

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 28

1st of June 2009

SEE COUPON ON PAGE 7

Bienvenido and welcome to the June issue.

I had planned to keep this issue to ten pages, but like Topsy, it just grew and ...etc. Probably comes from having been born too close to the Blarney Stone.

In this issue you will find a flyer for the up and coming Via Park V Fun Fayre on the 13th. There will be charity stalls, Excite FM Radio Road Show and lots of organised fun events to suit all tastes.

Included in this issue is an informative essay from young James Macbeth which gives us a young person's perspective of their first few weeks in Spain. This appears on page 4.

There are also two historical articles, an original cartoon from Angela, general info and of course the usual irreverent and rude humour. We are also fortunate to be able to share some of the wise and philosophical thoughts of the Oracle Of Dream Hills on Page 10. I hope you enjoy the issue. Let me know if you have any suggestions.

Dream Hills had its AGM in early May. It was certainly a quieter affair than normal, some said boring! Either way, it was a welcome change from the usual circus. Best of luck to the president and committee for the coming year.

With the European elections due shortly, the main political parties here in Spain have declared 'open season' on each other. Various charges of corruption are being batted to and fro. It is all very entertaining. Barcelona's win in the European Cup was interesting locally. Many Spanish in our area are Real Madrid supporters and see the Catalans as non-Spanish. Hence many cheered for Manchester United.

We have seen a number of incorrectly addressed letter to houses in Dream Hills during the last month. One of the most common errors has been with computer generated addresses. The line - Calle Lagunas de Ruidera (with a space and a number) has been too long for some computer fields, particularly those from the UK Gov departments. This has meant that a lot of addresses have been garbled and mail not delivered correctly. It might be an idea to shorten the line to C\Lagunas de Ruidera6 (or what ever number is your zone).

Pat Farnaby tells me that he is looking at putting the message board back on line again. Thanks to Bill and Kath for the donation of printing paper and cash towards the DS and to Pat and Alan for the computer manuals. Please support our advertisers.

Speak to you soon. Mick, Editor.

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I may be on the committee, but you still can't claim
for a second home!

WHAT'S UP?

Tourist numbers from the UK were down 18% for the first four months of this year, while German numbers were down by 10%. The overall figure for foreign tourists was down 12% for the period.

Recession! What recession? Barcelona won the Champions league final by beating Man U, thereby achieving the treble. The club will now have to pay the players 39 million € in bonuses. The Champions league bonus element alone comes to 16 million. The club normally arranges insurance to cover these payments but have not done so this year. They estimate that the extra revenue generated by reaching the final alone is as much as 37 million €. In another story, the police have asked to see the accounts of Real Madrid.

Even though the Spanish savings' banks are deep 'in the mire', the Caja Madrid savings' bank has approved the purchase of a 510,717 € armoured BMW car for its Chairman, Miguel Blesa. I am sure the customers are delighted with this. As will the customers of The Caja Sur savings bank, owned by the Catholic Church in Spain, which has been fined 300,000 € for breaking money laundering laws. None of the Spanish savings banks have published first quarterly figures this year, which explains a lot. One, Caja Madrid, has stopped paying interest on two of its funds.

Despite the crisis, the number of civil servants in Spain increased by 156,300 last year. In the first quarter of this year, the number increased by 16,300. This will do nothing to combat the usual bureaucratic inefficiency.

No doubt you are all replete after 'dining' on all the scandals involving MP's expenses in the UK. It is nice to see that the Spanish politicians are also capable of 'troughing' on a grand scale. The P.P. President of the Canary Island regional government spent more than 300,000 € on works to modernise his official residence in Las Palmas, while at the same time he claiming an 11,548 € hotel bill for where he stayed while the work was carried out. Costs for materials were an additional 75,594 €. I can't wait until details of MEP's expenses are published, if ever!

The Euribor rate, used to set mortgage rates in Spain, ended in May at 1.64%, which means that those who are repaying a 150,000 € mortgage will be 3,300 € better off over the year.

The Valencia government's councillor for education has announced plans to build more than 500 new schools in the next five years, with more than 1.7 billion € to be invested in building primary and secondary schools. He expects the plan to create 50,000 new jobs in the construction sector.

According to Standard and Poor's, the international credit agency, the total debt of the regional governments and town halls across Spain has soared by 62% this year and is now estimated to reach around 120 billion by the end of this year.

The Ministry for Industry has imposed the largest fine ever seen in Spain on a nuclear plant for the escape of radioactive particles which were detected from the Ascó plant near Tarragona between 2007 and 2008. The fine is 15.4 million €. The incident happened in November 2007, but was not reported until April 2008.

You may have thought from personal experience that the Spanish were immune to noise, but a middle age man killed his neighbour in Valencia City, in the early hours of Sunday, allegedly because of the volume of the music at a party. The victim was related to the assailant and died instantly from a stab wound to the heart. (I must confess that I felt like doing that a few times to that idiot Eamon Holmes on Sky News. Should I seek medical help or a dagger?)

FACUA, the Spanish consumer association, (not to be confused with FACUALL!) has denounced six airlines for sending complaining customers to expensive 807 phone lines. They note that in some cases, such as Easyjet, complaints by fax, letter or email are not accepted. FACUA has denounced the airlines to the National Consumer Institute. Other airlines named are Air Europa, Spanair, Iberia, Vueling and Ryan Air.

