

THE DREAM SCENE

Newsletter

Issue no. 56 1st of October 2011

Bienvenido a todos.

August has been a record year for tourism in Spain and one of the hottest for 50 years. Tourists spent €6.808 billion here, more than the previous record set in 2008. The visit of the Pope in August and the problems at other destinations in North Africa and Greece are thought to have stimulated the increase.

September has been a beautiful month here. Although a little cooler in the evenings, some days the humidity has still been quite high and we have had some very welcome rain on a couple of evenings. While driving around I have noticed very few mattresses dumped. Does this mean that we are getting a better class of summer rental at last and that the 'pissed-mattress' theory is incorrect?

If you are on the Spanish healthcare system, you may have noticed a few changes in relation to prescriptions. First of all your prescription summary sheet will indicate the cost of each medicine prescribed and will also include a total cost of the prescriptions you have had for the year to date. If you are retired and in the system, you still don't have to pay; these details are meant to make people aware of the costs. Also at one time the *farmacias* were quite happy to hand out drugs for future dated prescriptions, but this appears to be no longer the case. A two week lead is now all you may get locally. The problem? Local *farmacias* have not been paid by the region! These debts are paid by the regional governments because although the health service here offers national cover, each region operates its own system and it is they who must pay for all the medicines prescribed by general practitioners in the area. And, as we are all now aware, most of the regions are sinking in debt. But of course it is not just the *farmacias* which are suffering. The multinational drug companies (whom I can never feel sorry for) and the smaller Spanish drug companies are also taking a hammering. Spanish hospitals now owe more than €4 billion to the drug companies. (*Farmacias* in our area wait at least six months for payment.)

The third largest multinational pharmaceutical company, Roche, has warned Spain that it may stop supplying its products to Spanish hospitals and clinics. It comes as the company has stopped supplying medicines to Greek hospitals because of the debt they are owed, and says that what they are owed by some regional administrations in Spain is 'at its limit'. CEO of the company, Severin Schwan, made the revelation to the New York Times, and El País then asked Roche España for comments. The response was 'As is happening in other countries, the crisis situation and the debt in Spain is significant and some regional administrations are at their limit'. Regions such as Castilla y León are now paying medical suppliers after two years, but Roche reports delays of 900 days are now happening, while Andalucía, Valencia and Castilla-La Mancha has an average payment time of more than 600 days.

October 12 is the *Fiesta Nacional*. This was originally called the *Día de la Hispanidad* and the name was changed later. The second National Day is Constitution Day on December 6.

The best of luck to Martin Hayes who, after several months of chasing girls and drinking pints (and occasionally pulling them), is now returning to university to probablychase more girls and drink more pints.

Congratulations to The Phoenix & others for raising so much for the 'Hope for John' charity - see letter on page 9. Also well done to Butterflies who raised €253 for Paul Cunningham Nurses.

Thanks to Patricia & Con Doherty for their kind donation to the DS. All the best for now, Mick & Tid.



LOS BALCONES

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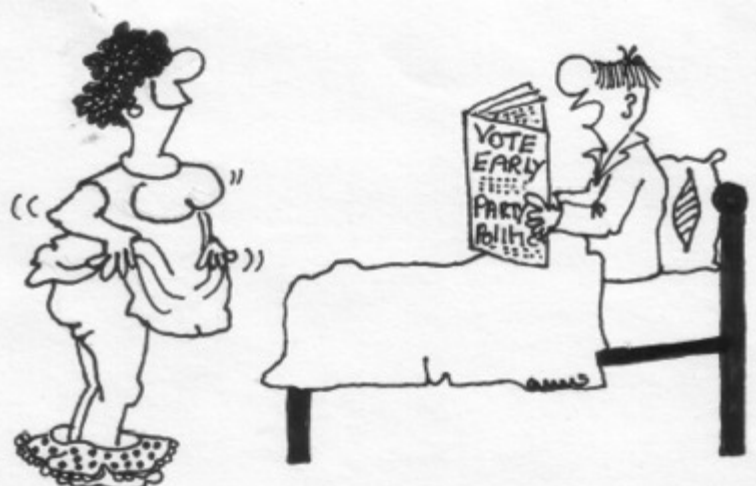
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Angela's Cartoon



No Mavis! I said there's a big election coming up!

What's Up?

As you would expect, it is the economy which has dominated the front pages of the Spanish press for the last month.

The government has clung-on to the end of the legislature and pushed through a number of measures in an attempt to boost employment and the economy. However seven social laws have been left uncompleted at the end of the legislature – Dignified death, Infancy protection, Religious freedom, Equality measures, Sex-Contact ads in newspapers, Immigration, and animal protection. The Spanish parliament has now been dissolved and general elections will be held on November 20. I will include a preview of the main players and issues in the next issue, although expats cannot vote.

The cabinet finally set the details of the new Patrimonial or Wealth Tax which is to be approved by Royal Decree. The tax will be applied in 2011 and 2012, and will kick-in on assets of €700,000 and over. There is a €300,000 exception/allowance for your main residential property. Assets which will be counted include property, vehicles, current and deposit bank accounts, shares and investment funds, public debt and life insurance, among others. If you are a Spanish resident, the tax will be on your worldwide assets. 160,000 people are expected to be caught by the new tax, which should bring in just over €1 billion for the treasury.

ABC says the PSOE has voted against the Spanish language. To isolate the PP they are supporting Catalan language immersion in Congress. El País notes that Congress has backed the Catalan model. It notes the votes against from the PP, UPyD. El Mundo headlines that the Generalitat regional government has said that the Supreme Court should respect its laws. The Catalan Government says it cannot comply with the judicial requirement because the Catalan Education Law demands Catalan language immersion.

La Razón describes the vote as an anti-PP cordon.

There have been a number of one-day teachers' strikes throughout the country; however I noticed that the UGT union leader who organised the strike in Madrid sends his own children to a private school. The newspaper ABC notes that Spanish teachers are among the highest paid in the OECD, and La Razón adds that is despite that the drop out failure rate in Spanish schools is among the highest.

