

# THE DREAM SCENE



## Newsletter

Issue no. 58 1st of December 2011



Bienvenido a todos and welcome to the December issue of The Dream Scene.

This month's issue always has an 'odd feel' as it is also our Christmas issue and there are still more than three weeks before the day itself! Still, it may help you to get into the spirit of things.

The weather this November has been very mixed. Lovely warm start to the month, then a week of rain. The rainfall was particularly heavy north of Alicante where five people drowned in floods. (If you have damp on your property check out the advert on page 4.) Then for the last few days we have had beautiful blue skies with very little wind. The orange and lemon groves around the area are looking very attractive with everything benefiting from the rain after such a long dry spell this summer.

After printing 57 issues by hand, we have now asked an outside printer to print this month's issue to see how it works out. When we printed the newsletter ourselves, it took nine hours of solid printing over two days, followed by two to three hours of stapling. This was not a problem for us but it was asking a lot of the laser printer; that is at least 6,400 pages every month. Although we only bought the new laser printer last winter for £200, to date we are about to go onto our fourth drum, and these retail at more than €100 each! You may have noticed a small drop in quality and some streaking in the last issue. Then 'K', a friendly neighbour in Dream Hills, introduced me to a Swedish printer who has given me a price which was a third of the quotation I got from a local British printer last year. So, as the hooker said to the bishop, 'We will suck it and see!' Of course I still have to compile and complete a PDF copy of the publication, which I then send to the printers two working days before it is needed for distribution. Whereas I was sparing with the toner in the past because of cost issues, now I can experiment a bit more with layout, photos etc. Of course the new print company charges a fee every month, but as long as their costs are covered that is enough.

Some of you may be experiencing problems in getting your free Spanish prescriptions with the larger local pharmacies. If they do not have the items in stock they may not order them for you suggesting you go to a different *farmacia*, particularly if the medicines are expensive. You may just have to shop around, but the situation is worrying.

Angela is away at the moment and hopefully her cartoon will be back next month.

Season's Greetings from The Dream Scene team and hoping you have a wonderful month.

Mick & Tid



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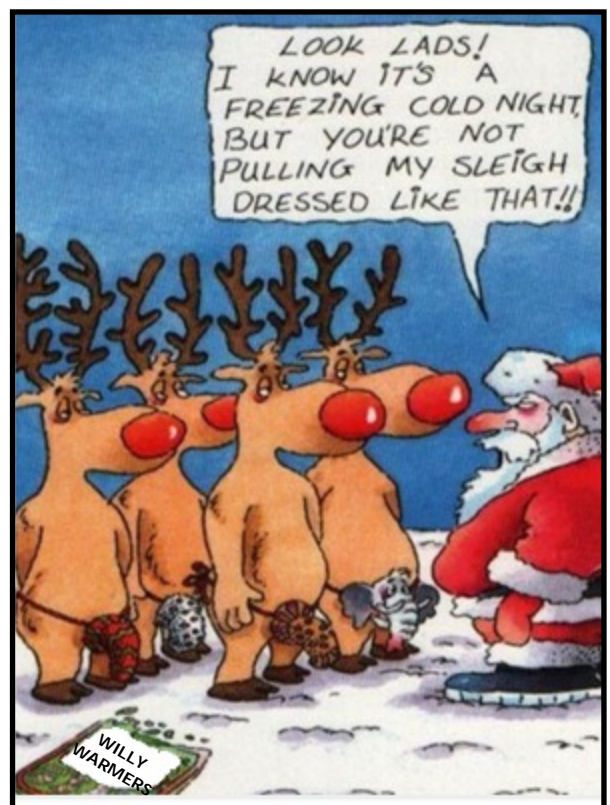
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team & all  
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## What's Up?

As one would expect, the nation's economy and the general election have dominated the Spanish newspapers. This election and related news is reported on in pages 7 and 13.

The economy and financial system continues to rest on 'the knife edge' with the government having to pay very high rates to fund its debt. The change of government did little to calm the markets and the IMF, the EU, and indeed everybody else it seems, are urging the head of the new government, Rajoy, to take immediate and decisive action. One problem is that the new regime are not allowed to take office until December 15, and as recent events have illustrated any confidence the markets may still hold for Spain could evaporate within an afternoon.

The accumulated debt the regions owe suppliers that furnish prescription drugs, medical technology and other products to public hospitals has now reached a record high, threatening the very survival of the system, industry insiders say. All the bills piling up in boxes throughout Spain's regions now add up to more than 10.56 billion euros - more than half of which relates to medicine while the rest is owed for everything from syringes to scanners. It is an unbearable situation for the suppliers, who complain that they haven't seen any payment for more than 400 days in many regions. The four regions which take the most time in reimbursing suppliers are Andalusia - about 1.1 billion euros now owed - followed by Valencia (886 million), Madrid (527 million) and Castilla y León (476 million). In Valencia, our region, it can take as much as 765 days before a supplier sees his money. You may have seen the 'warning signs' in the *farmacia* in Los Balcones.

In an effort to reduce its deficit and save one billion euros in 2012, Cataluña is to reduce the wages of its public employees once again. Price increases are also planned for public transport, petrol and water. Public assets will also be sold off and university fees will be increased. A study has been commissioned on possible co-payment of the health service and the current 40% prescription charge for non-pensioners may be increased. As all the regions are in a dire financial state - some worse than others - they will no doubt implement some of the Catalan changes, if they prove successful, in their own regions.

El País notes that the number of people to benefit from the Dependency Law has fallen in 13 of the 17 regions of the country despite €6.302 billion euros being spend on the system in 2010. I have carried reports on this system in the past which appears to have done little for needy expats to date. Rajoy, Spains next Prime Minister, has now described the Law as 'unviable' in the current economic climate.

The Bank of Spain has intervened in the Banco de Valencia. The Banco de Valencia was supposed to have released its results in September, but failed to do so. It was thought the Valencia bank needs between 600 and 800 million € but the Bank of Spain is to inject 1 billion € Another 2 billion € is to be made available to assure its future liquidity. The board is also to be replaced. Dealing in the shares has also been suspended.

