swedish, Colombians, Ukrainians, Norwegians, Bulgarians, Romanians, Ecuadorians, Belgians, Brazilians, Finnish, Italians, Argentineans, Irish, Chinese and Chileans.

The Spanish Government has revised its predictions for the economy downwards for the third time in a year, and now says that unemployment will reach nearly 16% this year. That would mean the loss of a further 730,000 jobs this year. It must be pointed out that other agencies feel that this prediction is over-optimistic.

The price of housing in Spain has to fall a further 30% for the market to adjust as needed, according to a study by the Confederation of Spanish Savings Banks, FUNCAS. The report defends the lack of credit coming from the banks, describing the closing of the tap as 'absolutely rational.' The study showed that there are currently more than a million flats for sale across the country and forecast that they will take three years to sell.

The economic slowdown resulted in a 20% fall in the number of hotel overnight stays on the Costa Blanca in 2008 according to an annual report by the bank La Caixa. They also reported that the unregulated sector of tourist apartments fell from 78.5% to 72.5% of the sector last year although I don't know how they could measure that. The Alicante region was nevertheless second in Spain for the number of overnight stays at 87.5 million, beaten only by Las Palmas with 89.4 million. Hotel reservations for the Alicante region are down 20% so far this year, but this could increase by Easter time.

Investigators of the Madoff *Ponzi* or pyramid scheme, which has defrauded \$50 billion worldwide, report that more than half the losses come from outside the U.S. Various Spanish clients of the Banco Santander, the largest bank in the Eurozone, have lost an estimated \$3.2 billion from the scheme. Outside of the U.S., Spain is believed to be the country most effected by the scandal. Santander have now surprised everybody by saying that they will refund around 500 million \$ to their private customers but will not refund the institutional investors.

Ryanair have announced four more new routes to Alicante for this summer. They will be from Bristol in the the U.K., Derry and Knock in Ireland, and Breslavia in Poland.

Some good news! Inflation in Spain fell to 0.8% at the end of January. For the first time in seven years it is lower than the Eurozone average although unemployment in Spain is now at 14.4%, double the European average. The average mortgage payment should now be down by approx. 156 euro per month due to the reduction in the Euribor rate to 2.622%.

More than 415,000 homes in the province of Alicante are suffering excessive noise, with most of them close to roads and the towns of Alicante, Villena, Montforte del Cid, Petrer, Torrevieja and Orihuela worst affected. Houses next to the A-31 and N-332 often suffer noise of more than 55 decibels, the limit fixed by the World Health Organisation. Those are the findings from the Valencia Statistics Institute, IVE, who say that 32.5% of the residents in the province suffer excessive noise from traffic, building or nearby pubs. The survey also shows that 30.7% of homes in the province also suffer from poor cleaning of their streets and 25.6% of home owners claim to suffer from crime in their neighbourhood.

The Alicante Chamber of Commerce has complained that there is too much protected land in the area and want to see more developments between Elche and Alicante. Just what we need - more concrete!

The ruling PSOE party are having a quiet chuckle at the moment. Having presented the opposition with a marvellous 'open goal' in relation to the dire economic situation, the PP are totally enmeshed in squabbles relating to internal spying allegations in Madrid between the various PP factions.

Continued on Page 3.

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Leónidas Vargas Vargas, a convicted Columbian drug trafficker with links to the Medallín cartel, was shot dead in his hospital bed in Madrid on the 8th of January. Vargas was released early from prison due to a lung condition. It has now been reported that his brother has just been shot dead in Calí, Columbia.

The 'Wheels of Justice' grind incredibly slowly in Spain. The Provincial Court in Almería has sent Mercedes R.A. to eight years in prison after she was found guilty of killing a 14 month old baby in an illegal nursery which she ran in her flat. The death occurred in December 1996! The sentence was reduced because of the time it has taken for the case to reach court. In another case, two youths were arrested in Los Montesinos with 300 ecstasy tablets in 2002. Out on bail since, they have only now been sentenced to three years in prison together with a fine of 6,000 euro plus court costs.

There has been a hell of a row brewing between the government and the judges during the past year. It now looks as if the judges will go out on strike for a day on February 18. There is now a backlog of more than two million cases nationally.

Russia and the Ukraine have had their annual spat concerning the Russian gas pipeline, while millions in Eastern Europe froze. This has illustrated to many European countries how tenuous their gas supplies are. Meanwhile the wily Spanish have been quietly building an undersea gas pipeline from Algeria. This has now been completed and tests are due to be carried out this March. The pipeline reaches the Spanish shores near Almeria with the gas then being piped to storage areas in Albacete.

Police seized 4.4 tons of cocaine recently in the northwestern region of Galicia and arrested a suspect on Monday. The drug bust took place in the city of Muxia, according to officials, who said the suspect belonged to the main drug smuggling group on the 'Coast of Death', the most treacherous part of the Galician coast.

In the Picassent jail in Valencia, over 300 prisoners were treated to a performance by a stripper as part of the January Christmas celebrations. The stripper, who apparently performed for free, covered her naked body with condensed milk and walked among the inmates allowing them to 'rub up' against her. The prison officers' union objected, as many of the audience were jailed for sexual and domestic violence offences.

