

# THE DREAM SCENE

## Newsletter

Issue no. 39 1st of May 2010

Welcome to the May issue of The Dream Scene. It seems that summer has arrived at last and one can still smell the remnants of the orange blossoms. Bliss!

The population of Spain increased by 0.4% last year to take it to 47 million, which of course does not include illegals. The latest numbers from the National Statistics Institute, reveal that 12.2% of Spanish residents are now immigrants. There are 5.7 million immigrants registered at their local town halls, of whom 2.3 million are from other EU countries. Despite the recession and poor exchange rate, the registered British population in Spain rose by 11,523 to 387,226 in 2009. If you were to read the British newspapers, you would get the impression that it is just you and I rattling around here!

The top ten by nationalities, with the change over last year is as follows:

1. Rumania 829,715 up 30,823
2. Morocco 746,760 up 28,705
3. Ecuador 395,069 down 26,357
4. United Kingdom 387,226 up 11,523
5. Colombia 289,296 down 7,378
6. Bolivia 210,624 down 20,079
7. Germany 195,579 up 4,577
8. Italy 183,999 up 8,683
9. Bulgaria 169,195 up 4,478
10. China 156,607 up 9,128.

It is interesting to note that all the South American numbers have dropped and you would think that there were more Germans here .....from all the noise that they make! Or is that the British?

You will recall how over the last few years the requirements for signing on the *empadron* in this district of Orihuela have 'chopped & changed'. Now it is a requirement to have *residencia* before signing-on the *empadron*, the local authority are examining their records to identify those who signed on the *empadron* in earlier years with a passport, deeds and utility bills only. Those who do not have *residencia* will be told to register for it if they want to remain on the *empadron*.

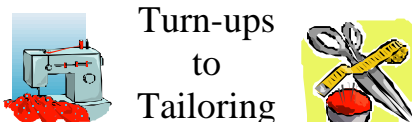
The Annual General Meeting for the Community of Dream Hills will be held on May 14, 2010, at 4 PM in the Restaurante Orihuela Costa Resort, Urbanisation La Zenia.

All the best for now. Mick, Editor.

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### Angela's Cartoon



'I hope you didn't worry when my flight was delayed!'

## What's Up?

Other than the unpronounceable Icelandic volcano, Spanish newspapers this month have been preoccupied with three issues - the economy, the Gürtel case - which relates to major financial shenanigans in the opposition Party Popular and the strange case of Spain's, and indeed the world's most famous judge, Baltasar Garzón, being dragged through the courts. More on the latter two in future issues. The economy continues to offer little comfort with unemployment continuing to rise and in the last week of April, Spain's long term sovereign credit rating has been dropped one place by Standard & Poor's to AA. This rating is hardly a disaster but the lack of confidence and the easily spooked markets could cause the ratings to slide even further.

There were disturbances inside the old Córdoba Mosque when a group of 100 Austrian Muslims arrived to pray together. They were organised, had walkie-talkies and the disturbances coincided with a procession. The problem being that the mosque is now a Catholic cathedral and has been since the Moors were kicked-out of the city in the 13th century. Two security guards were injured during the scuffles and a number of people were arrested by the Guardia Civil. (What is it about Austrians wanting to take over places abroad?)

The Holy Week in Spain appeared to have escaped the spending constraints of the recession. The processions in Sevilla for example are estimated to bring 160 million € to the city, and that amount does not include the added value to the city in tourism promotion. Hotels and bars and restaurants are as full as the streets throughout the entire week. The cost to each brotherhood in preparing their throne for procession has been put at an average 73,000 €. That cost is met by donations and a grant which comes from a central Brotherhoods' Council. Florists say that a brotherhood will spend between 2,200 and 4,000 € a year on flowers to decorate the 'palo' which on average needs at least 130 dozen flowers. The maintenance of the carvings and statues is an industry in itself which in Sevilla sees a yearly spend of more than 5.2 million € and then there is the cost of all the costumes and uniforms. Much of the sewing is done by families but still more than 600,000 € can be spent each year. Many may be upset to learn that the person who sings a *Saeta*, the mournful lament to the Virgin during the procession often thought to be a spontaneous occurrence, may have been paid to do so. Prices in Sevilla range between 700 and 1,000 € - a lot of dosh for a bit of a warble!

Both the Spanish and French police have had some notable successes concerning ETA, the Basque terrorist organisation, during the last month. Several weapons' caches were discovered as well as 13 hide-outs, four of them in France, and seizing more than 1,600 kilos of explosives. A number of lawyers were also arrested for assisting ETA members to communicate while in jail. ETA's various political wings have been banned and the government has stuck to its commitment not to negotiate with ETA's political leadership until it unconditionally renounces violence. Help with paying the rent for youngsters in Spain is costing the Government some 500 million a year. Nearly 200,000 youngsters are collecting the subsidy of 210 € a month, and there are nearly 49,000 more applications pending. Nearly half the beneficiaries are aged between 27 and 29. Youngsters under 30 have to have an income of less than 22,000 € to qualify.

Orihuela Town Hall can now levy stiff fines on graffiti vandals ranging from 750 to 3,000 euro, the larger fines being applicable when the graffiti is intended to damage privacy or honour. Also owners who do not clean their building facades can face stiff fines and those who search through bins can face fines ranging from 751(!) to 1,500 €. See <http://www.diarioinformacion.com/vega-baja/2010/04/22/orihuela-limpia-buenas-o-multas/1001567.html>

Alicante pharmacists have warned that the new government rationalisation on drug expenditures will lose them more than 1,700 € in profits monthly because of the directives. When you see the top of the range cars which these pharmacists have, I doubt whether they will get much sympathy from the public.

