

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 31 1st of September 2009

A warm welcome to you all. It's Monday the 31st, blue skies, 33.4° in the shade, there's a chilled bottle of 'Rueda' in the fridge beckoning and all would be right and perfect with the world if those shifty Mancunian 'bottom-feeders' and troglodytes had not beaten the 'gunners' last week. The extremely warm sea temperatures we are now experiencing will undoubtedly lead to *gota frias* later this year. Be prepared!

August has not been without its usual madness here. Bad behaviour seems to increase with the temperature and recent restricted access to the pools because of poor water quality and maintenance issues have not helped matters. However, a savage and unprovoked assault on a couple in Dream Hills was by far the most serious news to date. This has already been reported fully in both the Spanish and English press and on the DH web-site. I don't intend to add to this here other than to congratulate, first the owners who rallied around to assist the injured victims and secondly the security guards who directly assisted the police in the arrest of the alleged assailant - a British holidaymaker - who I understand is now in police custody and very likely to receive a custodial sentence. The victims now wish to put the whole matter 'behind them' and we should respect this.

According to Sur.es foreign tourism to Spain is down about 30%. In the month of July alone (which was better than June), there were 500,000 fewer foreign visitors, 300,000 less from the UK. The only Spanish location to see an increase is Madrid. The visitors who are coming are spending considerably less. As you would expect, the Spaniards are spending less time abroad this year, preferring to holiday here. Most traders in the Via Parks are reporting trade down significantly on last year. Many of the Spanish restaurants I have visited in the evenings have been dismal affairs and the few patrons there seem to be British.

The Union of Professionals and the Self-employed, Unión de Profesionales y Trabajadores Autónomos (UPTA), has warned that 5,000 bars and restaurants could close down permanently after this summer. They also strongly criticise government initiatives which are trying to clampdown on the hospitality industry, saying that this sector will be severely affected by new laws and measures which prohibit smoking.

Up to July, most of the hotels in this area were operating at less than 50% capacity. There were many special offers available from these hotels in August and the hoteliers hope to increase to 80% capacity in August.

Whereas the French and German economies grew by 0.3% in the second quarter this year, the Spanish economy shrunk by 1%, much more than expected with the Spanish economy falling by 4.2% in the second quarter compared to a year ago. 1.36 million full-time jobs have been lost over the past 12 months.

There is plenty of talk about 'green shoots.....' etc but little hard evidence to show for it. Unemployment may rise to 20% this winter, once the normal summer employment boost is finished.

Mick, Editor.

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'No! I don't think that will get you on X Factor!'

WHAT'S UP?

A new by-law approved by Alicante City Hall last summer makes it an offence to swim on the city's beaches while the red warning flag is flying, and last month a man swimming on the Playa de San Juan became the first bather to be fined for doing just that. Local police were called out to the beach when the man reportedly ignored instructions from Red Cross lifeguards to leave the sea. Municipal sources said the aim in such situations is to give a warning rather than issue a fine, but it was the man's attitude which finally decided officers on imposing the fine. He is reported to have told police that he would swim whenever he liked, as he had been doing for the past 20 years, and that no-one was going to tell him when he could or couldn't bathe in the sea. (Sounds just like those people who won't shower before going in the pool!) The new by-law allows for fines of between 750 to 1,500 €

One newspaper, Público, advises that 100,000 complaints are registered every year over medical errors. The paper says that hospitals and health professionals are trying to protect themselves with unnecessary measures and are avoiding taking risky decisions. Meanwhile the number of complaints of medical malpractice has multiplied by four in the past ten years. A couple in Murcia are now taking the local health authority to court. In place of the contraceptive pills the 25-year-old requested, she was given medication for the menopause and osteoporosis! The lady has now been 'ever so slightly pregnant' for a month. Another major complication is that the medicines she was prescribed must not be taken by pregnant women and there are now concerns for the foetus. So ladies, take care out there!

Still on health, Lorca town hall have come up with a tremendous idea by introducing a ten-strong medical emergency cycle response team. These will operate in teams of two, will carry basic medical equipment and will patrol mainly the town centre. As yet they don't plan to carry de-fib units, which is a shame.