The Catalans, led by their president, Artur Mas, have been creating a bit of a stink for some time concerning the Catalan language. The Catalan High Court has decreed that both Castellano (Spanish) and Catalan be on an equal footing throughout Cataluña, taught equally in the classrooms. Mas & Co don't want this and want total immersion in Catalan (Catalá) in the classroom and seemingly everywhere else as well. A shopkeeper has already been fined for displaying notices in Castellano and not Catalá. During the regional fiesta day last month, the Spanish flag and posters of King Carlos were publicly burned.

The government have decided not to privatise part of the Spanish Lottery this November. They feel that the current market conditions will not guarantee an adequate return. Bit like buying a lottery ticket really, I suppose.

Despite paying off a million € every month to Hacienda and Social Security, the debt at Marbella Town Hall is continuing to increase. The million € payment is only covering the interest generated on the debt amassed in the 15 years of the corrupt GIL administration in the town where the Mayor was the late Jesús Gil y Gil. The debt which remains is put at some €300 million, and the administration led by the PP Mayor, Ángeles Muñoz, says the Town Hall is suffocated. Outgoing socialist administrations in other towns and cities have also left huge debts to their successors. In the Costa del Sol town of Estepona accused the previous administration using a grant of €3 million to pay wages and of understating the town hall debt at €160 million instead of the true figure of €300 million! How can they possibly pay that off?

It is a similar story in the Castilla-La Mancha region where the debt has been revised at €2.81 billion! The Socialist president, José María Barreda, who was voted out left 167,727 facturas unpaid, of which 86,600 were from 2010 and worth 260.9 million €. On a more positive note, Crevillent Town Hall closed 2010 with a surplus of more than €5.3 million in its coffers. What a marvellous example to the majority of municipalities in Spain. The town hall pays its suppliers within 36 days, which must be a record!

Iberia-British Airways (IAG) wants to go shopping, and it seems that both BMI and Aer Lingus are in the sites of the new IAG holding. IAG has made it clear that it wants to grow through purchases and fusions with the target of becoming a truly global operator. Other names being mentioned are American Airlines, Quantas and Japan Airlines. It seems the interest in BMI is obtaining the slots it holds at the saturated Heathrow. British Airways has been doing far better than Iberia since the two airlines merged eight months ago to form the IAG. British Airways has seen a 23% increase in passenger numbers at Spanish airports since the merger, while Iberia and its partners have lost 4.6% in passenger numbers up to August. Iberia is having to return two new planes following the cancellation of routes to Brazil, and has announced a job freeze, while BA has announced a plan to take on 800 new pilots.

Amazon is to open in Spain on September 15, but the Spanish at www.amazon.es will not have e-books for its Kindle reader until the new year. Initially only physical material will be sold, books, music, videos and electronic goods. Over the past year Amazon has been buying up books from Spanish bookshops to offer them on its web. That has handled the physical problems, but reaching a deal on e-books is proving more difficult.

A small boy got lost at a football game. He went up to a policeman and said, 'I've lost my dad.'

'What's he like?' asked the officer sympathetically.

'Beer and women,' said the boy.

Spain has won the European Basketball Cup for the second time in succession, beating France in the final. Some 40 people who paid 33,000 € for training for air traffic control from the British company, Astac Limited, via the Camilo José Cela University, are claiming fraud after discovering that the course is not approved in Spain.

Electric cars are not taking off in Spain. Only 213 cars have been registered this year, while the Government forecast was 20,000.

Last month, Zaragoza University started using frequency inhibitors to prevent students from using their mobile phones or ear piece communicators to cheat during exams. An accomplice outside the examination room/lecture halls could provide the student with answers via an electronic device. Some students have been wearing wigs to camouflage the earpieces. Most of the complaints about cheating have come from - surprise, surprise, - the Law Faculty! Why am I not surprised?

The prosecutors' office is requesting a 309 year sentence for the Peruvian doctor Carlos Morín for more than 100 illegal abortions which were carried out at his Barcelona clinics before 2007. Morín's partner in the business, his wife, María Luisa Durán, faces 204 years. The couple are also charged with falsifying documents and illicit association. The investigation began in 2007 following a television report on the clinic which was broadcast in Denmark. El País reported that some of the women who underwent terminations were more than seven and a half months pregnant. The paper said Morín and his team justified the procedure at more than 22 weeks under Spain's former abortion law, which allowed a termination if the mother's health was at serious risk. The patients should have been assessed by a psychiatrist if that was the case, but it's understood that, in many cases, this never happened, and two psychiatrists, who are also charged, signed off their reports without a visit. Morín admitted during the instruction phase of the case that abortions were performed on girls as young as 13.

An investigation is underway into a possible €60 million fraud in the discount offered to residents of the Canaries on flights to and from the mainland. The allegation is that the airlines may have sent their claims for refunds to the Ministry for Development for tickets at a higher price than actually charged to the passengers, in order to obtain greater compensation.

A Spanish Court ruled that local authorities can no longer provide a free wi-fi service in public buildings, and that they must pay to register themselves as 'internet providers' if they choose to do so. Town Halls who decide to offer this service will be obliged to pay the required fee to the Telecommunications Market Commission to provide the service, the court confirmed in a statement. Even when available, the service will only be free in limited and specific circumstances such as inside libraries or cultural centres. The court upheld a 300,000-euro penalty imposed upon Malaga town hall by the commission due to their allowing the public to have free Wi-Fi access without them notifying regulators. This staggering example of bungling bureaucracy is probably why Orihuela Costa and other areas have not got the free we-fi promised throughout the area by the various councils.

A chemist in A Coruña has been fined €600 after being victim of a burglary. A government body said the robbery indicated that the security measures did not meet the legislative requirements, which requires there to be a security latch on the door to prevent access at night.

Many of you will have seen the tourist train which travels through Torrevieja during the summer months. Regrettably a 66-year-old British woman died from injuries she received while getting-off the train last month. She allegedly alighted at an unofficial stop and was run over by the train.