Banks in Spain have €176 billion worth of toxic assets in the real estate sector. The expression toxic covers those loans unlikely to be repaid, foreclosed assets and assets under supervision; they represent 11.4% of the credit portfolio of the banks. More than half of the amount was money lent for new building. The figures comes from the Bank of Spain report on Financial Stability, which has also called on the Spanish credit lenders to publish their own detailed information. The Bank of Spain calculates it will take the Spanish banks 36 years to clear out all their toxic real estate assets.

A protocol agreement signed by the Murcia government and the Development Ministry specifies that all civilian flights from San Javier will be transferred to the new Murcia International Airport at Corvera. San Javier will be restricted to military use, except in case of emergency. Construction of the new airport is reportedly almost complete

with testing to commence in April next year.

Tenerife and Benidorm have seen the largest increase in winter holiday bookings from British tourists this year. Reservations for Tenerife are up by between 12%-15% this winter compared to last, while in Benidorm the increase is 6%.

Red Eléctrica has said that wind power has broken its record and reached 60% of electricity production in Spain. 59.6% of the electricity consumed in Spain on the night of November 6 came from wind power. Currently in Spain more wind power is generated at night than during the day. The sale of white electrical goods and appliances in Spain has fallen back to the levels last seen in 1996. The relevant trade association says that there has been a 40% fall in sales since the start of the economic crisis.

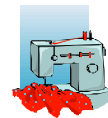
Orihuela Town Hall, and a number of thers throughout Spain, have introduced a scheme whereby owners of illegal properties can now have their properties 'legalised' following the payment of a 'fine' to the City Hall. This is being seen by the local authorities as a way of raising additional funds over the coming years.

A recent survey of emergency drug cases at the Can Misses Hospital in Palma de Mallorca has revealed that 42% of patients admitted for drug abuse were British. Of the 471 patients admitted, 198 were British, 104 Spanish; there were 53 Italians, 16 Germans, 14 French, 11 Irish, 10 Russians, seven from the United States and six from Holland. The total number of nationalities seen was 33! The drugs range from cocaine and methamphetamines, to magic mushrooms.

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I'm American....but I live in England with my English husband. By that I mean he eats pizza with a knife and fork. And sunburns under a 50-watt bulb.

Kit Hollerbach

Around 50 dissident pharmacies in Alicante want to charge patients for the full price of prescription medicines from next month, with signs in the window explaining that there is no money left for medicaments according to the regional administration. They say that they are suffering an 'economic drowning' as a consequence of the debt of the Health Department. The Official College of Pharmacists considers the action to be illegal and that patients should not be charged because they are not responsible for what has happened. Two weeks ago the College met and decided to postpone any measures until a bank loan was formalised for the pharmacists collective to cover them until 2014 when the Health Department says it can clear the debt.

The director of the CEIP Manuel Siurot college in Palma del Condado, a public school in Huelva, has sent a letter to the pupils' parents in which he asks for the donation of a monthly toilet roll and €5 for photocopies. He says the collaboration is necessary as 'these are not good times for any establishment'. However the pupils and parents of the school were not impressed with the initiative, and numerous protests were made. The school has now admitted its mistake and says it will be returning the toilet rolls and money already donated.

Brussels has told Spain that it must comply with telecommunications norms. The warning is the last step before a formal infraction is acted against Spain in the EU Court of Justice. Under the norm, users have the right to change operator and keeping their same number in a single day. The client is also entitled to a full explanation on the management of their data traffic. Could someone please tell *Telefonica*?

The Scandinavian School in Orihuela Costa has been closed this week due to the lack of an operating licence. More than 40 pupils and five teachers have been told that the school, which has existed for 11 years, must remain closed until a new location is found and the proper licences are obtained. A resident, who lives near the school, denounced the school because of the noise. The police investigated and found that the school never had a licence. Inspectors from the Valencia Department of Education visited the school and closed it down immediately. Another example of heartless bureaucracy. Surely they could have been given a 'grace period' to sort something out. Once again the needs of the children are shelved to accommodate the 'jobs worths!'

Once again the Catalans have demonstrated their remarkable flair for medical innovation. An unborn baby suffering from Spina Bifida will be able to walk after being operated on in the uterus. The girl was operated on in the 24th week of pregnancy at the Vall'd'Hebrón Hospital in Barcelona, and all went well despite the long operation. which stops the amniotic liquid from damaging the spinal cord and the nervous system. In the new procedure used in Barcelona, access was gained as if it were a caesarean birth, and then, instead of stitching, an adhesive patch is used to repair the opening in the skin. The child will grow up with a scar on her back but her parents said 'we have won the battle', and the medical team says she will grow up with 'hardly any neurological scars'. The child is doing fine after being born by Caesarean section. She will have a normal life and will be able to walk.

The prosecutors' office in Málaga is investigating possible crimes committed by the fortune telling and tarot programmes which fill the TDT television system. The broadcasts are considered illegal, and the content could be prejudicial for parts of the audience, children, pensioners or the most vulnerable.

Also the General Audiovisual Communication Law prohibits such 'esoteric' contents between 7am and 10pm, and fines of between 100,001

and 500,000 € are envisaged. There is also the question as to whether such programmes are committing fraud, often not telling callers that they are calling premium rate lines, and with some keeping callers waiting for several minutes to push up the cost of the call. There are 67 channels emitting in the area with a licence, but an additional 64 which have simply invaded the TDT frequencies. 53% of the 64 illegal channels are dedicated round the clock to fortune tellers and spiritualists. The illegal broadcasters take advantage of indifference from the central and regional governments, and also face charges of using a frequency that has not been assigned to them. Central Government says it's a problem for the regions, but the regions say the responsibility lies with the Ministry for Industry. Which will probably mean that nothing will be done.