A couple in Córdoba have been sent to prison for a year for keeping their daughter from attending school on a regular basis. Although the child was a keen student, the parents kept making excuses for her non-attendance and were aggressive when confronted by the school staff.

Saturday the 17th of January saw the feast of San Antón, the patron saint of animals. There have been long queues of pets and their owners outside the Madrid church of the same name waiting for their animals to be blessed.

See <http://video.publico.es/videos/0/29604/1/recent> for video of the pets and parades. The day also saw long queues of the faithful buying three 'saintly' bread rolls, which tradition says two of which must be eaten during the day. The last roll is put aside with a coin for a year, a guarantee of future work and health. In Mijas in Málaga the date has another tradition. Single women throw stones at the genitals of the statue of San Antón Abad in the belief this will bring them a boyfriend or husband the following year. This year some 50 women took part in the tradition as the priest, probably wearing a 'cricket box,' asked the ladies to be careful with their stone-throwing and not to damage anything! One would also hope that once they had a boyfriend that they would not continue the practice - just to keep their hand in!

The Spanish sports paper *Marca* (a daily sports newspaper!) claimed that the chairman of Real Madrid, Ramón Calderón, rigged the voting at the assembly in December by placing people without voting rights (including his son and brother) at the meeting. Although not authorised to do so, they subsequently voted when the club's accounts and budgets for the year were approved. After pressure from the board, the chairman has now resigned.

Most 'ciggies' have gone up by about 15 cents a pack in the last month.

Spanish ADSL broadband is now recognised as the most expensive and slowest in Europe. New ADSL connections are down by 40% in Spain on the previous year, which is a very illuminating statistic.

They are at it again in Murcia! The prosecutor in Murcia Provincial Court is calling for a 15 year prison sentence and a 12,000 € compensation payment from a man who tried to kill his wife as she would not help him to wash the car. The couple had friends with them at the time, and the wife said she would rather play cards. The husband then went to get his shotgun which had been a present from his father in law and fired a shot, which missed his wife. A neighbour called the police.

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Spanish Vignettes - *A Royal Romance.*

With St. Valentine's Day approaching - Feb 14, it is probably appropriate to share on a few thoughts in relation to royal matters of the heart. No! I'm not referring to the Windsors - that dysfunctional and badly behaved family, which has kept many a divorce lawyer in Rollexs. I refer to the House of Bourbon, the Spanish royal family and more specifically to Prince Felipe.

Felipe Juan Pablo Alfonso, is the third child and first son of King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain. His birth, after that of his two sisters, ensured a male successor to the Spanish throne, and as he is holder of the title Prince Of Asturias, he is first in the line of succession. A keen sportsman, the 6'6" prince featured in the Spanish sailing team which came sixth at the Barcelona Olympics in 1992..

Educated in Ontario, Canada at the Autonomous University of Madrid and Georgetown University in Washington D.C., Felipe showed himself to be intellectually superior to the normal dumb 'run-of-the-mill' European royals. Amongst his academic achievements are a degree in Law, several courses in Economics and a Master's Degree in Foreign Relations.

As one would expect his romantic 'relations' were of great interest to the Spanish public and media as he is 'the man who would be king'. His first serious romance was with Isabel Sartorius, a beautiful green-eyed, blond young aristocrat from a sophisticated and cosmopolitan background which he met in 1989. Three years his senior, Isabel charmed both the public and press, but unfortunately the king and queen were very opposed to a permanent union. The press linked some friends of her mother's to allegations of cocaine smuggling, although no proof was offered. Also, a house rule among the Spanish Borbons stated that if anyone wishes to marry a commoner they must be prepared to renounce the throne. This rule apparently stemmed from a royal ordinance made by Charles III of Spain in the 18th century, but no one was sure if anyone would take notice of it. Either way, the media pressure on Isabel was intense and in an interview with the Spanish daily *El Mundo* in 1993, she stated that the relationship was finished but gave no reason.

The Prince's next high-profile romance was with Eva Sannum, a beautiful and intelligent Norwegian model who spoke six foreign languages. Although she was introduced to him in 1997 by Crown Prince Haakon of Norway, it was not until two years later that the romance started to blossom. Once again Felipe's parents were not in favour of the union, but importantly neither were the public. To them they wanted the future Queen to be Spanish or at least to look Spanish! A blond blue-eyed six-foot Scandanavian beauty just did not 'cut the mustard.' The press were also hostile to Eva describing her as a 'second class model who specialised in lingerie,' and whose background disqualified her from royal status. One particularly vehement opponent, a biographer of King Juan Carlos, Jose Luis de Vilallonga, wrote that he would 'consider a marriage that puts us on the same level as the British to be a grave error' and that it 'would make me consider the advantages of a republic!'. Finally in December 2001, the Prince surprised everybody by announcing that they had come to a mutual agreement to end the relationship.