The Government has approved a regulation which means that all convenience stores will be able to sell tobacco 24 hours around the clock. Until now only shops in petrol stations could sell tobacco, but the new shops will only be able to sell cigarettes by vending machine. Shops wanting to do so should ask for permission from the tobacco market commission. The President of the Stance Association in Spain, Mario Espejo, fears that shops will make the most of this to sell contraband tobacco.

Last month two British women had their handbags taken from a bar in the district of Nueva Andalucia in Marbella. The handbags contained €2,000 and £400 in cash, a mobile phone, a diamond pendant worth €12,000 and other valuables. The women had noticed that two well-dressed men in the bar were missing along with the bags. Some time later in Torremolinos, at a routine checkpoint, the police stopped a vehicle carrying four men all with criminal records for robbery and theft. A search of the car revealed that there were gold chains, earrings, cash and a mobile phone hidden in the car. One of the men was seen to swallow something and a pendant without a stone was found in the car. The police whisked the suspect off to a medical centre for an X-ray, where the precious stone was found in his abdomen! So four more new friends for big gay Juan at the local 'chokey.'

Vetern

A man goes into a bar in Via Park III and points at the beer tap. 'Do you want a pint?' asks the barman. The man nods and the barman notices a huge scar across the man's throat. 'Bloody Hell' gasps the barman, 'where did you get that?' The man manages to croak, 'Falklands.' 'Well have this one on the house, Mate,' says the barman, 'you boys did a marvellous job there.' The man clutches his pint and croaks, '*Muchas Gracias.*'

Batten down the hatches!

A 'gung-ho' admiral is standing on the deck of his battleship when the enemy is spotted on the horizon. 'Fetch my red shirt' he orders a nearby midshipman. 'If I'm wounded fighting the enemy ship I don't want the men to see I'm bleeding.' 'Excuse me,' says the midshipman, 'but it is not one ship, there are at least twenty!' 'In that case,' replies the admiral, 'forget the red shirt and pick up my brown trousers.'



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Phoenix Golf Society

On a really hot Sunday in deepest Murcia at Hacienda de Alamo, the society and a few guests enjoyed a day out on Captain's Day.

Six holes on foot and then a bacon sandwich before the 18 was certainly different from the usual.

The winners of the 'yellow ball' on the 6 holes was Richard Hurst and John Bradbeer despite starting on the wrong green.

Overall winner was Mick Slater with 34 points with Richard Hirst taking the gold with 32.

Vice Captain Pete Brain got the silver with Jim Storey taking the bronze with one hell of an improvement on last month.

The best guest was Alan Ashbook with Captain Dave Wightman taking the Must Try Harder trophy, a relief for a few of us.

Nearest the pin winners were Mick Slater, Richard Hirst, Mick Robson and Darryle de Silva.

Thank you to Kevin and Donna for the great buffet and to Johnny Zella for the entertainment before the *Rozzers* turned up.

Details of the society can be found at the Phoenix Bar in Via Park 5 in Dream Hills.

John Bradbeer.

David Feherty on Golf.

I've hit more balls than Sir Elton John's chin this year, and still missed 16 cuts in a row.

Your playing partner took more strokes than an eight-grade schoolboy with a Victoria's Secret catalogue.

My golfing partner couldn't hit a tiled floor with a bellyfull of puke.

Jim Furyk's swing is like an octopus falling out of a tree, or a man trying to kill a snake in a telephone booth.

-If you could rewrite the Rules of Golf, what new rule would you bring in?

-You are allowed to tackle your opponent.

Is my friend in the bunker or is the bastard on the green?

House cleaning getting a bit too much for you or would you just prefer someone else to do it?

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Granny 'Grounds' Grandson!

A mistaken positive in a drugs test carried out at Barajas Airport in Madrid has resulted in a Panamanian doctor, Juan Rodríguez Lizondro, being imprisoned in Madrid for six months.

The customs authorities and Guardia Civil declared that his 19 kilos of clothes had been impregnated with cocaine, while the doctor claimed that what they had detected was his grandmother's camphor.

The reported conversation at the time was....

'It smells strange – what's it got?'

'I don't know. I live with my grandmother. She irons my clothes with starch, and then puts it in drawers with balls of camphor to repel the moths – maybe it's that'.

'Let's see', said the Guardia Civil, who then sprayed the clothes with an aerosol which produced a distinctive blue colour, indicating as far as they were concerned that it was cocaine.

The 34 year old doctor, who is a Seventh Day Adventist, came to Madrid because of a three month scholarship he had won with the Carlos III Health Institute. He does not drink or smoke, much less take drugs. (After being 'banged-up' unjustly for six months I dare say that the poor chap might now have a very large medicinal brandy!)

Despite that, the prosecutor called for him to be charged with drug trafficking, and the judge considered the aerosol test could not be wrong on 108 different items of clothing.

A second test on the clothing at the Spanish Medicaments Agency took six months to come up with the correct result showing that there were no drugs.

'I came to Spain with all my dreams and a grand project, and everything turned into the worst nightmare'. (Typically Sp.)

The Look-out

A couple decided that the only way to have a 'quickie' while their ten-year-old son was in the apartment was to send him out on the balcony and let him give a running report on what was going on in the neighbourhood. So the boy stood on the balcony and reported on everything that was happening.

'A police car has just called at the Hamiltons' house, the Chandlers are taking delivery of a new wardrobe, and the Mitchells are having sex.'

Hearing this, the boy's parents shot bolt upright.

'How do you know the Mitchells are having sex?'

'Because their kid is standing on the balcony too.'

The Kama what?

A man said to his wife: 'Honey, what do you say that tonight we change positions?'

'OK,' she said. 'You stand by the ironing board and I'll lie on the sofa, scratch myself and watch TV.'

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One too many?

A drunk staggers in a Catholic church late one night and collapses in the confessional.

Next morning he's awoken by the sound of the priest entering the cubicle next to him.

The priest addresses him through the grille.

'Good morning, my son. What can I do for you?'

'You got here just in time,' replies the drunk.

'Could you pass over some toilet paper?'

AIRPORTS

So what is happening about San Javier – Corvera airports?

