

# THE DREAM SCENE

## Newsletter

Issue no. 49 1st of March, 2011

Bienvenido and welcome to the start of the fifth year of The Dream Scene.

The High Court has reversed the decision reported in last month's Dream Scene, when a court in Navarra found that handing a property back to the bank - even though the current value of the property was less than the debt - was sufficient to release the debtor from further liability. By law, mortgages in Spain are all personal liability loans, meaning borrowers have to answer with all their assets worldwide, present and future, until the debt is repaid. That contrasts with non-recourse mortgages in the US, where the worst-case for borrowers is losing their home and credit rating but nothing more. Hence the term "jingle-mail" in the US, whereby borrowers post their house keys back to the bank and walk away from the debt. The Spanish government has made it clear it has no intention of changing the law in the short-term. Doing so would harm Spain's financial system, says Elena Salgado, Minister of Finance.

The Association of Bank, Savings Bank and Insurance Users, ADICAE, (see [www.adicae.net/](http://www.adicae.net/)) reports that it has extended its collective legal action against 53 banks and savings banks for their abusive use of the 'suelo' clause, which stops mortgage payments being revised downwards in times of low interest rates such as at present. The number of people joining the action has multiplied 40 fold recently, and Sabadel and the Caixa savings bank have now been added to the list of offending banks.

A British newspaper, The Telegraph, has just reported that in Newcastle -under-Lyme, residents have to sort their rubbish into nine different bags or bins! A further 20 councils provide seven bins, and more than 100 town halls ask residents to sort rubbish into 5 or more bins. The average number of bins collected per household in England and Scotland is four, while in Wales it is five and Northern Ireland it is three. In Scotland I think they eat their rubbish! High praise for the daily bin collection in our area together with the low council rates that go with it, which we take for granted.

Dog owners take great care! The pine processionary caterpillars are back in abundance. Their barbed hairs are highly toxic to animals and humans. Unfortunately their hairs can also be blown around by the wind and many hairs are also left in their tracks on the ground. A minor encounter with these can be fatal to your pet and can also result in tongue amputations. A human encounter will ensure you have several sleepless and painful nights, the full effects not wearing off for weeks. One of the best articles on the menace is here - <http://www.wildsideholidays.com/natural/insects-and-creepy-crawlies/99-moths/319-the-pine-processionary-caterpillar-and-its-life-cycle.html>

Grateful thanks to Dennis & Beryl from DH2, Dave & Justine from DH1 and Val & Ken from Inspiration for the extra donations over and above the subs. May the road rise to meet you and may you be in Heaven a half hour before the Devil knows that you are dead! Don't forget, St. Patrick's Day March 17.

What did St. Patrick say to the snakes when he was driving them out of Ireland?

'Are yis all right in the back there, lads?'

Mick, Editor.

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### GADDAFI MISSILE LAUNCHER



(Angela's cartoon will be back next month.)

## What's Up?

The President of the Valencia Generalitat, Francisco Camps, has now been formally accused of a continued crime of bribery, for the suits he allegedly accepted as part of the Gürtel case. The Anti-Corruption Prosecutor has asked that a fine of €41,250 be levied against Camps who says it was a set-up by the socialists. However, the PP election committee have placed him at the top of the list for the regional elections in May. Camps seemed to have 'lost the plot' when he said, 'I am the candidate with the most support of all of the candidates in the history of all the western democracies in all the world'. Yea, right!

Meanwhile in Andalucía, the socialist Junta are reeling under accusations of fraud. It appears that since 1999, over €47 million of public money was given in 'help' to companies. To date irregularities have been discovered in 14 companies of the 39 where people have been paid early retirement payments when in fact they have never worked for the company concerned! The current cabinet are blaming the former General Director of Employment who has already confessed to the judicial police but later retracted his confession. This scandal is being referred to as EREgate and the current president of the junta has dismissed calls for an investigation into 44 early retirement packages in private and public companies financed by the regional administration.

The *Hacienda*, the Spanish tax collectors, has announced it is going to investigate businesses on industrial estates and shops as it continues its crackdown on tax evasion. Among the plans are for tax inspectors to visit warehouses which are officially empty, but which appear to be using electricity. Hundreds of tax inspectors are reported to be heading out onto the street. The Government is particularly keen to find those people who are working and claiming unemployment at the same time. Although a major investigation into the black economy is planned, a lack of skilled investigators and the immensity of the problem may limit its success.

The government has got agreement to the movement of the retirement age to 67, although those who have paid into the system for 38.5 years will be able to retire at 65 and still get a full pension.

The Government has confirmed that it is introducing a new minimal basic capital requirements for banks. Savings Banks, the weakest link in the Spanish financial system, are to be given until March 2012 as a final date if they want to launch on the stock market. It's six months later than first envisaged. Those cajas/savings banks who opt to re-capitalise will have until December 2011 to meet the Government targets. The Governor of the Bank of Spain has revealed that the exposure of the savings banks to the construction and real estate sectors is 217 billion € of which around half is described as 'potentially problematic'. Around 20,000 job losses are predicted during the reorganisation of the *cajas*.