Letizia Ortiz was born in Oviedo in Asturias in 1972. Her mother was a nurse and active trade unionist; her father the founder and director of a local radio station. Letizia had a normal middle-class upbringing, going to state school and taking ballet classes three times a week. This slim and attractive lady then studied journalism at the Complutense University in Madrid. After graduating, she spent a year as a journalist in her home town of Oviedo before enrolling for a Master's Degree in radio and TV journalism. In 1998 she married Alonso Guerrero Pérez, a writer and high-school teacher (hers!) after a ten year courtship! The marriage was dissolved a mere year later. After getting her Master's, she went off to Mexico for a year to study for a doctorate in Guadalajara. She never finished her doctorate, returning back to Spain to work in TV, first on the Bloomberg financial channel, then CNN+ and after a year she was presenting the main weekly current affairs programme on the state owned TVE. She reported from Washington on the 2000 US presidential elections, she broadcast live from Ground Zero after the attacks; in 2002 she covered the Prestige oil spill and reported from Bagdad after the US led invasion. Her reporting won her a best young

Continued on Page 4

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Electricity - Urban Myth

There is a myth going around that if you signed-up with Iberdrola in December, you would be spared a 40% increase in your bill this year. It is not true! If you have signed-up it was for something else. Electricity prices went up by 3.6% in January and there is another rise scheduled for the summer. New surcharges were also introduced for those who use above average amounts of electricity. The power companies were not able to issue proper monthly bills in December, so they took estimated readings - often 30% to 50% lower than normal. Correct bills were then issued in January, which of course appeared abnormally high. At least, that's the power company's story!

A Royal Romance Continued from Page 4.



journalist award and by 2003 she was doing the most prized screen job in Spanish television journalism, presenting TVE's main evening news bulletin. Friendly, intelligent, discreet, professional - and very ambitious, she became extremely well known to the Spanish public.

But at this stage, she and Prince Felipe were deeply involved for at least a year and neither the public nor the press knew anything about the romance between two of the best known people in Spain! After the previous media intrusions in his personal life, the Prince, together with the help of a few royal aides, devised an elaborate plan of concealment and deception, code-named *Operación Silenzio*, which succeeded in keeping their relationship completely confidential. Once again the King and Queen were said to have objected to Felipe's plan to marry Letizia but relented only after he threatened to give up his succession to the throne.

On November 1 2003, Felipe announced the engagement, but mindful of the hounding that the media would undoubtedly subject his 'squeeze' to, moved her into a wing of the Zarzuela Palace straight away. As her previous marriage involved only a civil ceremony, the Roman Catholic Church regarded it as legally but not sacramentally valid and therefore did not require an annulment before her Catholic marriage to the Prince. The majority of the public were positive towards the union believing that Letizia Ortiz would give a modern image to a royal family which, although respected by most of the public, was generally considered somewhat 'outdated.'

The couple were married in May 2004 and more than 300,000 people went to Madrid for the occasion. More than 25 million watched the ceremony on Spanish TV. Since then they have had two lovely daughters and now, in line with its efforts to promote gender equality, the present government is planning to introduce legislation which would give women equality with men in the succession once Felipe ascends to the throne. Perhaps they will complete the trio with a son, soon anyway!

One Wish

A man walking along a Costa Blanca beach was deep in prayer. Suddenly the sky clouded above his head and, in a booming voice, the Lord said, "Because you have tried to be faithful to me in all ways, I will grant you one wish."

The man said, "Build a bridge to Africa so I can drive over anytime I want."

The Lord said, "Your request is very materialistic. Think of the enormous challenges for that kind of undertaking. The supports required to reach the bottom of the Mediterranean! The concrete and steel it would take! It will nearly exhaust several natural resources. I can do it, but it is hard for me to justify your desire for worldly things. Take a little more time and think of something that would honour and glorify me."

The man thought about it for a long time. Finally he said, "Lord, I wish that I could understand my wife. I want to know how she feels inside, what she's thinking when she gives me the silent treatment, why she cries, what she means when she says 'nothing's wrong,' and how I can make a woman truly happy."

The Lord replied, "You want two lanes or four on that bridge?"

And that's how the fight started!

I asked my wife to buy 2 special offer packs of Stella at 4 euro each. Instead, she bought a jar of cold cream for 7.95 euro. I told her the beer would make her look better at night And that's how the fight started.

Wife: 'What are you doing?'

Husband: 'Nothing'.

Wife: 'Nothing...? You've been reading our marriage certificate for an hour.'

Husband: 'I was looking for the expiry date.'And that's how the fight started.

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Bottom of the barrel jokes!

What do you call a 'gay' dinosaur?

A Megasorarse.

A Welshman dies and goes to heaven, he says to St Peter, "Look you. I am a good man, I give £1 to Red Nose, £1 to Children in Need and £1 to Cancer Research"

St Peter says "Wait here 'til I go and see what God says." 10 minutes later he returns and says "God says here's your 3 quid, now bugger off!"

What has got 172 teeth and hides the 'incredible hulk'?

Your trouser zipper.

Burtons Biscuits have brought out a limited edition of a family favourite to support Lewis Hamilton in the Defence of his Formula 1 World Title.....

Its called WOGON WHEELS. (Apologies, Lewis.)

It was the 'January Sales' at the cannibal supermarket.

There was some confusion at the butcher's counter over the prices. One customer complained, 'How come Frenchmen are only two coconuts, Irishmen are only four coconuts but Englishmen are ten coconuts?'