When the idea of a new international airport at Corvera was first mooted it certainly raised some eyebrows and questions. This is because Murcia already has an airport, San Javier, and although a military airport (the air-traffic controllers there are members of the military), commercial flights were permitted in the afternoons and evenings, the mornings being set aside for military use. AENA, the national airport authority, dealt with the time-slot issue by spending around €70 million extra to build a new runway and control tower and enhance the infrastructure of the airport. So why the need for a second local airport during such a time of austerity.

Corvera Airport is mainly about politics, prestige and regional pride. Murcia wants to join the 'big boys' and have their own international airport like Alicante, to enhance their regional status. They have no control over the San Javier location. (AENA were invited to participate in talks concerning building an airport at Corvera back in 2000 and later in 2004 under the PSOE administration, but they refused both invitations.)



(Model of Corvera frontage)

The original construction contracts for the new airport in Corvera were agreed with the builders Sacyr in 2006 and 2007, with the objective of commencing commercial flights at the airport by June 2010. The airport is privately owned, run and managed by a business consortium, Aeromur. However, less than two years into the project, funding ran out and work stopped for several months. Work on the new airport recommenced only after a massive loan - €200 million - was squeezed out of the regional authorities in June 2010. Building and fitting-out work is due to be completed by the end of 2011, which is followed by a licensing period of from three to six months. If the schedule is maintained, the airport could be open by July 2012.

But this new airport could not possibly succeed if San Javier remains open. So for some months Murcian politicians have been dropping hints about the closure of the non-military part of San Javier airport but it was not until last week that the Regional Government spoke to AENA. No doubt the closure of the commercial section of the airport will be discussed together with that of the level of compensation to be paid when those activities were terminated. Most of the talking to date has been between local, regional and national politicians who appear to be trying to force a *fait accompli*. It now appears that an agreement has been reached between the National Government and the Regional Government of Murcia that the new airport at Corvera has the better facilities, and greater potential of the two airports for passengers, airlines and airport operators, and that San Javier should be ceded back to the Military. Regional politicians are also saying that the new airport will be essential to compliment the new proposed Paramount Theme Park in the region. Un-sourced comments in the media also state that AENA may be compensated by requesting them to manage the new airport and that AENA also be given a 30% stake in the facility.

But to date, no final decision has been made on the fate of San Javier airport. "The airlines have to be asked yet and it is unclear whether all flights and routes can be moved for technical reasons," reports a spokesman for the National Department for Transport.



(Part of interior of new airport)

AENA only employ 90 staff at the airport, but there are also a large range of businesses at the airport - car rental, taxis, catering, transfers etc who now face a very uncertain future.

The latest news is that the The Murcia Regional Government has issued three penalties against Aeromur - the concessionaire of Corvera International Airport, for a total of 162,000 euros for various infringements.

(More in due course)



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Horrendous conditions in some Spanish zoos.

The international animal rights organisation Igualdad Animal, Animal Equality, has presented the results of its secret investigation into eight Spanish zoos and has lodged formal complaints against the conditions at the centres.

IA investigated zoos in Sevilla, Córdoba, Cádiz, Jaén, Barcelona, Madrid, (Rio Safari Park) Elche and (Bioparc) Valencia, and said all should be closed down now and fined. The worst findings were at Madrid, Seville and Jaén.

The organisation reported self-harming among the animals or violence towards one another, which they said is the result of stress from being confined in small spaces which are not adapted to their needs. They also noted inappropriate behaviour from visitors, who threw objects into the animals' compounds or were banging against glassed-in cages and frightening the animals.

One of IA's videos shows the agony and death of a lioness because the zoo would not pay for a veterinarian.

There was also abuse from the workers who beat the animals and forced them to perform actions, such as the dolphins, who had abrasions on their faces, probably due to the coaches who stand on their faces during training sessions and performance. Several large birds were also chained-up.

IA said while presenting its report on Wednesday that they found animals, 'condemned to a life of stress and serious disorders, with open wounds and no veterinary treatment because, as some workers have said, that has to be paid for.' Their 12-month investigation includes videos and photos of each of the zoos which EFE reports teams from Igualdad Animal either obtained by visiting the centres as a member of the public or by using hidden cameras while working at the zoos as volunteers.

Animal Equality consider zoos lack any educational function and argue that "the behaviour shown by animals in zoos is typical of any animal in captivity and therefore, zoos do not bring children to animals, on the contrary, they distort their vision."

If you can stomach it, you can see some of the photos and video from the report here - www.vidasenjauladas.org

A fair cop!

A US cop catches an illegal alien by the Mexican border. 'Sorry,' he says, 'You know the law; you've got to go back.' The Mexican pleads with him. 'No, Señor, I must stay in de USA! Pleezee!'

The cop says, 'Okay. Tell you what, I'll let you stay if you can use the words "green", "pink" and "yellow" in a sentence.' The Mexican thinks and then says, 'Hokay. The phone, it goes "green, green...green, green" I pink it up and sez "yellow?"'

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Mystery Meat

A family were given some venison by a friend. The wife cooked the deer steaks and served them up for dinner.

'What is this?' asked their young daughter, 'Is it beef?'

'No,' said the father. 'Is it pork?' said the young son.

'No,' said the father, 'I'll give you a clue. It's what Mum sometimes calls me.'

'Spit it out, Sis,' yelled the boy. 'We're eating asshole!'

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Violence and smut are of course everywhere on the airwaves. You cannot turn on your television without seeing them, although sometimes you have to hunt around. (Dave Barry)

The History of Spain. Part 25. Foreign Revolutions and the arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte.

The reign of Carlos III led to a short period of cultural and economic revival. The population increased from 7.5 million in 1717 to 10.5 million in 1797, reversing the trends from the Habsburg era. Although the king went hunting every day, his choice of gifted ministers, met regularly (an early form of the modern governmental cabinet), and guided Spain through an *enlightened* period and introduced many modern changes to society and government. The army and navy were also enlarged and modernised. However Spain remained an overwhelmingly rural society with 75% of the population working in agriculture and the ambitious reforms, particularly in this area, never became a reality. Poor infrastructure also meant that Spain could not enjoy the industrial expansion that both France and Britain were enjoying. Following peace with a number of North African states, the scourge of Barbary pirates off the eastern and southern coast of Spain ceased, encouraging the population to return to the coastline. The 1770's also saw a spat with Britain when the Spanish ejected a number of English settlers from the Falkland Islands.