A team of 30 doctors in Barcelona have performed the world's first full face transplant. As well as skin tissue, the patient - a farmer who accidentally shot himself in the face with a shotgun - received new cheekbones, facial muscles, teeth, palate, skin, nose, lips and jaw. The patient has already started shaving!

Unemployment has now exceeded 20.5% in Spain, the highest since 1997, 4,612,770 out of work at the end of March. Banks and Savings Banks in Spain paid off 8,300 employees in 2009, with four branches closing daily last year.

According to the Spanish Judiciary Council, the number of foreclosures, which amounted to 58,000 in 2008 and 114,000 in 2009, will exceed 180,000 this year. (Many believe it will actually double this year.) This means that in three years more than 350,000 homeowners, most of them families, have lost their homes. If you add to this all the relatives and friends who cosigned on these loans, a common practice in Spain, and who are now at risk, because of negative equity, of having their own homes embargoed, it is easy to see why a significant part of Spanish society is now shell-shocked and feels that the ground is trembling beneath their feet.

The right wing newspaper, La Razón, notes that the socialist Ministry for Equality is proposing to veto certain fairy tales which are considered sexist. The paper says that Snow White and Sleeping Beauty are under threat. Nice to see that the Ministry are concentrating on the important things! Reminds me of the 'looney Borough of Brent' in the UK.

Citibank España is to offer its 2,700 clients who invested in Lehman Brothers, the return of 55% of the money lost. The bank points out this offer does not represent any acceptance of responsibility, and clients have until May 7 to decide whether to accept the offer or not.

In a survey of prices compiled by the Ministry for Industry during the first quarter of this year, Mercadona were found to be the cheapest supermarket in Spain, and El Corte Inglés the most expensive. It also reported that, in general, food prices fell by 6.5% over the first three months of the year, and hypermarkets remain the most economical places to shop.

Spain remains the second noisiest country in the world after Japan. Most of the noise comes from traffic - cars, heavy lorries and noisy motorbikes and mopeds. This is closely followed by building works, discotheques and leisure activities (probably karaokes!) in general; especially in summer.

On April 21, many lottery offices closed for the day across the country for the first time in history. The 'Loterros' are angry at Government plans to liberalise the sale of National Lottery tickets which would be made available in vending machines for the first time, similar to those already in use for the Primitiva. 6,000 points of sale would be established in kiosks, bookshops, tobacconists and other locations under the plan.

A woman who was taking her dog for a walk on a Taragona beach has been fined €1,125. Dog walking on the beach is prohibited by the local authority (as it is in most areas) and they decided to 'make an example' in this case.

A network which defrauded more than 20 million € with fraudulent financial deals has been broken up by the National Police in Barcelona. The network fraudulently paid bank cheques and copied the web pages of several international banks in order to make money transfers and investments in several European countries. The investigation also interrupted a fraud of 7.2 million euro being committed against Racing de Santander Football Club. Four arrests have been made, including the man considered to be the head of the operation. Several homes have been searched in Cataluña and top of the range vehicles impounded.

The improvements to the *Palau la Música* auditorium in Barcelona, started in 1999 with an initial budget of 9.1 million € They ended costing 26 million. The auditors Deloitte's investigation estimates that the real cost of the work was 16 million and the other ten million was diverted elsewhere by the then President of the institution, Fèlix Millet, and his right hand man, Jordi Montull.

In a welcome move, Orihuela's mayoress, Mónica Lorente, has announced that local taxes and fees will not be put up this year, and special discounts for families with three or more children and the unemployed will be available. Orihuela will soon be awarded the title of *Gran Ciudad*, Great City, which brings greater funding and a number of benefits to its citizens. The city has also applied to UNESCO for World Heritage Site status. The mayoress stated that 'We have a beautiful historic city centre with five national protected monuments but we also have a rich cultural heritage.' The municipality of Orihuela has a population of 80,468.

In a callous case of animal cruelty - too frequently an occurrence in Spain unfortunately - the Guardia Civil have arrested seven people in Pedrajas de San Esteban, Valladolid, four of them underage, who are accused of playing football and tennis with some 100 chickens who were killed in the process. The three adults range in age from 18 to 27. The offence took place in the early hours of the morning in mid-February during a village carnival.

The Spanish police have arrested a criminal network for money laundering in Murcia. The gang paid 8.2 million € for the purchase of land in Molina de Segura, Murcia. Nothing illegal in that except that the total price of the land was paid for in 500 euro notes! Now I wonder where all that 'dosh' came from?

The European Union has made a call to both Spain and Britain to study the cancer cases on Gibraltar, with the European Parliament Petitions Commission recommending an epidemiological study in the area. It comes as figures show a higher than average level for cancers both on the rock and in the Campo de Gibraltar area. A group which calls itself the 'Platform for an Epidemiological Study' wants a joint study to be carried out by the Spanish and Gib' authorities. They think that the high cancer rates could be linked to the oil refining activities in the bay.

In what is, I confess, my favourite story of the month, a Spanish driver in Valencia was fined €150 for 'not maintaining freedom of movement' and 'not paying sufficient attention to driving'. Nothing unusual about this except that the policeman also added to the summons that the man was 'jerking-off' with his right hand while driving his Renault van at the time! His neighbours were interviewed by the press and comments ranged from 'Isn't there any wasteland or does he not have a home' to calling the man a 'pig' saying that the fine was not enough. But what really tickled me was the comment from one woman who said, 'This shows just how difficult it is for men to do two things at once!'

**First-Aid**

Patton staggered home very late after another evening's drinking. He took off his shoes to avoid waking his wife, Kathleen.