An employee of the Hospital La Fe's incineration department in Valencia, was arrested after crashing his car. He was found to be three times over the limit and assaulted a policeman who was trying to administer a second breath test. The police then found two human foetuses and a human skull in his car. (How weird! Talk about taking your work home with you!)

600 bank branches have closed here between January and June this year and 1,800 banking jobs have been lost. Meanwhile El País notes that Caja Madrid is looking at a merger with CAM (Caja de Ahorros del Mediterráneo) and the Caixa Galicia. It would allow the Madrid savings bank to grow to a size close to that of La Caixa in Barcelona. Público tries to describe the future map of savings banks after all the mergers and says that the number will be halved – the 45 current banks could end up as 20, so says the paper.

The Agencia Tributaria tax authority's anti fraud office saw an 9.5% increase in the amount of tax recovered in 2008 at over 8 billion € 62% of the cases involved VAT/IVA fraud.

Ice cream sales are resisting the crisis well this summer thanks to the high temperatures being seen. Producers say sales are only down by 2-3% since the start of the year.

The cost of calls and messages on mobile phones in Spain is 60% more expensive here than the average in the developed countries of the OECD.

Ryanair and Leeds Airport have announced that Ryanair are opening a new base there from March 2010, using 2 737-800's for 14 new routes in Europe including Murcia and Malaga.

Spain is the Eurozone country where petrol prices have risen the most this year. Since January prices here have increased by 33% while across the 16 countries of the Eurozone the average is just 23%. Data shows that currently 95 octane is sold in Spain at an average of 1.099 € compared to 82.5 cents in January. Diesel prices have risen by 16% here compared to the 10.8% average in the Eurozone.

On Sunday 20th September at 2 pm on Campoamor Beach, there will be an attempt to break the Guinness Book of Records world record for the most photographed group of ladies in the same place at the same time wearing a bikini. Just one catch – you'll need to wear a bikini! 2,000 suitably attired chicas should do the trick. This is a charitable event sponsored by Sol Productions and it should definitely prove a 'Kodak Moment.' (Where's my dirty mac'?)

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The Government is to remove all religious symbols from state schools. The Minister for Education, Francisco Caamaño, has warned that only those with historic or artistic value will be allowed to remain.

El Mundo also finds space for more reporting on what it sees as the injustices of the language policy in Cataluña, where it says a shopkeeper is still refusing to put up signs in Catalan after being fined 1,200 €

Renewable energy will make up 25% of Spain's needs by the end of the year. The President of Red Eléctrica, REE, Luis Atienza, explained that it was because of an increase in wind farms and more production from hydraulic and solar panels. He forecasted that by the end of the year such production would be between 26 and 27% of demand. Wind farm production is 13% higher than a year ago.

Passenger numbers at Spanish airports to July this year were down 11.5% compared to last year

In relation to the new abortion law, one newspaper notes that nursing and doctors' organisations' in Spain are insisting that the right to conscientiously object to abortion is not negotiable under the new legislation, despite efforts of the government to say otherwise. Another newspaper says the Minister for Justice has equated conscientious objection with civil disobedience.

Forget the recession, at least in Málaga, where their Feria kicked-off on the 14th with a firework display on the beach at La Malagueta. Were there many fireworks? Seven tons of them!

Self-employed or autonomo workers in Spain will be able to claim unemployment pay for the first time as part of the extraordinary measures passed by the cabinet to combat the crisis. The maximum payment will be 1,583 €a month. The government is giving more help to the unemployed with those who have used up their entitlement to dole money being given a further 420 €a month for a six month maximum period providing that their entitlement ran out after the first of August. The unemployment rate remains over 18%.

Although it is now a rarity on the Costas, many good Spanish bars inland will give a free tapas with your drink. In Gijón however, one dissatisfied customer caused havoc after being given a dish of olives as a tapa. He described it as 'crap' and went on a rampage breaking glasses and bottles and throwing the bar chairs and tables at passing traffic! He caused more than 500 €worth of damage before being arrested by the police.

