

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 45 1st of November 2010

Bienvenido to our largest issue yet, 14 pages!

Although some adverts have fallen off in recent months due to closures etc, there are some new ones this month including some whole page adverts from 'A Little Piece of Home' and 'Azuretel.' I am very grateful for these, indeed all the adverts, because this month I have had to 'shell-out' an extra €200 for a new printer and more than €200 for toner cartridges plus €18 for paper! I will keep the old printer as a back-up, but it certainly paid its way printing over 103,000 pages since The Dream Scene started 45 issues ago! Other than worn out parts such as drums - three or four of them - it has been an excellent work-horse and did not have one mechanical breakdown in that time. Thank you Brother Printers!

Do take time to look at our advertisers as many have got some excellent offers on this month. These are all 'tried & tested' local businesses and the range of services being offered is very extensive. And remember the old saying, 'A pub is not just for Christmas!'

Well summer has officially ended now, and it certainly has grown much cooler in the evenings, but nothing like as cold as last year yet. To date we seemed to have escaped 'gota frias,' which is good news, but we could do with a little more rain now for the plants and trees.

Although the number of burglaries in Dream Hills has been very low this summer, Scott, one of the security guards, has asked me to remind you all to be very vigilant and not to drop your guard. Last month two vehicles were stolen from Dream Hills. The first, a Scandinavian's Mercedes, was stolen from the 400's after the owner left his front door and grill open. The thieves just walked in, took the keys and drove off! Scott gave chase on his scooter, but a 'pop-pop bike' is no match for a Merc. Maybe we should get him to fit a turbo! The second vehicle, a rented car, was stolen from the top part of the urbanisation. The house owner had left his shutters up and the thieves easily lifted the windows out and, using the 'fishing-pole' technique, snatched the keys and drove off. Six vehicles were stolen from La Florida in one evening last month. The police believe that the villains are an organised Bulgarian-Mafia gang.

Scott also reminds you not to leave brooms, mops and brushes visible outside your property. The burglars are adept at taping these together with a piece of wire, and fishing your car-keys, wallets etc., from the coffee tables in your lounge. This is still the most common type of burglary on the Costa. Windows can be quietly lifted out, but when your shutters are down, even if they are not locked, they are much more noisy and difficult for the thieves to raise.

As we are coming up to the eleventh month, please support the Poppy Appeal in your area. No matter what country you hail from, let's all honour our heroes this month.

Check-out the Dream Hills web-forum soon for links to Halloween photos.

Take care of yourselves and bye for now. Mick, Editor.

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Angela, The Dream Scene cartoonist, is away.



Her cartoon will be back next month.

What's Up?

One of the big new's stories during the month, nationally and internationally, was of course the rescue of the Chilean miners. A great story, but what really caught my usually perverse interest was the case of the 52-year-old Chilean who also 'escaped,' but this time in the town of Fuengirola in the Costa del Sol. This chap managed to knock down a policeman with his car in the town, was arrested and tested positive for alcohol. It was then discovered that he was in Spain illegally and was placed in the local jail. While there, during a visit to the toilet, he managed to lock the policeman in his cell and escaped onto the street. To date he has not been recaptured.

Another big story was the revelation that a number of ETA members are hiding-out and training in Venezuela, some of them on the Venezuelan government payroll! The Spanish government have been fairly mute on this, but now a judge in the Prosecutor's Office in the National Court in Madrid, has requested that the Government demand the extradition of one, the ETA activist Arturo Cubillas, from Venezuela. Two ETA activists have testified in Spain that Cubillas had trained them, and FARC guerrillas from Colombia, in classes established in Venezuela.

The two main police unions have criticized Zapatero for his conciliatory gestures to Batasuna, the political wing of ETA. However Batasuna is now demanding that the terrorist organisation declare an 'unconditional' end to violence. Despite the present ETA 'ceasefire,' several businessmen in the Basque Region have had extortionate demands from the terrorists to pay €400,000 in 'revolutionary tax'.

PM Zapatero has also reshuffled his cabinet. Although the Ministries of Housing and Equality have now been closed down, the new cabinet is seen as a further move to the left. One of the new faces, Rubalcaba -the new Deputy PM - may be in line to replace Zapatero at the next election. Rubalcaba comes with some 'history.'

The right-of-centre newspaper, La Razón, has reported that the PNV, Basque Nationalist Party, has a double standard over ETA, condemning the terrorists on the one hand and giving help to the terrorists' families on the other. PNV controlled Lazcano Town Hall has given 160 € to a mother so she can visit her daughter in prison. The PP notes that money is not given to the victims of ETA so they can visit their loved ones in the cemetery.

The Spanish National Statistics Institute has released some very disturbing figures. They state that 21% of the Spanish population are below the poverty line with 24.6% of over 65's in this category. People are considered to be below the poverty line if their income is less than 60% of the average income across the country. Average income in Spanish homes (ie family income) was 25,732 € in 2009, 2.9% down on 2008, and the average income per person was 9,627 €, down 2.4% on 2008. The charity *Caritas* has assisted 800,000 people in Spain in 2009 to the tune of €230 million. The number of cases has doubled since 2007 and they are concerned that the number is increasing due to the economic situation and the decrease in public aid. Interestingly, they have reported donations up 21%, which is admirable.