The Spanish traffic authority, DGT, has issued a €30,000 fine to the Tripictures film production company. They say that the posters for their film 'Larry Crowne' which show Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts on a moped but without helmets is 'promoting dangerous driving'.

Lifeguards in Benidorm have met with the mayor demanding that they be paid four months wages which are still outstanding. The mayor said that he would commence the payments once the money for the water-rates bills start to arrive and thanked the lifeguards for their patience!! The Benidorm Fire Service is also owed over one million €

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**Poor Morag**

Hamish's wife dies. At her funeral, he unveils her tombstone. It reads, 'Morag McDonald. Loving wife of Hamish, certified tree surgeon. No job too small!' Hamish stands at the graveside, tears streaming down his face. The chaplain looks at him sternly. 'I'm not surprised you're crying, Hamish,' he says. 'Tears of remorse, nee doubt, for turning your wife's grave into a cheap advertisement.' 'It's nay that,' sniffs Hamish, 'They left off the bloody telephone number.....'



#### 4 COMMUNITY UPDATE (See also Page 15)

**The Book-Swap Christmas Party will be held at La Casita during Book-swap on Thursday morning December 15th from 10am to 12pm.**

**The Book-swap will be closed for holidays from December 15th to January 5th.**



#### Letters to the Editor.

##### Where's my bloomin' door bell?

I know that times are hard, and we would like to help you if we can; so, if you would like to come back and get the door charm that goes with the other part of the door bell that you took, you can have that as well.

Just ring the door bell - oops! Sorry, you can't ring the bell, can you? Never mind, just put your name and address down and pop it in my post box. Then I will bring it to your house for you...together with my baseball bat!

Thanking you,  
Gerald Courage.

#### Worth mentioning.....

The three green-fingered chaps - John, Terry and Steve - who voluntarily tend to the 'green' areas around the pool enclosures have told me that someone is **stealing plants** from the area. These were all good quality plants donated by residents. Terry caught a Spanish lady taking plants on the 26th but if you have any spare plants, please let the lads know.

Dave the handyman tell me that there has been an **increase in dog-crap** around the urbanisation, particularly around the planted areas during October and November. Now we can't blame the holiday-makers this time - it is the residents!

I am pleased to report that the security firm who have been doing the 'security patrols' around Dream Hills have been sacked. The 'guards' who were unsupervised, had a problem staying awake and were allergic to walking up the side roads. Indeed the only time I ever saw them was when they were in Via Park V, which they were not supposed to patrol. The **new security firm** appear to be much more professional, the guards are supervised, they patrol the side roads, use their torches and often patrol individually.

Please don't forget Dave the handyman and the security guards at **Christmas** - a warm greeting, a hot drink or a small gift, would I am sure be welcome by the people who have your interests and safety at heart.

I have seen a **new 'bus stop'** painted on the road next to Via Park V. Now I hope and believe that this is for the Costa mini-bus service. I understand that the route is being expanded to include a number of new stops, but no start date has been given for the new service.

Don't forget that there is a **Ladies Coffee Morning** at La Casita (between the pools!) every Friday morning between 10:30 and 12:30. If you are new to the urbanisation and would like to meet new friends, wish to find something out or just have a chat, then this is the place to go!

a joint alliance of the CLR & CLARO parties. This coalition had a majority of one over the PP. CLARO member, Bob Houliston, got elected as a council member on the joint CLR/CLARO ticket. However all has not been well with the joint alliance. The Spanish general secretary of CLARO has resigned stating that the PP were approached, and Bob Houliston has been expelled from the CLR alliance as they allege that Mr. Houliston has turned 'Judas' and is talking to the enemy - the PP - and trying to do a deal. Mr. Houliston has denied the allegations but the posters now look very ironic! More in next issue.

#### The Wise Man.

The Three Wise Men come to visit Joseph and Mary and her new-born son. As the last wise man enters the stable he gives his head an almighty crack on the doorway. He drops his myrrh, puts his hands to his injured forehead and shouts, 'Jesus Christ!' 'Hey Mary,' says Joseph, 'write that down. It's a damned sight better than *Darren*.'

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#### Charity Work

It has to be said that the charity work undertaken by the expats locally, particularly fund-raising, is admirable. Although I am aware of the many individuals locally who do sterling work for the animal charities, I am glad to say that the less fortunate people are not ignored. Maureen of The Rendezvous Cafe & Newsagent at Via Park III, has been collecting for the Elche Orphanage for some time. If you have any DVDs or books that she can sell or donations please pass them on. Butterflies have also raised several hundred euros for the British Legion and have another special event planned for December 14, see advert. The Phoenix at Via Park V and the Storeys have raised more than €540 as well for the British Legion and over the past few months Rob and JJ of Belushi's Bar & Grill have quietly collected several hundred euros for Help For Heroes. Well done!



#### Local Politics

If you drive around Orihuela Costa, you can't have missed the above giant posters, mainly on the N332. These relate to the local elections in May when the incumbent Partido Popular were booted-out by a loose coalition of Socialists, Greens and



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## **Avalon Funeral Plans**

Having looked at the various pre-paid funeral plan providers, I have now, as an independent advisor, had chance to scrutinise all of the plans available and concluded that the overall package, not necessarily the cheapest, provided by Avalon is the most suitable for the use of us residents of Spain. Yes, I did say us residents as I have actually now moved to Dream Hills permanently. [Don't blame me for the rain!]

I have also listened to people who have had the unfortunate need to use the funeral plan, and the one common thing that was said regarding Avalon was that the help and guidance that they received was superb, and took away any worries that they had regarding the arrangements with all parties concerned [ *policia* , *tanatoria*, etc, etc. ]

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**I have negotiated a 150 Euro discount off every plan taken out before 31st January 2011.**

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Don't take a risk and opt for a cheaper option, I can advise on this when we meet.

I now have the relevant brochures in German, Dutch and Norwegian.

Payments can be made monthly or in full in both £ or Euros.

I have been told by a few of you that you could not get through on my previous Spanish number. If you are one of those please try me again on 966844979.

