



# THE DREAM SCENE



Issue no. 63 1st of May 2012

Bienvenido a todos!

First of all congratulations to the organisers of two great charity events held in our area in the last few weeks. Belushi's held a fund raiser for 'Help for Heroes' which raised an amazing €1,225. I believe this is the largest amount raised for that charity in a single event locally, so well done J.J. and Rob; you can read more on page 17. Then CK1 Café Bar raised an incredible €530 for the Little Pod Foundation during the Car Treasure Hunt on Easter Sunday. Thanks to some great organisation and your kind support, it is wonderful to see such generosity in these challenging times.

The EU inspectors confirmed the validity of Spain's 2011 deficit, confirming the Government's admission of a 2.5% shortfall on the target and the figure of 8.5% in 2011. There is now no doubt that the the previous government understated the debt by 2%! El Mundo reported that last July Elena Salgado, the then Minister of Finance, also made an agreement with the Balears Government to hide some debts. It was out of a fear of intervention says the paper. The last people to behave like this were the Greeks, and look at them now!

The government are continuing with their austerity measures and you can read how the latest changes will effect you in this issue. Many more cut-backs are planned and the government are beginning to get a grip of the regions, which is being resisted by some areas such as Cataluna, Basque and Andalusia. The government plan to introduce more indirect taxation next year and this will undoubtedly lead to an increase in IVA/VAT. Taxes on alcohol, tobacco and fuel will also increase. Many feel that neither the banks nor the regions have 'come clean' on their true debt yet and that an EU rescue is inevitable. Unemployment is continuing to sore with no sign of relief in the medium term.

In local politics things are not much better. Orihuela Town Hall owe around €250,000 to the Red Cross for lifeguards, etc., most of it accruing from the last year. When the Cruz Roja said that they would not work unless they got a settlement, one of the Clr councillors hired a third-party firm from Pilar to do the work. But the 'brown effluent is likely to hit the rotating cooling device' on Thursday May 3. The local council have to vote on the budgets that day in a special session and it is highly likely that the ousted Claro/Clr member, Bob Houliston, will vote with the PP against the Tri-party alliance. This will probably mean that the current ruling councillors and their nominated staff will be booted-out. This will then see a return of the previous PP government with Monica Lorente as mayor. There is bound to be a bit of a ruckus, as when Bob Houliston voted against the alliance during a minor vote recently, there was a lot of intimidation and staged indignation. This should be a much more interesting situation, with the police probably involved again!

Once again we thank the generosity of those who have donated extra to the Dream Scene costs - Alan & Pat, Val, Ken, Dave & Sue Purdy, John Lumsdon and Søren Olsen. Due to an extra full page advert this month, we had to increase the size from 16 pages to 20. We are determined to keep a high ratio of text to adverts and don't want the Dream Scene to be just an advertiser.

Watch-out for youngsters snatching women's jewellery while out walking. There have been a number of such incidents locally. Have a great month! Mick & Tid

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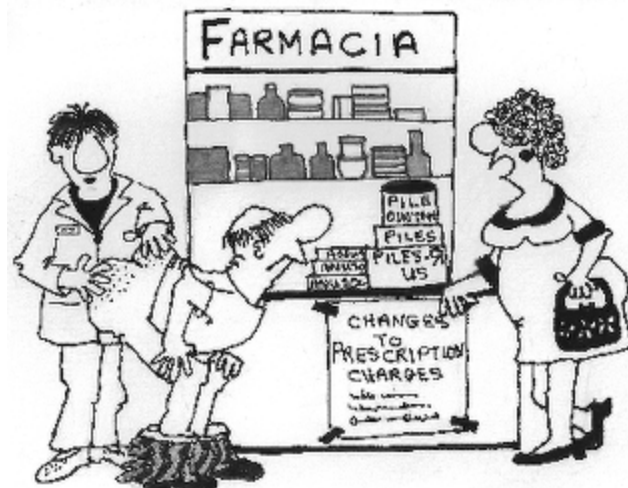


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### Angela's Cartoon



'Apparently they charge by the bunch now!!'

## What's Up?

The new government have 'beefed-up' the fiscal fraud legislation. A new law limiting cash deals in business to €2,500 was approved as part of the fight against the black economy. Transactions of more than €2,500 that "involve at least one professional entrepreneur" won't be allowed to be made in cash. (For non-residents the figure is €15,000.) Those caught not doing so will face a fine amounting to 25% of the sum involved. (As always, the devil will be in the detail. Individual to individual transactions are excluded from the law but probably not if one of the individuals is an entrepreneur i.e. the chap who is building your extension.) The cash limit is part of the Governments anti-fraud plans. Those Spaniards who have a bank account outside the country now face the legal obligation of having to inform Hacienda about the account. (Again, will this effect resident non-Spanish tax payers in Spain?) The Government hopes it's anti-fraud measures will bring in €8.171 billion which is probably wishful thinking.

This follows the tax avoidance amnesty which has given those who have defrauded the tax authorities an amnesty where they will only have to pay 10% of the money defrauded. There is an eight month application period. The government expects the amnesty to raise 2.5 billion euros.