During the first quarter of this year, there were 27,561 property repossessions by the banks. Some estimate that the Spanish banks are now holding property valued at (but not worth!) €20.5 billion. One newspaper reported that Spain's 'problem with bricks' amounts to €180.8 billion!

The European Court of Justice has ruled that the digital canon (tax or surcharge), charged on blank recording CD's, DVD's, printers, recorders, computers and other digital media in Spain as compensation for the loss of income for the creators, is not in line with European legislation. The tax was described as 'indiscriminate' and has been in effect for two years. Companies may now reclaim the surcharge paid.

The General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ) has agreed to create a new criminal court (No.4) in an effort to relieve the backlog of pending cases in both Torreveja and Orihuela. The huge backlog of cases - some trials in Torreveja in relation to driving with high blood-alcohol-levels have been outstanding for ten years - has encouraged or forced the judiciary in both areas to combine resources.

The Spanish air traffic controllers are playing-up again. AENA, the Spanish Airports' Authority, have said that the controllers are not meeting the overtime terms of an agreement settled in August. Four of the eleven controllers did not show up for work which resulted in delays during the bank holiday weekend in October at Alicante and Valencia. Meanwhile it has been revealed that only 0.8% of the controllers have taken the English examination they need to pass to stay in their jobs. A 2006 European directive states that all controllers must pass the United Nations for Civil Aviation Organisation Exam by March 5 next year!

The Catalan Regional Government, La Generalitat, has fined the four low cost airlines, Vueling, Ryanair, Easyjet and Transavia a total of 149,700 € for breaking consumer rights and carrying out what they describe as 'abusive practices'.

Eight men and four women, all British, were arrested in Orihuela and Torreveja in early October. Five vehicles, an eight-metre long boat, 53,000 ecstasy tablets and a well camouflaged marihuana plantation in Crevillente were also impounded.

A 44-year-old woman, from Cartuia de Monegros in Huesca in the north east of Spain, has become the first case of indigenous malaria in Spain in half a century. Epidemiologists have concluded that the culprit was an indigenous mosquito, as the patient did not fall under the usual causes of contagion - as foreign travel, blood transfusion, organ transplant or a visit to the airport - did not occur.

The Andalucian Regional Government is putting a five cent tax on single use plastic bags from Jan 1, 2011. From 2012 the tax will increase to ten cents. They plan to raise more than €45 million in taxes in the first year.

M&S are planning to re-enter Europe. They now plan to buy back most of the properties they sold-off ten years ago. These include six in Spain, which were sold to *El Corte Inglés*.

"One guy had four women waiting for him; there was the wife he never divorced, then there was the woman he lives with, then there was his current girlfriend and then the baby mama. He is now known as the Tiger Woods of mining."
-Bill Maher, on one of the Chilean miners.

What's Up? continued

The government have rejected the idea of smoking rooms in bars and restaurants. The ban on smoking in public places has been moved from the 1st to the 2nd of January 2011, so as not to interfere with New Year's Eve celebrations - 'one last fag!'

A 37 year old Senegalese street-trader has drowned in a reservoir at Capilla, Badajoz. He was travelling with a friend and it seems the GPS navigation device in the Peugeot 306 had sent them along the road in question when returning from a fair in Cabeza de Buey, Badajoz. The data used by the device was out of date, and the road has now been flooded by the creation of the reservoir. The driver's companion said that they could not brake in time, and while he managed to get out of the vehicle and swim to shore, his friend drowned.

Torrox Town Hall, in the Costa del Sol, has been forced to contract the services of a private security firm after all 34 members of the local police force reported sick. The numbers reporting ill had been increasing since the start of the town's *feria* (fair), in what the Ayuntamiento considers has more to do with putting pressure over working conditions, rather than the action of a virus!

Negligence at a Tarragona dialysis centre has resulted in at least seven patients being infected with Hepatitis C, the most severe variant of the virus. Although the criminal case remains open, the infected patients each received €3,000.

The evening of Sunday October 3 was an unusually violent one in Madrid. When the emergency services arrived at a bar, they found three people conscious but bleeding heavily. The three had stabbed each other following an argument in the toilet over who owed for the drinks! OK, weird enough, but the 'slashing' three (pardon the pun) were aged between 62 and 63! One had a stab-wound in his neck, another in his side and what was probably the 'tight-arse' who probably prompted the fight was stabbed several times in the arms, abdomen and chest. All three are in a critical condition. Then on the same night in Madrid, a 46-year-old man was stabbed in the neck by his wife with a scissors. The man remains in a critical condition. One often hears about the 'knife culture' in Spain but it is still shocking to see such violence among those who should know better!