Carlos, however, continued his disastrous foreign policy, and although ostensibly at peace with Britain, Spain (together with France), did what it could to frustrate its colonial rival by giving undercover aid to the North American revolutionaries from 1776. But Spain feared for its own American possessions as well, which led it to offer its mediation between Britain and the revolutionaries in 1779. When Great Britain refused the conditions tabled, Spain declared war on Britain, but at the same time did not recognise the United States's independence. Spain did not want its own colonies dabbling in independence, and in Peru an uprising of 60,000 Indians was brutally crushed, its leader's body being mutilated and pulled apart by a team of horses.

A combined Spanish-French fleet blockaded the English Channel preventing Britain from sending reinforcements to a beleaguered Lord Cornwallis, who was then forced to surrender to the American revolutionaries in 1781. A great siege was also mounted against Gibraltar by the Spanish and French, which lasted from 1779 to 1783 but the 'Rock' never surrendered and remains British to this day. (The story of the siege is a marvellous one, full of bravery, chivalry and spectacle. I will put a hopefully interesting and informative account of it in the December issue of this newsletter.)

Once again peace was agreed at the Treaty of Versailles in 1783. Spain got Menorca back but not Gibraltar. Spain however now held most of North America - save that held by the French north of the Great Lakes and that of the new Americans who held the eastern states. Spain also had all of Central America and South America, except for Brazil and Guiana. When Carlos III died in 1788 following a chill caught while hunting, the Spanish Empire was at its greatest ranging from the Philippines and the Americas to Italy and parts of North Africa. However, it would take less than a century for this massive empire to be wrenched apart.

Carlos III was replaced by his 40-year-old son, Carlos IV (see portrait on right). The new king was considered by many to be intellectually sluggish and quite credulous but he was also known for his acts of kindness. Having only a passive interest in government, leaving such matters to his wife, Maria Luisa of Parma and the government ministers, Carlos preferred to spend his time hunting.



The first challenge came with the French Revolution in 1789 and efforts were made to seal the Spanish border to ensure that any revolutionary or disruptive influences together with any news from France were kept at bay. This proved largely ineffective. (As you would imagine both the American and French Revolutions caused much anxiety to all of Europe's royal families.) Matters came to a head when Carlos's first cousin, King Louis XVI was guillotined and Spain declared war on France. Waves of anti-French and anti-Revolutionary sentiment swept throughout Spain which off course was countered by a new revolutionary and liberal spirit in others. Whereas real revolutionary cliques were small, the scope of critical opinion among the middle and upper classes increased considerably. Some believe that it was this period which caused the origin of the 'two Spains' which is often blamed for many of Spain's historic ills. Many will also argue that it is still apparent today. It was Marie Luisa who then 'grasped the nettle' and fired the senior minister, Floridablanca, insisting that Carlos appoint a 25-year-old royal guard officer named Manuel Godoy as chief minister.

Queen Maria Luisa (see left) dominated her weak husband and he appeared to be quite content as a cuckold. Although a beauty in her youth, the ordeal of frequent childbirth ravaged her features. Although pregnant on 24 occasions, she had 10 miscarriages and fourteen children. The queen had also lost all her teeth and these were replaced with a set of ivory molars, which according to accounts at the time, were exceptional. The new alliance of King, Queen and Godoy was referred to as 'the earthly trinity.' There was much gossip and rumours about the relationship between the Queen and Godoy but never any proof of 'hanky-panky.'



In 1795 Godoy (see below right) struck a treaty with France and both rounded once again on Britain, as a sporadic war raged for the next few years. The Spanish saw the coup d'etat of Napoleon Bonaparte in 1799 as a positive step towards Bourbon restoration in France. Spain's misreading of Napoleon's intentions was calamitous. Napoleon forced Godoy into a petty border war with Portugal - 'War of the Oranges.' War with Britain ceased briefly in 1804, the same year Napoleon declared himself emperor. On October 21, 1805, between Cadiz and Algeciras, off Cape Trafalgar, the French and Spanish fleets were defeated by the British under Admiral Nelson. The Spanish fleet was utterly destroyed and would never recover. Two years later French troops poured into the peninsula. What was initially perceived as a 'safe passage' exercise to Portugal became outright occupation. Napoleon was only interested in empire, not the status-quo. Spain was about to enter one of the most painful episodes of its history.



Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr Editor,

I was appalled to read the letter slating the *Madrilenes* in your last edition, it is unacceptable to seek out a particular group of people for criticism in this way; it will do nothing to improve relations between the Spanish and the English and other communities living here and I know that the article has incensed a lot of Spaniards. In fact a lot of what was said is untrue.

Granted that in July and August we have a great influx of holiday-makers and we are relieved when they go but that is only because then the roads are not choked and I for one can have the swimming pool nearly all to myself again! In Dream Hills II we have had incidents of pollution of the pools etc as we do every year it is unknown who the culprits are.

What we, the English, have to understand is that the Spanish people are noisy and passionate and enjoy their family get-togethers. They come out at night when we are going to bed to enjoy the cooler summer air and is it so hard to accept the noise for this short time? It is after all their country and we should try to adapt to their way of life if we are to enjoy it to the full. My neighbours are sometimes in their garden talking and laughing sometimes until 2 or 3 in the morning but as long as there is no fighting or swearing I just go back to sleep.

There is plenty of noise etc from the English holiday-makers, just ask anyone who lives near the bars I couldn't say that their behaviour is always exemplary!

As to accusing them of littering and not looking after their dogs correctly then again there are plenty of people of all nationalities here that are just as bad.

I am still trying to instil in people on our urbanisation that you actually have to put the household waste in the containers not on the ground next to it! If everyone cared about their community then more people would just pick up the odd bit of rubbish and place in the bin and not say "its not mine why should I?"