After being hauled-up for a minor traffic offence in Torremolinos, a driver tried to bribe the policeman with the contents of his wallet (around 900 euro). The policeman charged him with bribery and the man has now received a fine of 7,200 euro.

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The morning after pill is to be made available at pharmacies in Spain without prescription within the next three months at a cost of €20 each. Known as 'the emergency pill,' it is currently only available at family planning centres. The brands are known as Norlevo and Postinor, and have been available on prescription since 2001. Several regions have criticized the initiative and in Madrid it will not be available 'over the counter.' In 2007 there were more than 6,000 abortions on girls under 18 and 500 on girls under 15. The new abortion law is also prompting some debate.

A 56 year old British man, resident in Marbella, was arrested in Granada province for driving his Ferrari California at 271 kms per hour. This was 151 kms above the legal limit. I doubt if he will have any problem paying the fine though; the car costs around \$190,000.

A 25-year-old Mallorcan woman won 126 million euro on the Euromillions Lottery. Spain's newest millionaire was in bed with the 'flu all weekend and was completely unaware of her win. Although still ill, she decided to go back into work on Monday for fear of losing her job in the current economic crisis. It was on checking her emails at work that she found one message informing her of her life-changing win. (I bet the boyfriend who dumped her last month is a tad pissed!)

The Guardia Civil have stated that they cannot cope with the volume of drugs being transported into the country from Morocco via the Cadiz province. The Guadalquivir, Guadalete and Guadairo rivers are being used by the traffickers because they are close to Morocco, highly navigable, and give good cover with the reeds on the banks. The Civil Guard say they are suffering from a lack of resources, and in a single night they often make as many as three seizures. Recent hauls give an indication of the amounts involved, 1,650 kilos on April 8, 1,200 on the 15th, 2000 on the 17th, 961 on the 19th, 1,100 on the 22nd, 1,200 on the 23rd, 3,150 on the 28th, 3,200 on the 29th. 40% of the cannabis destined for Spain is thought to come through this route.

The British Insurance company which specialises in the travel insurance for the over 50's, 50plus Insurance, has warned about the risk of travelling to Spain. The company is telling potential travellers of the increased risk of violent robbery and theft, a result of the large increase in unemployment. The statement notes that the number of robberies is 1,123.19 for every 100,000 residents, compared to just 183.83 in Britain.

Whereas the Spanish Navy quickly and efficiently captured two gangs of Somali pirates in early May, the Spanish judicial authorities have again demonstrated their 'feet of clay' by ordering the release of the 14 pirates. Why? Because the prosecutors' office withdrew its accusations against the pirates! The Spanish Defence Ministry have now put pressure on the judiciary and asked for the pirates to be handed over to the Kenyan authorities for trial.

A man in his late 30s has been arrested for posing as a Guardia Civil officer and trying to extort a man he caught in *flagrante delicto* (if you come from Manchester, this means 'having nookie') with his partner in the back of his car at a service station between Mijas and Estepona. It appears that the fraudster, who has a police record for robbery and assault among other offences, approached the couple's vehicle and told the man that he could be sent to prison for indecent exposure, but could avoid this if he paid the 'officer' a fine of 5,000 euros. The victim, who can't have been the sharpest knife in the drawer, tried to get a loan from the bank to pay the fine and when asked what the money was for, explained his predicament; the bank clerk immediately suspected foul play and told him to report it to the Guardia.

The divorce rate in Spain has eased due to the recession. According to the General Council of the Judicial Branch, in 2008, 131,060 marriages were dissolved, compared to 141,304 the year before. Some 93 percent, or 121,814, were divorces and 47,980 of those cases were contested. A divorce can cost a minimum of 1,800 euros in Spain and the cost generally doubles, at least, if it is contested.

National Police in Córdoba have rescued a six year old boy who had been left home alone in a flat in the city for the past two weeks. The boy's Moroccan parents may have left the country. It seems over recent days the abandoned child had been climbing out of a window of the flat and visiting a nearby bar where they had been giving him some food, although he always returned home alone after eating. The mother has now returned and been arrested.

The whole of the UK is still in shock following the split-up of that publicity shy couple, the Prices. Apparently once Peter Andre discovered that the Pope had been in Jordan, he decided enough was enough. Rumour has it that Katie (Jordan) is now dating one of the Schumachers, who have both made a career of rear-ending Jordans. Meanwhile Madonna has asked for 'first dibs' on Harvey.

Which Jones?

A young man moves to a village in Wales and gets talking to an old man from the village. He asks the old man what his name is; the old man gets very irate at this point and says: "See that row of houses over there? I built them all, but do they call me Jones the House Builder? Do they hell!"
 "See those power lines over there? I ran them all in and built the pylons, but do they call me Jones the Lineman? Do they hell!"
 "See those bridges over that river? I built them all, but do they call me Jones the Bridge Builder? Do they hell!"
 "See the straight and robust road that leads to and from the village? I built that but do they call me Jones the Civil Engineer? Do they hell!"
 But, I shag one sheep and

Close Shave

A guy walked into a barber shop, sat on the chair and said, "I'll have a shave and a shoe shine."
 The barber began to lather his face and sharpen the old straight edge while a woman with the biggest, firmest, most beautiful breasts that he had ever seen, knelt down and began to shine his shoes.
 The guy said, "Young lady, you and I should go and spend some time making love in a hotel room."
 She replied, "I'm married and my husband wouldn't like that."
 The guy replied, "Tell him you're working overtime and I'll pay you the difference."
 She said, "You tell him. He's shaving you."