Alcoy, in northern Valencia, has reported ten cases of Legionnaire's Disease during the past month. Seven were initially hospitalised with two seriously ill. Unfortunately Alcoy has a history of the disease with thirteen outbreaks of Legionnaire's Disease since 1999, with four deaths amongst the 249 people affected. The town has been clear since the autumn of 2005 and, in December 2007, the regional government lifted the Zone of Special Intervention which was declared in Alcoy in 2002. A team of technicians has been inspecting the 454 officially-registered refrigeration systems in the town, but the infection has now been traced to tarmac machinery which was used to resurface roads in the areas where the patients were taken ill. The health department said in a press release last Tuesday that the water used in the machinery was spring water rather than from the mains supply. And you thought 'spring water' was healthier!

The annual La Tomatina festival has just taken place again this year at Buñol. (Detailed report in a previous issue.) This year 45,000 attended the festival and 100 tons of ripe tomatoes costing 28,000€were used.

Two residents of the Pinar de Campoverde urbanisation in nearby Pilar de Horadada were killed last week when their aircraft crashed into a tree on the urbanisation. The trip was taken so that the pilots friend could take photos of his home.

The San Miguel de Salinas fiesta commences on Friday September 18th for those who like the traditional fiestas.

A 57 year old Tarragona woman has been arrested after she handcuffed her 83 year old father inside a car last Friday in Cambrils, while she went to have breakfast in a nearby bar. The half naked man was left with both hands and feet handcuffed to the back doors of the vehicle for half an hour. One passerby said, 'The scene was so surrealist that almost nobody paid any attention'. Finally a taxi driver called the police who also found some cats in the boot of the vehicle. The woman told the police that despite the symptoms of dehydration being shown by the victim, he was not in any danger as she had wound down the windows a few centimetres! How very big of her.

A taxi driver on the island of Menorca returned a wallet containing 60,000 euros in cash, which a passenger left inside the vehicle. Police located the owner and returned the wallet and cash. (Two surprises there!)

'Hairy Jim'

A great big ugly biker called 'Hairy Jim', walks into his local pub with a big grin on his face.

"What are you so happy about?" asks the barman.

"Well, I'll tell you," replied 'Hairy Jim', "you know, I live by the railway. Well, on my way home last night, I noticed a young woman tied to the tracks, like in the movies. I went and cut her free and took her back to my place. Anyway, to cut a long story short, I scored big time! We made love all night, all over the house."

"Fantastic!" exclaimed the barman. "You lucky bugger! Was she pretty?"

"Dunno...Never found the head!"

Suits you, Sir!

A clown went in to a tailors and ordered a new suit, pink body, one sleeve purple, the other orange, yellow and red spotted waistcoat and trousers with on leg blue and green stripes and the other leg White and black check.

The Circus left town before the suit was finished so the tailors were stuck with it. They tried to sell it at a reduced price, but no luck. It was put into the store room for several years only being taken out for the annual sales.

At one annual sale the suit was found to be missing. They looked for it everywhere and asked all the staff if they had seen it. The youngest member of staff piped up the he had sold it. The Boss was astonished - "Tell me about this miraculous sale"

"Well," said the lad, " A guy came in for an off-the-peg suit but none in the showroom fitted him. Then I remembered the store room. He tried on all the suits up there till he found one that fitted, so I sold it to him. It was the multi-coloured job.... did I do wrong?"

"No" said the Boss, "You did magnificently. What did the purchaser say about the colours?"
"Nothing" said the youngster, "but his guide dog howled a bit!"

Spanish Vignettes - The Spanish Labour Market

There are many differences between the labour market in Spain and those in our countries of origin. Many of you will probably be aware that most Spaniards get 14 'monthly' payments a year, one extra before the August holidays and one extra before Christmas. Taking statutory and annual holidays and local fiesta days into account Spanish employees get 14 months' salary for ten months' work!

From the outset one must look at the Spanish labour market in its historical context. Spain's trade unions were outlawed from the end of the Civil War in 1939 until the early 80's, well after Franco's departure, when a socialist government was returned in 1982. The new left-wing government introduced the Workers' Statute in 1985. After being starved of workers' rights and protection for more than a generation, the new legislation heavily favoured the workers but took little regard of the growing competitive markets in Europe and the rest of the world. To the Spaniards there had been an assumed link between an employment contract and a job for life. In recent years Spain's labour problems have been exacerbated by the unions' uncompromising defence of rigid employment terms and collective bargaining. Spain now has the most rigid labour market in Europe. The present government do not accept this although the European Commission, the European Central Bank, the IMF, the World Bank and the Bank of Spain have pointed out that Spain needs to revise its labour laws if it wishes to be competitive describing them as 'very rigid, inefficient and unjust.'