He tiptoed as quietly as he could toward the stairs leading to their upstairs bedroom, but misjudged the bottom step. As he caught himself by grabbing the banister, his body swung around and he landed heavily on his rump. A whiskey bottle in each back pocket broke and made the landing especially painful.


Managing not to yell, Patton sprung up, pulled down his pants, and looked in the hall mirror to see that his butt-cheeks were cut and bleeding. He managed to quietly find a full box of Band-Aids and began putting a Band-Aid as best he could on each place he saw blood. He then hid the now almost empty Band-Aid box and shuffled and stumbled his way to bed.

In the morning, Patton woke up with searing pain in both his head and butt and Kathleen staring at him from across the room.


She said, 'You were drunk again last night weren't you?'

Patton said, 'How can you say such a mean thing?'

'Well,' Kathleen said, 'it could be the open front door, it could be the broken glass at the bottom of the stairs, it could be the drops of blood trailing through the house, it could be your bloodshot eyes, but mostly ..... it's all those Band-Aids stuck on the hall mirror.... (Pete Dudman)



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### Spain wants the country of origin to remain responsible for health care for expats in the EU.

Spain has proposed restrictions on so-called 'health tourism' in Europe. Under current European law you cannot prohibit a person looking for health care in another member state, but what can be done is to make the process so complicated that it does not happen.

An informal meeting of EU health ministers in Madrid on Friday, with low attendance because of the continued air transport disruption, ended with the suggestion that a citizen from one country who lives in another, and who wants to be treated in a third country, will have to obtain an authorisation from his or her doctor for the transfer. The hospital in the third country must be of a quality guaranteed by that country, but even if these conditions are met, there would be a ban on the patient actually being admitted overnight, or from taking part in any experimental treatments.

The idea of such restrictions is to make the person either return to his or her country of origin, or to remain in their country of residence for treatment. Health Minister, Trinidad Jiménez, admitted that such situations are not common, but they had to consider all possible cases.

Regarding the far more common case of foreign residents in Spain, they have the right to treatment here because Spain charges a fixed rate to their country of origin whether they use the health service here or not. Spain is insistent that it should be the country of origin which picks up the bill for expat treatments, and from May 1 the idea is that no EU resident will be able to simply choose to have treatment in Spain or any other EU country. The new rule, over which 15 countries are now in agreement, will make the country of origin responsible for the payment of health care, be it taken in the new country of residence, or if the patient decides to return 'home' for the care. Tourists are currently entitled only to emergency cover when in Spain, and following treatment the bill is then sent to their country of origin.

Spain remains firmly against the previous proposal, supported by the UK and others, that citizens can use private or public facilities in any member state and that this should be paid for by the country of residence (as opposed to origin) of the patient. The Spanish objection is logical when the high number of retired foreign residents in Spain is considered. Trinidad Jiménez noted that Spain has gone from being in a minority position on the matter to holding the EU Presidency, and therefore proposes the new text which it hopes will be brought into EU law before the end of the presidency in July.

*It should be pointed out that the above does not apply to the EU worker who is paying into the Spanish Social Security system, and who is fully entitled to free Spanish health care as a result. (Howard Brereton, Typically Sp'.) (Similarly, if you are a retired resident expat in Spain with an SIP card, you will continue to receive 'free' health care. Mick )*

### You gotta' laugh!

Doctors describe "mirthful laughter" as the equivalent of "internal jogging" because it can lower blood pressure, stress and boost the immune system much like moderate exercise. A number of volunteers asked to watch just 20 minutes of comedies and stand-up routines saw a dramatic drop in stress hormones, blood pressure and cholesterol. Like exercise, they also had their appetite stimulated. That means that the "laughercise" could be a way to reduce heart disease and diabetes. It is especially important to the elderly who may find it hard to perform more physical activities.

Dr Lee Berk, from Loma Linda University, California, who led the study, said that emotions and behaviour had a physical impact on the body. He concluded "that the body's response to repetitive laughter is similar to the effect of repetitive exercise". "As the old biblical wisdom states, it may indeed be true that laughter is a good medicine," he said.

Dr Berk, who has been studying the effects of laughter for more than two decades, said that the high you get from a giggling fit was similar to the endorphin rush from exercise. He has shown how it can reduce your risk of a heart attack and diabetes and generally regulate the body's vital functions. It is also an important way to de-stress after a day's work, he believes.

In the mid-1990s, Dr Berk found that laughter increases the number of natural killer cells in cancer patients. Natural killer cells are the body's way of fighting tumours. For the latest study he had 14 volunteers watch either a stressful 20 minute clip of the war film Saving Private Ryan or an extract from a comedy or stand up routine.

Blood samples taken afterwards showed the reduction in stress hormones and increase in immune T cells for those who watched the comedy. Blood pressure testing showed it was down too with this group.

In 1997, Dr Berk performed experiments with diabetic heart patients. One group watched a television comedy each day for one year, another did not.

The difference in outcomes was stunning. At the end of the year, the comedy-viewing group required less blood-pressure medication. Eight per cent of the comedy viewers had another heart attack, compared with 42 per cent of those who did not regularly view it.

An earlier study also showed that watching just half an hour of comedy a day slashes levels of stress hormones and compounds linked to heart disease. Levels of compounds linked to hardening of the arteries and other cardiac problems had also dropped, while levels of 'good' cholesterol – thought to protect against heart disease – rose.

Another study by Dr Berk also showed that the mere anticipation of a good laugh can benefit health. The expectation of watching a comedy video was enough to raise levels of feel-good endorphins and boost amounts of a hormone that helps our immune system fight infection.

The findings were presented at the Experimental Biology conference. (Telegraph online)

(We will do our bit in the Dream Scene to raise your laughter levels.)