'Great God Matambe,' exclaimed the butcher, 'have you ever tried to clean one?'

I had sex with this girl I met last night at our local. It was inevitable it was going to happen, you could tell just by the chemistryRohypnol and chloroform.

Today 5000 Israeli troops rapidly entered Jordan !

Early reports say she is a bit sore but she will still soldier on ..

I thought inaugural balls was a nasty infectious disease until I discovered Barak Obama.

"Of course, the media frenzy over Barack Obama is just getting bigger and bigger. It is really contagious. In fact, now that Barack Obama's president, Michael Jackson said he's thinking about being black again."(Jay Leno)

Out & About

Taking a quick look at Via Park V, it is sad to see that The Cavern has finally closed its doors. Gordon and Jane will be missed. Between them they collected around 1,000 euro for various charities during the last 18 months. I believe that Butterflies in Via Park 3 have now closed, Madisons being closed for some time. There is no doubt that the recessions will unfortunately 'take many more scalps' before things settle down. However if you enjoy and rely on the convenience of the various outlets in the neighbouring Via Parks, they also rely on your patronage, particularly in these difficult times. It really is a case of 'Use it or lose it!'

The MasYMas in Punta Prima has now closed down. You will probably recall that another branch in Los Altos closed about two years ago. There has been some talk of Mercadona opening-up a new store in Los Balcones. This seems to be very close to the one in Los Altos, but you never know.

The Thursday outdoor market at Campoamor, which was unsuccessful, has been moved to the Calle Fuego area behind the *salud* at Cabo Roig for the winter months. It is planned to return it to the Campoamor area for the months June to September. The new location has not really been thought-out and it is a poor choice because of the lack of parking. The road widening of the N332 has reduced available spaces and trying to park near the *salud* on a Thursday morning is almost impossible.

Reported incorrectly in the local English press, Orihuela is to receive an extra 19 million euro allocation from the Valencian Government, in addition to the 46 million already promised. These extra funds come from central government with the aim of creating new jobs. Orihuela Costa is due to get a new sports centre in the Las Piscinas area, however this will not include an indoor swimming pool, which is badly needed. Most of us older farts, of which there are plenty in Orihuela Costa, would rather wallow in a warm pool during the winter months than play basketball!

Torreveija's massive new sports facilities, reported last month, will apparently be funded in full by central government as part of the measures to combat the recession.

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One for the ladies.

One day my housework-challenged husband decided to wash his sweat-shirt. Seconds after he stepped into the laundry room, he shouted to me, 'What setting do I use on the washing machine?'

'It depends,' I replied. 'What does it say on your shirt?'

He yelled back - 'Manchester United!'

And they say blondes are dumb...

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Latest News

The new hospital in Dénia is having major problems with waits of up to 14 hours. They have had so many complaints they have run out of complaint forms. Some patients have complained to both the Local Police and the Civil Guard.

There will be quick tests for the HIV virus in Spanish pharmacies in February as part of a pilot scheme in the Basque Country and Cataluña. 20 pharmacies will take part in each region, with the plan to extend the measure across the country. The test, which takes just a drop of blood, takes 15 minutes.

The Guardia Civil are investigating the Mayor of Lubrilla in Murcia and three others, including the town planning councillor, who are alleged to have accepted 'backhanders' amounting to more than 1.8 million €. When will it end?

La Caixa Bank plans to close 250 branches in the next 18 months.

CAM bank are now operating the scheme that will allow it to cut mortgage payments by 50% for those people who are out of work. CAM were one of the last of the banks to sign up to the 'Linea ICO-Moratoria Hipotecaria' scheme.

The new Corvera airport in Murcia is still scheduled for completion next year. It is due to be inaugurated by 2011 with 219 million euro being invested in the first phase. They expect 5.2 million passengers landing each year! Tall order?

Dad?

A Chelsea Pensioner was sitting on a bench in the park in King's Road, London.

A young man walked up to the bench and sat down. He had spiked hair that was all different colours -- green, red, orange, blue and yellow. The old soldier just stared!!

The young man said. "What's the matter, you old fart? Never done anything wild in your life?"

The old soldier replied, "Got drunk once and had sex with a parrot. I was just wondering if you were my son."

Cook the Books!

There is something new at **Doña Anna's Pasty Shack** that will appeal to everyone with an interest in food & cooking (& who hasn't?). At the back of their diner you will now find - **COOKS' CORNER**.

To get it off the ground Anna & Dave have brought in some of their collection of cookery books. You are invited to look through these at the diner, copy recipes & swap ideas with Anna, Dave or other *foodies* there. If you wish to take a book home for a few days no problem, just pay a euro fee (with the aim of then buying more books). In addition they would like to invite anyone who makes a food product, be it chutneys, jams, bakes cakes etc., that is of a saleable quality, to display them in the diner. Best be quick if you are interested as there is only limited space.