There was a 7% drop in new mortgages awarded in Spain during 2010, against a drop of 22% in 2009. Most of the 956,127 mortgages last year were issued by the savings banks. Despite their perilous state, the chairman of *Caja Madrid* awarded himself a bonus of €25 million! The Bank of Spain stepped in and cut it by 20%. Only 20 mill - poor sod!

During a recent visit of Angela Merkel, the German chancellor, there was much bowing, scraping and 'tugging of forelocks.' Zapatero accepted her challenge to do something about competitiveness, admitting that more reforms are needed. The European average for company tax is 23.2%, while here in Spain it is 30%. The German chancellor asked for wage rises to be linked to productivity instead of the inflation index and criticized the collective bargaining system here. Zapatero has told Merkel that he will limit the regional government's deficit by law. Whereas the unions in Germany are self financing, their Spanish counterparts received 250 million € in funding from the Government in 2010. The Spanish union leaders Toxo and Méndez have already rejected the proposals of the German Chancellor to link wages only to productivity. Unemployment in Spain is now at a new record level of 4,231,003

The newspaper ABC reports that Catalan President, Artur Mas, is demanding that Madrid allow Cataluña to continue increasing its debt. The paper says the administration has inherited debt which has placed them on the edge of collapse. Mas wants 29 more responsibilities be transferred to Cataluña from central Government. He also wants the Catalan regional police, Los Mossos d'Esquadra, to replace the Guardia Civil and the National Police in the region. Both the Catalans and the Basques are in a race to gain more independence from the more responsive socialist government. If the PP achieve a majority in the national elections next year, which is predicted, these regions which crave independence will find the PP far less accommodating. A recent opinion poll has revealed that most people think that keeping the 17 autonomous regions will lead to more excess spending and increase inequality. The former PM, José María Aznar of the Partido Popular, has questioned the 'wisdom' of the autonomous system with 17 'mini-states' as he calls them. He called for a deep regional reform and said that Spain is losing competitiveness.

A new political party called SORTU has been launched in the Basque Region. Most recognise this as a ploy by the terrorist organisation ETA, to have a representation in the local and regional elections this May. It appears that SORTU is just a continuation of the illegal Batasuna Party which was the political arm of ETA. The police describe SORTU as 'an ETA project' and it is very doubtful that they will be allowed to participate in the forthcoming elections.

The new census in Spain will now just be a survey in order to save money. For the first time since 1857 not all Spanish homes will be visited to determine the census numbers. Instead a mere 10% will be called on. The National Statistics Institute will save more than 300 million € as a result, but accuracy and fact will be out the window!

An Abu Dhabi State Fund has now acquired 100% control of the second largest Spanish multinational petrochemical company, Cepsa.

A politician was in the middle of a speech when someone at the back calls out, 'I can't hear you.'

Someone at the front calls back, 'Could we swap places?'

Politicians and babies' nappies have one thing in common.

They should both be changed regularly, and for the same reason.



The European Commission is to take Spain to court for allegedly discriminating against pensioners. They consider the Spanish Government is breaking European legislation by denying free medicines to pensioners. A social security source denied that Spain is acting against EU law as pensioners from another EU member country can use the European Health Card in Spain the same way as national pensioners, noting that national pensioners have the right to free medicines. The EU is not accepting that argument as the European Health Card makes no differential between pensioners and others.

A massive fraud has been uncovered in Estepona on the Costa del Sol. In this case 90 investors, mainly from Northern Ireland, each paid an average of €75,000 as a deposit on off-plan luxury apartments in Estepona. Although the money was paid to a British real estate company, Ocean View Properties, between 2005 and 2006, nothing has been built yet. In fact the promoter had no licence from Estepona Town Hall, did not even own the land where the properties should have been built and only made a payment of €200,000 towards the €18 million asking price. The Estepona case is also linked to other alleged similar frauds in Morocco and Santo Domingo involving it is thought, around 1,000 investors and between the three countries total sums of between €70 and €80 million. Only a nut case would buy off-plan these days. Aside from the all too frequent frauds, the precarious state of most of the promoters and building companies and the non existence of and difficulty in enforcing bank guarantees, the practice is as risky as playing hop-sotch in a minefield.

The Government is preparing a new law to close orphanages. The law for the protection of the infant will see that no child under three goes into an orphanage, creating professional foster families who will be given parental rights.

Did you get roses for Valentine's Day and were you a bit 'heady' after smelling them? It seems that more than 70 kilos of cocaine had been smuggled into the country inside a shipment of 60 boxes of roses sent over by air from Colombia through Madrid airport. Seven have been arrested.

A new vaccine which is slowing the advance of the HIV virus is being tested in Barcelona, and opens an alternative to the anti-viral drugs. The Spanish vaccine also reduces the level of the virus in those ill with HIV.

A man from Alicante who had a 50 kilo tumour removed from his abdomen in 2009, now has a 30 kilo tumour attached to his testicles. However the hospital authorities initially said that they would not operate on him because of his 'moribund obesity' and that he would have to reduce his weight from 200 kilos to 80 before they will operate; they have now agreed, after press coverage, to carry out the op. I have spared you a photo of the new tumour as it might put you off your *albondigas*!

