

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 38 1st of April 2010

Bienvenido a todos

Now that the weather has improved dramatically and the volume of visitors - all carrying wads of cash - has greatly increased for the Easter break, it is now open season for the various villains. Please, please, be extra careful when it comes to your personal belongings, security and safety. Thieves continue to be a problem throughout the area. Early in the month the local police arrested burglars in a house in the Barranco urbanisation near Playa Flamenca. The thieves were caught red-handed dismantling the kitchen cabinets, the boiler and the granite work-top surfaces! You may think you have nothing valuable in the house but they don't see it like that. In an attempted robbery in our road some years ago, the burglars packed toys and even a half bottle of aftershave into a suitcase for easy handling!

Early last Saturday morning, a house in the 800's was burgled here in Dream Hills. The house was fully occupied by a Norwegian family, the thieves probably managing to hook handbags etc through the ground floor windows using poles or fishing rods. They also managed to get the keys of the hire car which they also stole leaving the driveway strewn with credit cards, handbags, wallets etc. Incredibly, this is apparently the 13th time that this property has been robbed. Now you don't have to be a genius to recognise that there is a problem here but also that the thieves will undoubtedly return. Don't make it easy for them.

Speaking of 'law & order' most of us were staggered to hear that, of the 18 former inmates which the government have agreed to accept from Guantanamo Bay and relocate in Spain, two are to be housed in Dream Hills. Many of the locals believe that this area is hardly the ideal reception area for these individuals but the Spanish government believe that the diversity of cultures in this part of the coast would be very beneficial and assist their integration greatly.

The two individuals, who it is understood will be relocated to one of the bungalows, are Abdul-Muhaimin al Khazi and Khuzaymah Lutfi bin Liner. Both have always insisted on their innocence saying that when they were arrested in the Al Qaeda training camp on the Pakistan border, they were only selling ice-cream. The two gentlemen are very anxious to 'fit-in' with the locals and, being avid gardeners, have expressed an interest in joining one of the local gardening groups. They have already stated that they want to be treated the same as everybody else and would greatly appreciate it if some kind neighbour could provide them with some storage space, preferably in the garages, for their fertiliser bags.

In a laudable effort to control the dog mess on the pavements of Orihuela Costa, the town hall are providing urbanisations with African dung beetles (*Scarabaeus zambesianus*) in small cardboard boxes. The idea is to place the boxes containing the beetles in areas where dogs foul. The beetles will collect the dog poo and return to the boxes, which can then be placed in the rubbish bins. The boxes can be collected from the ladies at the Casita during the Book Swap, from Dave the handyman or from committee members. (The beetles are harmless to pets and humans.)

Very short of space this month. The History series will be back next month together with a number of restaurant reviews. I also hope to include some occasional info and advice from Mike Heighway, of Dream hills, on various financial matters. I am currently doing some research into cost-assisted holidays for pensioners in Spain and Telefonica's new 'holiday-line' service, and will report back when I have gathered sufficient info.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter.

Mick, Editor.

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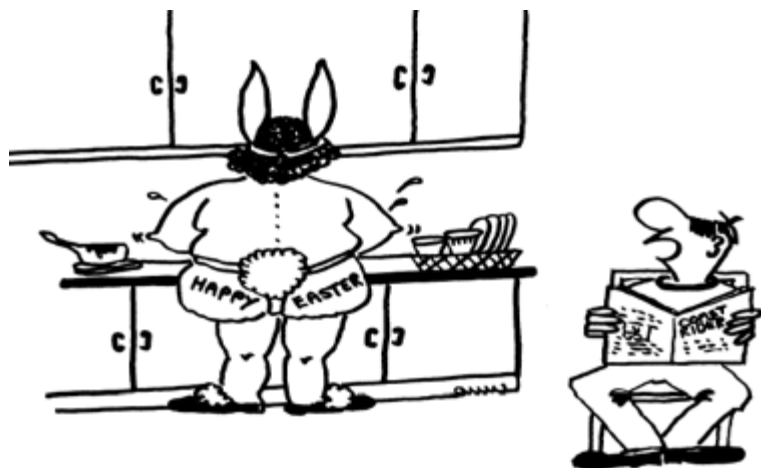
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Angela's Cartoon



Alright! I'll get you an Easter egg this year!

What's Up?

There were a number of arrests of suspected ETA terrorists in France and Spain during March. During one chase in France, a French policeman was shot dead. This tragedy then threatened to turn into farce after the French authorities released a video taken at the airport showing five 'terrorist' suspects. Five hours later it emerged that they were not terrorists but only Catalan firemen who were on their holidays in France.

It has also emerged that Hugo Chávez, the President of Venezuela, has got suspected ETA terrorists on the payroll in Venezuela. Although the Spanish opposition parties are furious, to date Prime Minister Zapatero has been very muted in his response to this news and has not yet called fellow socialist Chávez to account. A Spanish national court judge, Eloy Velasco, who has demanded that the President of Venezuela explains his actions, has been insulted by Chávez and has accused the magistrate of working for the 'Aznar mafia', and linked the PP with the far right and *Franquismo*. In a recent poll, 43% of Spaniards believe that there are links between Chávez and ETA, the Basque terrorist organisation.