Do you know that we all shed skin? Something like 90% of the dust in the world is made up of dead human skin. You think you're dusting your house. You're not. You're just moving your grandmother around. Dave Allen

How do you get 200 cows into a barn? Put up a sign that says 'Bingo'.

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"In fact, I do," said the old man. "After I have sex, I am usually cold and chilly; and then after I have sex with her the second time, I am usually hot and sweaty."

After examining the man's elderly wife, the doctor said, "Everything appears to be fine. Do you have any medical concerns that you would like to discuss with me?"

The lady replied that she had no questions or concerns. The doctor then said to her, "Your husband had an unusual concern. He claims that he is usually cold and chilly after having sex with you the first time; and then hot and sweaty after the second time. Do you know why?"

"Oh, that crazy old fart!" she replied. "That's because the first time is usually in January, and the second time is in August"

(Ann Ball)



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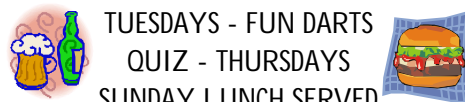
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'In awe I watched the waxing moon ride  
across the zenith of the heavens like an  
ambered chariot rushing towards the eb-  
on void of infinite space, wherein the  
tethered belts of Jupiter and Mars hang  
for ever festooned in their orbital majes-  
ty. And as I looked at all this I thought,  
"I must put a new roof on this lavatory".'  
Les Dawson

It is impossible to travel faster than light,  
and certainly not desirable, as one's hat  
keeps blowing off. Woody Allen

The two most common elements in the  
universe are hydrogen and stupidity.

Anon.

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### The History of Spain, Part 14. The reign of the Catholic Kings ends.

In 1502, Queen Isabella issued an edict demanding that all Moors in Castile either convert to Catholicism or leave the country. (The edict was not extended to Aragon and Valencia until the 1520's.) Very few Muslims decided to leave, considering that that as Spain or al-Andalus had been their home since the 700's, where could they go and why should they go? Also the conditions of departure were very demanding. Those leaving could not take any precious metals with them, such as gold or silver, and they were also required to leave their children behind! In the circumstances the pragmatic Moors decided that 'Spain was worth a Mass' and agreed to be baptised, 300,000 of them being baptised in one year alone. The baptised Moors, known as *Mariscos*, continued to practise their religion in private although every effort was made by the Queen's advisor and confessor, Cardinal Cisneros, to grind the last remnants of Moorish Spain and its Islamic culture into the dirt. The Arabic language was banned, tens of thousands of priceless books and manuscripts in Arabic were destroyed, traditional Moorish dress was banned (one was allowed to keep the existing garments until they wore out!), mosques were turned into churches and the public baths were outlawed. The *Mariscos* effectively became second class citizens. Also, whereas previously the Inquisition had no authority to investigate unconverted Muslims, now that they were converted they came under the full investigative authority and tyranny of the merciless inquisitors. Such was the paranoia and ignorance at that time that the accusation of 'he was known to take baths' would be sufficient to attract interrogation by the Inquisition. This policy of intolerance and the final rejection of the pluralistic tradition in Castilla would return to haunt the Spanish Crown in the future. There were a number of sporadic revolts by the Moors, but these attempts were quickly quashed, the rebels being either killed or sold into slavery.

Between 1520 and 1522, a civil war raged throughout Aragon and Valencia. This was a popular uprising against the nobility which was led by the brotherhoods known as the *germanías*. (These were artisans and craftsmen who were permitted to carry arms as protection against the frequent raiding by Barbary pirates.) The Moors in these regions were mainly agricultural workers or soldiers who worked for the nobles and were considered 'fair game' by the *germanías*. By targeting these Moors the *germanías* could both defeat their enemies and salve their consciences by claiming a pseudo-religious motivation. Some 40,000 died in the battles, many more later through hunger and epidemics. The campaign in Alicante region was particularly bloody one; Orihuela succumbed to the *germanías* in 1521 and was sacked for a period of 10 days! In Polop, which is just north of Benidorm, the Moors took refuge in a castle for several days and only emerged after they had been promised by the *germanías* that they would be spared after they were baptised. However once the Moors were baptised the *germanías* cut the throats of 600 of them saying that 'this was a way of sending souls into heaven and coins into our pockets!' The revolt by the *germanías* was finally quashed in late 1522 but few of their leaders were punished.

Isabella died in 1504 and her daughter Joanna was named as her successor to the throne of Castile. However, Isabella's will specified that if Joanna's mental health deteriorated further, (she became known as Joanna the Mad, *Juana la Loca*) King Ferdinand would take over the running of Castile until their grandson Carlos, the first born of Joanna and Archduke Philip, came of age. Joanna and her philandering consort, Philip the Handsome or the Fair, took up the throne in 1506 and Ferdinand returned to rule in Aragon where his dominions in the Italian Peninsula were demanding close attention. It is fair to say that both Philip and Ferdinand continually plotted to have Joanna removed or locked away so that they would have a free hand to rule. King Henry VIII of England had met and was very impressed with Philip, whereas Machiavelli chose Ferdinand as the model for a perfect prince in his famous political treatise, *The Prince*. With these two vultures circling around her, it's no wonder that poor Joanna was depressed!

However, Joanna's husband Philip died of typhus during the first year of their reign, 1506. Some suspected that his father-in-law Ferdinand poisoned him in an attempt to secure the significantly richer and more powerful throne of Castile for himself. The queen was devastated and sunk deeper into depression and madness. After receiving advice from a monk that Philip would revive, Johanna toured the country with a funeral cortege drawn by eight black horses and a train of attendants and torchbearers. Johanna would occasionally open the coffin and inspect the corpse. Finally the queen returned to the castle of Tordesillas where she was to remain as queen nominally but virtually imprisoned, until her death in 1554.