Please leave a message if I am out on an appointment, mobile 634305881.

**Wishing all the readers a Happy Christmas  
and a prosperous New Year.**

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### **Shed a tear.**

Two old ladies, Ethel and Doris, are enjoying a game in a bingo hall. Ethel looks out of the window and sees a hearse driving past slowly with the name 'Alf' written in flowers on the coffin. Ethel starts to sniff and dab at her eyes. Doris looks over and says, 'Don't be so soft, you silly old moo.' 'I can't help it,' replies Ethel. 'He was a good husband to me.'

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He died laughing



President  
Sarkozy  
wishes  
Prime Minister  
Cameron  
a  
Happy  
Christmas.



## The Spanish General Election November 20.

As had been predicted in the opinion polls, the right of centre party, *Partido Popular* (People's Party) inflicted a crushing defeat on the ruling PSOE, *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*.

With 350 seats at Congress 'up-for-grabs', the *Partido Popular* (PP) won an absolute majority with 186 seats. The Socialists, who have been in power for the last seven years, had their worst general election result since they were founded in 1879, going from 169 seats to 110. As the PSOE had less than the 176 seats needed for a majority during the last term, they had to rely on the nationalist groups, particularly the Catalans, to keep them in government. This proved expensive as they were basically 'bought-off' and were, may felt, allowed to pursue their nationalistic ambitions at the expense of a united Spain.

Some of the smaller parties also did very well, the *CiU* - the United Left - going from 10 to 16 seats, *Amaiur* - a dodgy coalition grouping of Basque nationalists gaining seven seats and the *UpyD* - Union, Progress & Democracy - going from one to five seats.

María Dolores de Cospedal, the PP secretary, said that Rajoy, head of the PP and soon to be Prime Minister, would meet with all parties in Congress, except the *abertzale* (literally *patriot* but meaning *Basque nationalist* in this instance) coalition *Amaiur*, unless it renounced ETA violence. Basque Popular Party (PPE) leader Antonio Basagoiti went further by saying that Rajoy should not talk with any *abertzale* group that doesn't publicly condemn ETA. The terrorist group last month announced a "definitive" end to violence but the new administration say they will not talk to terrorists.



The PP also won a comfortable majority in the upper house - the Senate. (See page 13 for more info.) (Satirical images from the Spanish press are of Rajoy on the right, and Rubalcaba of the PSOE, on the left. (More on Spanish national politics in future issues.)

### Unfortunate Statements

- I really get sick of these 'trick or treaters' so I turn the light off and pretend I am not in. I suppose it is not the best thing to do if you live in a lighthouse.
- 'Aside from that Mrs. Lincoln, how was the play?'
- Say what you like about paedophiles but at least they drive slowly past schools.
- I went to the pub with my girlfriend last night. Locals were shouting 'paedo' and other names at me just because my girlfriend is 21 and I'm 50. It completely spoilt our 10th anniversary.
- Last night I reached for my liquid Viagra and accidentally swigged from a bottle of Tippex. I woke this morning with a huge correction.
- "It's been proven that 9 out of 10 single women who sit at home and have conversations with their cats are mentally disturbed." My dog's full of useful information like that.
- The government have advised people to watch out that they're not being sold fake 2012 Olympic tickets. I think I'll be alright though. My tickets for the men's wheelchair triple jump seem genuine enough.
- As a child, there is nothing more embarrassing than your mum going topless on holiday. I haven't been back to Legoland since.
- Making love to a blind girl is challenging but rewarding. It took me ages to get her husband's voice right.
- From the sewers straight to the fridge - Gaddafi has a lot in common with Spanish lager.
- I've spent the day in a German police station. Word to the wise... Don't go hailing a taxi in Germany like you do in Britain.
- If Mama Cass had shared her ham sandwich with Karen Carpenter, they'd both be alive today.

## CAM - still in the news!

Up to November 16, if you purchased a property from CAM Bank's delinquent property portfolio, you were given an additional 10% discount off the price if you completed the purchase using a loan/mortgage from a rival bank. CAM preferred this as not only did it help to reduce its huge massive property portfolio but it did so without increasing the bank's credit risk! They have now stopped this promotion because it was bad for their image - as if CAM have any image other than that of a totally incompetent organisation once headed by a bunch of allegedly criminal self-serving shysters. CAM will now offer an extra 10% discount if you are a cash buyer of one of their stock of properties.

Shares in the CAM savings bank have collapsed on the market after it has been revealed that the Banco Sabadell is the now the only entity to show any interest in the Alicante bank. Shares were trading at 96 cents each, signifying a loss in value on the stock market of more than 86% since the start of the year. The bank may be split up and parts sold off.



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### The Guide to Buying Brassieres at Christmas

There are four types of bra: Catholic, Salvation Army, Presbyterian and Jewish. Catholic bras support the masses; Salvation Army bras lift up the fallen; Presbyterian bras keep you upright; and Jewish bras make mountains out of molehills.

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**E4**  
**Channel 5**  
**Fox Movies**



## The vision of the future Connecting you

### Internet



The Azuretel system provides a secure 2mb broadband service.



### Telephone



Azuretel's technology offers customers a telephone service with either a local Spanish telephone number or a UK number, or both.

Azuretel call rates are more competitive than Telefonica, just cents per minute for calls to the UK and Eire



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Woman to husband: 'When are you thinking about mowing the lawn?'  
 Husband: 'After I've thought about putting up those shelves.'



### How bureaucracy and waste stifles progress in Spain

This is a good example of how regionalisation works against and slows progress in Spain.

The on-going delays in the construction of Murcia's stretch of the AVE high-speed rail link has once again attracted criticism, following the publication of a report by the Ministry of Development.

In October 2010 problems arose on the stretch of line between Murcia city and Cartagena, which identified two years of delays due to the inability to solve two key problems. The request of the regional government to have an additional stop for the trains at Corvera international airport. Not an unreasonable request you may have thought, but this would mean the re-routing of an underground stretch of the line, which would also result in the re-routing of a number of sewers. As such the Plan General of the area and the projects would need to be modified, which the Ministry of Public works has still not begun.