The Big Move. By James Macbeth, aged 12.

For kids moving to Spain it can be a very difficult time in your life but you can make sure that this turns in to a dream move. Its very difficult leaving the U.K. and leaving behind your friends and family. When I moved to Spain I was only 8 years old. I had made some very good friends at school in England and it was tough having to leave them behind when we moved. Mum and Dad explained to me why they wanted to move to Spain and said they would do their best to make sure that my own life in Spain would be good fun.

Week 1

When we arrived in Spain it was really scary. This first week it was all about finding our way around and looking for the best places to go, also it was the time to go out and try to find some new friends. It was hard to meet new friends because I had not started school yet, but I met some nice kids around where we lived.

Week 2

This was the time to try to become more streetwise. The kids that I first met were ok but now was the time to find out if they were going to be proper friends and if they were really nice people. I started to ask them about school. At first they told me that in some of the classes in Spanish school there was nearly 85 percent British kids. This was really surprising because I thought that there would be more Spanish kids in the school. I wasn't sure whether this was a good thing or a bad thing.

Week 3

This was the toughest week so far. My Mum and Dad started to look for a school for me. This was pretty scary looking at the different schools and imagining myself going to them. It was only then that I realised that I was going to have to learn to speak Spanish and maybe how difficult it was going to be. Sure, I expected to have to learn the basics but it was now that I realised that I had to learn a lot more than that. I thought I would be able to learn the basics before going to school so that I would be able to speak Spanish a little bit but I then realised that that was not the case.

Week 4

In the fourth week I started to feel really homesick, so what I did was I spoke to other kids and adults and asked them how they felt when they first moved over. This helped a lot because they told me that feeling homesick was normal but they said I would get through it and feel better when I had been in Spain a bit longer. They told me that I should start to interact more with Spanish kids and adults and that would make me feel more comfortable, this was difficult though, there was hardly any Spanish people about. I still felt really homesick and I missed my Nan and Grandads and my uncles and aunts a lot.

When I first started school, I was excited and scared at the same time. It wasn't too bad because the school that I went to was the same school as my cousin, so at least I knew somebody else at the school. It was exciting because I wanted to make new friends so that I would have things to do after school and at the weekends. They also helped me with my Spanish and other things, that's what friends are for. They are there to get you back up when you're feeling down. It is sometimes difficult for you when you make a good friend and next thing you know they are going back to the U.K. I think that I'm one of the longest serving kids at my school because a lot of people are moving back to England and I've only been there 4 years.

Finally I would say to all kids who have just moved over or are getting ready to move over to Spain. I think its great over here, it's quite difficult at first but I would think it's difficult wherever you are if you have to start a new school. I have some really good friends in Spain and I really enjoy the freedom over here that I would probably not have if I was still living in England.

I would say to people who are living in Spain and moan about it all the time, if you don't like it go back to the U.K. and see if it is much better there.

(Thank you James for an excellent essay. Looking forward to printing more of your work in the future. Mick, Editor)

'Got to get these out of my system!

My mate says he's got Swine Flu, but I think he's just telling porkies. He got the first symptoms this afternoon....he came out in rashers. I called the Swine Flu hotline but I couldn't get through.....all I got was crackling on the line!

The only known cure for Swine Flu has been found to be the liberal application of oinkment.

With Swine Flu spreading fast, Kermit the Frog wishes he'd taken precautions before humping Miss Piggy.....

What a muppet!!

While walking through the woods one day, Piglet says to Winnie the Pooh, 'Pooh, you really are a wonderful and kind friend to me. I am so lucky.' Pooh turns to Piglet and says, 'One sneeze from you Porky, and you're crackling!'

Out & About

The various business owners in Via Park V are planning a big charity bash, called the Via Park V Fun Fayre for June 13th. A full range of entertainments and attractions are planned. Details are included in a flyer enclosed with this issue. The Raheny Bar has now opened up on the lower ground floor and a new Indian Restaurant/take-away is expected to open shortly in the middle floor. A new bar called 'Angels' is scheduled to open up on the top floor of Via Park 3.

At least four bikes have been stolen from Dream Hills during the last month. Several more have been stolen from the Los Altos area. Take your bikes indoors at night and secure them firmly outside during the day. There were also fake 'gas inspectors' around the urb. Dressed like technicians, they will replace a 10 euro piece of plastic piping on your cooker and charge you 100 euro for the 'service'.

A 24-year-old British man was arrested after a car chase, in connection with the murder of his 20-year-old girlfriend. The murder, which the police described as a brutal stabbing, took place at Friday lunchtime in a room at the Playa Marina aparthotel urbanisation in Orihuela Costa. The victim's parents run a local pub. Reporting restrictions on the case are in place.

The road works to the N332 in Orihuela Costa are racing ahead, but, for the present, you will still have to drive to the Dehesa de Campoamor roundabout and turn back, if you need to go to the *salud*. Torrevieja have hardly touched the N332 in their area and this will undoubtedly lead to major bottlenecks this summer.