You may recall that last month I mentioned that the PP Mayor of La Línea, Alejandro Sánchez, was trying to charge a € toll to those entering Gibraltar through his town. After pressure from the central government in Madrid, he now states that the charge will be voluntary! But now he wants a 'cut' from the internet and casino-based gambling revenue in Gib. He claims that the optic-fibre lines, which support these activities, run through his town. For God's sake, will somebody pay this idiot off!

The horror stories surrounding the telephone service in Spain continues, this time in relation to mobile phones. A Valencian man was charged €30,974 for the month of August for internet use on his mobile. He claims that he only downloaded one song which cost €1.50! But then in September he was advised by Vodafone that his bill for the month was €174,428, not including IVA! In July his bill was €26. He did not have any problems until he went to a phone company store and changed his card. He suspects that online poker-players have hacked his line. There are lots of 'wolves' out there, so take care. Telefonica have also just announced cheaper landline phone calls for new customers, in an effort to attract business from the 'mobile' market. Existing customers have to dial 1004, but be careful what you sign up to; their sales staff are pirates!

Using software developed by the Norwegian Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), the Spanish police have arrested 57 and charged 47 others for the possession and downloading of child pornography. The Spanish police have a commendable record of making regular arrests of these 'pervs' throughout Spain.

The police have just discovered how drugs were getting into the El Acebuche prison in Almería. It seems that the drugs, mainly hashish, were being launched from the car park over the wall in tennis balls. No arrests were made as those who threw the tennis balls were hiding under the trees in the car park. The trees will now be cut down - 'New balls, please!'

79,815 drivers have lost their licence in Spain since the points system was introduced. Excessive speed remains the main reason for points to be withdrawn, 43.8% of fines, followed by no helmet or seat belt, 18.6%, use of the mobile phone at the wheel, 12.4%, and being over the alcohol limit 10.4%.

A disabled man from Cádiz who was wrongly imprisoned on a rape charge for 13 years, has been awarded 555,000 € compensation. His lawyer had asked for 10 million €

A Málaga man has been fined €80 for leaving his dog to die at home without food or water, during August last year. The five-month old German Shepherd died of heatstroke. €80!?!? That'll teach him. Pathetic!

The Town Planning manager of Estepona, Pedro López -who is now under arrest - paid more than 10 million € into a bank account in Andorra over a period of less than a month and a half. The money was then dispersed by Swiss banks to several tax havens. (Well, to be fair, maybe his wife was careful with the housekeeping money.) 68 others, including two British people and the then Socialist Mayor, Antonio Barrientos, are also implicated in the case.

A case of crabs

A lawyer boarded an airplane in New Orleans with a box of frozen crabs and asked a blonde stewardess to take care of them for him. She took the box and promised to put it in the crew's refrigerator. He advised her that he was holding her personally responsible for keeping them frozen, mentioning in an obnoxious manner that he was a lawyer, and proceeded to rant about what would happen if she let them thaw out.

Needless to say, she was annoyed by his behavior. Shortly before landing in New York, she used the intercom to announce to the entire cabin, "Would the gentleman who gave me the crabs in New Orleans please raise your hand?"

Not one hand went up ... so she took them home and ate them.

Two lessons : 1. Lawyers aren't as smart as they think they are & 2. Blondes aren't as dumb as they are made out to be. (Pete Dudman)

Out & About

During the last month, some of the large mail-box outer doors in both Dream Hills and Dream Hills II have been stolen. I also noticed that the large mail-box doors and the outer doors of the electrical cabinets to the apartment block opposite the *Salud* in Cabo Roig have also been stolen.

These may be stolen for scrap, or maybe to be fitted to another urbanisation. The police reports generally indicate an increased level of activity from our North African friends. I notice that Jysk have now chained-down all their external display furniture as much of it had gone 'walkies.'

There appears to be a dispute between a local insurance brokers firm, Knight Insurance Brokers and an insurance company call Ibex Insurance which is registered in Gibraltar. If you have a policy with either you should check-out <http://www.ibexinsure.com/knights> and <http://www.knight-insurance.com/ibex.htm>

As we are on insurance, it is worth noting that many insurance companies will not recognise a claim, where the thieves have used 'the fishing pole' technique to take goods through windows of a house or apartment!

If you would like to improve your social life, there are plenty of activities in the evening at *La Casita* in the urbanisation. These range from darts to various card-game nights, not forgetting the Spanish language classes - all levels - in the day time. There are also spaces for other social activities, if you have any ideas. And don't forget the *petanca* courts. Check out the notice board for details.

There is also a coffee morning every Friday from 10.00 until 12.30 for the ladies. This should give you chaps the opportunity to brush up on your on-line poker skills.

A number of people have been asking me about TDT programming. I will put a few copies of a general program schedule from The Costa Blanca News down at the *Casita*.

If you want a copy you can pick one up from the lovely ladies at the Book-Swap on Thursdays, between 10 & 12 in the morning.