The Cartagena PSOE recently revealed estimations that the AVE would not reach Cartagena until 2014, before moving onto the regional capital, and then Lorca by 2015 at the earliest.

The Ministry has not formally announced any opening dates as yet, but have confirmed that a problems exists on this stretch of line, which is largely down to the sewers : "You have to have a technical report to move a sewer. And that requires a three-way protocol between the local ayuntamiento, the regional government and the Ministry of Development. This is under review and the Ministry has claimed they will speed things up, but there has still been no response said a spokesman for the Department of Public Works, and with a change of government it is likely to incur further delays.

It looks increasingly likely that the only solution would be to find an alternative route on the surface, however this would mean that the Ayuntamiento of the City of Murcia would need to amend its General Plan to set aside and reclassify land for use for public facilities, which could potentially effect thousands of property owners with compulsory purchases.

Now a classic example of colossal incompetence and waste.

The Valencia government, then presided by the Popular Party's (PP) Francisco Camps, (who later resigned and awaits trial for his part in the Gürtel corruption scandal,) paid architect Santiago Calatrava over 15 million euros for three skyscrapers near the Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias that are likely never to be built, the provincial court has found.

The payment was confirmed by regional government spokeswoman Lola Johnson, who justified the payments for the project as a "property asset" that can be used or sold. Prosecutors will not pursue the case, brought by deputies of Esquerra Unida, because there is no evidence of misappropriation of public funds. Johnson noted that work has been halted on the project but that "at any moment the economic situation could bring us to a point where we decide to move ahead or to sell." Like when Hell freezes over!

Calatrava's office (the architects) declined to comment. The court report states that the architect received an advance payment of 2.6 million euros on September 30, 2005, 137,000 euros on August 30, 2006 for models and plans of the towers, and two later payments of 6.2 million euros each for pre-project and drafting work, a total of 15.2 million. The Socialist regional spokeswoman for infrastructure, Eva Martínez, asked current PP regional premier Alberto Fabra to begin legal proceedings to recover the money from Calatrava.

---

My uncle Silas is illiterate. He once tried to sue the local bakery for forging his signature on a hot-cross bun.

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### Incoming!

Two men were playing a round of golf when one sliced the ball and sent it flying towards a gay couple who were walking nearby. The ball hit one of the gay men on the head and he fell to the ground, unconcious. His partner shouts, 'Julian! Julian! Wake up! Can you hear me?'

'The two golfers came over and the chap who took the shot said, 'Sorry about that, it was an accident.'

'Accident my ass,' says the gay man, 'You did it on purpose!'

'I did not,' says the golfer. 'Did too!' says the gay man, 'and we're going to sue the pants off you!'

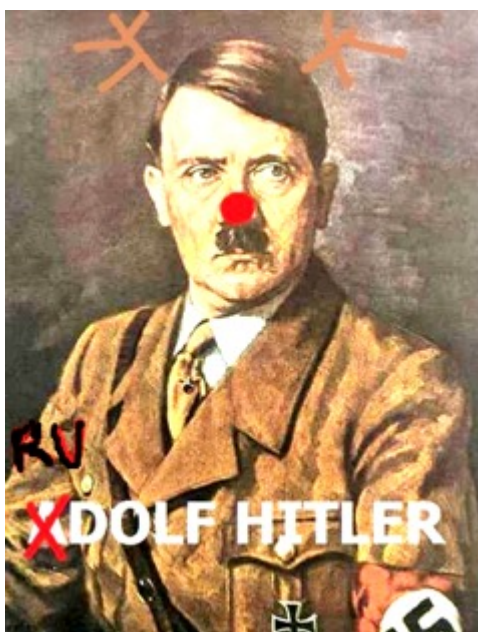
'Sue me, you bastard!' shouts the enraged golfer, 'You can suck my dick!'

The gay man shouts at his friend, 'Julian! Wake up, wake up! They're going to settle out of court!'

### Talking Crap!

'(Former) Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon says that the city of Umm Qasr in Iraq is similar to Southampton. He's either never been to Southampton, or he's never been to Umm Qasr. There's no beer, no prostitutes and people are shooting at us. It's more like Portsmouth.

(Unidentified British Soldier stationed in Iraq)



### December 6 and 8 - Constitution Day & La Inmaculada

December the 6th in Spain is celebrated as Constitution Day. It is a 'Red' day, when offices and medium to large businesses are obliged to close for the fiesta.

With the day of Immaculate Conception also being celebrated as an official fiesta just two days later, on the 8th of December, many Spaniards choose to take the 7th as an optional holiday as well - especially when the 7th falls on either a Friday or Monday. This is usually referred to as a 'Puente', or 'Bridge', taken so that a long weekend can be enjoyed.

Spanish Constitution Day commemorates the ratification of the new constitution in 1978, following the death of Franco and the return of democracy to Spain.

The constitution was approved by the Cortes Generales on 31st October 1978, and by the Spanish people in a referendum on 6th December 1978, before being signed by King Juan Carlos on 27th December and coming into effect on 29th December - the day it was published in the Official Gazette. Constitution Day been celebrated as a national holiday on 6th December each year in Spain ever since.

The Spanish Constitution has only been reformed twice since it's original inception.

Two days later, on 8th December, '*La Inmaculada Concepción*,' commemorates the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary, and is celebrated as a holy day of obligation in the Roman Catholic Church. The date was established as the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1476, by Pope Sixtus IV, and was defined as a dogma by Pope Pius IX in 1854. Mary as the Immaculate Conception was declared as principal patroness of all the possessions of the Spanish Crown in 1760, and has remained the patron virgin of Spain since then.