As to saying that 'they' do not want us here that is absolutely not true, 'they' know that the UK pays for our use of their Health Service and that we contribute to the economy. The British and others have been buying here for a number of years now and because of the great numbers the cost of housing increased to such a level that the Spanish people, who earn less than the British, could not afford them, now that there has been a decline then perhaps some of them can now afford to buy. Good luck to them I say the more young Spanish couples who buy on my urbanisation the better, I might get a chance to practice my Spanish!!!!

Ann Ball, Dream Hill II

Common sense!

The wife and I were sitting around the breakfast table one lazy Sunday morning.

I said to her, "If I were to die suddenly, I want you to immediately sell all my stuff."

"Now why would you want me to do something like that?" she asked.

"I figure that you would eventually remarry and I don't want some wanker using my stuff."

She looked at me and said: "What makes you think I'd marry another wanker?"

(Mel Bettell)

Well, stuff that!

A little old lady buys a couple of monkeys and she becomes very attached to them. As happens, both monkeys die and not wanting to part with them, she takes both monkeys to a taxidermist. The taxidermist asks her, 'Would you like them mounted?' The old lady replies 'No, just holding hands would be fine.'

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Hope for John, Lafora Appeal

Hi Mick,

the total raised from the Phoenix and VP5 was 1,006 Euro which is absolutely fantastic.

John's Mum Alice has posted a thank you letter to me (not arrived yet) and she was delighted and overwhelmed at the amount raised by people who don't know John, and would like to thank them all from the bottom of her heart.

Ian and I would like to thank Donna and Richard, DJ Chris, Kevin Tyler, Billy aka Tina Turnup & Amy Winenomore and Cath for entertaining everyone and all the bars, restaurants and individuals who donated prizes, the people who supported from the Friday Quiz and on the day and night. Not forgetting Thelma for her fantastic raffle ticket selling, Dream Scene along with all the Media and Radio Stations who contributed in advertising and gifts. Especially Mr Peter Andrea who signed the "Hope for John" Tea Shirts and caps which raised a fantastic amount on the Auction.

Kind Regards

May & Ian.

Enough said!

Pythagoras' theorem - 24 words.

The Lord's Prayer - 66 words.

Archimedes' Principle - 67 words.

10 Commandments - 179 words.

Gettysburg Address - 286 words.

US Declaration of Independence - 1,300 words.

US Constitution with all 27 Amendments - 7,818 words.

EU regulations on the sale of cabbage - 26,911 words.

(Mike Wiggington.)



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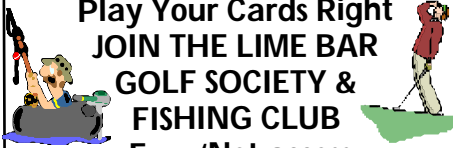
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More on the Spanish Banks

Property: Banks in Spain have been accused of selling the property in their portfolios at unrealistic prices, some as much as 40% more than the market rate. (This of course means that the banks are keeping an inflated figure on their books of their property assets.) The Association of Bank, Savings Banks and Insurance Users in Spain, ADICAE, says the prices are being hiked even though the banks have been awarded some of the properties at half their price. ADICAE carried out a study comparing prices of property being sold by banks, savings banks and individuals in 11 cities across the country. They say the difference could be over €10,000 on flats with the same features in the same street, and claim that the banks continue to be the most expensive and offer conditions seen during the real estate bubble in their mortgage policies. ADICAE says the situation acts against free competition, and notes the 'silence of an accomplice' coming from the Bank of Spain.

The Bank of Spain has said there has been a 9,4% fall in the loans awarded for the purchase of homes in July compared to June. For the year to July the amount of mortgage loans granted is 47% down on the previous year.

Debt: The banks and savings banks who are having difficulty finding finance on the markets, have asked the Government to extend the payment of their debts backed by the State, for six month beyond December. If the Government decide to do this, they will need permission from Brussels. The International Monetary Fund has asked for independent audits of the Spanish banks but the Minister for Tax and the Economy, Elena Salgado, has stated that this is not necessary. But then again if you take the case of CAM Bank, who in May of this year announced first quarter consolidated profits of €39.8 million; this during a period when they were looking for a buyer. Then just two weeks ago they announced a six-monthly loss for the first half of this year of €1.136 billion! This is disgraceful and it stinks of 'creative accounting' and manipulation. Although a number of banks, including Barclays, were interested in CAM earlier in the year, any likely suitor is going to require indemnities and guarantees: Santander, Caixabank and Sabadell may still be interested.

Charges: A recent study by the European Commission has revealed that only the Italians pay more commission to their banks than the Spanish, reporting that the banking institutions are trying to compensate for their fall in profits caused by the recession by increasing bank charges. The Bank of Spain advises that the average charge for a debit card is now €19.89, a 42% increase over three years. The average annual maintenance charge for a credit card is now €36.93, up around 25% in three years. Commissions charged for the paying-in of cheques and transfers are also up, and the Banco Santander has toughened the conditions under which it offers 'no charges' to certain clients.

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Three Surveys Family Time

A study from the charity UNICEF has launched a disturbing report on the state of parenting skills and childhood well-being in the UK. The study, which surveyed 250 children (hardly a massive sample) between the ages of 8 to 13 in the UK, Spain and Sweden, studied attitudes towards materialism and inequality and found that parents and children had markedly different attitudes towards material possessions.

A further 24 families in each country were studied in much greater depth and filmed as they interacted in their everyday lives.

The conclusion was that family life across the three countries was markedly different. In the UK both parents often worked long hours and compensated for this by buying material possessions for their children.

However, in Spain and Sweden it was found that family time appeared to be a more important and established fact of everyday life.

On the subject of materialism itself, the survey found that British children and parents both 'had problems', and noted that for the majority of eight- to 13-year-olds in all three countries, "new toys, fashion items and gadgets were not central to their well-being".

The report concluded that the peer pressure that children felt in the need to conform with the acquisition of material possessions was not reflected outside the UK : "This compulsive acquisition and protective, symbolic brand purchase was largely absent in Spain where parents were clearly under much less pressure to consume and displayed greater resilience."