Spain has the European Union's highest unemployment and one of its less generous welfare systems. More than 1.3 million jobs have been lost in the last 12 months and Spain will soon have as many jobless as France and Italy combined. One of the main areas of contention is the 'employment contract.' Forgetting work permits, there are basically three types of work or employment contract; the indefinite term contract, the short-term contract for a specific duration or reason, and the verbal or written contract for casual or seasonal work which has few legal rights.

According to The Economist, two-thirds of workers have armour-clad permanent contracts but the rest are on short-term deals. These are the people now on the dole. It goes on, 'This two-tier labour market divides workers into a privileged group cocooned from the reality of recession and the disadvantaged on temporary contracts, in unemployment or in illegal jobs. Employers do not invest in training short-term workers and are wary of hiring on permanent contracts.' More than 100 economists have called on the Socialist prime minister Zapatero to carry out labour market reforms but the government will not take on the unions. The system has created a privileged section of the working class with a guaranteed job, not because of their ability and skills but because of their seniority. Also even as the country is in recession with unemployment over 18%, the centralised wage-bargaining system has been awarding real pay rises of around 3.5% to this cocooned sector!

Social security payments are also a contentious issue with employees paying around 5% but employers paying a whopping 23% of the salary.

Spain has more than four million civil servants (more than 130,000 added last year) out of eighteen million workers and there are around nine million pensioners!

Latest data from Hacienda tax authorities in Spain shows that 63% of workers earn less than 1,100 € a month. It means that 16.7 salaried workers have an annual gross income of less than 13,400 € The data shows the average wage is now 18,087 € a year. Even among the professionals and self-employed, around 1.6 million earn less than 1,100 € net a month, a number which represents three quarters of total number of self-employed.

The average retirement pension in Spain in August was 856.31 € per month, an increase of 4.9% compared to the same month in 2008. The Ministry for Employment and Immigration has reported that the average pension, including retirement, incapacity, widows, orphans and family pensions, is now 756€ per month, up 4.8% over a year ago.

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The Spark of Romance

An elderly couple were celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary, so they decided to return to the little town where they first met. They sat in a small coffee shop in the town and were telling the waitress about their love for each other and how they met at this same spot. Sitting next to them was the local postman and he smiled as the old couple spoke. After the waitress left the table, the old man said to his wife, 'Remember the first time we made love, it was up in that field across the road, when I put you against the fence. Why don't we do it again for old times sake?'

The wife giggled like crazy and said, 'Sure, why not.'

So off they went out the door and across to the field. The postie smiled to himself, thinking how romantic this was and decided he better keep an eye on the couple so they didn't run into any harm. The old couple walked to the field and as they approached the fence they began to undress. The old man picked up his wife when they were naked and leaned her against the fence. The postman was watching from the bushes and was surprised at what he saw. With the vitality of exuberant youth, the wife bounced up and down excitedly, while the husband thrashed around like a wild man. Finally they both fell to the ground exhausted.

Eventually, they stood up and got dressed. As they walked back towards the road, the postman stepped from his hiding spot and said, 'That was the most wonderful thing I have ever seen. You must have been a wild couple when you were young.'

'Not really,' said the old man, 'when we were young, that fence wasn't electrified!'

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moan and groan.

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A duck hunter out in the marsh felt the urge to relieve himself, so he walked over to the bushes and propped his gun against a tree. Suddenly, a strong gust of wind blew and knocked his gun over, discharging it and shooting him in the 'family jewels'.

Awaking several hours later in a hospital bed, our intrepid hunter is approached by the doctor. "Sir," the doc begins (BUPA obviously!) "I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is there's no internal damage, and we were able to remove all of the buckshot."

"Wow, that's great!" replied the hunter "So what's the bad news?"

"The bad news is that there was some pretty extensive buckshot damage done to your 'todger'. I'm going to have to refer you to my sister."