The Government has announced a 33% cut in the money it gives to the unions in Spain, which means they will have to do with 8.5 million € less. This means that the annual payment to the unions was in excess of €25 million. The unions have complained that the cut in the payments to political parties has been cut only by 13.2%. (ABC says that the political parties received €281 million € in public grants in 2007.) That the taxpayer should be funding any of them is a joke.

House prices in Spain have now fallen for 53 consecutive months. The average fall over the past 12 months was 7.6%.

Your electricity bill has just gone up in price and the average monthly bill is now nearly €80, €30.5 more than just five years ago. The FACUA consumer group says electricity has risen by more than 60% in five years. If we count the increased IVA the jump is 62.9% in price. FACUA say the increase is an unjustified attack on the budget of families.

Once again, those admirable Catalan medical researchers have delivered. They have now discovered the molecule which spreads the HIV virus. These molecules, called gangliosides, are those responsible of penetrating the defences of the body. The discovery will help in the creation of new drugs and is a step towards the creation of a vaccine and the resulting drugs from this research will be more efficient and stable than current treatments, and less vulnerable to virus mutations.

In Spain Aids is no longer considered to be lethal, rather a chronic illness with a life expectancy the same as the non-infected population, but the number of infections has risen 17% in the last decade and one in four of those infected do not know they are living with the virus.

The Spanish Senate has rejected a proposal to postpone bank evictions during next winter. In France a winter moratorium is to run from November 1 to March 15, but the proposal in Spain has been rejected by the PP. Last year saw 328,687 evictions because of unpaid mortgage payments.

Details of the Summer schedules for AENA's network of Spanish airports has revealed how a total of seven airlines will operate from Murcia's San Javier airport until the end of the Summer period, which will run until the end of October. The airlines who have made this commitment are : Air Nostrum; BMI baby; EasyJet; Jetair Fly; Jet2.com; Ryanair and Norwegian Air. This revelation coincides with earlier news, that AENA has committed a further investment of €4.4 million at San Javier airport throughout 2012. Of this amount €1.2 million will be spent on the new terminal building, €1.2 to support investment and maintenance, €1.7 on Security and €0.2 on planning.

It now seems that Corvera Airport will not be fully operational until summer 2013 at the earliest. Surprise, surprise! Also, the AVE high-speed train will not be stopping at the airport. The problem is reportedly one of the physical characteristics of the area surrounding the airport, which would call for the construction of 6 miles of tunnels, and the creation of a gradient of just 3% to allow the approach of the train, which could only be built at significant cost.

Jet2.com have announced a new route - Alicante/Edinburgh - which will begin this summer.

The number of both fixed and mobile phone lines in Spain fell in February. Consumers have continued to change company in search of the best offer. The offers are now based on prices rather than trying to attract the client with an offer on a smartphone. The Telecommunications Market Commission says 133,500 mobile numbers and nearly 50,000 fixed lines were lost in February. The mobile lines saw a 209,557 loss for Movistar with smaller falls for Vodafone and Orange, but Yoigo and the virtual clients obtained 136,740 new clients. Movistar is to offer up to 200 € in discounts to try and capture clients from Orange. The discount ranges from 160 € to 200 € depending on the tariff the customer signs up to. Orange is the only operator in Spain which has not abandoned the practice of offering cheap smartphones to attract new customers.

In an overdue move, several of the Socialist politicians involved in the multi-million ERE scandal in Andalucia have been remanded in custody without bail. Although the conservative Partido Popular gained more votes than any other in the recent regional election, they did not gain an overall majority. The Socialist will now run one of Spain's most profligate region with the help of the United Left, who ironically voted against the Socialists a number of times during the last term.

### It's a fair cop!

When the Railway Cop saw the young couple screwing away in the late night train compartment, he notified the police, who arrested the couple.

The girl was let off with a warning, but her boyfriend was charged with mounting and dismounting while the train was in motion, and for having a first-class ride while holding a second-class ticket.

What do you get when you mix holy water with castor oil? A religious movement.

## What's Up? continued

Victor Fernández from Barcelona has just paid a €186 fine, made up of a €150 fine and €36 for late payment, for the noisy barking of a dog that he does not own. (So you see, people can be fined for barking dogs!) The dog lives next door but when the fine was being issued, they made a mistake on the flat number. Bajo1<sup>a</sup> is Victor's flat while the dog is in Bajo 2<sup>a</sup>. After many trips to the Town Hall to explain the situation, now after eight months he has received a letter saying he is to be fined. Victor has been advised by a lawyer friend to pay the fine to ensure that his assets would not be impounded if the case continued. So now he has paid, but he is also making a claim to the Ombudsman.

A village on the south of Gran Canaria, Morgán, is reserving 75% of ten of its beaches for non-smokers. Initially the idea was ban smoking from all the beaches, but this is the compromise. The same by-law recommends the public to abstain from night-time bathing; so no skinny dipping!