Pope Benedict XVI will come to Spain later this year and will be visiting Santiago, Barcelona and Madrid.

As the Palma Arena corruption case on the Balears continues to develop, it has emerged that over a five year period, the ex Minister and ex PP President of the Balearic Islands, Jaume Matas, and his wife, only took out 450 € from their bank accounts. Now that's what I call being careful with the housekeeping! The fact that he got 1.5 million euro knocked off the price of his palatial house in Palma and put two other houses in the name of him mum and a friend has nothing to do with the millions of overspend on the Palma Arena cycling track. Bail for Snr. Matas has been set at three million € a record in Spain.

In a rather ominous statement, the Minister for Tax and the Economy, Elena Salgado, admitted that it may have been a mistake to abolish the *patrimonio* (wealth) tax. Facing union opposition, the government may drop its earlier proposal of extending the retirement age to 67. Very few of the government ministers have private pension plans.

The newspaper, El Mundo, describes Spanish private pensions as a fiasco, reporting that a Spanish fund is four times less profitable than a British one, and the commissions charged are double.

Another Spanish newspapers, La Razón, carried a photograph of the chamber at Congress (Spanish Parliament) during a debate in March with 300 empty seats; the matter being debated? - Should deputies work more!

The Spanish Chambers of Commerce say that they don't think the banks in Spain will ever recover some 100 billion € they have lent to real estate companies and promoters. Their president, Javier Gómez Navarro, said he thought that the amount, 30% of the total of 350 billion € lent, will never be recovered.

La Razón headlined that the Spanish Embassy in the United States massaged the numbers on the recession when it made its presentations to United States businessmen. The paper claimed that the number unemployed and the deficit were understated in an effort to build confidence in the Spanish economy. It also noted that there are now two million women out of work in Spain. ABC had the number 4,598,958 in large red letters on its front page. That is the number the newspaper considers to be really unemployed, saying the official figures are massaged and reduced by the number of people on training courses. EL Pais has also reported how the crisis is putting the Spanish people against immigrants; according to a new report. 77% of Spaniards think the number of immigrants here is excessive and 42% think the law is too tolerant.

The Hacienda (Spanish Inland Revenue) collected 35.5 billion between the years 2005 and 2009 as a result of its investigations into fiscal fraud, mainly in relation to real estate deals. Now that the property well has run 'dry,' it has formed an alliance with the Spanish Social Security whereby they will share data and create a new joint database using information from Agencia Tributaria, Social Security and from work inspectors. In addition, new international double tax agreements will be signed, and this will be done as there is greater interchange of information also with other European countries. She said the plan would be a step towards a European network in the fight against fraud. One newspaper, El Mundo, has reported that the Government's new plan against fraud will bring in only 1 billion of the 250 billion thought to be in the submerged/black economy.

There have been several more spats between the Royal Navy and the Guardia Civil in the Straits of Gibraltar. The Guardia have warned that the situation is deteriorating.

Although house sales remain very depressed, for the first time in two years, resales have exceeded new house sales.

The left-wing newspaper, *El Pais*, has reported that most of the Spanish regional health authorities are wallowing in debt and unable to pay their bills. Over €5 billion is owed to suppliers for drugs, bandages, chemicals etc. The three largest debtors are the regions of Andalucía, Madrid and Valencia. Although there is a 60 day legal limit on delaying payments, the regions of Cantabria, Murcia and the Balears are already taking more than 500 days to pay! Only the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Africa pay their bills on time. The newspaper believes that the Spanish health service requires a further €2 billion a year to sustain it. (This may partially explain why the Valencian health service 'pulled the rug' on other European residents who were below the retirement age.)

But of course it is not just the various health authorities who are experiencing liquidity problems. According to the Bank of Spain, the total debt of the Spanish regions reached 86.28 billion € last year, an increase of 26%; the three regions of Spain with the highest debt in 2009 being Cataluña owing 22.6 billion, Valencia 14.3 billion and Madrid 11.6 billion. Town hall debts in the province of Alicante has doubled in the last five years and have now reached a record level of €1.33 billion. As income from new housing projects has virtually disappeared, the town halls have had to borrow more from the banks, borrowings alone up 30% in 2009. Torrevieja plans to introduce spending cuts of €1 million. Lets hope they repair that disgrace of a road in Lago Jardin 2 before they cancel the repair expenditure. (At the time of writing there have been some temporary repairs made to the road.)

June 22, 2010. That is day reported to have been chosen by the Ministry for Health to stop smoking once and for all in all closed public areas. From then, the only public places where smoking will be permitted will be in prisons or on the psychiatrist's couch! The Government will also be adding dramatic photos to cigarette packets from November. The main change to the current legislation established in 2005 is the elimination of Article 8, which allowed for small bars to choose whether to be smoking or not, and the establishment of areas for smokers in larger bars and restaurants.