The ever-scheming Cardinal Cisneros persuaded Ferdinand to return as regent. Ferdinand had married a niece of Louis XII of France, Germaine de Foix, a year after the death of Isabella. In 1512, taking advantage of succession disputes to the throne of Navarre, he annexed the independent kingdom, completing the unification of the lands that today comprise Spain. Encouraged by the clergy, Ferdinand did much to improve the manner in which the natives were treated in the New World colonies, at least superficially, with the introduction of the Laws of Burgos. Even in those brutal times, the savage treatment of the natives in Hispaniola by the Spanish settlers shocked and angered Spanish society.

Ferdinand was prodigiously fecund in his youth siring many illegitimate children. However with his new wife Germaine, 12 years his junior, he couldn't quite 'raise the mainsail.' The only child they had died at birth and in an effort to improve his fertility and ardour, Ferdinand began to take a number of love potions/aphrodisiacs which contributed to the deterioration of his health and it is likely that a love potion made of mercury hastened his death in 1516. Ferdinand's remains were taken and placed next to Isabella's in the royal chapel in Granada.

In his well researched and entertaining book - *The Story of Spain* - Mark Williams succinctly summed up the reign's of Ferdinand and Isabella. 'Together they left Spain on the threshold of world power and cultural glory. Ever since, many Spaniards have looked back at the reign of *Los Reyes Catolicos* as an era of innocent grandeur, before the burdens of empire came crashing down on a nation ill-prepared to face them.'

### Law & Order

Many of you will recall the tragic murder of 43-year-old Angela Hall in her home in Residencial Inspiracion, between Dream Hills and Lago Jardin II, on April 7, 2008. Pedro José B.I., a Cuban, was found guilty of killing Mrs. Hall following a unanimous verdict by the jury and was sentenced by an Elche judge to 17 years in prison. Undoubtedly not sufficient justice for the murdering swine but it was the sentence requested by the state prosecutor. The jury accepted that the killer launched an unprovoked and surprise attack on Mrs. Hall, 'grabbing her from behind and stabbing her several times without her being able to defend herself.' The judge emphasised the seriousness and cruelty of the crime.

In a tradition which dates back to Carlos III in 1759, the El Rico brotherhood in Málaga has granted a pardon to a prisoner being held in the Málaga jail. According to the legend, back in 1765 there was an outbreak of cholera which killed many citizens. Due to fear of infection during Holy Week, there were no men available to carry the statue for its yearly procession. Hearing of this, the prisoners of the county jail escaped in order to carry their Christ. All of them returned to jail voluntarily after the procession and the epidemic subsided. For this reason, the King Carlos III ordered for a prisoner to be released every Holy Wednesday from then on. Each year the man granted a pardon leads the El Rico procession on the Wednesday of Holy Week, covered in a black mask. On this occasion the pardoned man had been serving a three and a half year prison sentence for defrauding clients of his insurance business out of four million pesetas between 1993 and 1995 and only started serving his sentence last December.

In another somewhat comic case, a man who was set to become the first prisoner to be granted an Easter Good Friday pardon in Granada since 1928, has been re-arrested for drug trafficking. This idiot was enjoying the third grade open prison regime when he was arrested with four others as part of a drug's raid in Madrid. He had been sentenced last September to three years in prison for a crime against public health. The *Soledad de San Jerónimo* Brotherhood then cancelled their plans to pardon him at a ceremony in Granada Cathedral. In less than a month the prisoner has been sentenced, pardoned, granted the open regime, arrested, and now sent to prison on remand.

In an unusual case, the Catalan police have arrested a 33-year-old woman who specialised in flirting with men in bars and nightclubs, then drugging their drinks and robbing them. Police got suspicious when a large number of men reported having been robbed of their cash and credit cards by a curly haired woman who had drugged their drinks, one of them requiring medical assistance after consuming a doped drink! When arrested, the lady had 5,000 euro, 12 sleeping pills and two prescriptions for sleeping medication in her handbag.

And, in another doping story, the Supreme Court in Palma have confirmed a five-year prison sentence on a doctor of Palestinian origin. An English lady suffering from nerves, which were stopping her from sleeping, went to the doctor. The doctor gave her a sedative and then started to kiss her and touch her inappropriately. Although very groggy, the patient managed to resist and get out of the surgery, complaining later to the police. (I wonder how the poor dear's nerves are now, not too good I imagine.)

A Valencia businessman, Francisco Ramirez, who killed two burglars who broke into his villa in January 2006, has recently been found not guilty after the court accepted his plea of self-defence. The case against him had been brought by the widows of the two deceased.

Fortunately Dream Hills appears to have been relatively quiet as far as crime during the last month. The security guards spotted a 'look-out' at the top of one of the roads mid-urbanisation at around 2 am; as they approached him, he was joined by two other accomplices who then scampered-off over the wall to DH2, where a fourth was waiting for them in a blue get-away vehicle. These villains had been attempting to rob a garage in the 80's before being interrupted by the guards. The incident indicates that organised gangs are operating in the area.

There is still plenty of crime and muggings here on the Costa. Robberies in the Pau 8 area on the other side of Entre Golf now average about eight to nine a week while those around Las Ramblas average six to seven every week.

If you are a visitor (or indeed a resident) you cannot afford to drop your guard. You will be at your most vulnerable when you are loading your car at the airport, on the drive to your accommodation (do not stop for anyone), when you are unloading your car and during your first night when you go out for a meal, leaving your belongings in the house.

### Now Hear the Word of the Lord.

A minister decided that a visual demonstration would add emphasis to his Sunday sermon.