Rapid Fire

My wife says her fantasy is to have sex where she works. But our ironing board just isn't strong enough.

This girl came up to me today and said she recognised me from the Vegetarian Club. I was confused, I'd never met herbivore.

What do you get if you cross a football with Emile Heskey? A goal kick.

Wayne Rooney's gone to Dubai for his birthday. He must have been saving up for that all day.

It was announced today that when Margaret Thatcher dies her body is to rest at the bottom of a man-made lake.....from all the people pissing on her grave!

JFK'S Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was in France in the early 60's when deGaulle decided to pull out of NATO. deGaulle said he wanted all US military out of France as soon as possible. Rusk asked "Does that include those who are buried here?" deGaulle did not respond.

A lost opportunity? What a pity they didn't greet the Chilean miners dressed as characters from 'Planet of the Apes.'

Apparently Celtic's Neil Lennon is dressing up as a pumpkin for Halloween. He's under the impression that at midnight he's going to turn into a coach.

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The Largest Whorehouse in Europe?

The largest whorehouse in Europe has opened in La Jonquera, Girona. The 2,700 square metre venue, called 'El Paradise', and which has been described as a disco which has overdosed on neon, has cost 3 million €. It opened mid-October after the Catalan High Court demanded that the local Town Hall concede a licence. The Catalan Superior Court obliged the town hall to grant a licence to the brothel, overturning the town's rejection of an application in 2006 on the grounds of safety and public order risks. In February, the Supreme Court of Catalonia ruled that police speculation was not sufficient grounds to dampen the libido of paying customers.

The 'knocking-shop' has been built in an industrial estate on the edge of town. It has 80 rooms and two theatre/salons. The owner said that all the papers for the venue are in order, and local residents are 'very happy'. *El Paradise* is located close to the motorway and Spanish/French border, which has already had large numbers of those 'cheese & frog munching surrender-monkeys' queuing-up to 'get their rocks off'.

The club owner, José Moreno (no relation!) was arrested in September, along with 40 other people, in connection with an alleged sex trade trafficking ring. He was charged and released pending trial. Police believe that the ring lured the women from Brazil and forced them into prostitution at his other night spots. Mr Moreno has denied involvement with trafficking rings. "I run three places. Who would think that I would get involved in something like that? It doesn't make sense," he told the press.

El Paradise, Mr. Moreno explained, will initially house 120 prostitutes, but has capacity for 150. Clients can expect to pay an average of 60 € for 30 minutes 'of company', but if they wanted to retire to one of the rooms, with rates ranging from €120 to €300 per hour, the venue possibly keeping a percentage.

The owner said he would be charging each prostitute 70 € a day. "I give the girls breakfast, lunch and dinner, a room, and they get to keep whatever they make. Do you call that exploitation?" He expects that most of the clients will cross the border from France where such venues are illegal. The venue is already doing a brisk trade and although it has been advertising on the radio stations in Girona, they are forbidden to advertise in the town streets. The brothel says it is the biggest in Europe but there are others, in Germany for example, that claim to have more rooms.

El Paradise is one of 11 so-called "macro-brothels" in this Catalan region of Gerona, near the Costa Brava. Roughly 1,800 prostitutes reportedly sell their services there. Many local restaurant and bar owners are pleased with the business they attract. Except for a handful of local priests, few Spaniards have attempted to throw cold water on this industry. Spain, a traditionally Catholic country, has long tolerated prostitution. Every time you drive to Alicante, you pass a couple of brothels, masquerading as 'Night Clubs.' An estimated 300,000 women work as prostitutes in Spain where prostitution is not illegal but profiting from the sale of sex by another is.

In another story, hookers touting for business on a rural highway outside Els Alamus near Lleida in Catalonia have been told to don the yellow fluorescent vests or pay fines of 40 euros under road traffic laws. See photo on right. One wag has commented on the net that 'it would be a good idea if they put their prices on the vests, and that it would also be helpful if policemen, councillors, mayors etc, would do the same!'



Crisis in Al Qaeda

Muslim suicide bombers in Britain are set to begin a three-day strike from Monday in a dispute over the number of virgins they are entitled to in the afterlife. Emergency talks with Al Qaeda have so far failed to produce an agreement. The unrest began last Tuesday when Al Qaeda announced that the number of virgins a suicide bomber would receive after his death will be cut by 25% this April, from 72 to only 54. The rationale for the cut was the increase in recent years of the number of suicide bombings and a subsequent shortage of virgins in the afterlife.

The suicide bombers' union, the British Organization of Occupational Martyrs (or B.O.O.M.) responded with a statement that this was unacceptable to the aspirations of its members and immediately balloted for strike action. General Secretary Abdullah Amir told the press, "Our members are literally working themselves to death in the cause of Jihad. We don't ask for much in return but to be treated like this is a kick in the teeth."