An unnamed British man faces a 15 month prison sentence for not paying for his mini-bar and other extras while staying at a hotel in San Sebastian last May 24 -29. Although the man paid for the room for himself, his wife and daughter in the four star hotel, he is accused of never intending to pay for the extras, leaving the hotel with an unpaid bill of 684 € He was arrested on the day he left the hotel, May 29, as he tried to board a ferry for the U.K. The prosecutors' office has demanded a 15 month prison term and repayment of the debt. One heck of a bar bill!

The Spanish Institute of Tourist Studies have announced that once again the British are the foreigners who spend the most in Spain, bringing in 984 million € in 2009, although this is 10.3% lower than a year ago.

A spokesman for the Marbella Town Hall has revealed that the amount of money missing from the town hall's coffers due to the corruption being investigated in the long running Malaya case is €12 million, not including interest.

Despite considerable success by the police, counterfeit currency increased by almost 20 % last year. 27 large scale police operations resulted in 216 arrests, an all-time high. There are two types of counterfeiters – large international gangs who are often linked to drug trafficking and prostitution, and small, usually family operations. One case was that of a family from Valencia, a married couple, their two sons and both their partners, were arrested in February. They had spent the previous seven years producing fake 50 € notes, and had reached the point where they had spent 800,000 € between them. Police say they managed to operate for so long as they were not too ambitious.

Anaesthesiologists in Alicante General Hospital cancelled around 40 operations in early March because they have not been paid approx. €6,000 euro each as part of an incentive scheme to attend more operations in the late afternoon. In mid-2008, the Valencian Government had to inject 600,000 euro owed to the striking doctors, nurses and auxiliaries, in the same hospital after other hospitals threatened to join their strike.

A 39 year old woman from Segovia, who has been filling her top of the range black Mercedes with petrol and driving off in the Madrid region since 2007 without paying a penny, has finally been caught. She conned more than 13 filling-stations in the Madrid area by adjusting the car number plates so they could not be read by the security cameras. (Once after filling-up at a station on the N332, I drove the car from the pump to the side of the garage to allow others to fill-up and parked while I went to pay my bill. When I arrived at the kiosk, the attendant had already called the police, thinking I had 'done-a-runner!')

In late February, the National Police raided a building in Madrid thought to be a major drug-dealing centre. In the building they found 120 people either buying or using a whole range of regulated substances. The police arrested 20 of the dealers aged between 23 and 62, who were part of a family clan which ran the business and which is known as 'Los Gordos' (the Fat Ones), because of the large amount of drugs they dealt with. The police found €12,000 cash, thought to be the takings of a single day and, oddly enough, a sort of altar in the building, complete with candles, where the traffickers prayed for the good of 'the company'. Although Spain continues to be the 'cocaine capital' of Europe, there is now growing concern at an increase in the use of the veterinary sedative, Ketamine. (Several young males have been admitted to hospitals with badly strained backs, when after taking the sedative they tried to lick their own balls!)

A thousand kilos of cocaine has been found hidden in barrels of frozen fruit pulp in Pamplona. The drugs came from Columbia and have an estimated street value of €30 million. Seven people were arrested.....and no doubt the sales of slushies rocketed!

In a series of coordinated raids throughout Europe in March, 70 members of the Georgian mafia were arrested, 25 of them in Spain. The gang was reportedly led from Alicante by a Georgian who has Spanish residence thanks to a marriage of convenience.

In early March, Barcelona experienced its heaviest snowfall - up to 20 inches - in 25 years. More than 470 schools were closed, bus and train services were cancelled and over 200,000 homes were without power for an extended period. On March 10, there were heavy snowfalls in Mallorca with temperatures falling to just 2°.

Movistar, the mobile phone division of Telefónica - those other bandits - has been voted the worst company of the year, according to a survey carried out by the consumers' organization FACUA. 34% chose Movistar because of their 'high tariffs and abusive practices,' which of course is standard practice for Telefonica.

We seem to have a weird 'zoo story' every month. In late March, seven tigers escaped from their cages due to negligence by the keeper while cleaning their cage in the Cocodrilo Park Zoo in Gran Canaria. Although the animals remained close to the boundaries of the park, 25 Guardia Civil and five Local Police were forced to shoot dead three of the animals after the owner of the zoo admitted that he did not have enough tranquilliser darts. The remaining four animals were returned safely to their cage.

The Guardia Civil have uncovered an illegal dog-importation business in Cáceres where pedigree puppies were being imported from Slovakia. Police surveillance commenced about six months ago after receiving several complaints from people in Badajoz, after dogs were dying shortly after being purchased. During the search the police found 58 cages containing 75 puppies of ten different breeds including schnauzers, shi-tzu, Yorkshire terriers and poodles amongst others. Many of the dogs were ill, while others were malformed. They also discovered more than 100 dead dogs stored in freezers. It is thought that these dogs died on or shortly after arrival and were being kept to support a claim later.