Four worms were placed into four separate jars. The first worm was put into a container of alcohol.

The second worm was put into a container of cigarette smoke. The third worm was put into a container of chocolate syrup. The fourth worm was put into a container of good clean soil.

At the conclusion of the sermon, the minister reported the following results:

The first worm in alcohol- Dead.

The second worm in cigarette smoke – Dead.

Third worm in chocolate syrup – Dead.

Fourth worm in good clean soil – Alive!

So the minister asked the congregation, 'What did you learn from this demonstration???'

A young lady sitting in the back quickly raised her hand and said, 'As long as you drink, smoke and eat chocolate, you won't have worms!'

That pretty much ended the service. (Dave Purdy)



### Tax Tips

People who have benefited from the Plan E car scrappage scheme in Spain and obtained up to 2,000 € in assistance, have been told that they have to declare the amount as an income in the income tax return for last year. Something no one was told about until now!

In an effort to stimulate the building industry, the Spanish government are attempting to divert the many unemployed builders across the country into the home improvement sector. One of the tax reforms being introduced is that all renovation work in private homes for the next two years will be charged at the lower IVA (VAT) rate of 4%. I am not sure how effective this measure will be as most renovation work appears to be done within the 'black economy.'

There will also be income tax breaks for those who carry out improvements to their homes before the end of December 2012. 10% of the total cost of the project can be claimed against your Spanish tax payable, up to a maximum of 4,000 € a year, in measures which are open to all those who earn less than 53,000 € a year, which is about 95% of the general population. (It is interesting to note that now in Greece, in an effort to fill the gaping hole in its public finances, they plan to levy a tax of up to 20 per cent on people who have had extensions including holiday villas.)

The period to hand in your tax details in Spain runs this year from May 3 to June 30. One unwelcome feature this year is the removal of the 400 € tax rebate on incomes over 15,645 € a year. If you are taxed jointly here and your joint incomes are in excess of this figure, it may be worthwhile being taxed separately to keep this rebate. A sliding scale on the 400 € also applies so it is worth obtaining professional advice.

### 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 much, much more. This is to be an interactive site giving readers the opportunity to submit comments and views on the articles published. See [www.golflinksspain.com](http://www.golflinksspain.com)

### Thank You

**Patsy and Arthur would like to thank everybody who came to help celebrate Patsy's 80th at All Bar Sue's this month. A heartfelt thanks also for all the lovely cards and wonderful presents.**

**Thanks also to Kevin & Jules for organising an excellent evening and buffet and to Pete Cresswell for the great entertainment. All in all, it was a hugely enjoyable and memorable evening.**

It may be a bit early for Iceland volcano jokes. We should wait awhile for the dust to settle!

I came out my house yesterday and was hit on the head by a bag of frozen sausages, a chocolate gateau and some fish fingers. I realised it must be the fallout from Iceland. 'Waiter, there's volcanic ash in my soup!'

'I know, it's a no-fly zone.'

It was the last wish of the Icelandic economy that its ashes be spread over Europe.

Hats off to the Icelandic people. First they declared themselves bankrupt...Then they set their island on fire....Anyone else smell the mother of all insurance frauds?

Woke this morning to find every surface in the house covered in a layer of dust and a foul stench of sulphur in the air. No change, I've been married to that bone-idle slob for 20 years!

What's the difference between the Icelandic Volcano and Cheryl Cole?.

The volcano is still blowing ash.

To All Al Queda Fighters

From: Bin Laden, Osama

Subject: The Cave

Hi guys,

What with the offensive by the Infidels, we've all been putting in long hours recently but we've really come together as a group and I love that! However, while we are fighting a jihad, we mustn't forget to take care of the cave & frankly I have a few concerns:

First of all, while it's good to be concerned about cruise missiles, we should be even more concerned about the dust in our cave. We want to avoid excessive dust inhalation, (a Health & Safety issue) - so we need to sweep the cave daily. I've done my bit on the cleaning rota, have you? I've posted a sign-up sheet near the cave reception area (next to the halal toaster).

Second, it's not often I make a video address but when I do, I'm trying to scare the shit out of most of the world's population, okay? That means that while we're tapeing, please do not ride your scooter in the background or keep doing the 'Wassup' thing. OK? Thanks.

Third: Food. I bought a box of Dairylea recently, clearly wrote "Ossy" on the front, and put it on the top shelf. Today, two of my Dairylea slices were gone. Consideration. That's all I'm saying.

Fourth: I'm not against team spirit and all that, but we must distance ourselves from the Infidel's bat and ball games.

Please do not chant "Ossy Ossy Ossy, Oy Oy Oy" when I ride past on the donkey. Thanks.

Five: Graffiti. Whoever wrote "OSAMA SH\*GS DONKEYS" on the group toilet wall, it's a lie. The donkey backed into me, whilst I was relieving myself at the edge of the mountain.

Six: The use of chickens is strictly for food. Assam, the old excuse that the 'chicken backed into me, whilst I was relieving myself at the edge of the mountain' will not be accepted in future. (With donkeys, this is a grey area.)

Finally, we've heard that there may be Infidel soldiers in disguise trying to infiltrate our ranks. I want to set up patrols to look for them. First patrol will be Omar, Muhammad, Abdul, Akbar and Rodney.

Love you lots,

Group Hug.

Os.

### Iceland

Very little space this month so I have to be brief. St. George's Day celebrations went very well in Via Park V and were well attended. Both The Pasty Shack and All Bar Sue arranged a joint gig with good traditional British food - no, not Pot Noodle - with entertainment provided by Dream Hills's own Keith Monk and an 'outsider' Kevin Tyler.