Speaking from his shed in Tipton in the West Midlands in which he currently resides, Al Qaeda Chief Executive Osama bin Laden explained, "We sympathize with our workers' concerns but Al Qaeda is simply not in a position to meet their demands. They are simply not accepting the realities of modern-day Jihad in a competitive marketplace. Thanks to Western depravity, there is now a chronic shortage of virgins in the afterlife. It's a straight choice between reducing expenditure and laying people off. I don't like cutting perks but I'd hate to have to tell 3000 of my staff 'Don't bother blowing yourself up on Monday morning'."

Spokespersons for the union in the Northeast of England, London, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the entire Australian continent stated that the strike would not affect their operations as "There are no virgins in our areas anyway". Apparently the recent drop in the number of suicide bombings has been put down to the fame of the Scottish singing star, Susan Boyle - now that Muslims know what a virgin looks like that they are not so keen on going to paradise.

Brain Teaser

(From Pete Dudman & Mel Bettell)

See if you can figure out what these seven words all have in common?

1. Banana
2. Dresser
3. Grammar
4. Potato
5. Revive
6. Uneven
7. Assess

Look at each word carefully. Take your time and, no, it has nothing to do with vowels!

Good luck! The solution is on the back page.

Bottle of Merlot

A man asked a waiter to take a bottle of Merlot to a most attractive woman sitting alone at a table in a cozy little restaurant.

So the waiter took the Merlot to the woman and said, 'This is from the gentleman who is seated over there.'... And indicated the sender with a nod of his head.

She stared at the wine coolly for a few seconds, not looking at the man, then decided to send a reply to him by a note.

The waiter took the note from her and conveyed it to the gentleman.

The note read: 'For me to accept this bottle, you need to have a Mercedes in your garage, a million dollars in the bank and 7' inches in your pants'.

After reading the note, the man decided to compose one of his own in return. He folded the note, handed it to the waiter and instructed him to deliver it to the lady.

It read:

"Just to let you know things aren't always what they appear to be, I have a Ferrari Maranello, BMW Z8, Mercedes CL600, and a Porsche Turbo in my several garages; I have beautiful homes in Aspen and Miami, and a 10,000 acre ranch in Louisiana. There is over twenty million dollars in my bank account and portfolio. But, not even for a woman as beautiful as you, would I cut off three inches. Just send the wine back.'

(Kim Browning & others)

Get Real!

A homeless man finds an old bottle on the beach.

He pick it up and a genie pops out.

'Your wish is my command,' says the genie.

'You're an answer to my prayers,' says the man. 'What I really want is a nice house.'

'Are you kidding,' says the genie. 'Do you think I'd be living in a old bottle if I could magic up houses?'

A friend of mine has invented a land-mine which looks like a prayer mat.

The prophets are going through the roof!

Prosthetic Hip Recall.

The De Puy company, part of Johnson & Johnson, have recalled 93,000 prosthetic hips, which were distributed worldwide in 2003. Around 12% of those patients will experience a faulty device and may require surgery. The 'ASR XL Acetabula Systema' and 'ASR XL Hip Resurfacing System' were also distributed in 2003 to 70 health centres across Spain. Some reports say the defective model can come adrift from the femur, while others say that particles can be worn away, although it has not been proven that such particles are dangerous to the body.

The Spanish Ministry for Health has issued an alert to health professionals saying that they should check to see if they find more problems, but consider that not all the patients given the model need to be operated on again. Patients will need to undergo more controls, every six months, to check on the situation.

Doctors say it has to be borne in mind that, particularly in older people, a repeated operation can lead to very serious complications, with more risks of infection, rejection and other problems. The advice being given is if you think you have the model concerned, then go and see your doctor.

Although news of the recall was published in August, it seems to have reached Spain only now.

If you google - hip replacement recall - you will find plenty of info.

Would you like another cup of tea, Father?

A 'priest', known as Padre Ángel, from the town of Picasent just south of Valencia, has been arrested and charged with tax fraud. He is accused of defrauding €386,139 from the taxman between the years 1992 and 2003, and now faces eight years in prison.

Padre Ángel did not know he had to pay tax and claims that he has contact with the Virgen María and that he purchased a flat at her request and other land in Picassent, Gandía and Valencia with the money donated by the faithful. The priest is not recognised by the Catholic hierarchy in Spain. He set up his own religious order, *La Junta de la Esclavitud del Sagrado Corazon de Jesús*, (The Order of Slavery of the Sacred Heart of Jesus). The figure quoted above is just the tax element. He should consider renaming it The Order of Lining Your Own Pockets!

The Hold-Up

A hooded robber burst into a Texas bank and forced the tellers to load a sack full of cash. On his way out the door a brave Texas customer grabbed the hood and pulled it off, revealing the robber's face.

The robber shot the customer without a moment's hesitation. He then looked around the bank and noticed one of the tellers looking straight at him. The robber instantly shot him also.

Everyone else, by now very scared, looked intently down at the floor in silence.

The robber yelled, "Well, did anyone else see my face?"

There were a few moments of utter silence in which everyone was plainly too afraid to speak.