Now for those who want that (easy) luxury end of fine dining. With the *fashionistas* declaring that "Eating In is the new Eating Out", it could be Dine-In from Doña Anna's is the perfect answer. Dine-In is quality catering delivered to your door. From casual suppers, canapés & buffets to 4 course meals. All ready for you to simply re-heat/finish off or have Anna & Dave cooking up a storm in your kitchen. In these tighter times this is one way a group can enjoy quality food at very affordable prices. With a minimum 24 hours notice they can achieve minor miracles, major ones may require longer!!! Give them a call on 649 637 956 or 971 and see what they can do for you.

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Comfort Zone!

If you have not already done so, it is worth paying a visit to **Galadriel's** in Via Park V. When you enter you are immediately greeted by the welcoming colours, design and layout of the cafe/bistro. Of most importance there is always a warm verbal welcome by Rik, Kath and the staff. This simple courtesy is a fundamental of good hospitality but all too rare on the CB and indeed elsewhere.

A comfortable lounge area has been provided by the entrance with comfortable sofas and a coffee table. There is a rack with local and UK national newspapers for your perusal and a flat screen TV showing English programs. This area also incorporates three coin-operated internet facilities and a small library. Some people who want just a coffee and would rather not go to a pub, feel quite comfortable having a beverage in this environment. There is a glass display cabinet by the open kitchen which features a selection of their delicious home-made cakes which are guaranteed not to put on an ounce.....I wish!

The attention to detail and creativity is illustrated by the unique menus and delicious food. Even the simple burger is constructed with care and panache not done by 'blind man' as a recent burger I had at MacDonaldis was!

There is something in the menus to please all tastes, even the most discerning. Galadriel's (named after a wizard from Lord of the Rings) are now introducing a Wednesday afternoon quiz with Open-the-Box. Don't miss it!

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Evenings

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And Open-the-Box 3 pm

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PIRACY!

A December '08 survey by the Consumers' Association Which? Publication, has outlined the charges travellers can pay for a number of snack food and drink items on some airlines. See the table below.

The charges levied by the first four carriers are generally similar, except for the sparkling water. However it is the prices charged by Ryanair that are truly jaw-dropping. How can they possibly justify these extortionate prices? If Ryanair was a luxury carrier with smiling far-eastern beauties, perfumed hand towels and excellent service, then you could probably 'swallow' these prices. But Ryanair? You would probably be lucky to get some hairy-legged 'trolley dolly' from County Mayo with a scowl on her face! And what ever you do, do not ever, ever, pay in euros when they ask for sterling. When we paid for some snacks in euros on a Monarch flight last December we were charged a rate of 1.50 euro to the £! (I would expect Ryanair to start charging for toilet paper soon!)

	<i>Bmibaby</i>	<i>Easyjet</i>	<i>Flybe</i>	<i>Monarch</i>	<i>Ryanair</i>
Sandwich	£3.50	£3.50	£3.75	£3.50	£4.20
Pringles/s	£1.20	£1.50	£1.10	£1.25	£1.85
Coffee	£1.80	£1.80	£2.00	£1.80	£2.50
Water-50cl	£0.80	£1.50	£1.60	£0.80	£2.50
Red wine	£3.20	£3.20	£3.50	£3.25	£5.00
Totals	£10.50	£11.50	£11.95	£10.60	£16.05

Which? also conducted a comprehensive airline survey in July 2008. With regard to short-haul flights to and from Spain, Palmar, Jet2.com, EasyJet and Flybe were rated as the best airlines. XL Airways, First Choice Airways, My Travel Airways and Thomas Cook Airlines were rated as the worst. In terms of overall satisfaction on short-haul flights, BMI came 22nd, Monarch 31st and Ryanair 33rd.

You can see the full report at

<http://www.which.co.uk/whichholiday/index.jsp>

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New Postal Address System

The following list details the property numbers in Dream Hills in relation to the blue tiles, placed on walls in the main road.

This is information received from the town hall & postal authorities.

FROM 1 TO 11 - TILE 9

FROM 813 TO 886 - TILE 9

FROM 12 TO 65 - TILE 7

FROM 66 TO 169 - TILE 5

FROM 170 TO 221 - TILE 3

FROM 222 TO 320 - TILE 1

FROM 321 TO 407 - TILE 2

FROM 408 TO 509 - TILE 4

FROM 510 TO 588 - TILE 6

FROM 589 TO 676 - TILE 8

FROM 677 TO 812 - TILE 10

So, if your name was Joe Bloggs and you lived in property no. 586, your address would be -

Joe Bloggs,
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 Pta 586 Urb. Dream Hills,
 Orihuela Costa 03189

(Pta - puerta - means door)

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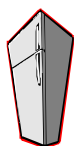
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The pound in your pocket.

Those of us who are on pensions or income in sterling have certainly taken a number of 'hits' over the last year. Sterling's slide has aroused considerable anxiety and hardship to all British expats living abroad. The heady days of 1.50 euro to the £ are now long gone and we are all wondering what sterling will do next? Will it increase or decrease against the euro? The answer I am afraid is - nobody knows! Whereas expats and holiday-makers are being hit hard by the pound's fall, sterling's weakness benefits British exporters, that is of course as long as you have something to export and that your foreign customers have sufficient liquidity to purchase your exports. A weak pound also encourages more British holiday-makers to holiday at home and attract more foreign tourists to Britain. Also, as imports are now much more expensive, the government hope it will encourage people to 'Buy British.' In other words, the sinking pound can be viewed as the healthy decline of a currency in need of devaluation - a positive step towards recovery.