"Oh, well that's not so bad I guess," the hunter replied. "Is your sister a plastic surgeon?"

"Not exactly." answered the doctor... "She's a flute player in the local symphony orchestra, and she'll teach you where to put your fingers so you don't piss in your eye."

Gone half-cock!

The priest in a small Irish village loved the rooster and ten hens he kept in the hen house behind the church. One Sunday morning, before mass, he went to feed the birds and discovered that the cock was missing. He knew about cock fights in the village, so during mass, he asked the congregation, 'Has anybody here got a cock?' All the men stood up.

'No, no,' he said, 'that wasn't what I meant. Has anybody seen a cock?' All the women stood up.

'No, no,' he said, 'that wasn't what I meant. Has anybody seen a cock that doesn't belong to them?'

Half the women stood up. 'No! No!' he said, 'that wasn't what I meant at all. Has anybody seen MY cock?'

Sixteen altar boys, two deacons and a goat stood up. The priest fainted.

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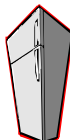
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Lil' Johnny again.

Mom was cleaning little Johnny's room. In the closet she found an S&M magazine. This was highly upsetting to her. She hid the magazine until his father got home and showed it to him.

He looked at it and handed it back to her without a word.

She finally asked him, "Well, what should we do about this?"

Dad looked at her and said, "Well, I don't think you should spank him."

The difference between cats and dogs.

Dog's Daily Diary.

8:00 am - Dog food!! My favorite thing!
 9:30 am - A car ride!! My favorite thing!
 9:40 am - A walk in the park!! My favorite thing!
 10:30 am - Got rubbed and petted!! My favorite thing!
 12:00 pm - Lunch!! My favorite thing!
 1:00 pm - Played in the yard!! My favorite thing!
 3:00 pm - Wagged my tail!! My favorite thing!
 5:00 pm - Licked my balls!! My favorite thing!
 7:00 pm - Got to chase a ball!! My favorite thing!
 8:00 pm - Wow!! Watched TV with the people!! My favorite thing!
 11:00 pm - Sleeping on the bed!! My favorite thing!

Excerpts from a Cat's Daily Diary.

Day 983 of my captivity.

My captors continue to taunt me with bizarre little dangling objects.

They dine lavishly on fresh meat, while the other inmates and I are fed hash or some sort of dry nuggets. Although I make my contempt for the rations perfectly clear, I nevertheless must eat something in order to keep up my strength. The only thing that keeps me going is my dream of escape. In an attempt to disgust them, I once again vomit on the carpet.

Today I decapitated a mouse and dropped its headless body at their feet. I had hoped this would strike fear into their hearts, since it clearly demonstrates what I am capable of. However, they merely made condescending comments about what a "good little hunter" I am. Bastards! There was some sort of assembly of their accomplices tonight. I was placed in solitary confinement for the duration of the event. However, I could hear the noises and smell the food. I overheard that my confinement was due to the power of "allergies." I must learn what this means and how to use it to my advantage. They will suffer.

Today I was almost successful in an attempt to assassinate one of my tormentors by weaving around his feet as he was walking. I must try this again tomorrow -- but at the top of the stairs.

I am convinced that the other prisoners here are flunkies and snitches. The dog receives special privileges. He is regularly released - and seems to be more than willing to return. He is obviously retarded.

The bird has got to be an informant. I observe him communicating with the guards regularly. I am certain that he reports my every move. My captors have arranged protective custody for him in an elevated cell, so he is safe.....for now!

Quick News

The Spanish government is now considering a total ban on smoking in public places. This would include all bars, even small ones. The government believe that the Spanish people are now 'mature enough' to accept a total ban.

In Spain, vaccinations for the A flu will not commence until November. There have been 20 deaths from the virus to date.

The Supreme Court has annulled the protective status of 500 metre strips of land around three natural parks in our area. These are the protection perimeters around the Salinas de Santo Pola, La Mata-Torrevieja natural park and El Hondo de Elche y Crevillent. These large and heretofore undeveloped areas now fall under the control of the local authorities! It is a bit like putting the arsonists in charge of the matches. Expect more concrete!