The owner of a restaurant in San Pedro de Alcántara, Marbella, who has conspicuously been ignoring the ban on smoking in closed public areas from January 2, is being served a 145,000 € fine and has his restaurant closed. He will now be allowed to reopen, if he gives a written undertaking to ban smoking from his premises in future. It is not known if the fine still stands.

The Basque regional government is ordering non-smoking stands be created in the region's football stadiums.

The animal protection organisation, *El Refugio*, is taking out a private action against the *Parque Animal* shelter in Torremolinos for alleged abuse. The four accused are the owner, the manager and two vets. A 'meticulous' and 'impeccable' investigation by the Guardia Civil has revealed that the animals suffered a slow agonising death as a low dosage of euthanasia drug was used to save costs. Some of the injected animals were also placed in a freezer while they were still alive. *El Refugio* reports that 700 animals were put down in the space of five months and complained that it took the local town hall more than three months to order the temporary closure of the *Parque*.

There are some 350,000 bars and restaurants in Spain and I am now off to one of them!

#### Feedback from U.S. Lateshows.

"Prince William's nightclub owner friend is said to be planning a wild bachelor party. It must be weird stuffing a bill in a stripper's g-string when it has a picture of your grandmother on it." –Jimmy Fallon

"The Catholic Church has approved an app that let's you confess on your iPhone. You can now cheat and atone right on the same device. The actual name for this app is "Priest in your pocket." Don't they read the paper? Couldn't they come up with a better name?" –Jay Leno

"For me the great mystery of this whole revolution (Egyptian) was that for three weeks, these people were in this square with no bathrooms. How did they go? This will always be known in Egyptian history as the riddle of the sphincter." –Bill Maher

"Facebook is looking into buying Twitter for around \$10 billion. If all goes as planned, the company hopes to combine the two companies, creating the biggest waste of time the world has ever seen." –Jay Leno

"The king of Saudi Arabia announced that he is giving his people \$37 billion in subsidies and payments. It's not a stimulus package, it's a 'don't overthrow me' package." –Jay Leno

"George Clooney says he's had sex with too many women to ever run for office. He was immediately made Prime Minister of Italy." –Conan O'Brien

"Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said Gadhafi has gone too far. That's like an Australian bartender telling you that you've had too much to drink." –Craig Ferguson

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### La Liga

The Spanish Professional Football League (LFP) on Friday announced a boycott of all *La Liga* matches scheduled to be held on the weekend of April 2-4 in support of its bid to have the government revoke the obligation to show one match a week on a free-to-air station. The LFP, which is also pushing for a ban on match summaries on free-to-air channels, wants the obligation to be lifted in time for the 2012-2013 season.

However, it said it is willing to drop its strike plans if sufficient progress on the issue is made in negotiations with the government over the coming weeks. The LFP estimates that the free-to-view Saturday match costs *Liga* clubs between €150 and €200 million each season.

GOL and Canal + are the two Spanish pay-per-view sport's channels.

.....

How many professional footballers does it take to screw-in a light bulb?

One, he'd just stand there while the world revolves around him.

.....

The loneliest place in the world? The Arsenal Trophy Room.

### Here comes de judge!

Mick is in court for a double murder. The judge says, 'You are charged with beating your wife to death with a spanner.'

A man at the back of the courtroom yells out, 'You bastard!'

The judge continues, 'You are also charged with beating your wife's lover to death with a spanner.'

The man at the back yells out, 'You absolute bastard!'

The judge looks at the man and says, 'Sir, I can understand your anger at this crime, but I will have no more outbursts or I will find you in contempt. If you have anything to say, say it now.'

The man gets up and says, 'For fifteen years I have lived next door to that bastard. And every time I asked to borrow a bloody spanner, he said he didn't have one!'

A defence lawyer meets with his client. 'The blood tests have come back and we have good news and bad news.' 'So what's the bad news?' asks the client. 'Your DNA matches the blood found on the victim, the murder weapon, and the getaway car.' 'Okay,' says the defendant, 'So what's the good news?'

The lawyer replies, 'Your cholesterol is down to 120.'

### First Night

An Aussie stockman and his girlfriend had just got married and found a nice hotel for their wedding night. The man approached the front desk and asked for a room.

He said, "We're on our honeymoon and we need a nice room, with a good strong bed."

The clerk winked, "You want the 'Bridal'?"

The drover reflected on this for a moment and then replied, "Nah, I reckon not. I'll just hold onto her ears until she gets used to it."

### Crafty!

Harold is 95 and lives in a retirement home. Every night after dinner, he goes to a secluded garden behind the centre to sit and ponder his accomplishments and long life. One evening, Mildred, age 87, wanders into the garden. They begin to chat and before they know it, several hours have passed. After a short lull in their conversation, Harold turns to Mildred and asks, "Do you know what I miss most of all?" She asks, "What?" "Sex!!" he replies.

Mildred exclaims, "Why you old fart. You couldn't get it up if I held a gun to your head!"

"I know," Harold says, "but it would be nice if a woman could just hold it for a while."

"Well, I can oblige," says Mildred, who unzips his trousers, removes his 'jewels' and proceeds to hold it. Afterward, they agree to meet secretly each night in the garden where they would sit and talk and Mildred would hold Harold's package.