Skiing in the Sierra Nevada by Vivianne.

The Sierra Nevada, meaning 'snowy range' is a dramatic, rugged and extensive mountain range, the highest in Europe after the Alps and the most significant section of the Cordillera Penibética. This is the most southerly ski resort in Europe and it is quite small in comparison to other European resorts. However, the facilities are considered top rate and it has hosted numerous national and international ski events.

As the weather in Orihuela Costa was very poor, we decided to take a short break in the Sierra Nevada. It took us about three and a half hours to drive from Dream Hills to the Sierra Nevada ski resort. Most of the journey was fine except for the last 20 km's which of course was all uphill. It was also very windy. The scenery was beautiful and there were many attractive restaurants along this last leg of the journey. As we went higher the snow covered everything and finally we reached our destination, the village of Pradollano, which is sometimes called the 'California of Europe.' This is the main resort centre feeding the Sierra Nevada slopes. It has good facilities from banks to supermarkets, medical facilities, hairdressers, shops, disco pubs, restaurants, bars and a conference centre. When we arrived we could see the whole village with people skiing right down to the town square with everything covered in snow. It was all very impressive.

We booked into the Meliá Sol y Nieve Hotel. This is a beautiful four star hotel of a very modern design with a lagoon shaped indoor heated swimming pool, Jacuzzis, Turkish bath and many other facilities. The hotel has two restaurants, one a buffet style and the other an a la carte Italian brasserie. We had booked a suite on the top floor and we had large windows on two sides, one looking out onto the town square and the other with a beautiful view of the majestic Sierras. Our suite was very impressive with a huge bed, large flat screen TV, DVD & CD players together with a sofa, a table and extra chairs. The bathroom was large and beautifully fitted out.

Pradollano has lots of shops catering for the skier, be it either equipment or ski clothing. There are also about 12 restaurants and a few bars. Meals are on the pricey side with dinner and wine costing around €35 a head.

Facilities for skiing are first class, with a total of 61 kilometres spread over 39 runs, plus 6 sensational off-course trails. There are a total of 19 lifts, which can carry up to 31,965 passengers per hour. Ski lifts are open to the public from 09.00hrs. - 16.30hrs. daily, however weather conditions may affect lift schedules. On one day the winds exceeded 40 km per hour so the lifts were closed. Lifts are also open Friday and Saturday evenings for floodlit night time skiing.

Most skiers and visitors come from Spain - mainly Madrid and the cities of Andalucía. According to statistics for a recent year, 80 % of those using the facilities at the ski station were Spanish. Out of the 20 % of foreigners skiing Sierra Nevada that year, 30 % were British. You would do well to carefully plan your ski holiday in Sierra Nevada, keeping in mind that in the last week of February children from schools across Andalucía have one week off school, presumably to enjoy the snow and go skiing, which is why it's called "White Week" (Semana Blanca). Most of the children don't actually go skiing, but February is reported to be one of the busiest months, so beware. Unfortunately we choose to go there during this period. Also, as would be expected, weekends and bank holidays are particularly busy. Parking can be difficult though, so check out availability before you visit, and don't forget to bring chains for your tyres.

Those wanting a bit more culture may prefer to stay in the historic university town of Granada which is a 25 minute drive away. Ski hire and ski lessons are available from a variety of sports shops within the resort. Lessons are about 40 Euros and hour but make sure you find an English instructor or some-one who speaks fluent English or you could be disappointed. The ski resort has a long season running from November to May. This is in part due to the resort organisers who work hard to prepare the runs during the night and the resort's superbly equipped advanced snow making systems (called canons) which virtually guarantee skiing, even if it does not snow a single flake! You can see a diagram of the runs here - http://www.andalucia.co.uk/channels/sierra_nevada/sierranevadapistemap/

Whether you ski or not, I certainly recommend a visit. The area also contains the Sierra Nevada National Park, probably the finest national park in Spain.

Ask the Doctor.

What is the difference between 'guts' and 'balls'?

There is a medical distinction. We've all heard about people having guts or balls, but do you really know the difference between them?

In an effort to keep you informed and hopefully out of trouble, the definitions are listed below:

GUTS ... Is arriving home late after a night out with the boys, being met by your wife with a broom and having the guts to ask: "Are you still cleaning or are you flying off somewhere?"

BALLS ... Is coming home late after a night out with the boys, smelling of perfume and beer, lipstick on your collar, slapping your wife on the bum and having the balls to say: "You're next, fatty."

I hope this clears up any confusion on the definitions. Medically speaking, there is no difference in the outcome, since both ultimately result in death.

Board of Directors

Schwartz, Cohen, Ginsburg & Langenscheidt, four Jewish friends, decide they want to go into business together.

Schwartz says, "OK ... I'll invest £100,000."

Cohen says that he'll put in £200,000.

Ginsburg says, "All right, I'll put in £150,000."