As far as modern day Spain is concerned it remains a popular Bank Holiday, which is traditionally when many of the country's airports and roads are at their busiest. The wildcat strike by many of Spain's Air Traffic Controllers over the December Bank Holiday period last year caused Spanish airspace to be closed and ultimately be taken over by the Military, resulting in thousands of cancelled flights. A compensation claim by affected travellers is still ongoing, but could potentially cost the USCA Air Traffic Controllers union 100 Million Euros. As far as December 2011 is concerned official working days remain the Monday 5th, Wednesday 7th and Friday 9th, however, some businesses may decide not to open for those days and may or may not deduct them from the holiday allowance of their employees. (Source: Tumbit.com)

### The safe period

Two men, one Catholic, the other Protestant are talking. 'I don't understand it,' says the Protestant. 'How is it that my wife and I, who are Protestants and who can use as much birth control as we want, while you and your wife, who are Catholics and who can't use any birth control at all, haven't any?'

'Ah, well, you see,' says the Catholic, 'I'm very careful. I only have sex during the safe period.'

'Oh, yes?' says the Protestant, 'and when's that?'

'When you're out at work,' says the Catholic.

### Between sweets not the sheets!

A jellybaby develops an itchy crotch and goes to the doctor. After the examination, the doctor gives him the bad news; he has VD,

'It's my own fault,' says the jellybaby, 'I've been sleeping with allsorts.'

### Water, water, everywhere.....

I write this while experiencing what I like to call the *Costa Blanca Monsoon*, which is the period of wet weather here which normally follows the hot summer.

Water is scarce here, though thankfully nowhere near as scarce as in areas like Almeria on the south coast. The closest river to us, the *Segura*, is not even a stream at this stage, the reservoir at Torremendo being the main body of fresh water in the area.

Shortages in this area and in Murcia led to the building of the new desalination plant in Torrevieja, believed to be the second largest in the world. But as usual in Spain, it is difficult to keep politics out of anything; consequently the regional and local ruling PP parties did all they could to hinder the completion of the local desalination project, even though it cost central government (i.e. the taxpayer) €297 million, although 55 mil came from the EU.! They achieved this by refusing to grant permission to lay the last couple of hundred metres of pipeline to the sea. The previous president of the Valencia region, Francisco Camps (now under investigation by the courts) refused to grant final approval, preferring to demand that water from the river Ebro be diverted instead. Now that Camps has resigned, the new President of the Valencia region, Alberto Fabra, has decided to move ahead with what is Europe's largest desalination plant and forget about diverting water from the Ebro. Work on the plant was completed more than 18 months ago, which has since just been lying idle.

You should have recently received a copy of your latest water bill from Aquagest Levante. This would have been for charges incurred from 01/07/11 to 01/10/11 - a three-month period. The bill is split into three sections and I will use our bill, which was just €62.47 to illustrate the breakdown. The first section relates to actual water consumed, meters, sewers and IVA and came to €33.57. The second section is collected by Aquagest on behalf of the local town hall and refers to the collection of rubbish. This came to €17.40 which is remarkable for what is a daily collection from several parts of the urbanisation.

The final part of the bill, €11.50 relates to the charge for drainage, which the water company collect on behalf of the Valencian Authority.

All this equates to around €20 a month. I wonder what our readers abroad in Ireland, the U.K. and Scandinavia are paying for similar services?

The consumer's group FACUA has said that it has found differences of as much as 428% in water rates in Spain. The difference can amount to as much as 409 € a year. They carried out a study in 28 cities and those who are paying the most live in Murcia and Alicante, while those who pay the least live in Vallolid. Only in Sevilla is the water rate linked to the number of people living in a property, while in 16 municipalities there are discounts for numerous families!

With your Aquagest bill, you may also have received details of an insurance policy available to help paying towards the repair of broken water pipes on your property. However, as far as I can tell, the cover relates to the area from your wall to the pavement and does not include cover to burst pipes inside your dwelling, which is where most of the problems have arisen to date. Some homeowners in DH have had to have their lounge floor dug-up and re-tiled because of leaks. The normal house insurances would not pay these claims as they feel they relates to bad workmanship.



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### POLICIES OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN SPAIN.

Spain's centre-right opposition People's Party (PP) has won a landslide victory over the ruling Socialists in Sunday's election. The following are some of the key policies the party is expected to implement:

#### LABOUR MARKET REFORM

- \* The PP plans to cut the number of days per year worked to calculate severance pay for lay-offs in about half from the current 33-45 days.
- \* Reform collective bargaining to delink wage increases from inflation, set productivity as a benchmark for wage hikes and negotiate wages on a company-by-company basis rather than on the current industrial sector basis.
- \* Introduce a single, flexible work contract to replace the existing range of contracts regarding job benefits and severance pay.

#### BANKING REFORM

- \* The PP plans to force banks to mark property assets to market price and then recapitalize the banks which are left with a big hole.
- \* It could seek funds for the recapitalization from the European financial rescue fund.
- \* Further consolidation in the banking sector is also on the cards to reduce the number of banks after the ruling Socialists forced weaker savings banks to merge.

#### ENERGY SECTOR REFORM

- \* The PP is likely to slash subsidies for wind and solar power as the euro zone debt crisis makes funding very expensive.
- \* Promoting smart power grids and meters to match them and with quick-changing supplies of renewable energy.
- \* Keeping nuclear plants running for as long as the regulator deems they are safe.
- \* Possible windfall tax on cheap nuclear power in exchange for an extension of the life of the power plants.