The Sunday Times asked a number of banks to predict where they think sterling will be against the euro at the end of 2009 and their predictions are outlined in the chart below. OK! I know that after their performance during the last 12 to 18 months, the banks can hardly find their backsides with their own hands - but the predictions are interesting when you take into account their wide variance - from 1.08 to 1.37. Again, nobody really knows!

Forecaster	£ Against the Euro
HSBC	1.08 €
Barclays Wealth	1.37 €
Morgan Stanley	1.27 €
Merrill Lynch	1.22 €
UBS	1.16 €
Current Rate	1.13 €

Jim Rogers, the former investment partner of George Soros, the speculator who made \$1 billion from the collapse of sterling in 1992, said: 'I would urge you to sell any sterling you might have. It's finished. I hate to say it, but I would not put any money in the UK.' Strong words! But not all analysts agree with his view and so far, neither do the international credit rating agencies who measure country financial exposure and risk. First of all, many analysts believe that sterling has been

overpriced for too long. They argue that the sustainable value of a currency is the exchange rate that would equalise the prices of goods and services in two countries. According to the OECD (Organisation of European Cooperation & Development), sterling's purchasing-power parity against the euro is around €1.30. This suggests that sterling is now somewhat below its long term value against the euro.

Certainly the credit rating agencies, such as Standard & Poor's, still give Britain as a top rate triple A rating. However, the agency have now issued warnings to Spain, Ireland, Portugal, Greece and Italy, because of their deteriorating public finances. Their credit ratings could and probably will be downgraded as economic conditions worsen and will drive up the borrowing costs of these countries.

S&P said it had placed its triple A ratings for Spain's long-term foreign and local currency debt on 'credit watch with negative implications', which means the rating could shortly be downgraded, because of 'the significant challenges facing the Spanish economy as it traverses a period of very weak growth'. Spain's recession is now thought to last much longer than was first hoped, probably well into 2010 if not beyond. The financing of government debt in Spain (by 10-year bonds) is now almost a full percentage point more expensive than Germany's and this is likely to increase. (Sources: Financial Times, Economist & Sunday Times) Next month, if we have space we can take a look at the euro and ask whether the pound should join the euro or indeed will the euro last?

Banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies. Thomas Jefferson 1743-1826

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Would you 'Adam'nEve' it?

One day God and Adam were walking the garden. God told Adam that it was time to populate the Earth. "Adam, you can start by kissing Eve." Adam looks puzzled at God, "Lord, what is a kiss?". God explained, and then Adam took Eve behind the bush and kissed her.

A little while later, Adam returned with a big smile and said, "Lord! That was great! What's next?" "Adam, I now want you to caress Eve." Puzzled again he asks, "Lord, what is caress?" God explained, and then Adam took Eve behind the bush and caressed her.

A little while later, Adam returned with a big smile and said, "Lord that was even better than a kiss! What's next?" "Here is what gets the deed done. I now want you to make love to Eve." Puzzled yet again, "Lord, what is make love?" asked Adam. God explained, and then Adam took Eve behind the bush.

A few seconds later, Adam returned and asked, "Lord, what is a headache?"

The History of Spain. Part 4 - The Early Moorish Period.

Visigothic rule in Spain was a shambles and their contribution to Iberian culture, society, security, progress and wealth was negligible. Legend states that Count Julian of Cueta in North Africa helped the Moors to invade the peninsula in revenge for the rape of his daughter by King Roderick. However, in reality the Muslim invasion of the Iberian peninsula was the logical extension of a spectacular movement of conquest and expansion, which in the space of barely a century, after the death of the prophet Muhammas in 632, led to the creation of a vast Islamic empire. After they conquered North Africa, the peninsula was a natural progression.

Although there was a half-hearted attempt by the Moors to invade in 675 AD (they never got off the boats), Musa, the Muslim governor of North Africa, sent a force of 400 Moors in 710 AD to reconnoitre the south coast. They brought back valuable information, some booty and 'women of rare beauty.' In 711 AD, Musa ordered the Arab governor of Tangier, Tariq ibn Zihad, to cross the straits and invade southern Spain.

'You must know how the Grecian maidens, as handsome as houris, their necks glittering with innumerable pearls and jewels, their bodies clothed with tunics of costly silks and sprinkled with gold, are awaiting your arrival, reclining on soft couches in the sumptuous palaces of crowned lords and princes.' It was with these words that Tariq inspired his invading force of 10,000 no-doubt 'horny' men, mostly comprised of Berbers.

In April 711 they landed near the limestone mass they called *jabal-tariq* (Tariq's rock), which is the origin of the name Gibraltar. King Roderick was in the far north when the invasion occurred and rushed south with an army of questionable loyalty to do battle with the Moors. Both forces met near the Guadalete River in southwestern Andalucía. During the battle, a large number of Roderick's army defected to the other side which now included the bishop of Sevilla, together with the supporters of Achila, the main Visigoth opposition to Roderick. Rapidly, Roderick and what remained of his army were annihilated. One of Roderick's bodyguards, obviously not a very effective one, together with remnants of the mangled Visigothic army, managed to escape to Asturias in the north. His name was Pelayo and together with a handful of stragglers, they joined tough local defenders and formed the nucleus of the Christian Reconquest.