Then one night Harold didn't show up at their usual meeting place. Alarmed, Mildred decided to find Harold and make sure he was O.K. She walked around the retirement home where she found him sitting by the pool with Ethel, another female resident, who was holding Harold's manhood!

Furious, Mildred yelled, "You two-timing son-of-a-bitch! What does Ethel have that I don't have?"

Old Harold smiled happily and replied, "Parkinson's!"

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## Spanish Vignettes - The Duchess of Alba

Okay look, I didn't want to frighten the children and the horses with the photo below, but I thought that I might introduce you to, according to the Guinness Book of Records, the most titled person in the world with 44 noble titles and 144 hereditary ones. This is none other than Maria del Rosario Cayetana

Alfonsa Victoria Eugenia Francisca Fitz-James Stuart y de Silva, better known as the 18<sup>th</sup> Duchess of Alba. According to the Independent newspaper, the Duchess is of higher rank than the Queen of England and because of her bluer than blue hereditary, does not have to bow before the Pope. The Duquesa, now 85, heads the House of Alba, a noble family which can be traced back to the fourteenth century, the House receiving the original title for supporting King Henry II against troublesome nobles. In 1492, the second Duke of Alba was one of the signatures to the capitulation of Islamic Granada. The third Duke of Alba, Don Fernando Álvarez, was governor of the Spanish Netherlands and responsible for many atrocities and the slaughter of tens of thousands of civilians there, earning him the nickname from the Dutch of the 'Iron Duke.' However it was these atrocities that united the Northern Dutch Provinces to resist the Spanish and subsequently dealt many damaging blows and lasting damage to the Spanish Empire.



During the Second World War, the current Duchess's father, the 17<sup>th</sup> Duke of Alba, was the Spanish Ambassador in London, where his daughter joined him. In October 1947, the Duchess married Don Luis Martínez de Irujo y Artacoiz (1919–1972), son of the Duke of Sotomayor. The wedding was considered to be the last great feudal wedding in Spain and attracted the attention of the international media, even overshadowing interest shown in the wedding of Princess Elizabeth of the UK (later Queen Elizabeth II), which was held a month later. The French newspaper *Libération* called it "the most expensive wedding of the world." She had six children from this marriage, all of whom received noble titles including that of Grandee of Spain.

After becoming a widow, the Duchess stunned public opinion and controversially married Jesús Aguirre y Ortiz de Zárate (1937–2001), a doctor of theology and a former Jesuit priest, in March 1978. Eleven years younger than the Duchess, he maintained a good relationship with her children and the gossip hungry media until he passed away.



Liria Palace, Madrid

The House of Alba has one of the largest fortunes in Spain, made up of more than nine palaces and castles, large farms (several million euros are said to be received annually from the CAP in subsidies), real estate (the largest landowner in Spain), businesses and share portfolios. It is said that you can walk from the north of Spain to the south coast and never have to step off Alba property.

The Liria Palace in Madrid, owned by the duchess, contains the largest and most valuable part of the cultural heritage of Alba. More than 30,000 books form the library, with the famous Alba Bible of 1433, the first translated into Castilian, and 21 documents signed by Columbus. This palace also houses a priceless art collection featuring works by Titian, Rubens, Goya, Velazquez, El Greco, Rembrandt and many others.

Since 2008 however, the Duchess, has 'put the cat among the pigeons' after expressing her wish to marry Alfonso Díez Carabantes, an antique dealer and old family friend who is 24 years her junior, but faces opposition from her children, some of whom believe that he is a 'carpetbagger.' Plans for a secret ceremony were apparently well advanced before the family found out by chance. Backed, it is said, by King Juan Carlos, they vetoed the match. The duchess was furious. "They don't want me to marry, but they change partners more often than I do," the duchess complained about her six children, all of whom made high-profile marriages that ended in divorce. The Duchess, Cayetana Fitz-James Stuart, said that she would petition Queen Sofia for approval of the proposed marriage.

Their relationship continues to get plenty of coverage in the gossip pages, celebrity magazines and television talk shows. (This type of media in Spain is known as the *prensa rosa* – the pink press.) This February it has been announced by The Reader.es that the couple will marry this September, as Alfonso has already signed a pre-nuptial agreement waiving any rights or benefits that he might get from the union. No doubt there were great sighs of relief from the children! Although the *Cayetana* is suffering from bad health, she is a fighter and one hopes she will last to tie the knot with her beau this September. (However I do think Alfonso should take it easy on the honeymoon!)

In an interesting aside, it has been reported by *El País* that the Supreme Court has ruled that the showbiz gossip journalists don't have to be precise in their reports on famous people because their role is to entertain, not necessarily inform. The ruling came as a result of an appeal by Cayetano Martínez de Irujo, the son of the Duchess of Alba, Cayetana Fitz-James Stuart, who filed a lawsuit against the magazine *Qué me dices* in 2005 for publishing a story with photographs from his honeymoon. A Madrid court threw out the case against the magazine. In confirming the lower court's decision, the Supreme Court justices ruled that the so called "pink press" is not required to display "absolute accuracy in its reporting" and nor should it take "special care" in their search for news about society and showbiz figures.