Spanish Families

23% of Spaniards say that they have lent money to other members of their family to meet day to day costs, according to another study by the La Caixa Foundation. The survey studied family solidarity in comparison with other countries, and the main conclusion is that the solidarity in Spanish families continues to be 'very high' in times of crisis. The family remains the main instrument of support for 56% of the Spanish, compared with 32% of the Germans and 30% of the French who turn more to social services.

The study shows that 33% of Spaniards who purchased a home in recent years have done so with the financial help of relatives, mostly parents, who have lent money without interest or security.

The research also shows the Spanish are the Europeans who leave the family home the latest. It shows that most of them are happy to stay with the parents to save money and not lose the lifestyle that they have already.

The study shows that 67% of Spaniards aged 18 – 29 still live with their parents, and most of those who do move out go no further than 5km. This is more than double that of Scandinavian countries (30%). The percentage of grandparents called on to look after their grandchildren has increased from 15% to 25% since 1993.

You can read more here -

<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2011/09/22/economia/1316696529.html>

Holiday Blues?

Back-to-work blues for British holidaymakers are not as bad as they were two years ago. But UK tourists still have the worst holiday blues among European travellers, the poll by TripAdvisor found.

The survey showed 78% of British travellers suffer from post-holiday blues and back-to-work stress. This compares with a British figure as high as 88% in 2009 but is still ahead of the current European "blues average" of 69%.

The Spanish are the least likely to suffer post-holiday depression with only 61% feeling fed-up after a break.

The poll of 4,097 travellers, including 1,304 Britons, showed 75% of Britons said stress returned to pre-holiday levels within one month of their getting back from a break. The overall European figure was only 57%.

As many as 7% of Britons have phoned in sick after a holiday, although the least-depressed Spanish are the worst offenders, with 11% resorting to the tactic.

The poll also found that 74% of Britons plan their next trip as soon as they return, while 34% reminisce by looking at pictures of their holiday, 23% try to cook meals they enjoyed while away and 19% take weekend breaks to bridge the gap until their next getaway.

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In praise of redheads!

Why is it that redheads get a bad press? Some years ago following an episode of South Park, a handful of yobs started a campaign in Facebook called 'Kick a Redhead Day.' As this led to some bullying in schools, the perpetrators, quite rightly, ended up in court in Canada and were duly reprimanded for their foolishness. Then to counteract this came 'Kiss a Redhead Day' followed by an International Redhead Day, which is now held early every September in the city of Breda in the south east of the Netherlands. Just as some have strange attitudes to left-handed people or race, there appears to be a history of suspicion and prejudice against red/ginger-headed/auburn individuals.

Then just a couple of weeks ago, Ole Schou, the director of Cryos - the world's biggest sperm bank, said that there had been a surge in donations in recent years, allowing the facility to become much more picky about its donors and that now they had enough from red-headed donors. "There are too many redheads in relation to demand," he told Danish newspaper Ekstrabladet. "I do not think you chose a redhead, unless the partner - for example, the sterile male - has red hair, or because the lone woman has a preference for redheads." Mr Schou said the only reliable demand for sperm from redheaded donors from Ireland, where he said it sold "like hot cakes". (Cryos pay donors up to \$500, but before any of you chaps start to 'bang a few out' for some extra cash - don't bother! They already have 70 litres of the stuff and a waiting list of 600 donors!)

Even though the ancient Egyptians associated red haired people and animals with the god 'Seth' and despite one of their greatest pharaohs Rameses being a redhead, this did not stop the occasional burning or burying alive of redheaded maidens. The Greeks believed that redheads turned into vampires after their death. Then of course there was the redheaded Celts typified by the fierce warriors of ancient Europe. The Roman historian Deo Cassius described British Warrior Queen Boudicca as "tall and terrifying in appearance with a great mass of red hair." One can imagine a large naked redheaded Celt - painted blue and carrying a retributory cudgel - bearing down on the unsuspecting Romans; it would put them right off their cornflakes! Despite this, the ancient Romans paid a premium for red haired slaves.

Much later the Spanish Inquisition supposedly took a dim view of redheads stating that the red hair was evidence that it's owner had stolen the fire of hell and had to be burned as a witch, but I have never seen any credible evidence of this in any historical study.

Thankfully modern attitudes are more enlightened and mature....or are they? In 2001, a judge in Ireland fined a man for disorderly conduct stating "I am a firm believer that hair colouring has an effect on temper and your colouring suggests you have a temper." The singer Mick Hucknall from Simply Red has stated many times that there is still far too much prejudice against redheads and that it needs to be seriously addressed.

Grant McCracken, the author, lecturer and anthropologist, has stated that "Of course, part of the problem with redheads is that there aren't enough of them. They make up just two percent of the population. So they're pretty extraordinary. Redheads are too numerous to be ignored, too rare to be accepted." Scotland is the country with most redheads, around 15%, closely followed by Ireland - 10%, with a world-wide average of around 2%, most of them in the UK, Ireland and Australia. Aside from an obvious susceptibility to too much sun, redheads are now being treated differently when it comes to anaesthetics. A number of studies have demonstrated that people with red hair have different sensitivity to pain compared to people with other hair colours. They may also be more susceptible to bruising and very loud noise.

Mark Twain, a redhead, was scathing about the critics. "OH, SHE HAS RED HAIR! -- Turn up your nose at red heads! What ignorance! I pity your lack of taste. Why, man, red is the natural colour of beauty! What is there that is really beautiful or grand in Nature or Art that is not tinted with this primordial colour?" I particularly like the words of Sylvia Plath, the American poet who wrote "Out of the ash I rise with my red hair and eat men like air." As Anne of Green Gables confirmed, "You'd find it easier to be bad than good if you had red hair, people who haven't red hair don't know what trouble is." The zany Lucille Ball said. "Once in his life, every man is entitled to fall madly in love with a gorgeous redhead." I have also heard it said that a trucker will slow down for a blonde, stop for a brunette, but he'll back up 500 yards for a redhead! But I will leave you with the words of Groucho Marx, who in a letter to his convalescing son wrote, "According to the wire, you are resting well and are being taken care of by a nurse. I hope she is beautiful and that she has red hair. I don't know why, but whenever I dream of a nurse she always has red hair. Red hair makes a man want to recover his health quickly, so that he can get on his feet and get the nurse off hers."