#### BUDGET REFORM

- \* Spain's challenge is to stick to deficit targets agreed with Europe, aimed at allaying fears it will need a bailout like Greece, Ireland or Portugal. The 2012 budget drafted by the Socialists has not been debated or approved by parliament. The PP will have to pass the final 2012 budget.
- \* The draft 2012 budget sets a spending cap for the central government of 117 billion euros, 3.8 percent below the 2011 cap.
- \* The PP has said it is sticking to a public deficit target for 2012 of 4.4% of GDP. Some analysts says that this will only be possible by cutting expenditure by around 40 billion euros.
- \* The PP is likely to implement further public sector wage cuts.
- \* The budgets of Spain's 17 autonomous regions are also expected to see swingeing cuts, although the PP has committed to keeping the welfare system intact. The regions control the health and education budgets.
- \* The PP has said it will reintroduce a tax rebate for the purchase of new homes which was abolished by the Socialists at the end of 2010.
- \* The PP has said it will support entrepreneurs, small and mid-sized companies and the self-employed with tax cuts. They also plan changes to the Value Added Tax (VAT) system so these businesses will not have to pay VAT until their bills are paid.
- \* One-person enterprises hiring an employee will be granted a 3,000 euro tax rebate.

#### SOCIAL REFORMS

- \* Regarding a 2010 law legalizing abortion, PP leader Mariano Rajoy has said he plans to eliminate the possibility for 16 or 17-year olds to have an abortion without parental consent.
- \* The PP has challenged in the Constitutional Court a 2005 law allowing gay marriage. Rajoy has said he supports civil unions for homosexual couples but does not think they should be called marriages.
- \* The PP's manifesto says the Dependency Law, which established a benefit for people who care for a disabled or elderly relative, has failed to meet expectations, saying it is too expensive.

(Source: Reuters)

- Jim's a great salesman. Yesterday, a woman came into his tailor's shop to buy a new suit; it was to bury her dead husband in, and Jim still managed to talk her into buying an extra pair of trousers.
- Jim's friend, Norma, was found walking down the high street completely naked apart from contact lenses over each nipple. She was arrested for making a spectacle of herself.
- Moshe, an Israeli, arrives at Heathrow airport. The customs officer says to him, 'Occupation?' 'No,' replies Moshe, 'just visiting.'

### The Spanish War of Independence, 1807 - 1814.

The Spanish War of Independence or The Peninsular War was a war between France and the allied powers of Spain, the United Kingdom, and Portugal for control of the Iberian Peninsula during the Napoleonic Wars. The war lasted until the Sixth Coalition (a coalition of Austria, Prussia, Russia, the United Kingdom, Portugal, Sweden, Spain and a number of German States) defeated Napoleon in 1814. The conflict is regarded by some historians as one of the first national wars and is also significant for the emergence of large-scale guerrilla warfare (guerrilla means "little war" in Spanish) and for eventually leading to the a period of 'Liberalism' (another word of Spanish origin) in Spain.

After a number of notable early Spanish victories, a furious Napoleon personally led an army of 135,000 men into Spain and within a month of brilliant soldiering reversed the tide, decimated the Spanish regular army and marched into Madrid unopposed. He crowned himself King briefly until his brother Joseph returned after running-away during the May uprisings. Napoleon then returned to France to pursue his grand European ambitions. The French occupation, which was savage, destroyed the Spanish administration, which fragmented into quarrelling provincial juntas, escaping first to Sevilla, where they formed a *Cortez* or local parliament. After being chased out of Sevilla by the French in 1810, a reconstituted national government fortified itself in Cádiz but it proved unable to recruit, train, or equip effective armies due to being under constant siege.

Although Spain was an 'old enemy' of Britain, Napoleon was seen as the greater threat, so Britain dispatched General Arthur Wellesley - the future Duke of Wellington - to Portugal with about 25,000 troops. Here they joined an almost equal number of Portuguese troops, and using it as a secure position from which to launch campaigns against the French army while Spanish *guerrilleros* bled the occupiers dry with no quarter given by either side. Combined, the regular and irregular allied forces prevented Napoleon's marshals from subduing the rebellious Spanish provinces. To the Spanish the war is known as the *Guerra de la Independencia Española*, although Spain had been independent for a long time before the French invasion.

The Spanish army remnants, though beaten and driven to the peripheries, could not be stamped out and continued to hound the French relentlessly.

Soon Napoleons other campaigns in Europe, particularly Russia, siphoned many of his soldiers from the peninsula. This allowed the combined allied forces of the Spain, British and Portuguese, under the command of Wellesley, to go on the offensive. The many years of fighting in Spain gradually wore down France's famous Grande Armée. While the French armies were often victorious in battle, their communications and supplies were severely tested and their units frequently cut off, harassed, or overwhelmed by partisans. Victory by Wellesley over the French at Salamanca in July 1812 paved the way for the liberation of Madrid, but it was the allied victory at Vitoria\* in June 1813 which prompted the evacuation of all French forces from Spanish soil, with the exception of Catalonia. King Joseph (Bonaparte) once again went back to France and Marshal Soult led the exhausted and demoralized French forces in a fighting withdrawal across the Pyrenees and into France over the winter of 1813-14. Wellesley, relentless as a dog chasing a bone, pursued the French across the Pyrenees into France itself in August 1813. Less than a year later Wellesley, as the Duke of Wellington, would face Napoleon at Waterloo.

Napoleon, after his crushing defeat at Leipzig (October 16–19, 1813), recognized the impossibility of retaining his hold on Spain and released Ferdinand, who had been detained by the French at Valençay since his abdication in 1808. In March 1814 Ferdinand VII returned to Spain and the throne.

War and revolution against Napoleon's occupation led to the Spanish Constitution of 1812, later a cornerstone of European liberalism. The burden of war destroyed the social and economic fabric of Portugal and Spain and ushered in an era of social turbulence, political instability and economic stagnation. Devastating civil wars between liberal and absolutist factions, led by officers trained in the Peninsular War, persisted in Iberia until 1850. The cumulative crises and disruptions of invasion, revolution and restoration led to the independence of many of Spain's American colonies and the independence of Brazil from Portugal.

#### The Battle of Vitoria\*

The Battle of Vitoria took place in the Basque region when Wellesley, commanding the allied armies, routed a 70,000 strong French army. King Joseph himself was present at the debacle and escaped capture by a whisker, losing his carriage and silver piss-pot in the confusion. Every June 21, in one of the British army's strangest traditions, the men of the Tenth Hussars unit drink champagne from a replica of the chamber pot. The original sits in a Manchester museum. There is also a monument to the victory in Victoria's main square and Beethoven composed 'Wellington's Victory' to commemorate the battle.