Stallion's arranged a barbecue, which we thoroughly enjoyed, together with entertainment by Ian Mac, who I believe, also lives nearby. (The area is bursting with talent!) Both events also had raffles for charity.

The Lime Bar organised a day-trip to Benidorm on the day. The bus, with 50 sober and clean-living individuals left Via Park 3 at 8:30am and arrived in Benidorm's 'City of Culture' at 10.15am. The travellers then spent the day visiting museums and lesbian workshops. Breakfast was provided together with a lunchtime buffet, which was followed by a comedian. I understand that so many souvenirs were taken away, that the structural integrity of a number of establishments in Benidorm is now in doubt! The travellers arrived back at Via Park 3 at 7.30pm, older, wiser, poorer and all with bursting bladders! The trip cost €13 per person, all incl.

There was also a two-day St. George's event at Playa Flamenca which was also crowded, so it is good to see that the day is becoming a regular fiesta, at least in this area.

On the retail front, Aldi's will be opening a new store at the new commercial centre next to Dream Hill 2 on May 6. The new Mercadona in Los Balcones is 'steaming ahead' and a new Danish store, JYSK (rather like a mini IKEA), at Punta Prima, is proving very popular, not just with Scandinavians, but with anyone who enjoys spending hours putting a bookcase together!

### Amazing Grace

As an experienced bagpiper, he played many events and venues. Recently he was asked by a funeral director to play at a grave side service for a Scottish homeless man who had no family or friends, so the service was to be at a pauper's cemetery.

As he was not familiar with the area, he got lost; and being a typical man he didn't ask for directions. He finally arrived an hour late and saw the funeral people had evidently gone and the hearse was nowhere in sight.

There was only a mini JCB digger and three guys left and they were eating their sandwiches. The piper felt bad and apologized to the men for being late. He went to the side of the grave and looked down and the vault lid was already in place. He didn't know what else to do, so he started to play his pipes.

The workers put down their sandwiches and began to gather around. Then he played out my heart and soul for this man with no family and friends. He played like he'd never played before for this homeless man. And as he played 'Amazing Grace,' the workers began to weep. They wept, he wept. When he finished he packed up his bagpipes and walked slowly to his car, with his head bowed and his heart full. As he was opening the car door, the piper heard one of the workers say,

"I've never seen anything like that before and I've been putting in septic tanks for twenty years!"

Although it is not close to this area, **Restaurante La Fina Boca** in Avenida Alfredo Nobel, Torreveija, is certainly worth a visit. The more scenic route is to take the coast road through Torreveija towards La Mata. The restaurant is on the left a few hundred yards before the Hotel Masa.

Incidentally, a couple of hundred yards before La Fina Boca is a Chinese restaurant called **Haifeng** which easily is the worst one we have ever visited. One day we unwisely stopped there for lunch. It had been raining and there were buckets throughout, drip, drip, dripping continuously. When the food arrived, cooked by the waiter, it was a battle to see who would have control over it, the flies or us. In the end the flies won. The whole place, brick upon brick, should be shipped to North Korea.

On to **La Fina Boca**, the Fine Mouth. The restaurant is run by Christian Lehane, a Belgian chef, who has won numerous awards, the certificates being displayed on the various walls. Christian is assisted by his wife, Ana.

The last time we went to the restaurant for lunch, we were greeted by Christian who was confident, flamboyant and dressed totally in pink, very Elton John I thought!

There is a lunchtime menu here but it was a bit disappointing. This is not a Menú del Día but a selection of dishes, all independently priced. There were very few starters but the French Onion Soup was very good at €3.80. My Chicken Vol au Vent, €8.50, was very small and served with very poor steak fries. 'She, who must be obeyed' had a Mixed Meat Brochette, €9.80, which was served with a dipping sauce, salad garnish and the same type fries. The brochette was served in a hanging skewer and was very tasty. We also shared a Bacon Salad, €6, and the bill for the above together with two large beers and two glasses of gaseosa came to €40.30. Probably too much for what it was, but then again Afternoon Tea for two at the Dorchester in London would set you back almost £70, plus service; so prices are pitched at what people are willing to pay. Then again we were almost the only ones having lunch there that day!

But it is in the evening that the restaurant 'flexes its muscles' with its exciting menu. You are then invited to 'Taste the World' with a large selection of dishes from around the world. Starters include Smoked Norwegian Salmon with sour cream, €7.80, Snails Bourgogne style in garlic butter, €6.80, and French Basque duck fois gras terrine with sun-dried tomato relish, €8.80. Mains include Magret of Duck Christian style, with dauphinois gratin and grilled cherry tomatoes, €15.80, New Zealand Rack of Lamb with seasonal chargrilled vegetables, Kiwi relish and dauphinois gratin, €16.80, Grilled Pacific Shark Fillet, coconut sauce, baby corn and roast potatoes, €13.80, Andean grilled Llama fillet, special Inca spicy sauce and white Andean rice, €16.80, Roast Kenyan Antelope fillet with sweet onion sauce, rösti sweet potatoes and fried Banana, €16.80, and much, much more. The menus are changed twice annually and there is always something to stimulate a tired palate.

The ceiling to most of the restaurant is decorated with fishing nets and the place has a very relaxed and friendly atmosphere. The only major crib I have is that the chairs were a mix of plastic and rickety wooden chairs, not at all comfortable. They have a very informative web-site with plenty of photos at <http://www.finaboca.com/ingles.htm>

Telephone: 660 867 600

## Maypole Financial Services

I am delighted to have the opportunity to provide a series of articles regarding financial advice for you residents, who are fortunate enough to live in Dream Hills, Orihuela Costa. However the majority of these articles will be applicable to all of you irrespective of whether you live in Spain or the UK.