Then one old man tentatively raised his hand and said, "My wife got a pretty good look!"

(Pete Dudman)

The Bosses

You could be forgiven if you thought that Spain is a country of extremes. Travel just two hours inland and the weather fluctuates between a furnace in the summer and a freezer in the winter. You can see some heart-stopping scenery inland (particularly in Andalusia) and then visit the coastline nearby which is blighted with concrete jungles. Spain is a country where the Saints are honoured regularly with fiestas and pageants, while there is also a plentiful supply of 'knocking-shops' and 'working girls'. (Note for our non British/Irish readers: this means brothels and prostitutes.)

Unfortunately when it comes to labour relations, the gulf in attitudes is just as diverse. The employers association, Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales - the CEOE - is to be expected for a completely new team as the seem to foster and promote Dickensian attitudes, whereas the main Spanish trade unions, Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT) and the Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) are sufficiently 'red' to make a Trotskyite blush with pleasure!

More on the unions in a future issue, but the employers' association in Spain, the CEOE, seem a fairly 'rum bunch.' Their president, Gerardo Díaz Ferrán, can only be described as a failed businessman and discredited employer. Ferrán had a number of businesses which went 'phut' during the last twelve months; the largest of which included an airline and a travel company - Air Comet and Travel Marsans. Ferrán failed to pay many of his staff their wages for several months, continually lying to them and giving false promises. He is now involved in a string of lawsuits and the courts have placed a €37.5 million preventative embargo on his assets. Díaz Ferrán said that people had to 'work more and earn less' for the country to get out of recession. The European Central Bank commented that it was not more work that was needed, but better productivity, and Minister for Development, José Blanco, commented that Díaz Ferrán was an example of somebody who 'worked little and was paid a lot'.

Ferrán has finally decided to 'fall on his sword' and resign from the CEOE. However some of his disgruntled employees in the travel company which is now in receivership, Marsans, have marked the occasion by sending him a wreath at the CEOE with the message 'We will never forget you!'

Now, another director of the CEOE, José de la Cavada, their Director of Labour Relations no less, has been fined 25,000 € for humiliating and verbally abusing his subordinates. This is yet another organisation in Spain which needs to adapt to the 21st century and drastically improve its image. The fact that the unions here are just as difficult and dogmatic, means that any hope of meaningful long-term labour reform is nigh impossible. (More on the unions and their nuances in a future issue.)



The Orihuela Costa Football Club has finally 'taken-off.' They have played several games, but have unfortunately only won one game to date. This standard is very high in their league and it will take time for the players to 'gell' together. To date they have 18 players. The notorious Spanish bureaucracy has even permeated down to sports. It took 2½ hours to register just one player in Alicante! The team is open to all ages and nationalities.

The founding members of the club are Alfredo Diego Miranda - the Club President - who is also the owner of The Abbey Tavern. Then there is the Vice-President, Francisco Torrecillas Zapata, owner of the Meson Don Luiz Cafe on Calle Picasso, (I watched the World Cup Spanish Semi-Final with him and consumed an inordinate amount of lamb chops and alcohol.) And then there is our own Stefan Pokroppa from Dream Hills - the Coordinator of the Office of European Residents - who is the club's General Secretary. Michael Lavery, the owner of The Captain's Table in Blue Lagoon, is the Club Treasurer.

The home ground for the club will be the new Sports' Centre in Calle Niagra, when they finally decide to open it, probably in November. The Sports' Centre is finished but the appointed management team are dragging their heels! The club's home colours are red and white, away being blue and white.

A season ticket cost just €20 and that includes transport to all away games. If you want to be a member of the club is costs €50. This will give you the full season ticket rights plus free entry into the club raffle/tombola and a say in running the club.

Work has already started to encourage youth teams, ranging from 5 to 11 years +.

Call it Art?

A bunch of art-lovers are being taken round an art gallery in Glasgow by the head guide. He stops in front of each painting and gives a brief insight and description. When they get to the last painting, they all stop and gawp. It features three naked black blokes on a park bench. The two on the left and right are eating 'butties' and the one in the middle has got a pink todger. The guide waffles on "What we have here is an allegorical representation of the marginalisation of the black male, in contemporary Scottish society."..... and so on.

He's still rattling on when a bloke shouts from the back, "That's rubbish!"

The guide, outraged at the affront, shouts back, "How dare you, Sir. I'm the head guide at this gallery. What gives you the right to question my judgement."

"I painted the bugger, that's what."

The guides taken aback but comes back quick, "Well perhaps you'd like to enlighten us as to what is going on in your painting then."

"No probs. It's quite straightforward really. It's three white, turn-of-the-century coalminers on their break."

"Oh, really. Then perhaps you can explain why the man in the middle has a pink dick."

"He went home for lunch."

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A Doctor, a lawyer and a politician are sharing a train compartment and get to talking about their families.

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'My son is a complete idiot' says the downhearted politician, ' He's still at primary school and he's 15!'

'Why don't you buy him an encyclopedia' suggests the doctor.