Early in the month I went to a presentation on urbanisation law sponsored by Caja Murcia at the town hall. It was packed out. Although little of the information was new, what was significant was the concern from most of the audience on the matter of unpaid urbanisation fees. A lady from one urbanisation explained that more than 50% of their owners paid no urbanisation fees. They were now in a position whereby they cannot afford to pay their community electricity bills or water bills for the pool. This particular urb had outstanding fees of 150,000 euro. The 'experts' could offer no panacea other than to recommend the owners to pay the utility bills and chase the debtors through the courts. Many owners felt that the law was far too slow in pursuing defaulters. The bank representative present stated that they were quick to liaise with administrators in cases of repossessions. This of course was nonsense. Another concern was in relation to owners who habitually break the rules, particularly in relation to the common pools in urbanisations. One of the advisory panel suggested that these people be brought to the courts. Again this is nonsense. Do you think the courts would be bothered processing a case in relation to someone breaking pool rules. Whether correct or not, all agreed that refusal of access to the pools was probably the only sanction easily available to urbanisations.

Torrevieja Town Hall have badly neglected road repairs in their area over the past few year. They have finally agreed to spend 2.7 million euro on tarmac on a number of urbanisations. These include Los Balcones, Lago Jardin 1 & 2, Lago Sol and the Torretas. No time-scale yet but it will mean that the bone-shaking route down the hill from Dream Hills will be properly repaired at some stage.

It now appears that Orihuela Town Hall have given permission to build an eco-plant across the motorway from Dream Hills 2. From what I can make out it will be a recycling plant. The town hall have confirmed that this is going ahead, although I cannot find the exact location yet. According to the 'greens' it is going to be close to Entre Golf. See Round Town archive at http://www.roundtownnews.co.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19137&Itemid=31

I have collected some Terra Mitica 2 for 1 tickets, for anybody who wants them. They are also available from McDonald's for a limited period of time, if you have the stomach for it! Call at 586.

It made me jurmp!

Two French paratroopers were transferred to the States for special training. After the first day they met up in the bar.

"Ah, Pierre," asks Anton, "ow 'av you been doing?"

"Merde, Anton!" answers Pierre. "I 'av 'ad a mos' terrible day. Terrible! At seex zis morning I was pulled out of bed and on to ze parade ground."

"And zen what 'appened?" inquires his mate.

"I weel tell you what 'appened! 'E made me climb urp zis silly leetle platform five feet off ze ground and zen 'e said "Jurmp!"

" "En' did you jurmp?" asks Anton.

"I did not. I told 'im - "I am a French paratrooper. I do not jurmp five feet.

It is beneass my dignity." "And zen what 'appened?" asks his mate.

"Zen 'e made me climb up zis silly leetle platform ten feet off ze ground, and 'e said "Jurmp!"." "And did you jurmp?" asks Anton.

"I did not. I told 'im - "I am a French paratrooper. It is beneass my dignity to jurmp ten feet." "What 'appened zen?" asks his mate.

"Zen 'e made me climb urp zis rickety platform a 'undred feet above ze parade ground. 'E undid 'is trousers, took out zis enormous wapon, and 'e said: "If you do not jurmp, I am going to stick zis right urp your burm."."

"Mon Dieu!" says Anton. "And did you jurmp?"

"A leetle,at ze beginning!"

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Electricity & Telephones.

Not that you could tell from the Spanish press or TV, but from the 1st of July this year, power users can change their electricity company. Locally, this is Iberdrola. You will be able to choose between several dozen alternatives. If you do nothing, you will just remain with your existing provider. From what I can make out, nobody, including the electricity companies, are geared up to this change. If you are lucky enough to get Iberdrola bills, some details would have been included with your last invoice. I now suspect that the 'urban myth' early in the year recommending people to 'sign-on' again to avoid 'proposed' large increases to the electricity bills was purely a local ploy to get consumers to remain with Iberdrola.

In a change of policy the Industry Ministry has now decided to eliminate the retroactive character of a decision on how the power companies are obliged to issue refunds resulting from the introduction of a new monthly billing procedure. Many power companies charged the last two months of 2008 at new 2009 prices, but now the Ministry has said the new prices came into effect on November 1 2008 and not on January 1 2009 as everyone had previously thought. The Government has justified this change by saying there had been 'a mistake in a press release'. The consumer's associations are naturally fuming at this slight of hand.

Telefónica, the underachieving and probably richest telecom firm in the world, has finally agreed to reduce the price of its basic 3 meg broadband. When times are hard, businesses are forced to come up with attractive offers to lure new customers or to prevent the ones they have from looking elsewhere. It emerged this week that Spanish telecommunications giant Telefónica is to offer its customers savings of up to 30 per cent on their ADSL services to persuade those considering cancelling their contracts to think twice. Their market share for broadband has fallen from more than 50% to around 22%.

The company began offering the high speed internet access service in 2002, and has charged 40 euros up until now; as part of the new offer, customers will pay just 27.93 euros a month. However, the company has decided not to advertise the campaign to avoid a massive switch over.

According to figures from the Ministry of Industry, Telefónica customers pay the most for a three megabyte connection and line rental (53.87 euros). This is considerably more expensive than the 35.40 euros charged by Jazztel and the 39.90 and 29.95 euros charged by Ono and Yacom respectively.