After his victory, Tariq gave orders that a large group of prisoners be cut to pieces and their flesh boiled in cauldrons. The remainder of the Visigoths were released and told to spread the word of Moorish methods. As the Moors advanced, if they met any armed opposition from a town or city, all the men were slaughtered and the women and children were taken into slavery. If there was no opposition there were no killings. Some Visigoth notables sought to preserve their power and status by immediately coming to terms with the Muslims. One such lord was Theodemir of Orihuela who was guaranteed safety and freedom of worship in return for a pledge of loyalty, an annual tribute of one dinar per head and quantities of wheat, barley, grape juice, vinegar, honey and oil. Initially the Moors allowed freedom of worship to both Jews and Christians considering them to be 'People of the Book.' The oppressed classes such as the Jews and the serfs were pleased with the demise of the Visigoths, the former having suffered terribly under several cruel regimes. Encouraged by the ease with which the conquest was proceeding, Musa himself invaded in 712 with another army and commented on the 'effeminacy of the Goth princes.' Thirty years later, St. Boniface blamed the Goths quick downfall on their 'moral degeneracy and homosexual practices.'

After just two years, both Tariq and Musa returned to Damascus, then the power centre of the Muslim world, with phenomenal treasures and entourage of captured Spanish women. (The Moors brought no women with them from Africa.) However, bad timing was their undoing and after becoming unwittingly involved in a power struggle following the caliph's death, they spent the remainder of their lives in a filthy Arab prison.

Most of the indigenous population believed that the Moors would load up with booty and depart back to Africa and the Middle East. However this was not the case. Surprising themselves, and historians subsequently, the Moors conquered most of Spain in just seven years, except for a small area in the north and north west. Parallels are often drawn by historians between the rapid demise of the Visigoth kingdom and the equally dramatic fall of Anglo-Saxon England to the Normans in 1066. The Moors then crossed the Pyrenees, but were defeated by Charles Martel of the Franks near Poitiers in a number of battles around 733, finally returning to the peninsula in 759. The Moors now referred to their conquered areas in the peninsula as *al-Andalus*.

It would be a mistake to think that the Moors were a united or homogenous force. They consisted of a smaller Arab population and a much larger Berber element from the Maghreb, a large non-Arab region of North Africa. The Arab element consisted of a number of rival tribes, with the two leading factions being the Yemenites and the Kaishites. However the Arabs treated their Muslim brothers - the Berbers, as second class citizens and the settlement of the peninsula was divided along tribal or ethnic lines. Whereas the Arab minority settled mainly in the major towns such as Córdoba, Seville and Zaragoza and in the richer agricultural lands, the Berbers were relegated to the central *meseta* and poorer regions. This would in due course lead to major conflict amongst the Moors.

More next month.

Restaurant Reviews - Good Lunches

Good news for those of us that enjoy a good meal out, but like most of us, are conscious of what we spend at the present time. Two venues, previously closed at lunchtimes, have now re-opened their doors, offering set-price lunch menus with good quality food at excellent prices.

For those who prefer English-style food with a bit of style, visit *Market Street* in San Miguel de Salinas. At an all-inclusive price of 14 euro, you will receive fresh bread & dip, a refreshing salad and a selection of starters, main courses and desserts; the choices outlined on a blackboard in English. The menu varies slightly each day. We had a choice of potato skins with dips (generous portion), homemade soup & homemade pate, fried-breaded-brie with onion chutney or Caesar salad for starters. The main courses offered were a large baked ham-hock on a bed of mash, lightly breaded halibut on a pea coulis, or vegetable tart – all served with a bowl of homemade chips (average) and some excellent fresh vegetables – broccoli, cauliflower, carrots and courgettes. Desserts included bread & butter pudding and custard, profiteroles with cream and chocolate brandy sauce, raspberry tart and julienne of fresh fruit with sorbet or ice-cream.

All the food is beautifully presented. A half bottle of wine p.p. or a drink is included in the price. The staff are pleasant and efficient and there are smoking and non-smoking areas. The décor could be described as ‘minimalist’ at best. They are open in the evenings for a la carte, but it is rather pricey. The lunchtime menu is available Monday to Friday only, and they have a set price Sunday lunch. *Market Street* (966 723 965) is on Calle Calvario and can be reached by following the San Miguel by-pass and it is just off the roundabout. Wednesday is market day and parking can be very difficult.