Langenscheidt says, "I'll put in £600."

Cohen says, "If I'm putting in £200,000, I'll be the President and CEO of the corporation, Ginsburg, for your £150,000, you can be Vice President, Schwartz, for your £100,000, you will be CFO and Langenscheidt can be the Sexual Adviser."

Puzzled, Langenscheidt asks, "Why a Sexual Adviser?"

Cohen replies, "When we want your f***ing advice, we'll ask for it"

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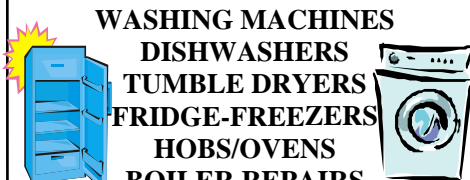
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Bedside Manner

A beautiful young girl was about to undergo a minor operation. She's laid on a trolley bed by a lady in a white uniform and wheeled to the corridor. Before they enter the room the nurse leaves her behind the theatre door so that she can go in and check whether everything is ready. A young man wearing a white coat approaches, takes the sheet away and starts examining her naked body. He walks away and consults with another man in a white coat. The second man comes over and does the same examination.

Then as a third man starts examining her body, she grows impatient and says: "All these examinations are fine and appreciated, but when are you going to start the operation?"

The man in the white coat shrugged his shoulders: "I have no idea. We're just painting the corridor."

Donna & Richard
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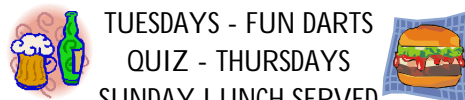
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Dyslexic Nurse?

Two doctors were in a hospital hallway one day complaining about Nurse Jenny. "She's incredibly dumb. She does everything absolutely backwards." said one doctor. "Just last week, I told her to give a patient 2 milligrams of percocet every 10 hours. She gave him 10 milligrams every 2 hours. He nearly died on us!" The second doctor said, "That's nothing. Earlier this week, I told her to give a patient an enema every 24 hours. She tried to give him 24 enemas in one hour! The guy nearly exploded!" Suddenly, they hear this blood-curdling scream from down the hall. "Oh my God!" said the first doctor, "I just realized I told Nurse Jenny to prick Mr. Smith's boil!"

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Out & About

Well, the weather this week has been glorious, highs in the mid 20s. Hopefully we have at last emerged from what has been for Spain generally, a miserably chilly winter. Around 95% of the people I have spoken to during the last month have had problems recently with mould or damp in their houses in the upper floor and many of these houses have been permanently occupied and have had their roofs recovered in recent years. In some cases this is down to condensation from gas fires, although the mould/damp has also appeared in many dwellings without gas heating. The core of the problem is that these houses have been built to cope with warm weather not the type of winter we have had this year. The lack of damp-proof courses and air bricks created many problems this year.

Both pools in Dream Hills have now been repaired and refilled. (While the pools were being filled, some Spanish louts chucked in some rocks and parts of a chicken into the lower pool.) The first of the brave ventured into the pools today, 30th, and I asked them how the water was? The answer was unanimous... 'ffffffffffreezing!'

As no one turned up to help turn part of the dead ground between the pools into a children's football area, Terry and John have done a magnificent job in planting the area with plants and trees donated from various sources. Unfortunately some louts have already damaged two mature cacti which had just been planted. In a remarkable and effective piece of civil engineering, or what he would call common sense, Terry has built a long drainage trench/water gully at the top of this bit of land. When it rains heavily all the rainwater that gushes down the side road by Via Park V is now channeled down this trench to the *barranco* and does not collect and flood between the pools. Well done, Terry!

Called at the St. Patrick's Day Festival at Playa Flamenca for a couple of pints. The weather was good and the crowds were enthusiastic. The festival was opened by a good humoured Monica Lorente, the mayoress of Orihuela who, bless her, always manages to eviscerate the English language. Still, at least she tries, which is more than her Spanish colleagues will do. One of the bands performing - the Voodoos, a rock band - were very good. What was equally appreciated was that the two main bars there, The Celtic Isle & The Lansdowne Arms, charged normal prices, €2 a pint. There was various types of food available, Irish stew, German food, onion bhajis (doing a roaring trade) & Indian, English breakfasts and Chilean food. Yes, I can hear you asking. I had some and still don't know what it was! Now looking forward to the two day St. George's festival. Well done to the town hall for arranging these.

The big change in Via Park V has been the departure of the much liked Neil & Donna from the Phoenix. Went to their farewell on the 20th. It was an excellent evening with Dream Hills's own talented Pete Cresswell entertaining us and a free buffet. Richard and Donna, also of Dream Hills, have now seamlessly taken over the bar and we wish them all the best. Their welcome party is on Saturday April 3, all welcome. Richard & Donna plan to open the kitchen in due course, watch this space. Went to see Lenny Mitchell at All Bar Sue on the 26th. I thought he was an excellent guitarist with the minimum of backing tracksor was that the generous measures poured by Kevin?