An enquiry has found that a combination of pilot error and technical malfunction led to the plane crash at Madrid's Barajas airport in August '08. It found that the planes slats and flaps were not extended for take-off which went unnoticed by the pilots and their equipment. No doubt an 'open goal' for the lawyers!

Five people, including four former PP representatives, have been arrested in the Balearics concerning irregularities in the construction of the Palma Arena cycling track. The cost mushroomed from an original estimate of 41 million to an actual cost of 110 million euro. The four are also accused of using some of the funds to promote the PP Balearic campaign in 2007.

In a recent high profile case the Valencian regional premier, Francisco Camps, was acquitted of bribery charges. The Valencia High Court ruled that there was no direct relation between the gifts received and the contracts awarded. The decision is being appealed.

Penance

A married Irishman went into the confessional and said to his priest, 'I almost had an affair with another woman.' The priest said, 'What do you mean, almost?' The man said, 'Well, we got undressed and rubbed together, but then I stopped.'

The priest said, 'Rubbing together is the same as putting it in. You're not to see that woman again. For your penance, say five Hail Marys and put £50 in the poor box.'

The man left the confessional, said his prayers, and then walked over to the poor box. He paused for a moment and then started to leave.

The priest, who was watching, quickly ran over to him saying, 'I saw that. You didn't put any money in the poor box!'

The Irishman replied, 'Yeah, but I rubbed the £50 on the box, and according to you, that's the same as putting it in!'

(Mike Duncan)

The Oracle of Dream Hills



Shin: a device for finding furniture in the dark.

The problem with the gene pool is that there is no lifeguard.

Women who seek to be equal to men lack ambition.

Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach him how to fish and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day.

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you.

Smith & Wesson - the original point & click interface.

The History of Spain. Part 8 - Ebb and Flow.

In Part 7 we saw that the Christian north finally began to make some gains into Moorish territory. Many of the Moorish *taifa* or 'party kingdoms' paid substantial tribute to the various kings or generals from the north hoping to keep these 'barbarous infidels' at bay. Amongst these Christian leaders were Alfonso VI of León-Castilla and of course one of his generals, Rodrigo Diaz de Vivar, 'El Cid'. Not content with taking tribute from the Moors, the Christian generals from the north also wanted to gain territory. After all the Moors still controlled four-fifths of the peninsula.

In 1085 Alfonso's army recaptured Toledo, the old Visigoth capital, from the Moors. This was the first crucial victory of the Reconquest and a major morale boost for the Christians. The fall of Toledo however, caused panic in Muslim al-Andalus and led by the ruler of Sevilla, al-Mu'tamid, their leaders asked the current rulers in the Magreb (North Africa), the Almoravids, for assistance. The Almoravids were a fundamentalist and warlike sect whose name means 'vowed to God.' These dark-skinned nomads originally came from the Sahara and were expected to leave the peninsula after defeating Alfonso. There was always the risk that they might remain. However as al-Mu'tamid remarked, 'I would rather tend camels for the Almoravids than pasture swine under the Christians.'

The Almoravids arrived from North Africa in 1086 and in October of that year clashed with the army of Alfonso at Sagrajas, near Badajoz. The Christians were used to fighting man-to-man style, by which a collection of individual triumphs brought overall victory. They were totally unprepared for the Almohad invaders who used compact forces of infantry supported by lines of archers and a Negro guard equipped with rapiers and shields made from hippo hide. The Christians were routed and Alfonso was lucky to escape with his life.

Within a few years the *taifa* regimes of southern Spain had disappeared, now under the uniting and strict control of the Almoravids. Whatever tolerance Jews and Christians experienced under the previous regimes was now gone under this fundamentalist regime and streams of refugees now headed to the Christian north.

Disastrously for the Christian north, all the tribute payments were stopped. This had the effect of putting the Christian kingdoms into a state of fiscal crisis for the first quarter of the thirteenth century. The Almoravids also won back much of the newly acquired Christian territory including Valencia but were unable to re-capture Toledo.

Almoravid persecution of the Christian communities helped fuel anti-Islamic feelings in the Christian kingdoms. This coincided with the commencement of the Crusades to the Holy Land and many of the knights, French and German, stopped-off in Iberia to 'baptise their swords with Islamic blood.' The Reconquest was gathering momentum.