'Screw that' said the politician, ' He can walk!'

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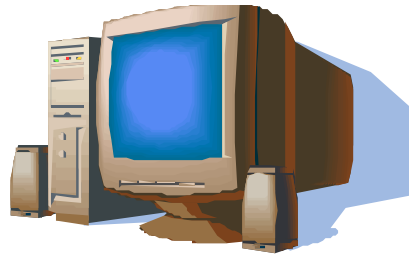
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I took my mother-in-law to the Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's. One of the attendants said, 'Keep her moving, sir; we're stocktaking.'

Les Dawson

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Ring-Ring!

Bill and his wife Pam are having dinner when the phone rings. Pam picks it up and chats away for twenty-five minutes. 'Just under half an hour!' says Bill when she finally hangs up. 'That's pretty good for you. What happened?' Pam says, 'It was a wrong number.'

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Whenever my wife looks at my head she puts melon on the shopping list.

I went into a shop and I said, 'Can anyone sell me a kettle?' The bloke said, 'Kenwood.' I said, 'Where is he?'

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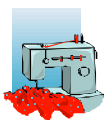
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What a coincidence!

A chicken farmer went to a local bar, sat next to a woman and ordered a glass of champagne.

The woman perked up and said, 'How about that? I just ordered a glass of champagne, too!'

'What a coincidence' the farmer said. 'This is a special day for me. I am celebrating.'

'This is a special day for me too, I am also celebrating,' said the woman.'

'What a coincidence!' said the farmer. As they clinked glasses he added, 'What are you celebrating?'

'My husband and I have been trying to have a child, and today my gynecologist told me that I am pregnant!'

'What a coincidence!' said the man. 'I'm a chicken farmer and for years all of my hens were infertile, but today they are all laying eggs.' That's great!' said the woman, 'How did your chickens become fertile?'

'I used a different cock,' he replied.

The woman smiled, clinked his glass and said, 'What a coincidence!'

The History of Spain. Part 18, Shoring-up the Empire in Europe.

In Granada, Aragon and Valencia, tension between the 'converted' Moors (Moriscos) and the Christian authorities began to mount after 1550. The Moriscos, who numbered about 400,000, were subject to many economic and social injustices. Much of their land was appropriated and a number of measures were taken to forcibly hasten their assimilation into Christian society: the Arabic language was prohibited; traditional customs, culture and dress were suppressed; their houses were searched regularly; and their children were required to be brought-up away from parental control. It is not surprising then that on Christmas Day 1568, the Moriscos rose up and in the ensuing rebellion, which lasted three bloody years, over 60,000 lives were lost. The authorities then forcibly deported more than 100,000 Moriscos in small groups to Andalucia, Castile and Extramadura.

Then in 1572, under the leadership of William, Prince of Orange, seven northern provinces in the Low Countries (Netherlands) rebelled against Spanish rule. The Spanish had been 'riding roughshod' over the Protestant Dutch in an attempt to stamp out what they considered the Protestant heresy. In 1576 mutinous Spanish troops massacred more than 7,000 inhabitants of Antwerp. (The Spanish army was made-up of largely German, Walloon and Italian troops; the Spanish army outside of Spain never contained more than 20,000 Spaniards.) This only increased the resolve of the Protestant northern provinces, the resolve of which Philip II greatly underestimated.

The execution of Mary Queen of Scots and the assistance Elizabeth I was giving to the Protestant rebels in the Low Countries was just too much for Philip. Elizabeth also allowed the English privateers such as Hawkins and Drake to plunder the Caribbean colonies, the Spanish treasure fleets and the Spanish mainland ports, almost without restraint. Drake in particular was a major nuisance to the Spanish and was greatly feared and respected. Although Philip had been King of England & Ireland between 1554 and 1558, and had proposed marriage no less than three times to Elizabeth, he was now determined to teach the English a lesson. Strategically he feared that a union between Protestant England, a Protestant and independent Low Countries and an ever opportunistic, yet still divided France, would be a great threat to Spain and her colonies.

Philip then planned what he called 'The Enterprise of England.' Flushed with the great naval victory over the Turks at Lepanto in 1571, he would now launch a great Armada which would sail from the Spanish Peninsula and while in the English Channel, it would be joined by a Spanish army of 20,000 from the Low Countries, under the leadership of the Duke of Parma. The joint force would then invade England, the task of the Armada being to supplement and protect the Duke of Parma's army while it sailed across the Channel to England.

The Armada eventually set sail from Lisbon in May 1588, with 130 warships and 19,000 men. They failed to rendezvous with the Duke of Parma's army and harried by English warships, decimated by storms, shipwrecks and unfavourable winds, the Armada was driven up the east coast of England and Scotland, down the west coast of Ireland, before what remained of the navy managed to limp back to Spain. It was a disaster! (I will include a full article on the Armada in a future issue.) Its failure was a massive blow to Spain's prestige and an encouragement to its enemies. The abortive venture had also cost the Spanish treasury more than 10 million ducats. To pour salt in Spain's wounds, the English fleet raided La Coruña, Lisbon and the Azores in 1589 and also sacked Cadiz in 1596. However it would be a mistake to think that this disastrous episode finished Spain as a naval power. Far from it. Although not generally known, Philip launched two further Armadas against England, in 1596 and 1597, both being driven back by storms. Many argue that the Great Armada was not the end of Spanish naval power, but its beginning, giving Philip the opportunity to correct the previous mistakes and build a larger and better navy.