"I am strong. I am invincible. I am redhead." (Seen on a T-shirt)

A stiffener.

A little boy and his grandad went raking leaves in the garden. The boy saw an earthworm trying to get back into the hole. 'Grandad, I bet I can put that worm back in the hole.' 'I'll bet you 5 dollars you can't. It's too wriggly and limp to put back in that little hole. You'll never get it in.' The boy goes into the house, comes back with a can of hairspray and sprayed the worm until it was straight and stiff. Then he stuffed the worm back into the hole. His grandad give him 5 dollars and trotted indoors. Thirty minutes later he reappears and gives his grandson another five bucks. 'But Grandad, you already gave me 5 dollars.' 'I know. That's from your Grandma.'

Performing Poodle

An employee went for a game of golf with his boss who owned a small white poodle. The dog always used to accompany its master on the course and every time the boss hit a good drive or sank a long putt, the poodle stood on its hind legs and applauded with its two front paws. The employee was amazed. 'What happens,' he asked, 'if you land in a bunker or miss a short putt?' 'Oh,' said the boss, 'the dog turns somersaults.' 'How many?' The boss replied, 'Depends on how hard I kick him up the arse.'

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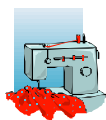
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Other News

Sometimes you just have to chuckle. Amid much ballyhoo and fanfares, the new Castellón airport was officially opened by Francisco Camps (then president of the Valencian Community, now resigned and facing bribery charges). The idea was to get the airport opened before the May local elections and win political 'brownie points'. The only problem now is that no one wants to fly there and there has not been a single flight assigned to the new airport! Meanwhile, the director of the new empty airport is being paid 84,000 € a year while PM Zapatero is paid just 78,184 € The Valencian Government say that the first flights to the airport should arrive next springmaybe!

Well they say that beauty is in the eye of the beholder (or beerholder!), but I was somewhat surprised that in Spain the male magazine, FHM, voted La Dama de Elche, the Lady of Elche, the sexiest woman in Spain's history (voting may have been rigged!) - see right. The stone bust was discovered by chance in 1897. It is thought to be dated back to the 4th century BC and it shows some Hellenistic influences. Shortly after its discovery it was purchased by a French archaeologist and put on display in the Louvre in Paris. At the start of World War II, it was hidden for safe-keeping. In 1941 following negotiations between Franco's government and the Vichy government, the sculpture was moved eventually to the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, where it remains today.

One great characteristic about Spain is surely its beautiful women who seem to be as abundant as the sunshine. Even the newsmagazines are stunners! Little wonder then that when the Moors invaded and stayed, they left all their women in North Africa. The 'pickin's' were obviously better in Spain.



Early finisher.

A man suffering from premature ejaculation goes to his doctor. The doctor suggests that he tries to startle himself when he's about to ejaculate. The man buys a starting pistol, runs home and finds his wife naked in the bedroom. Losing no time, he starts to do the deed.

Next day the man goes back to the doctor. 'How did it go?' asks the doctor. 'Not so good,' replies the man. 'We were in the 69 position when I felt my eyes beginning to water and my heart ponding, so I fired the gun. My wife farted in my face, bit three inches off my 'todger', and my neighbour ran out of the wardrobe, naked, with his hands in the air.'

Subscription

Harry's wife lets him subscribe to two magazines: National Geographic and Playboy. Both let him see places he never gets to visit.



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This way up!

Whenever there was a confrontation, yelling could be heard deep into the night.

The old man would shout, 'When I die, I will dig my way up and out of the grave and come back and haunt you for the rest of your life!' Neighbours feared him and believed he practiced black magic, because of the many strange occurrences that took place in their neighbourhood. To everyone's relief, he died of a heart attack when he was 98. His wife had a closed casket at the wake.

After the burial, she went straight to the local bar and began to party, as if there was no tomorrow. Her neighbours, concerned for her, asked, 'Aren't you afraid that he may be able to dig his way out of the grave and haunt you for the rest of your life?' The wife put down her drink and said, 'Let the bastard dig. I had him buried upside down..... and you know men never ask for directions...'

(Simon Kennefick)

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Husband & Wife

He: 'When I get mad at you, you never fight back. How do you control your anger?'

She: 'I clean the toilet bowl.'

He: 'How does that help?'

She: 'I use your toothbrush.'

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The Last Laugh.

The wife suggested I get myself one of those penis enlargers..... so I did....she's 21 and her name's Shirley.

My girlfriend said she was leaving me due to my obsession with the 60's group The Monkees. At first I thought she was joking.....And then I saw her face!

My budgie broke his leg today so I made him a little splint out of a couple of Swan Vesta matches.....you should see his little face light up when he tried to walk.

My mate went to get a tattoo of an indian on his back. Half way through he said "Don't forget to put a big tomahawk in his hand". The tattooist said "Give me a f***ing chance mate, I've only just finished his turban..!"

A man walked into an army surplus store and asked if they had any camouflage trousers. 'Yes we have,' said the sales assistant, 'but we can't find them!'

Bugsy was the only short-sighted skunk in the zoo. Once he managed to fall in love with a gas leak.

The army has successfully crossed a messenger pigeon with a woodpecker. Now the bird not only delivers the message but knocks on the door first.

Harry was dating a Siamese twin, but after a while he started seeing her sister behind her back.

There's been some severe cost-cutting at Ryanair; the last time I took a flight they asked us to fasten our Velcro before take-off.

Did you hear about the jumbo jet that had an all-woman crew? They had to change the name of the cockpit to 'the box office.'

Seamus won a gold medal at the last Olympics. He's so proud of it, he's had it bronzed.

I can't forgive the Germans for what they did to my granddad in the last war - passed him over for promotion time and time again - (Jimmy Carr)

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