The Lime Bar in Via Park 3 is organising a trip to Benidorm on St. George's Day. Many have signed up already and I am sure it will be the usual abstemious affair. I just wonder how they are going to manage the 200 toilet stops on the way back. The Lime Bar is also holding a charity raffle for a Spanish World Cup jersey.

The Tavern Bar in Lago Jardin 2 has now reopened as Laguna Vista and is now operated by a pleasant and helpful Spanish couple. Last Saturday they were offering a small beer and small plate of paella for just €2.

Looking at many of the bars and restaurants in Via Parks 3 & 5, the number of special deals on food and drink is staggering. The retailers have certainly done their bit to makes things cheaper and better value. Aside from meal deals and generous measures, many of them are now also offering soft drinks in cans which is a great idea and good value. I have always thought that a small bottle of coke was an expensive and inadequate mixer for the spirit measures in Spain. Similarly, during the hot weather, the normal small bottle of coke, pepsi or sprite would not quench the thirst of an ant let alone that of a parched child or adult.

Do support our advertisers, most of whom go out of their way to provide you with good value in these difficult times. Business is reciprocal and remember if you do not use them, you will lose them!

Shipwrecked

A Kerryman was washed up on a beach after a terrible shipwreck together with a sheep and a sheepdog. Looking around, he realized that they were stranded on a deserted island.

After being there a while, he got into the habit of taking his two animal companions to the beach every evening to watch the sun set. One particular evening, the sky was a fiery red with beautiful cirrus clouds, the breeze was warm and gentle - a perfect night for romance. As they sat there, the sheep started looking better and better to the lonely Kerryman. Soon, he leaned over to the sheep and... put his arm around it. But the sheepdog, ever protective of the sheep, growled fiercely until the man took his arm from around the sheep.

After that, the three of them continued to enjoy the sunsets together, but there was no more cuddling.

A few weeks passed by, and lo and behold, there was another shipwreck. The only survivor was a beautiful young woman, the most beautiful woman the man had ever seen. She was in a pretty bad way when he rescued her and he slowly nursed her back to health. When the young maiden was well enough, he introduced her to their evening beach ritual. It was another beautiful evening...red sky, cirrus clouds, a warm and gentle breeze - perfect for a night of romance. Pretty soon, the Kerryman started to get 'those feelings' again. He fought the urges as long as he could, but he finally gave in and realizing he now had the opportunity, leaned over to the young woman, cautiously, and whispered in her ear, 'Would you mind taking the dog for a walk?'

(John Bradbeer)

More Electricker

After checking last month's Iberdrola bills, it is still apparent that those who signed new contracts at the supplier's office in Pilar de Horidada are continuing to be charged at the rate of 12.1113 cents per kw, while those who have not signed on are being charged at a rate of 11.7759 cents per kw.

A study from the Energy Commission has shown that changing your electricity company means a saving, at best, of only 23 € a year. Nine months after the industry was liberalised the study showed only a minimal benefit for consumers. A 67 € annual saving was possible in one case where both electricity and gas were linked. An average consumer in Spain now pays 1,287 € a year for electricity. The Spanish newspaper, La Razón, has reported that electricity for industry in Europe is most expensive in Spain and Ireland.

Although we are used to, or perhaps conditioned to, the escapades of the utility companies in Spain and are generally not too surprised by their excesses, it is with a certain amount of *Schadenfreude* that I read in the Telegraph about the distribution of energy-saving bulbs in the UK. More than 200 million free energy-saving light bulbs have been sent to households in the UK over the last two years by energy suppliers. The mass mail-out was caused by gas and electricity suppliers trying to hit Government targets to reduce carbon emissions.

However, Which?, the consumer watchdog, has calculated that each household has ended paying £45 each through higher energy bills to fund the scheme, even though many consumers objected to being sent the bulbs. Many complained about having to go to the Post Office to collect what they thought was a parcel, only to find it was a bulb that did not even fit any of their lamps. "Consumers unwittingly paid for them to help energy companies avoid fines," the Which? report said.

A scheme last year to distribute similar bulbs in Spain was largely ineffective. Consumers should have received a coupon for an energy-saving bulb with their electricity bill to be exchanged for a bulb at the local post office. However, the usual queues at the local *Correos* together with the fact that many consumers do not receive electricity bills, doomed the initiative to failure. There were also problems with the quality of the bulbs, which were made in China.

Lions eat anything!

A bloke starts his new job at the zoo and is given three tasks.

The first is to clear the exotic fish pool of weeds. As he does this a huge fish jumps up and bites him. To show the others who's boss, he beats it to death with a spade. Realising his employer won't be too pleased, he disposes of the fish by feeding it to the lions, as lions will eat anything.

Moving on to the second job of clearing out the chimpanzee house, he is attacked by two chimps who pelt him with fruit, nuts and poo. He swipes chimps with a spade, killing them both. What can he do? Feed them to the lions, he says to himself, because lions eat anything. He hurls the corpses into the lion enclosure.