Back in the Magreb the Almoravids were replaced by the similar sounding Almohades. The Almohades, whose name means 'unitarian' and who came originally from the Atlas Mountains now invaded al-Andalus. All churches and synagogues were raised and a Christian army was annihilated in Alarcos (between Toledo and Córdoba) in 1195. Here 'the flower of young Spanish knights' fell, the Castilian king, Alfonso VIII, narrowly escaping capture.

In 1212, and for the first time using artillery in Europe, Christian soldiers from throughout Spain and Europe gathered at Toledo and marched south to do battle with the Moors. On the rolling plains of Las Navas de Tolosa 60,000 Muslims were killed as against 50 Christian deaths - at least according to the chroniclers! After the battle hundreds of thousands of Moors fled to North Africa and the defeated Muslim commander drank himself to death.

Fancy that!

A man with a bald head and a wooden leg is invited to a fancy dress party. He doesn't know what to wear to hide his head and his wooden leg, so he writes to a fancy dress company to explain his problem.

A few days later he receives a parcel with a note:

"Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a Pirate's outfit. The spotted handkerchief will cover your bald head and with your wooden leg you will be just right as a Pirate".

The man is offended that the outfit emphasizes his disability, so he writes a letter of complaint. A week passes and he receives another parcel and note:

"Dear Sir,

Sorry about the previous parcel. Please find enclosed a monk's habit. The long robe will cover your wooden leg and with your bald head you will really look the part".

The man is really incandescent with rage now, because the company has gone from emphasizing his wooden leg to drawing attention to his bald head. So he writes a really strong letter of complaint. A few days later he gets a very small parcel from the company with the accompanying letter:

"Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed a tin of Golden Syrup.

We suggest you pour the tin of Golden Syrup over your bald head, stick your wooden leg up your arse and go as a toffee apple".

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Television Signals

In a major operation throughout Spain in early August, 60 people, some of them British, were arrested by the National Police in a crackdown on the redistribution of pirated TV signals. Community presidents, financial administrators, hotel directors and commercial operators were among those arrested. The operation involved 17 National Police bases in areas ranging from the Costa del Sol to Barcelona and from Madrid to the Canary Islands.

It is probably fair to assume that this is just the start up of a major campaign to quash illegal TV transmissions nationally. A measure of the seriousness and range of the investigation is that for the first time the administrators of an internet site have been arrested for illegal broadcast of pay-TV channels on a website.

The programs, mainly football matches, were taken from the Spanish Digital+ channel and Arab satellite broadcasters. Companies supplying UK pay-TV channels to the British population in Spain have also come under scrutiny. To date, investigations in Spain have revolved around pay-TV channels only.

However that is not to say that the scope of investigations may widen in the future. A spokesperson for the BBC has said that they view the illegal broadcasting of their signals in Spain 'extremely seriously.' In 1995 they launched BBC Prime to cater for viewers outside the UK. However highlights or live coverage of sporting events are not included in BBC Prime's schedules because they do not have international transmission rights. Whereas there do not appear to be investigations relating to the re-broadcasting of BBC and ITV programs at present, that does not mean that there will be no investigations or prosecutions in the future.

So the way it stands at present, as long as your signal supplier such as Torresat, is paying for its pay per view channels, there should be no problem.

Mid month, the Spanish cabinet approved the introduction of pay per view channels on the existing TDT (Televisión Digital Terrestre) 'freeview' terrestrial TV service. (The analogue TDT signals in Dream Hills are currently being upgraded to digital.) The pay per view channels will be limited to one channel per media organisation. Many newspapers are part of larger media groups who have an interest in the decision. La Razón reports the Government said that it took the decision to guarantee 'equality of conditions' in the sector, approving the pay service as 'urgent and necessary'. The decision has been harshly attacked by the Prisa group, which contains not just El País, but also the pay satellite TV service Digital Plus, which will no doubt be adversely affected.

Consumer protection groups have also criticized the move saying that consumers who have paid out for digital decoders and state-of-the-art television sets incorporating TDT will be prevented from watching these programs. Most of the existing TDT boxes have no facility to accept a card. A government source has now said the legislation governing decoders stipulates that all makes and models must be able to receive and decode signals from all stations and that TV companies will only be allowed to charge for viewing one of their channels.