Telefónica is also reducing the price of the Apple 16 GB iphone by as much as 75% from June 1 ahead of a new model of the phone which is expected on the eighth of June.

Deja Vu

Two men were sitting next to each other at a bar in Via Park V. After awhile, one guy looks at the other and says, 'I can't help but think, from listening to you, that you're from Ireland.'

The other guy responds proudly, 'Yes, that I am!'

The first guy says, 'So am I! And where about from Ireland might you be?'

The other guy answers, 'I'm from Dublin, I am.'

The first guy responds, 'So am I!'

'Holy Mackerel! And what street did you live on in Dublin?'

The other guy says, 'A lovely little area it was. I lived on McCleary Street in the old central part of town.'

The first guy says, 'Faith and it's a small world. So did I! So did I!'

And to what school would you have been going?'

The other guy answers, 'Well now, I went to St. Mary's, of course.'

The first guy gets really excited and says, 'And so did I. Tell me, what year did you graduate?'

The other guy answers, 'Well now, let's see. I graduated in 1964.'

The first guy exclaims, 'The Good Lord must be smiling down upon us! I can hardly believe our good luck at winding up in the same bar tonight. Can you believe it? I graduated from St. Mary's in 1964 myself!'

About this time, a young lady walks into the bar, sits down and orders a beer.

Brian, the bartender, walks over to her, shaking his head and mutters, 'It's going to be a long night tonight.'

The lady asks, 'Why do you say that, Brian?'

'The Murphy twins are pissed again.'

(Pat Chambers)

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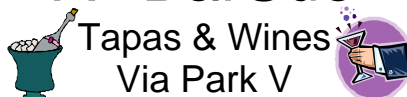
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Child's Prayer

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True Story

After stopping for drinks at an illegal bar, a Zimbabwean bus driver found that the 20 mental patients he was supposed to be transporting from Harare to Bulawayo had escaped. Not wanting to admit his incompetence, the driver went to a nearby bus stop and offered everyone waiting there a free ride. He then delivered the passengers to the mental hospital, telling the staff that the patients were very excitable and prone to bizarre fantasies. The deception wasn't discovered for 3 days.

LESSON: Nothing is ever really "free".

ID Parade

A woman walks into a tattoo parlor and asks 'Do you do custom work?' 'Why of course!' 'Good. I'd like a portrait of Hugh Jackman on the inside of my right thigh, and a portrait of Brad Pitt on the inside of my left thigh.' 'No problem,' says the artist. 'Strip from the waist down and get up on the table.' After several hours of hard work, the artist finishes. The woman sits up and examines the tattoos. 'That doesn't look like them!' she complains loudly. 'Oh yes it does,' the artist says indignantly, 'let me prove it.' With that, he runs out of the shop and grabs the first man off the street he can find; it happens to be the town drunk. 'Well, what do you think?' the woman asks, spreading her legs. 'Do you know who these men are?' The drunk studies the tattoos for a couple of minutes and says. 'I'm not sure who the guys on either side are, but the fellow in the middle is definitely Willie Nelson!

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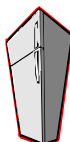


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Via Park V

A missionary who had spent years showing a tribe of natives how to farm and build things to be self-sufficient gets the word that he is to return home. He realized that the one thing he never taught the natives was how to speak English, so he takes the chief and starts walking in the jungle. He points to a tree and says to the chief, "This is a tree." The chief looks at the tree and grunts, "Tree." The missionary is pleased with the response.

They walk a little farther and he points to a rock and says, "This is a rock."

Hearing this, the chief looks and grunts, "Rock."

The padre is really getting enthusiastic about the results when he hears a rustling in the bushes.

As he peeks over the top, he sees a couple in the midst of shagging their brains out. The padre is really flustered and quickly responds, "Riding a bike."

The chief looks at the couple briefly, coolly pulls out his blow pipe and kills them both with poison darts.

The padre goes ballistic and yells at the chief that he had spent years teaching the tribe how to be civilized and kind to each other, so how could he just kill these people in cold blood that way?

The chief dourly replied, "My... bike."

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Spanish Vignettes - Two Great Warriors.

When I came to write this particular article, I had originally intended to write only about *El Cid*, Spain's national hero. However my research uncovered information about another great warrior, **Almanzor**. Although Almanzor was an Arab, he was of course also Iberian, if not Spanish, having lived here all his life. Their timelines are slightly different, but it is intriguing to speculate who would be the victor if they had met in battle.

Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar was born in Vivar, north of Burgos around 1040. He was educated in the royal court of Castile. At the age of 17, Rodrigo fought against the Moorish stronghold of Zaragoza, making its emir a vassal and tribute payer to King Sancho II.

He grew up as a military adventurer, fighting anywhere for any paying cause; by the age of thirty he was an experienced soldier with several campaigns under his belt. He was admired throughout Castile for his daring skill in combat, and distrusted for his apparently equal readiness to fight Moors for Christians, or Christians for Moors. His fighting and leadership skills brought him respect from Christians and Moors. The Muslims referred to him as '*El Cid*', from the Arab word *sayyid* meaning 'Lord.' To the Christians he was '*Campeador*' taken from the vulgar Latin word *campidoctor* meaning 'master of military arts.'