El Refugio 11 is a pleasant Spanish restaurant (reviewed last year), which has not opened at lunchtimes since last summer. Thankfully, they are now back into the swing of things with the standard remaining quite high. Rosa - one of the owners, works the ‘front of house’ with charm and efficiency and the menu, which does not vary a lot, is still good value and delicious at 10 euro p.p. This includes fresh bread with alioli, tomato and an excellent salad. Starters usually include either a paella or Spanish stew, a soup and an egg dish. Mains usually include a large steak escalope, pork chops, swordfish or lightly battered sole fillet served with chips and the usual stewed Spanish veg. There is also a good selection of homemade desserts – tarte de chocolate being one of the more indulgent! The interior of the restaurant is delightful with a large range of farm knick-knacks. Unfortunately most of the stuffed animals have been removed - *mala suerte!* It helps to have a little Spanish, if only to understand the chalkboard lunchtime menu. This menu is served only Monday to Friday. *El Refugio 11* also offer a set price evening menu (in English) at only 18 euro per head. This includes suckling pig, a reasonable sized steak or fish together with starters, desserts and wine. This restaurant is very popular with expats of various nationalities but mainly the British. *El Refugio* is situated on Calle Bigastro 14 in Torre Vieja, 965 714 637.

Hey! How are ye?

A film crew was on location deep in the Nevada desert. One day an old Indian went up to the director and said, "Tomorrow rain." The next day it rained. A week later, the Indian went up to the director and said, "Tomorrow storm." The next day there was a hailstorm.

"This Indian is incredible," said the director. He told his secretary to hire the Indian to predict the weather. However, after several successful predictions, the old Indian didn't show up for two weeks. Finally the director sent for him. "I have to shoot a big outdoor scene tomorrow," said the director, "and I'm depending on you. What will the weather be like?" The Indian shrugged his shoulders. "Don't know," he said. "Radio broken."



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SMILE!

"Smiling is infectious, you catch it just like flu

When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too

I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin

When he smiled I realised I'd passed it on to him

I thought about that smile, then realised its worth

A single smile like mine could travel round the earth

So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected

Let's start an epidemic and get the world infected"

(Anon - submitted by Wendie Ingram.)

Tea or Coffee?

After a British Airways flight reached its cruising altitude, the captain came on air and announced.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is your captain. Welcome to Flight 293 from London Heathrow, flying nonstop to Toronto. The weather ahead of us today is good, so sit back, relax and enjoy OH MY GOD."

Silence followed.....!

Some moments later the captain came back on the intercom.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I'm sorry if I scared you. While I was talking to you, a flight attendant accidentally spilled a cup of coffee in my lap." then added "You should see the front of my trousers."

Towards the front, an Irish passenger shouted.....

"Jaysus!! You should see the back of mine !!!

Padron - Moving Goalposts!

In yet another change, the Orihuela town hall has now said that as one is obliged to spend more than six months in the municipality to gain the *padron*, then you must also possess *residencia*. A word to the wise - if you do not have *residencia*, tell them you have applied for it.

Which brings us on to the SIP or health card.

Expats who are under 65 and who for whatever reason do not qualify for the card have been waiting for the outcome of negotiations between the UK Gov and the Valencian health authorities. The Foreign & Commonwealth Office has outlined the position to date in its web-site <http://ukinspain.fco.gov.uk/en/> Click on 'Healthcare in Valencia' for detailed information. (Part quote) - 'On January 15th, all those already in receipt of free healthcare will have their cover extended indefinitely until the new scheme is ready. You will not have to do anything to renew your SIP card as it will be updated automatically on the date your cover would have originally ended. The Valencian Health Agency will send out letters to all those affected by the changes when the new monthly quota scheme is ready but they have not yet finalised a date for this. The letter will explain different ways to access healthcare in Valencia.'(Unquote). For those of you who do not have access to the net, I will print-out some copies of the whole text and they can be collected at the book-swap next Thursday.

Mean Cow!

An elderly man is on his deathbed, although he can feel the end is near, his senses are suddenly aroused by a wonderful aroma. He realises his loving wife of 60 years is baking his favourite cakes. He finds the strength to drag his tired body to the kitchen and as his frail withered hand reaches up to the table he suddenly feels the whack of a wooden spoon as his wife barks "Bugger off, they're for the funeral!"

THE ACTORS' STUDIO (acting for Alzheimer's).

Our local amateur dramatics group, 'The Actors' Studio,' performed its first evening of comedy and dramatic sketches to a packed audience at the Virgen del Carmen Theatre, Torrevieja, on the evening of the 20th of January .

The show's title was 'Laughter and Tears' and director and writer, the erudite David Whitney, has the ability to elicit both. The actors and back stage staff formed the perfect team, bringing David's words to life. We laughed, guffawed and gasped at an acid-tongued holiday rep, two gossipy bitches, a *goth* waitress, a ghastly blind-date, a terrifying learner driver, a sexy salsa instructor and two professional mourners who showed neither respect or reverence. And who was that scary Irish bingo lady? Tears of hilarity were swiftly followed by tears of sadness when we listened to two beautiful monologues on the topic of loss. In the end we were feeling both entertained and inspired.

All proceeds will go to support the Alzheimer's Association in Torrevieja. Contributions are still coming-in so we will publicise the total raised next month. 'The Actors' Studio' seeks new members with any of the following creative interests - acting, costume making, hair & make-up, prop-making, lighting, sound and public relations. Speak to Joyce, Jo, Pam or Matias (Dream Hills residents) or Sue, who runs All Bar Sue, or ring David on 966 704 097 if you are interested in joining us. (Joyce Sinclair)

The editor can be contacted at mick.dreamscene@gmail.com or at No. 586 Dream Hills.

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