This really is a bit of a mess and it needs to be sorted out quickly.

Donald McDonald from the Isle of Skye went to study at an English university and was living in the hall of residence with all the other students there. After he had been there a month his mother came to visit him. "And how do you find the English students, Donald?" she asked. "Mother," he replied, "they're such terrible, noisy people. The one on that side keeps banging his head on the wall and won't stop. The one on the other side screams and screams all night." "Oh Donald! How do you manage to put up with these awful noisy English neighbours?" "Mother, I do nothing. I just ignore them. I just stay here quietly, playing my bagpipes."

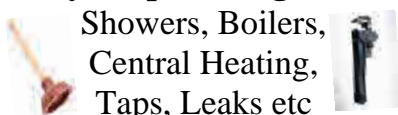
Have you noticed...?

Since singer Susan Boyle was on TV there's been a marked drop in suicide bombings. Apparently a lot of terrorists didn't realise what a virgin looks like.....

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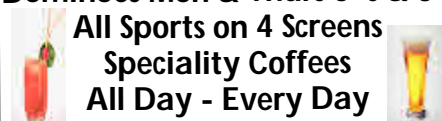
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Get on yer hoss

A cowboy rode into town and stopped at a saloon for a drink. Unfortunately, the saloon's regulars had a habit of picking on strangers. When the cowboy finished his drink he went out to his horse. Not to his surprise his horse wasn't there.

He went back in, deftly flipped his gun in the air, caught it, and shouted loudly, "All right, I'm gonna' get another drink, and by the time I go back out, I want my horse to be there or I'm gonna be forced to do what I did in Texas!"

The cowboy, true to his word, had a beer and walked outside to find that his horse was there. The bartender walked out with him and said tentatively, "Say, partner. Before you go, can I ask what happened in Texas?"

The cowboy turned and said, "I had to walk home."

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2 ceiling fans with lights, 1 white, 1 gunmetal. Can be seen working. Only 10€each. Tel. Lawrence (in Dream Hills) on **966 722 522** .

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **IBI** (*Impuesto Sobre Bienes Inmuebles*) tax should be taken out of your account today providing you signed a direct debit. This is the equivalent of the housing rates bills in the UK. As a rough guide, expect to pay around €38 for a three bed roomed house.

EHIC Card: Still no news as to how to get the card from the UK from February. We will report any firm news when it comes to hand. In the meantime check <https://www.ehic.org.uk/InternetRes/home.do>

Resignation: Tid Clifford has resigned from the positions of vice president, committee member and secretary of the Dream Hills urbanisation. She would like to thank the committee and owners for their assistance during the years she served the urbanisation.

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WATCH**

Spanish Tax Law Changes

New measures introduced by the Spanish tax office, effective August 1, will mean all taxpayers, including foreign property owners, will fall under increased scrutiny. The reduction in tax revenue caused by the economic crisis and reduction in consumer spending has created a massive hole in the governments budget. Whereas government spending has increased by 13%, incoming taxes are down by more than 25%.

The *Hacienda* can now secure personal equity, up to a maximum of 30,000 euro, by embargoing bank accounts and property to cover debts owed by individual taxpayers. The previous complicated legal process has also been eliminated.

All banks will be obliged to present annual reports for each account holder detailing the movement of funds from personal loans exceeding 6,000 euro together with cash deposits and withdrawals exceeding 3,000 euro per transaction.

This data will include that of non-residents. Information about the property they own, their bank account traffic and their water and electricity consumption has to be made readily available to the *Hacienda* by the different property registries, financial entities and utility companies in Spain. The information will give a clear picture of whether a property is in use.

There are certainly some tax increases in the pipeline. The Ministry for Hacienda wants to reduce the rapidly increasing public deficit while not affecting the politically sensitive wages or pensions. The tax increases will be centred on *rentas del capital*, that is to say non-earned income from bank interest or dividends, profits from the sale of shares or investment funds, life insurances, and profit from the sale of property and other assets. Tax on savings will probably be increased from 18% to 20% and the 400 euro extra tax allowance is likely to be withdrawn.

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