Sent by Alfonso VI of Castile to collect tribute from the emir of Seville, he was accused on his return of keeping part of the tribute. He was banished from Castile by Alfonso. He became a mercenary, organised an army of Moorish and Christian freebooters and sold their services to Christians or Moslem rulers indifferently. For eight years he served the emir of Saragossa, extending the Moorish dominion at the expense of Christian Aragon.

In 1083 he defeated and captured the Christian count of Barcelona and held him for ransom of 80,000 gold dinars.

Two years later he defeated the king of Aragon and captured a whole string of distinguished Aragonese, which he held for ransom. Successful soldiering such as this with its lucrative benefits made Rodrigo rich and famous amongst both Christian and Moors.

In 1089, he led a private army of 7,000 men, mostly Moors, and captured Valencia. He then exacted a massive monthly tribute of 10,000 gold dinars from the city. Rodrigo then continued to campaign up and down the region of eastern Spain known as the Levante, fighting Christians (the count of Barcelona once again) and *taifa* Muslim states, pillaging the countryside and exacting tributes. When he returned to Valencia, he found it closed to him. He then besieged it for a year. When the city surrendered in 1094, he violated all the conditions that were previously agreed with its inhabitants concerning the surrender. He burned its chief justice alive and divided the belongings of its inhabitants among his soldiers. He was about to burn the chief justice's wife and daughters as well, but his own soldiers raised a cry of protest against it. Although he was ferocious as a warrior, he then governed Valencia with justice and wisdom and it became, while he was alive, a successful redoubt against the new massive invasion by the Almoravid Moors.

Rodrigo died in 1099. His wife Jimena, who was made of equally stern stuff, held the city for a further three years, before burning and then evacuating it when the Almoravids overran the whole region. Valencia would now remain under Moorish control until 1238.

(I had to shorten this article due to lack of space. More on *El Cid* in another issue.)

Muhammed ibn-abi-Amir, later to become known as **Almanzor** or Mansur - meaning Victorious, was born near the port of Algeciras in southern Spain, in 938 into a old-established family of Arab descent. Almanzor received a good education in Córdoba and after a number of successive administrative posts there, his talent and ambition brought him to the notice of powerful people within the caliphate.

His big opportunity came when the caliph of Córdoba asked him to administer the property of his favourite wife Subh, who was a Christian and captured in Navarre.

Soon Almanzor became part of the inner circle of the court in Córdoba and when the caliph died, Almanzor became part of a triumvirate to control the regency of al-Andaluz on behalf of the new 11-year-old caliph, Hisham II. It was during this period that Almanzor showed a cunning and deviousness in court intrigues that would earn him the admiration of Machiavelli some 500 years later.

The triumvirate comprised of Almanzor, an older general called Ghalib and a senior elderly statesman and minister of Berber descent called al-Mushafi. Following a succession of intrigues, Almanzor had al-Mushafi disgraced, imprisoned and later murdered. Three years later, Ghalib died of a fall from his horse during a battle against Almanzor. (He actually married Ghalib's daughter several years prior to this.)

Almanzor then encouraged the teenage caliph to devote all his time to the carnality of the sumptuous harem, ensuring he took no part in politics, and kept him there. Almanzor was now effectively head of state. He could be incredibly cruel. One astrologer, (it was considered a science then) predicted defeat, so Almanzor had his tongue cut out. One of his sons he had whipped to death for plotting and he decapitated another. At one stage he had a giant pyramid of heads, which he used to ride around with glee. He then had them salted, boxed and sent throughout the caliphate as a warning. He also cut the tongue out of a Muslim prince and crucified him for holding 'detestable opinions.'

He then strengthened the army. He recruited large numbers of Christian and Berber mercenaries and turned his attention to the Christian principalities in the north. His work load was prodigious and within 20 years he personally led 57 major expeditions into their territory, all of which were successful. Monasteries (then used like banks), cities and towns were sacked, burnt and their inhabitants either slain or enslaved. No part of the north was safe, and in 997, with the help of Christian guides, he captured and sacked Santiago de Compostella. Only the tomb of the saint was spared. Almanzor was impressed by the bravery and devotion of an old monk who remained to guard the tomb. He spared both the monk and the tomb. Almanzor then made relays of Christian slaves carry the church bells and doors back to Córdoba as trophies, where the bells were melted down to make chandeliers and lamps.

Almanzor never lost a battle. He died in 1002, while returning from a raid in the north. The Córdobaans lamented, 'Our provider of slaves is no more.' The Christians rejoiced.

Dream Hills Petanca Club

On Tuesday 19th May, members gathered in La Casita to enjoy a party to mark the third birthday of the club. Mike has agreed to organise another fun day for us. At the time of writing, the date has been suggested as Saturday 13th June. The event will take place in the morning and form part of the Via Park V charity fund-raising day.

Starting from 1st June, it was agreed to switch to our summer (later) playing time of 5 to 7 p.m. Please arrive at 10 to 5 in order to draw for teams.

Notes from La Casita

Our thanks to John Kerr for giving the Casita report at the AGM. A copy of the last year's financial report is on the notice board in the Casita.

All our regular social events continue as before. If any of these interest you, and you would like to know more details, please phone the person named on the list.