Prior to the Armada, Spain could be considered to be at its peak, the dominant country in Europe, with an empire 'on which the sun never set.' But shoring up this empire came at a great cost. The standing armies, particularly in the Low Countries, were a massive drain on Spain's finances. It was in the pursuit of this war, not the war with the English, that the Spanish Empire in Europe would eventually founder.

In an effort to restructure his debt payments, Philip declared a state of bankruptcy in 1557, 1575 and again in 1596. The huge loans raised among the bankers of Genoa, Augsburg and Antwerp attracted average annual rates of around 35%, sometimes the rate being in excess of 70%! The shipments of silver from the New World inspired both the king and his foreign bankers with the perennial hope of new treasure to pay off ever growing debts. But the armies and navies continued to swallow up more money than the stream of American silver provided. There was a growing disparity between the monarchy's imperial policies and the financial resources at its disposal to carry out these policies. Because of his refusal to cut back on his military commitments, when Philip II died in 1598, the Crown debts totalled 85 million ducats. As with his father, it was left to his successors to pick up the bill.

It is estimated that the population of Spain rose from 4.7 million in 1534 to around 7 million in 1591. The increase in food production to cater for the needs of the peninsula and the colonies, led to an economic boom and a marked increase in inflation. The peasant farmers and urban workers, the majority of the population, were the main victims of the price revolution, as real wages fell by almost a third. During the sixteenth century alone, prices quadrupled. The process of demographic and economic expansion slowed to a halt by about 1580. The impact of epidemic disease (bubonic plague, smallpox, diphtheria), famine and malnutrition, caused Spain's population to fall sharply, accounting for one million lives between 1596 and 1652. Spain was also haemorrhaging large numbers of men and women overseas. Between 1506 and 1600, an estimated 250,00 Spaniards migrated to the New World, a further 200,000 doing so in the first half of the following century.

A Word from Maypole

Firstly, thank you for the questions I have received from you since my last article. I will endeavour to answer them in the coming issues.

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Millionaire Mick

Mick, from Dublin, appeared on 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire' and towards the end of the program had already won 500,000 pounds. "You've done very well so far," said Chris Tarrant, the show's presenter, "but for a million pounds you've only got one life-line left, it's phone a friend. Everything is riding on this question, will you go for it?"

"Sure," said Mick. "I'll have a go!"

"Which of the following birds does NOT build its own nest? a) Sparrow, b) Thrush, c) Magpie or d) Cuckoo?"

"I haven't got a clue," said Mick, "so I'll use last lifeline and phone my friend Paddy back home in Dublin .."

Mick called up his mate and repeated the question to him. "That's simple", cried Paddy, "It's a cuckoo."

"Are you sure?" "I'm fookin' sure." Mick hung up the phone and told Chris, "I'll go with Cuckoo as my answer."

"Is that your final answer?" asked Chris. "That it is, Chris."

There was a long - long pause, and then the presenter screamed, "Cuckoo is the correct answer! Mick, you've won one million pounds!"

The next night, Mick invited Paddy to their local pub to buy him a drink.

"Tell me, Paddy? How in Heaven's name did you know it was the Cuckoo that doesn't build its own nest?"

"Because he lives in a 'fookin' clock!"

(Pete Dudman)

Wine does not make you fat; it makes you lean.....against tables, chairs, walls, floors and ugly people. Wendy Jung

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Solution to Puzzle on Page 6.

In all the words listed, if you place the first letter at the end of the word, it will still read the same word backwards!

Eh! What?

An elderly gent who was hard of hearing had his wife accompany him to visit his GP. At the end of the consult, the doctor said he would need to provide a urine sample, a stool sample, a blood sample and a semen sample. The elderly gent turned to his wife and asked "What'd he say??"

She yelled back, "He said he wants your underwear!"

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Far too rude!

A blonde's been getting golf lessons from the pro for ages and he eventually sends her off to complete a round on her own. She's back within half an hour and awfully upset...

'Whats wrong ?' asks the Pro

'I got stung by a bloody wasp !' replies the blonde

'Where did you get stung ?'

'Between the first and second holes'

'Ah' says the pro, 'that's your problem then, you're standing with your legs too far apart.'

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Diabetic?

If you have been diagnosed as a diabetic there is a very successful support group, which meets on the last Wednesday of every month at 11am at Hoggies Bar in San Luis. The support group is fully funded by the Help Association Vega Baja, so there are no fees. This is a large group and the support and advice is first class.

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