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## PHOENIX GOLF SOCIETY

It was President's Day at Las Ramblas on Sunday the 13th. After the loss of our former president, Peter Dawson, last December, it was great to see his son Andy make the trip and play the course.

On the nearest the pins sponsored by MICK THE GRIP, Andy was nearest in 2 on the 8th and won the Best Guest Award.

The overall winner was Rob Hughes with 35 points followed by Mike Heighway taking the gold section.

The silver and bronze were taken by Ron Smith and Captain Dave Wightman respectively.

The other nearest the pins were Richard Hirst (5th), Ken Sutton (6th), Les Roundthwaite (18th) with Mike Heighway (10th) and Mick Slater (12th).

The Must Try Harder Award went to a popular and previous winner Les Roundthwaite.

Thanks to Donna and Kevin for the excellent buffet .

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

John Bradbeer

My boss phoned me today. He said, "Is everything okay at the office?"

I said, "Yes, it's all under control. It's been a very busy day, I haven't stopped."

"Can you do me a favour?" he asked.

I said, "Of course, what is it?"

He said, "Hurry up and take your shot, I'm behind you on the 7th hole!"

### Look at the size of that!

A beautiful woman loved growing tomatoes, but couldn't seem to get her tomatoes to turn red. One day, while taking a stroll, she came upon a gentleman neighbour who had the most beautiful garden full of huge red tomatoes.

The woman asked the gentleman, "What do you do to get your tomatoes so red?"

The gentlemen responded, "Well, twice a day I stand in front of my tomato garden naked in my trench coat and 'flash' them. My tomatoes turn red from blushing so much."

Well, the woman was so impressed; she decided to try doing the same thing to her tomato garden to see if it would work. So twice a day for two weeks she 'flashed' her garden hoping for the best.

One day the gentleman was passing by again and asked the woman, "By the way, how did you make out? Did your tomatoes turn red?"

"No", she replied, "but my cucumbers are enormous!"

Pete Dudman

### Love Story

An elderly man lay dying in his bed. While suffering the agonies of impending death, he suddenly smelled the aroma of his favourite scones wafting up the stairs. He gathered his remaining strength, and lifted himself from the bed. Leaning on the wall, he slowly made his way out of the bedroom, and with even greater effort, gripping the railing with both hands, he crawled downstairs. With laboured breath, he leaned against the door-frame, gazing into the kitchen. Were it not for death's agony, he would have thought himself already in heaven, for there, spread out upon the kitchen table were literally hundreds of his favourite scones. Was it Heaven? Or was it one final act of love from his devoted Irish wife of sixty years, seeing to it that he left this world a happy man? Mustering one great final effort, he threw himself towards the table, landing on his knees in rumped posture. His aged and withered hand trembled towards a scone at the edge of the table, when it was suddenly smacked by his wife with a wooden spoon ....'Feck off' she said, 'they're for the funeral!' (Kathleen Allen)

## The Royal British Legion-Poppy Appeal 2011 Costa Blanca.



Dear Friends,

On 13th November 2011 (Remembrance Sunday) The Phoenix Golf Society held its annual Poppy Appeal raffle in the Phoenix Bar.

Once again it was well supported by the residents of Dream Hills and the surrounding area.

May I take this opportunity in thanking everyone who donated and supported the raffle with their donations & bought tickets for the raffle.

Your generosity is always much appreciated, however special thanks must go to all members of the Golf Society for their continued support, and to Lowri once again for the wonderful Naval Poppy Doll she knitted again this year. Thanks also to Rob & JJ from Belushi's Bar, to Rik & Kath from Galadriel and to the Geordie Boys who won the hamper which was returned to be auctioned. Rob & JJ made the successful bid, but returned the hamper to be raffled again at the Phoenix Bar Race Night on Saturday 19th November, with all the proceeds going to the appeal. Last but not least a big 'thank you' to my lovely wife Thelma for organizing the raffle, donating the hamper and for arranging the evenings entertainment of the multi-talented Ian Smith, who once again entertained us all with music & songs to please everyone, generously free of charge. To date the total amount raised has been €37.70 with still more to come.

Thank you all.  
Jim Storey.



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**Christmas**

Christmas at my house is always more pleasant than anywhere else. We start drinking early. And while everyone is seeing only one Santa Claus, we're seeing six or seven.  
 W.C. Fields

What do a Christmas tree and a priest have in common? Their balls are just for decoration.  
 Graham Norton

We were so poor that we couldn't afford a turkey. We gave the budgie chest expanders. It was five aside to a cracker.  
 Les Dawson

It will be a traditional Christmas, with presents, crackers, door slamming and people bursting into tears, but without the dead thing in the middle. We're vegetarians.  
 Victoria Wood

The nicest present I ever got was an exploding suppository.  
 Emo Philips

I never believed in Santa Claus because I knew no white dude would come into my neighbourhood after dark.  
 Dick Gregory

I never know what to give my father for Christmas. I gave him \$100 and said, 'Buy yourself something that will make your life easier.' So he went out and bought a present for my mother.  
 Rita Rudner

I came from a very traditional family. When I was seven, my Uncle Terry hanged himself on Christmas Eve. My family didn't take his body down until the sixth of January.  
 Nick Doody

My dad was really tight. One Christmas, he gave me an empty box and said it was an *Action Man* deserter kit.  
 Anon

Little Johnny writes to Santa: 'Dear Santa Claus, please send me a baby brother.' Santa replies: 'Dear Johnny, please send me your mother.'  
 Anon

**Bottom of the class?**

I bumped into an old friend and said to him, "I hear you lost your job as a Geography teacher?"

"Yeah, I've no idea why, but it doesn't matter now as I'm moving to Australia to teach."

"Why go all that way for a job?"

"Because apparently Miami has some of the best schools in the world."

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