He moves on to the last job, which is to collect honey from the South American bees. As soon as he starts he is attacked and stung by the bees. He grabs the spade and smashes the bees to a pulp. By now he knows what to do and throws them into the lion's cage because lions eat anything.

Later that day a new lion arrives at the zoo. He wanders up to another lion and says, "Hiya. What's the food like here?"

The other lions say, "Absolutely brilliant. Today we had fish, chimps and mushy bees."

So what's coming up?

Of course we are now on top of Easter Week - **Semana Santa - Holy Week**. There will be many religious processions throughout our area, the largest being in Orihuela and Torrevieja. I covered it in detail with photos last year so I will just repeat some of the timings of the processions in Torrevieja. These are solemn processions and are very impressive, even if you are not religious. The processions depart from the Inmaculada Church in Constitution Square at the following times - April 1st (silent procession) 11.00pm; Good Friday April 2 7.30pm; Sat April 3 10.00pm - Tamborada - the noisy one, bring a drum!; and finally Easter Sunday, April 4 at 7.45 am - Domingo de Resurrección. If you want to escape the large crowds but would like to enjoy the atmosphere, then go and see the processions in the smaller towns such as nearby San Miguel or San Fulgencio.

Los Montesinos are having a **Tapa's Festival** or Route on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of April. Around 28 bars and restaurants are participating. For just €1.80 will you be able to enjoy the 'tapa of the day' together with your choice of a glass of water, soft drink, beer or wine. The tapa changes daily in each establishment and range from Huevo loco and Calamares a la Romana to Pinchos de tortilla and mini kebabs (pinchos) depending on the outlet. Some outlets (not many!) have restricted the hours that this offer is available but there is an excellent four page brochure available around the town which details the various hours, what each outlet is offering by way of tapas and a map of each location. The brochure also allows you to vote for the best tapa and win a prize.

St. George's Day falls on Friday April 23. He is not only the patron saint of England but also of Bulgaria, Ethiopia, Georgia, Greece, Portugal and Russia. Like St. Patrick, St. George's exploits come entirely from legend, the most famous being that he saved a princess by slaying a dragon. (After living with the princess for several months, poor old George finally realised to his chagrin that he slayed the wrong dragon.....honest!)

This year, the local town hall is organising some events to celebrate the occasion. This will be held at Playa Flamenca near Mercadona on the 22nd and 23rd of April. There will be a market plus English bars, musical acts and a chance to try English cuisine, which probably means Pot Noodle and Chicken Tikka Masala!

Alejandro Sanz, winner of 15 Latin Grammys, two Grammys & 200 platinum discs, will be performing in Orihuela on June 4 as part of the year long tribute to the poet Miguel Hernandez. Tickets are priced between €73 & €37.

San Javier Jazz Fest' XIII kicks off on July 2 with rocker (and sometime actor) Chris Isaak headlining.

There will be a **Medieval Market at Los Alcázares** from April 1 to 4. The Berber pirates will be 'invading' the beach at 20.30 on April 2 plus fireworks. The Grand Parade is at 20.30 on the 3rd. Camels, burros, pirates etc. Well worth the short trip.

A BIT OF THIS THAT AND THE OTHER

- Written and Directed by David Whitney.

After the success of last years performances of "Laughter and Tears" and "Dracula, Another Story". The Actors Studio proudly present "A Bit of This That and The Other" an evening of comic sketches including a couple of sad items and a One Act Play for good measure. To be held at the Virgen del Carmen Theatre in Torrevieja on Friday 23rd April at 8.00pm. Tickets are available NOW from the Municipal Ticket Office in Torrevieja and also at The Water Filter Co. stand at Zoco market every Sunday. Tickets are only € each and all ticket sales go to our charity AFA Alzheimer's Society in Torrevieja.

If you are looking for an evening of laughter and a few tears then please put this date in your diary and support the Alzheimer's Society.

The Actors Studio are seeking new members with any of the following creative interests – acting, costume-making, hair and make-up, prop-making, public relations and general back stage help etc please contact David Whitney on 966 704 097 if you are interested in joining us.

Yet Another Parrot

A woman went to Pet's World and immediately spotted a large, beautiful parrot. There was a sign on the cage that said €50.00. "Why so little?" she asked the assistant. The assistant looked at her and said, "Look, I should tell you first that this bird used to live in a knocking-shop - a house of prostitution - and sometimes it can say some pretty vulgar stuff."

The woman thought about this, but decided she had to have the bird anyway. She took it home and hung the bird's cage up in her living room and waited for it to say something.

The bird looked around the room, then at her, and said, "New house, new madam."

The woman was a bit shocked at the implication, but then thought "that's really not so bad." Later her two teenage daughters returned from school, the bird saw them and said, "New house, new madam, new girls."

The girls and the woman were a bit offended but then began to laugh about the situation considering how and where the parrot had been raised.