Spanish Lessons

Carolina, our Spanish teacher, is hoping to start a new **beginners** class on Thursdays at 12.30 p.m at La Casita. There are also places available in the current **intermediate** and **advanced** classes on Tuesdays and on Wednesdays. If you would like to join, or for more information, please contact Carolina on 678751591. MN.

The Oracle of Dream Hills



Few people are aware that the Dream Hills urbanisations have their own resident 'Oracle.' Like the Oracle of Delphi, he is elusive, shy and unbelievably wise. Nobody knows where he lives, but many suspect he resides either inside an illegal under-build in DH1 or 2, or in a little cave by the *petanca* courts, living a hermit's life on a diet of goat's milk and Marmite soldiers.

Some say they have seen him darting about the urbanisation, long after the latest of revelers have meandered their way home.

We are fortunate that he sometimes shares his musings and we will reproduce them here occasionally.

Love may be blind but marriage is a real eye opener.

Support bacteria, they're the only culture some people have.

It is always darkest before dawn. So if you're going to steal the neighbour's newspaper or milk, that's the time to do it.

It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.

The more you complain, the longer God makes you live.

Letter to the Editor

The Dream Scene got the following letter in early May, from Lesley and Peter in the 500's.

Dear Editor,

Re: Accident early hrs April 24th.

If I may, I would like to publicly thank our local security guards for all they did for myself and my partner.

I was hurt in a fall and badly cut my head. The guards arrived in record time, comforted my distraught partner, organised an ambulance and cared for me.

My only memory was the gentle calming way I was treated and was helped downstairs with your guard holding both my hands!

No words can express how much we appreciate what these young men did and we shall always be indebted to them.

Thank goodness we are fortunate enough to benefit from their expertise.

May we also thank our neighbours and friends for their help and support.

Yours Sincerely,
Leslie & Peter

(Thank you Lesley & Peter. I have passed your comments on to the security guards and their employers. Hope you are fully recovered now Lesley and that your 'noggin' is back to normal. Mick, Editor)

The Good Samaritan

A man and his wife were awakened at 3:00 am by a loud pounding on the door. The man gets up and goes to the door where a drunken stranger, standing in the pouring rain, is asking for a push.

'Not a chance,' says the husband, 'it is 3:00 in the morning!'

He slams the door and returns to bed.

'Who was that?' asked his wife.

'Just some piss artist asking for a push,' he answers.

'Did you help him?' she asks.

'No, I did not, it is 3:00 in the morning and it is pouring rain out there!'

'Well, you have a short memory,' says his wife.

'Can't you remember about three months ago when we broke down, and those two guys helped us? I think you should help him, and you should be ashamed of yourself!'

The man does as he is told, gets dressed, and goes out into the pounding rain. He calls out into the dark, 'Hello, are you still there?'

'Yes,' comes back the answer.

'Do you still need a push?' calls out the husband.

'Yes, please!' came the reply from the dark.

'Where are you?' asks the husband.

'I'm over here on the swing,'

The History of Spain. Part 7 - A Chink in the Moorish Armour.

As al-Andaluz flourished, towards the end of the tenth century, Moorish military might was in the grip of Mohammed ibn-abi-Amir, later called Al Mansur, 'the Victorious (see Vignettes). Mansur managed to keep the disparate Moorish factions together and raided all the lands which the Christians had settled during the previous two hundred years. When he died in 1002, there was a collective sigh of relief throughout the Christian north as they never won a battle against him. As one Christian monk of the time wrote, 'Al Mansur died in 1002 and now burns in Hell.'

Although the Moors still controlled two thirds of the peninsula, a succession of weak rulers were unable to hold al-Andaluz together. Revolt followed revolt among the Moors, the Caliphate of Córdoba, still the strongest power in Europe, collapsed in a matter of years. The dissolution of the caliphate had been the political prelude to the political and military decline of all of Al-Andalus. The various Arab and Berber factions fractured with political power coalescing around local leaders or individual ethnic groups.

Nearly all the first overlords were local commanders and notables who had achieved power through the political and military network created by al-Mansur. The result was that al-Andaluz fractured into as many as 39 independent *taifas* (from the Arabic *muluk al-tawa'if*, meaning rulers of the 'parties' or 'factions.'). The smaller *taifas* or party kingdoms were quickly absorbed by other larger and stronger ones; the most powerful were Sevilla and Granada in the south; Badajoz, Toledo and Valencia in a band across the centre of the peninsula; Zaragoza in the northeast. These party kingdoms collectively still controlled around 75% of the peninsula. When the military balance in the peninsula began to change in the middle of the eleventh century, the smaller *taifas* could not defend themselves in regional isolation and were absorbed or destroyed one by one. Despite the dynastic strife within the Muslim ruling families, the new kingdoms/ *taifas* vied with one another in public works, in building mosques or palaces and in the patronage of poets, scholars and artists. Moorish culture and the sciences still flourished.