The United States has developed a new weapon that destroys people but it leaves buildings standing.

It's called the stock market. Jay Leno

### Late News

Following a demonstration in Madrid on Feb 26, union members of AENA, the Spanish Airports Authority, have said that they will be calling various strikes over Easter and the summer until the government 'rectify' their decision to privatise most AENA operations. Expect more airport misery this year.

The Spanish Government has announced it is to reduce the maximum speed on Spain's motorways from the current 120 km/hr to 110 km/hr on March 7 in an effort to save fuel. The energy saving measure, which is being implemented because of the current unrest in the Middle East, is supposed to be temporary, but there is no indication when the old limit will be reintroduced. Further measures are being investigated by the cabinet, including the reduction of lighting in streets and of public buildings and a reduction in the speed limit for inner roads in towns and cities.

A carnivorous lizard measuring 1.2 metres was discovered by police in an urbanisation garden in Málaga. This beast, which may be an escaped pet, can devour any animal that is unlucky enough to get between its powerful jaws. This might be a good time to check that little 'Tiddles' is still ok in the garden!

There are plans to raise the minimum marriage age in Spain from 14 to 16. The law as it exists is an aberration.

The Spanish Government has approved the new Ley de Juego - gaming law. New taxes will be placed on the companies trading in this activity, generally online, calculated on the basis of gross income. The companies wanted to be taxed instead on what money is left after they had paid out their prizes. Some say they pay out 80% in prizes and so if they are taxed on 100% of their income, the businesses would not be viable.

The Spanish film industry appears to be collapsing, with data for 2010 showing that some Spanish films collected barely 500 € at the box-office. The film industry in Spain is heavily subsidized, obtaining 20 million € more in aid than it took at the box office.

A woman was having an affair. One afternoon while indulging in some 'horizontal jogging,' her husband arrived home unexpectedly.

"Quick, get in the wardrobe," said the woman to the lover and she kicked his clothes under the bed and pushed him into the wardrobe stark naked. She made out that she was just about to take a shower, but her husband was suspicious and after a search of the bedroom discovered the man in the wardrobe...

"Who the hell are you?" he shouted. 'I'm an inspector from the council,' said the man. 'WTF are you doing in there?' the husband asked. 'I'm investigating a complaint about an infestation of moths,' the lover replied.

"Bollocks!! Where are your clothes?" demanded the husband.

The man looked down at himself and said,.....' Why....those little bastards.....!'

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Last week I fell asleep watching the Country Music Awards.....When I woke up I was missing 5 teeth and I was married to my sister.

I've been trying to teach my mate how to play golf recently but the problem seems to be his drive. His wife stands on it and doesn't let him out.

Got the sack from Carrefour last week. I was working in the alcohol section when a Moroccan asked if I could recommend a good port? I said 'Yea, Santa Pola, now piss off!'



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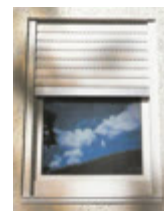
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### Out & About

February was 'Carnival' in Torrevieja but the numbers seemed fewer than in previous years. The final Carnival Parade is at 10 pm on Saturday, March 5. I booked a table for two at The Welcome Inn at Via Park III for St. Valentine's Night. I knew it would end in tears. My wife is useless at snooker!

Butterflies at Via Park III are holding an all day fundraising event on March 9. The funds raised will go towards the cost of aftercare and an artificial limb for a nine-year-old miniature horse called Faith. The veterinary surgeon will do the operation for free. The horse had a horrific injury to one of her front legs caused by a rope used by her owners to hobble her. The bone has been exposed over a large area and badly damaged, and if it is not amputated, she will die. The cost is expected to be around €8,000, of which €2,627 has been raised to date.

The entry cost to the event at Butterflies is just €5 and includes a buffet, entertainment by the female vocalist Debbie Slater. There will also be a tombola, raffle, Avon lady, and lots more. The Easy Horse Rescue Centre is also holding a Grand Auction and Raffle at their centre between Rojas and San Fulgencio at 3pm on Sat March 5. You can find more details, maps and photos at [www.easyhorsecare.net](http://www.easyhorsecare.net)

It is good to see some new developments at Via Park V. All Bar Sue is now fully open on the lower floor and the Sun Bar & Grill has opened on the ground floor next to the 2GB Indian restaurant, offering reasonably priced fast food and a very popular quiz & bingo on Saturday nights. Stallions have moved 'lock, stock & barrel' up to the first floor and it is now called Italian Stallions Sport's Bar & Restaurant.

This month Donna & Richard will be celebrating their first year at The Phoenix. I have always seen the Phoenix as the community pub in Dream Hills, ever since it began under the able care of Neil & Donna in the early days. Being smack bang in the middle of the urb (and within crawling distance of my house) is of course an advantage. When you request a 'short' in the Phoenix it is never a 'namby pamby' measure but always a generous, indulgent, scrotum tightening measure, restoring your confidence in the kindness and brotherhood of man. They must also be complimented on carrying a number of low-sugar soft drinks. All too often the bars on the CB stock just Diet Coke, which is just not adequate. Imagine a bar in the UK just having one low-sugar drink. They would be laughed at! I must also mention that the bacon 'banjo' at the Phoenix is second to none! The Phoenix Golf Society also meet here on the first Sunday of the month and play on the second Sunday.....that is if they are out on parole!