Shortly afterwards, the woman's husband Keith came home from work.

The bird looked at him and squaked, "Hi Keith."

Bad Girl

A mother walks into her daughter's room holding a condom in her hand and said, "I found this while cleaning your room today.... ..Are you sexually active?"

To which the daughter replies, "No, I just lay there."

Gay flight attendant

My flight was being served by an obviously gay flight attendant, who seemed to put everyone in a good mood as he served us food and drinks. As the plane prepared to descend, he came swishing down the aisle and told us that 'Captain Marvey has asked me to announce that he'll be landing the big scary plane shortly, so lovely people, if you could just put your trays up, that would be super.

On his trip back up the aisle, he noticed this well-dressed and Arabic looking woman hadn't moved a muscle. 'Perhaps you didn't hear me over those big brute engines but I asked you to raise your trazy-poo, so the main man can pitty-pat us on the ground.'

She calmly turned her head and said, 'In my country, I am called a Princess and I take orders from no one.'

To which the flight attendant replied, without missing a beat, 'Well, sweet-cheeks, in my country I'm called a Queen, so I outrank you. Tray-up, Bitch!'

GOLF LINKS SPAIN

Gordon McCadden, former Golf Editor of Golfers Link, Golf Correspondent for Almural Golf magazine and resident of Dream Hills, has launched a new online publication - GOLF LINKS SPAIN.

The free publication is aimed at providing news and views on all that is current in the world of golf but also to pass on information relating to forthcoming cultural events and advice on where to stay and eat. This is to be an interactive site giving readers the opportunity to submit comments and views on the articles published.

You can visit the new site at www.golflinksspain.com

All Bar Sue & The Pasty Shack

Invite you to celebrate

St George's Day

on Friday 23rd April.

in support of The Alzheimer Assoc. Torry

Singalong with Keith Monk 2-4pm

Charity Quiz & Bingo 4-5pm

Kev (The Voice) Tyler 5-7pm

Enjoy Traditional English Food inc.

England's Favourite Dish!!!

We're all happy to be living in Spain, but lets "Fly the Flag" for a Day.

What happens if it rains?

Real English Weather, bring a brolly.

So come along, be happy be bright,

Wear some Red & White.

Don't be disappointed, call in and reserve your V.I.P. Table (for charity)

All Bar Sue & The Pasty Shack

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Last night, my kids and I were sitting in the living room and I said to them, 'I never want to live in a vegetative state, dependent on some machine and fluids from a bottle. If that ever happens, just pull the plug.'

They got up, unplugged the computer, and threw out my wine!!!!

The little bastards

(Martin Jung)

It seems that David Beckham's injury is so severe he hasn't got a hope of getting anywhere near the World Cup Finals.....

In a statement Beckham said "Now I know how it feels to be Scottish!"

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Book Swap

Don't forget that there is a very successful book swap facility manned (or womaned) by Chris and Pam at La Casita every Thursday morning between 10 am and 12 pm. Bring one book, or many, to swap, lots of choice.

Letter to a Dad during this year's World Cup?

A father entered his daughter's bedroom and saw a letter on the bed. With mounting premonition, he read it with trembling hands.

'Dear Mum and Dad,

I am sorry to tell you that I've eloped with my new boyfriend. I've found real love and he is so nice especially with all his piercings, scars, tattoos, and his big motorbike. But it's not only that, I'm pregnant, and Ahmed said that we will be very happy in his tent in the woods. He wants to have many more children with me and that's also one of my dreams.

I've learned that marijuana doesn't hurt anyone and we'll be growing it just for us and his friends. They're providing us with all the cocaine and ecstasy we could ever want. In the meantime, we'll pray for science to find the AIDS cure, so Ahmed can get better. He deserves it.

Don't worry about money. Ahmed has arranged for me to be in films that his friends, Leroy and Jamal, make in their basement. Apparently I can earn £50 a scene. I get a £50 bonus if there are more than three men in the scene, and an extra £100 if they use the horse.

Don't worry Mum. Now I'm 15 years old and I know how to take care of myself. Someday I'll visit you and Dad so that you can meet your grandchildren.

Your loving daughter,

Aimee

PS: Dad, it's not true. I'm watching TV at a neighbour's house. I just wanted to show you that there are worse things in life than ENGLAND GETTING SCREWED ON PENALTIES AGAIN!!'

The Remedy!

Hung Chow calls into work and says, 'Hey, I no come work today, I really sick. Got headache, stomach ache and legs hurt, I no come work.'

The boss says, 'You know something, Hung Chow, I really need you today. When I feel sick like you do, I go to my wife and tell her to give me sex. That makes everything better and I go to work... You try that.'

Two hours later Hung Chow calls again.. 'I do what You say and I feel GREAT. I be at work soon.....You got nice house.'

(Pete Dudman)

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Lee Bell has created a section in Facebook for Dream Hills.

Just go to the log-on screen and type 'Dream Hills Costa Blanca' into the search box and away you go. It already has 93 members.

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