For the first half of the eleventh century, the Christian rulers made little attempt to profit from this Moorish fragmentation, either territorially or otherwise. In the north-west, Alfonso V had his hand full dealing with a rebellious local aristocracy and bands of marauding Vikings who regularly devastated the Galician coast. East of the Pyrenees in the Caytalan counties and Spanish Marches, there was a progressive breakdown in public order, when the counts of Barcelona faced head-on opposition from the other nobles. When Sancho III of Navarre died in 1035, he undid 30 years of diplomacy and cajoling, by partitioning Navarre, Aragon, Ribagorza and Castile between his four sons. However, two years later, one of these sons, Ferdinand I, who was enthroned as the first king of Castile, killed his brother-in-law, Vermudo of León, in a battle at Tamarón, thereby uniting León and Castile under his rule. He then defeated and killed his brother, García III of Navarre at Atapuerca near Burgos and similarly dispatched his remaining brother, Ramiro I of Aragón. Ferdinand was now preeminent and in 1039, proclaimed himself emperor of Hispania.

Now with his kingdom secure, Ferdinand started to exploit the political and military weaknesses of the Muslim *taifas*. Although he conquered large amounts of territory from the Muslims in what is now northern Portugal, his primary objective was to gain regular tribute, known as *paria* payments, from his significantly richer Moorish neighbours. This type of operation was nothing other than a 'protection racket,' whereby various Christian rulers offered their military services to the *taifa* monarchs in return for sizeable annual payments of gold, silver and luxury goods. This military protection meant that there were many occasions where the Christian kings and nobles (such as El Cid, see Vignettes), were taking up arms against other Christian kingdoms, or Moorish ones, on behalf of their Muslim paymasters.

This influx of *parias* brought unheard of wealth to the previously impoverished Christian kingdoms. This allowed them to build bigger and better armies, with the new wealth passing through the agency of kings, enriching noblemen, soldiers, bureaucrats, churchmen and merchants. Christian rulers would vie with one another for the tribute from an individual *taifa* state, if necessary going to war to secure it. The tributes were substantial, Zaragoza agreeing to pay Sancho IV of Navarre 1,000 gold pieces every month. Abd Allah, the ruler of Granada, agreed to pay Alfonso VI, the son of Ferdinand I, 30,000 gold pieces. The Christian north was now becoming significantly richer and stronger.

Two Quickies

Two friends are walking through the woods when a huge brown bear suddenly appears in the clearing about 50 feet in front of them. The bear sees them and begins to head their way. The first guy drops his backpack, digs out a pair of running shoes and frantically begins to put them on. The second guy says, "What are you doing? Trainers won't help you outrun that bear." "Who said anything about the ***kin' bear," he replied, "I just need to outrun you!"

Remember Super Gillette double-sided razor blades. Boy! They were good! For example, a female magician used them for her grand finale. She swallowed a length of twine and then swallowed a dozen Super Gillette double-sided blades. She then pulled out the twine with all twelve blades attached. One night, only eleven blades were pulled out and she ended up giving herself an appendectomy, a hysterectomy and succeeded in circumcising her husband, castrating her lover, gave the vicar a hare-lip and she still got three good leg shaves when it finally showed up.

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'The Actors' Studio' seeks new members with any of the following creative interests - acting, costume-making, hair and make-up, prop-making, lighting, sound and public relations. Speak to Joyce, Jo, Pam, Sandi or Matias (all Dream Hills residents), or Sue at 'All Bar Sue', or ring David Whitney 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.**PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS AND THE WEB SITES AT www.dreamhills.co.uk/ &
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There are 6. Most people only get 3 or 4. The 'F' in 'OF' rarely registers with people!

Pay-Out Time!

Please note that your urbanisation fee payments are due this June if you live in Dream Hills. Also, if you pay Spanish Income Tax on a deferred year basis, you will have to pay your first instalment by the end June, second in November.

Change in motorbike licence requirements.

In mid May, the Cabinet approved changes in the conditions for riding more powerful motorcycles. The first change is to raise the minimum age for riding a 500 cc motorbike or bigger to 20. Furthermore riders will require two years' experience with an A2 licence (for smaller bikes) and take extra classes before obtaining the new 'A' permit for more powerful vehicles.

The A2 licence is for 125 cc to 250 cc motorbikes and to obtain this riders must be over the age of 18 and either take a direct test or prove two years' experience with an A1 licence for motorbikes up 125cc. While the A1 licence is obtainable from the age of 16, the minimum age to ride mopeds or motorscooters of up to 49 cc has been raised from 14 to 15, although this will not come into force until September 2010.

Costa Blanca SAMARITANS**902 88 35 35**

The HELPLINE on 902 88 35 35 for the Samaritans is now available Monday to Friday evenings from 8 p.m. until midnight. The intention is to deliver a 7 day service as soon as possible.

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A man went into a pub and said to the barman "Pint of best please."

The barman said, "That'll be 5 pence please"

The man was amazed at the cheapness and asked for the bar menu. He selected T-bone steak and chips,

The barman said, "That'll be 25 pence."

"That's fantastic!" said the man, "Can I speak to the landlord, I'd like to congratulate him on his prices!"

"No," the barman replied, "He's upstairs with my wife."

"What's he doing with your wife?" asked the man.

The barman replied "The same as I am doing to his business down here!"

I was at my bank today; there was a short queue, just one lady in front of me; an Asian lady was trying to exchange Thai Baht for euros. It was obvious she was getting a little irritated ...

She asked the cashier, 'Why it change? Yesterday, I getta two hunat euros fo Baht. Today I only getta hunat eighty? Why it change?'

The cashier shrugged her shoulders and said, 'Fluctuations.'

The Thai lady replies, 'Well fluc you too!'