The town hall will be organising some celebrations to take place on St. Patrick's Day on March 17. This year I understand that they will be taking place near the Burger King/Lidl area. No details are available yet.

If you fancy a five-day party, then head for the *fallas* in Valencia this month. Starting at 5am on the morning of the 15th of March and culminating with the burning of the effigies on the evening of the 19th, it is probably the largest, noisiest and most impressive of fiestas! See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Falles> for more info & images on Page 9.

### Close Call!

A married couple were asleep when the phone rang at 2 in the morning. The wife (undoubtedly blonde) picked up the phone, listened a moment and said 'How should I know, that's 200 miles from here!' and hung up.

The husband said, 'Who was that?'

The wife said, 'I don't know, some woman wanting to know if the coast is clear.'

Ken Billingham.



### Security Cameras.

Do you have nosy or snoopily neighbours whose cameras cover part of your property? If so the following may be of interest to you.

The Supreme Court has made a ruling which confirms the limits on the use of closed circuit television cameras in Spain. The law says that the cameras cannot capture images from an area which is wider than their intended coverage.

The Supreme Court has ordered a resident of *Icod de los Vinos*, in *Santa Cruz de Tenerife*, to dismantle a security camera system which, in addition to covering the doorway to his home, also caught images of people entering and leaving neighbouring homes. The system was motion activated and was capable of working at night. The Supreme Court confirmed the sentence first issued in the court in Santa Cruz. Supreme Court judge, said that the defendant, Gunter R., must pay 300 € compensation to his neighbour Carmelo G., whose right to privacy was violated and whose health had suffered as a result of the situation.

'The recording of the comings and goings from the neighbour's family home affected, although obliquely, the intimate area where his life was taking place', said the judge, considering the recordings invaded his privacy.

The Spanish Data Protection Law is clear on the matter – it says that cameras can only capture the images that are necessary. In addition posters or signs have to be erected to inform of the presence of the cameras. The AEPD, the Spanish Data Protection Agency has to be informed also for its registry of such cameras, and the images recorded have to be erased every 30 days. 32,925 new cameras were registered in 2010.

Any cameras placed on the public way have to be managed only by the Police or Guardia Civil, and need previous permission from a CCTV Commission, which is made up of judges or prosecutors. However despite these rules there are more companies, public bodies and individuals who are using video cameras for their security without proper consent or approval.

Currently in Spain there are more than 70,000 active security cameras, more than 5,000 of them have been placed by neighbourhood or urbanisation communities.

(Source: El Pais & Typically Spanish)

### Play through?

A priest, a doctor, a rich businessman and a Scotsman were waiting one morning for a particularly slow group of golfers in front of them. The doctor shouted to them, "I've never seen such poor golf!"

The Scotsman chimed in, "Och aye! We ha' been waitin' for nigh on fifteen minutes!"

The businessman called out, "Move it on you guys, time is money."

The priest said, "Here comes George the greenkeeper. Let's have a word with him."

"Hello, George!" said the priest, "What's wrong with that annoying group ahead of us? They're rather slow, aren't they?"

George the greenkeeper replied, "Oh, yes.. That's a group of blind English fire fighters. They lost their sight saving our clubhouse from a fire last year, so we always let them play for free, anytime they want to."

The group fell into an embarrassed silence for a moment. Then the priest said, "That's so sad. I think I will say a special mass for them tonight."

The doctor said, "Good idea. I'm going to contact my ophthalmologist colleagues and see if there's anything they can do for them."

The businessman replied, "I think I'll donate £50,000 to the Fire Brigade Benevolent Fund in honour of these brave souls."

And the Scotsman said, "Why kin they no play at night?"

### Las Fallas (The fires) in Valencia.

During this fiesta in March, also know as St. Joseph Festival, the city is decorated by colourful giant papier- mâché figures called *ninots*. These can be as tall as houses, some satirising politicians, celebrities and sports' idols; others are charming and imaginative and some grotesque!

At around midnight on the 19th, the final night of the fiesta, and after an impressive firework display, all the *ninots* are burned in huge bonfires. See some images below.



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A woman is chatting with her friend. 'My husband bought me a mood ring the other day,' she says. 'It lets him monitor my emotional state.' 'Oh yes?' says the friend. 'How does it work?' The woman replies, 'When I'm in a good mood it turns green, and when I'm in a bad mood it leaves a big red mark on his forehead!'