I have had a property on Dream Hills for over 3 years now and during this time I have been dismayed by the financial advice offered in the local media. I would therefore like to take the opportunity to discuss what you should be looking for when seeking financial advice whether in Spain or the UK.

First you need to make sure that the advisor is registered and if so, where? Are they authorised to advise you in Spain? How long have they been in the industry and are they qualified? If the advisor is not registered in the UK, what complaints procedure is in place? What compensation scheme are they attached to?

Just because you live in Spain should that mean you get less than if you received advice in the UK?

Always get a personal illustration. Find out what fees/commissions are payable to the advisor.

What can I REALLY do with QROPS? Is it wise?

Have I got the correct medical cover? Why is life insurance so expensive, can I get it cheaper?

I have an investment plan but I haven't seen the advisor since, can you help?

Maypole Financial Services are authorised and regulated in the UK by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). Our reference number is 457971 and we are authorised to give advice in Spain.

Check us out at [www.fsa.gov.uk](http://www.fsa.gov.uk).

At Maypole Financial Services we always provide a FREE initial meeting and that can be provided in your OWN house either here or in the UK and I can arrange to meet you on one of my frequent visits.

Just phone me on 00 44 1384 352345 or email [mike@maypolefs.co.uk](mailto:mike@maypolefs.co.uk) to arrange your FREE initial meeting. Even if you have already taken advice and policies in place I will give you a second opinion and hopefully reassurance that the product meets your requirements.

For forthcoming issues I would appreciate an email to [mike@maypolefs.co.uk](mailto:mike@maypolefs.co.uk) as to what you would like me to write about.

*Maypole Financial Services cannot accept responsibility for any decisions or actions taken as a result of this article. Maypole Financial Services are authorised and regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA). FSA number 457971. The FSA does not regulate will writing and some forms of tax planning.* (Mike Heighway)

**STOP PRESS: There will be a Petanca Knock-out Tournament, to celebrate four years of petanca at Dream Hills, at the petanca courts on Saturday, May 1 at 10 am.**



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### How much?

Blair, Sarkozy, and Putin all die and go to hell.

While there, they spy a red phone and ask what the phone is for. The devil tells them it is for calling back to Earth.

Putin asks to call Russia and talks for 5 minutes. When he is finished the devil informs him that the cost is a million dollars, so Putin writes him a check.

Next Sarkozy calls France and talks to his mistresses for 30 minutes. When he is finished the devil informs him that the cost is 6 million dollars, so he writes him a check.

Finally Blair gets his turn and talks for 4 hours. When he is finished the devil informs him that the cost is \$5.00.

When Putin hears this he goes ballistic and asks the devil why Blair got to call the UK so cheaply.

The devil smiles and replies: "Since Gordon Brown took over, the country has gone to hell, so it's a local call."

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A young Chinese couple get married. She is a virgin and truth be told, he is not all that experienced either.

On their wedding night, she covers naked under the sheets as her husband undresses. He climbs in next to her and tries to be reassuring.

"My darring" he says "I know dis yo firrs time and you berry berry flighten, I plomise you, I give you anything you wan, I do anyting, anything you wan. ....Whatchou wan?" He tried to sound experienced, which he hopes will impress her.

She eventually replies shyly and unsure, "I wan to tly someting I head about, iss ah numbah 69"

In a puzzled tone he asks, "You wan ... chicken wiff brocorri?"

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**New changes to Motoring Law**

Drivers caught without a current ITV (MOT) will now be given ten days to get the car passed, but will still be fined €150.

Currently ITV stations are failing one in five vehicles presented, for not being roadworthy or for emitting more exhaust gases than permitted.

Also, from May 25th, if you are caught speeding just one kilometre above the speed limit you can be fined, previously you were allowed some latitude.

The Spanish Senate are preparing to introduce legislation to allow drug tests at routine traffic controls, in addition to the current one for alcohol. Under current legislation such drug tests are voluntary, but as many as 70% of them turn out to be positive. 17.5% of drivers currently killed on the roads in Spain are found to have consumed drugs. Time to throw away those magic mushrooms!

The Government are also drafting a new penal code with exemplary penalties for offences such as excessive speeding and drink-driving. The penalties will include confiscation of your car! More details in Spanish in the link below - <http://www.larazon.es/noticia/10075-si-conduce-ebrio-o-sin-carnet-le-pueden-decomisar-su-coche-y-venderlo>

If you would like to take part in organised walking trips in the Costa Blanca then email the following address - [scbwalkers@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:scbwalkers@hotmail.co.uk)

**An Irish blonde in a casino.**

An attractive blonde from Cork, Ireland, arrived at the casino. She seemed a little intoxicated and bet twenty-thousand Euros on a single roll of the dice. She said, 'I hope you don't mind, but I feel much luckier when I'm completely nude'.

With that, she stripped from the neck down, rolled the dice and with an Irish brogue yelled, 'Come on, baby, Mama needs new clothes!'

As the dice came to a stop, she jumped up and down and squealed...'YES! YES! I WON, I WON!'

She hugged each of the dealers and then picked up her winnings and her clothes and quickly departed.

The dealers stared at each other dumbfounded. Finally, one of them asked, 'What did she roll?'

The other answered, 'I don't know - I thought you were watching.'

**MORAL OF THE STORY** - Not all Irish are drunks, not all blondes are dumb, but all men.....are men.

(Pat Chambers)

I got stopped by a copper with a radar gun the other day.

'Bit of a speed merchant are we sir?' he asked.

'A bit, now and then,' I replied, 'but I only sell to friends'.

So as well as three points, I'm looking at three months!

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**Facebook**

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 now has 128 members.

**DISCLAIMER**

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