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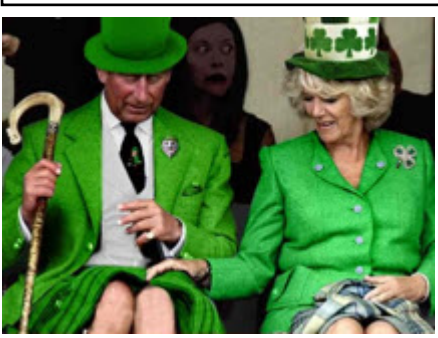
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**Feedback from U.S. Lateshows.**

"Prince William's nightclub owner friend is said to be planning a wild bachelor party. It must be weird stuffing a bill in a stripper's g-string when it has a picture of your grandmother on it." –Jimmy Fallon

"The Catholic Church has approved an app that let's you confess on your iPhone. You can now cheat and atone right on the same device. The actual name for this app is "Priest in your pocket." Don't they read the paper? Couldn't they come up with a better name?" –Jay Leno

"For me the great mystery of this whole revolution (Egyptian) was that for three weeks, these people were in this square with no bathrooms. How did they go? This will always be known in Egyptian history as the riddle of the sphinctor." –Bill Maher

"Facebook is looking into buying Twitter for around \$10 billion. If all goes as planned, the company hopes to combine the two companies, creating the biggest waste of time the world has ever seen." –Jay Leno

"The king of Saudi Arabia announced that he is giving his people \$37 billion in subsidies and payments. It's not a stimulus package, it's a 'don't overthrow me' package." –Jay Leno

"George Clooney says he's had sex with too many women to ever run for office. He was immediately made Prime Minister of Italy." –Conan O'Brien

"Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has said Gadhafi has gone too far. That's like an Australian bartender telling you that you've had too much to drink." –Craig Ferguson

Marriage is like a deck of cards.....in the beginning all you need is two hearts and a diamond.....by the end you wish you had a club and a spade.

### The History of Spain Part 21. The Golden Age & the arrival of the Bourbons.

When one refers to Spain's Golden Age - *Siglo de Oro* - we usually mean the period from 1492 to the late 17th century. However we must not forget that Islamic Spain also enjoyed a 'Golden Age' which fostered a period of intense cultural exuberance and scientific enquiry.

Here we will take a brief look at the later 'Golden Age' which coincided with the rise and fall of the Habsburg dynasty, beginning in 1492 with the discovery of America and the publication of the first Castilian grammar by Antonio de Nebrija, coming to an end with the death of the last great writer of the period, Pedro Calderon de la Barca, in 1681.

There is little doubt that the large influx of gold and silver from the colonies contributed to the development of the arts by generous patronage. The collective arts rarely seem to flourish in poverty. Surprisingly, the Inquisition had little negative effect on the arts, and if foreign literature appeared on the 'banned lists,' the books tended to be obscure. Although Philip II, a Catholic zealot, banned Spaniards from studying abroad and tried to censor foreign works, it did not seem to impair the cultural and creative development of the country, as its imperial connections abroad kept Spain receptive to trends beyond the Pyrenees. The influence of the Italian Renaissance led to a growing appreciation of classical learning. 22 new universities were founded in Spain during the sixteenth century and a further five abroad. By the late sixteenth century, it is estimated that there were over 20,000 male students in Castile; women unfortunately were excluded from the educational system.

It was the Spanish painters in particular who gained fame and fortune as a result of royal patronage and enthusiastic connoisseurs and collectors. These included El Greco (d. 1614), Diego de Velázquez (d. 1660), Murillo (d. 1682) and Francisco de Zurbarán (d. 1664), all of whom brought a penetrating realism to their art.

In the field of literature, Miguel de Cervantes produced a masterpiece in *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, the story of a befuddled knight and his 'streetwise' squire, on a mission to correct all the world's evils. (Cervantes own life is a marvellous epic of misfortunes and triumphs and deserves telling here at a later stage.) Other famous writers of the period included Francisco de Quevedo, Calderon de la Barca and Tirso de Molina. The latter is the *nom de plume* of a friar named Gabriel Tellez, who created the classic lecherous figure of Don Juan, the seducer in *The Deceiver of Sevilla*. Calderon greatly influenced the later Romantic writers and Quevedo's acerbic wit and savage pessimism is illustrated the *La Vida del Buscon*, when the hero goes to school and is served a bit of lamb that 'between what stuck under our fingernails and what was lodged between our teeth, it was all gone, leaving the belly excommunicated from participation.'

Although Cervantes dearly wanted to succeed in the theatre (he had several affairs with actresses while trying!), it was Lope de Vega who emerged as the most famous and prolific playwright, producing over 1,800 plays of which around 500 survive today. As Lope once said, 'More than a hundred of my comedies have taken only 24 hours to pass from my brain to the boards of the theatre.'

Spanish sculpture of the period used polychromed (multi coloured) wood as a medium rather than marble or stone, Becerra and Cano being the most famous sculptors.

Fortunately Spain is still sprinkled today with fabulous architecture from the period. Lavish private residences and palaces were erected such as the severe but majestic Escorial near Madrid, the sumptuous palace and gardens of El Buen Retiro and the Plaza Mayor in Madrid. Several ornate cathedrals - Granada, Sevilla and Segovia for example - were either erected or completed in this period.

On the death of his father, Philip IV, in 1665, the sickly four-year-old Charles II acceded to the throne. One historian described the poor unfortunate as 'the last stunted sprig of a degenerate line.' Because of his age, the king's widow and Charles's mother, Mariana of Austria, together with a five-man regency council, took over the ruling of the country and empire. However, the regency council was soon sidelined due to the influence of the queen's confessor, the Austrian Father Nithard. As was illustrated previously by Torquemada and Cisneros (and as would later be illustrated by Rasputin during the Czarist's final reign), the female members of royal families always seemed susceptible to scheming clerics! The Spain governing classes soon descended into a period of great inertia and confusion with a reign that often took on aspects of a Keystone comedy.

When Charles II came of age in 1675, he was neither physically or mentally capable of the tasks awaiting him. He would only spend a few minutes daily on state affairs devoting himself to childish games. He would pick strawberries and then spend hours counting and recounting them. A Venetian envoy reported that 'from the poor to the rich, everyone devours the state of the king, some taking little bites, the nobility large ones, and the greatest enormous portions.'

Although the king had two marriages in a reign that lasted 35 years (much longer than his critics expected or wanted), he was incapable of producing an heir, some say because of mutual ignorance about sexual matters, others that he was just not capable of what the Irish call 'raising a gallop!' Consequently, the final years of his reign were dominated by the question of the royal succession. Spain's rivals gathered like vultures 'to prey on the corpse of the Monarchy.' Intrigues abounded as the other European powers feared the consequences of the Empire falling into the hands of a single royal house and wanted the Spanish dominions partitioned between themselves. Despite his poor physical and mental condition, the king was determined to avoid the dismemberment of his empire and named Prince Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria as sole heir to the Spanish monarchy. However Prince Joseph died within a year of being nominated and the intrigues continued.

Finally, on his deathbed in November 1700, a chronically ill Charles II - the last Spanish ruler of the Habsburg Dynasty - named as his successor the grandson of Louis XIV of France. The new king, the 17-year-old Philip Duke of Anjou of the House of Bourbon, (who spoke no Spanish and had never set foot in Spain) succeeded to the throne as Philip V, and arrived in Madrid the following April. The arrival of the Bourbons brought a new challenging era to Spain.

## PRE PAID FUNERAL PLANS --- WHY?

Death procedures in Spain are completely different to what happens in the UK and a typical example follows

If death should occur at home, then the local police would attend the house, ask the relevant questions [may not know any English] and then advise the local Tanatoria [Funeral Director] who will collect the body. This is the first big expense but more importantly, do you want this pressure put on your loved ones?

On arrival at the Tanatoria they would want to know, immediately, whether a burial or cremation is required and then that procedure would be arranged and normally occur within 24 -48 hours!!!!

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### High Tech

After having dug to a depth of 10 feet last year, Australian Scientists found traces of copper wire dating back 200 years and came to the conclusion that their ancestors already had a telephone network more than 150 years ago. Not to be outdone by the Aussies, an American archaeologist dug to a depth of 20 feet and shortly after, a story was published in the New York Times: "American Archaeologists, finding traces of 250-year-old copper wire, have concluded that their ancestors already had an advanced high-tech communications network 50 years earlier than the Australians".

One week later, Essex County Council reported the following: "After digging as deep as 30 feet in Colchester, Jack Lucknow, a self-taught archaeologist, reported that he found absolutely 'f\*ck all.' Jack has therefore concluded that 250 years ago, Britain had already gone wireless."

Just makes you bloody proud to be British, doesn't it? Pete Dudman

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#### Points to Ponder

Remember, people will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. You may have a heart of gold .. but so does a hard-boiled egg. Anon.

Many a man owes his success to his first wife and his second wife to his success. Jim Backus

Queen Victoria was like a great paperweight that for half a century sat upon men's minds, and when she was removed their ideas began to blow about the place quite haphazardly. H.G. Wells

A Canadian psychologist is selling a video that teaches you how to test your dog's IQ. Here's how it works: if you spend \$12.99 for the video, your dog is smarter than you. Jay Leno

It always pays to get your retaliation in first. Willie John McBride

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The editor, Mick, can be contacted at [mick.dreamscene@gmail.com](mailto:mick.dreamscene@gmail.com) or at 586 Dream Hills.

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#### Motor bike needs a good home.

I have a Honda XBR500 (1988) motor bike sitting in the driveway for years now and needs someone to give it the attention it deserves. I had it transferred onto Spanish plates in 2005 and have kept up the SUMA payment of 20 euros a year ever since. The bike was last ridden about three years ago and although riding fine then, it will no doubt require some basic attention, (including a re-spray of the petrol tank) before it will fire up again. If you would like to come and have a look at it with a view to taking it off my hands (before Jenny strangles me!) you can give me, Gordon, a call on 675173749.

(Classified adverts are free to local residents for the first couple of months. After that, a euro or two is payable depending on the size of the ad.)

#### Good News!

The chemists/pharmacists in Los Balcones are now open seven days a week, **365 days a year** from 9am to 9pm.

#### Do you enjoy walking?

If you do, then visit the website [www.topwalks.net/en/index.htm](http://www.topwalks.net/en/index.htm)  
 This is a very informative and helpful resource. The 260 walks in Spain along the mountain ranges and coasts are accompanied by a detailed description, map, contour profile, GPS waypoints, slide show, photos, driving instructions and a road map. There are also photo sets on more than 1500 plants as well as the many types of butterflies, which you encounter along these hiking routes. The website is in English, Spanish, German, Swedish and Finnish.

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#### Diabetic?

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