The Chairman of Mercadona, Juan Roig, has upped his wage by 73% to 3.8 million €. The company says the increase in activity is the reason and notes that his wages beforehand were far below competitors in the market. No doubt the staff at the cash tills will get a similar rise.

Lower sales have led Carrefour in Spain to freeze the wages of more than 6,000 workers in their supermarkets.

The Spanish motorbike champion, Dani Pedrosa, is reported to be among 21 people who were arrested by the Guardia Civil last month in investigations into various irregularities during the exams to qualify as a yacht captain. Ten had an earpiece to get the exam answers from someone outside the hall and seven took the identity of someone else to complete the exam. (I wonder if this was where that Italian ferry captain of the *Concordia* got his qualifications?)

National Police have arrested a man in Alicante who is accused of getting married to two different women in four days. He did it so they could obtain residency permission and allegedly was paid €3,000 in the first case, according to a statement from the Alicante provincial police station. Four days later he got married to a woman from Venezuela, and the irregularity has only come to light now when both the women had to renew their papers.

The left-wing mayor of the small town of La Toba in Guadalajara has banned a number of anti-social activities. These include: coughing and sneezing without putting your hand to cover your mouth, being a noisy neighbour, and spitting and passing wind in public. Better hold it 'til you get home, Doris.

A Madrid postman who threw away 7,100 Christmas cards in 2006 faces two and a half years in jail and a €4,500 fine. He may also be banned from holding any public job for five years. I must admit, I always thought that losing cards was part of their training! *Correos* are now talking about laying-off 2,000 workers this year, which will hardly improve the service. 4,000 staff were laid-off last year.

A Spanish lorry driver was arrested mid-April in the Tangier-Med port in the north of Morocco when his articulated lorry was found to be carrying about **9 tons** of hashish. The drugs were camouflaged in a cargo of melons. At least 140 Spaniards are being held in Moroccan jails after being caught transporting hashish.

A judge in Torremolinos has ordered provisional prison without bail for a 27-year-old man who was arrested in Benalmádena, who put his four year old step-daughter in the boot of his car. His excuse? He was protecting her from chicken pox.

### Mistaken identity!

I was in a British pub on Saturday night. Had a few....I noticed two large women by the bar. They both had strong accents so I asked, "Hey, are you two ladies from Scotland?"

One of them chirped: "It's WALES you friggin' idiot!"

So, I immediately apologized and said..., "Sorry, are you two whales from Scotland?"

Then the lights went out....

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The largest police union in Spain, the SUP, have in their April publication criticised the government ministers' official cars. They state that the ministers have between three and five official cars each. This is apparently because of breakdown or cleaning. 'They waste the money of everybody else like Arab sheiks while they make cuts and demand sacrifices from the weakest, from those who have nothing', the union reports. The article says that the first people who should be tightening their belts are not doing so. How very true!

A doctor in the Hospital Clínico de Valencia is being investigated for prescribing a 'Viagra' type drug called 'Revatio' to a man who had been dead for six months. The total value of these drugs came to €7,500! Maybe he was just trying to give a 'stiffy' to a 'stiff'?

The teacher was asking the nature study class what they knew about birds. Johnny put up his hand and claimed that birds had spare parts.

'What do you mean, Johnny?' asked the teacher.

'Well, I heard Dad tell Uncle Bill that he would like to screw the arse off the bird next door.'

The middle-aged couple were driving along the suburban street when the traffic cop pulled them over. 'You were doing 90 in a built-up area,' said the cop.

'Rubbish!' replied the husband. 'I was only doing 40!'

The cop insisted on 90 and the driver was getting very agitated, when his wife leaned over and said, 'Don't argue with him, officer. He's always pigheaded when he's had a few drinks.'



## Local News

### The 'She-Devil.'

A rather unusual addition to the Easter parades in Orihuela this year was a 'She-Devil.' The horned and winged Lucifer with female breasts, is surrounded by five angels; the sculpture (see photo and detail) was created by the Austrian Fray Nicolas de Bussy in 1695. This is the first time that a 'devil' has featured in an Easter procession anywhere in Spain, although the sculpture will not be allowed in any church. Over the years, the sculpture has been exhibited in local museums.



### Horror in Torrevieja

Typically Spanish have reported the following horrific case, which thankfully is not typical of life locally, but is worth remembering that these sort of individuals do walk among us.

A man has admitted in court he saw how a friend killed another by 30 stabbings as they were all high on cocaine, and how the body was burned. Jorge, Ulises and David are known to have got high on the drug in a house in Torrevieja, and then started fighting between themselves, resulting in Jorge's death from 30 stab wounds. After the killing, Ulises and David went out in Torrevieja, still high on cocaine, and then drove to Madrid to buy more drugs. They took money out of the victim's credit card while in the capital. They then returned from Madrid to Torrevieja and set fire to the body and the house where it all happened.

The amazing case opened in the Provincial Court in Madrid on April 10, and Ulises and David face more than 50 years in prison for homicide and taking-out money from the credit cards.

Ulises told the court, 'We were chatting, drinking and taking cocaine. David went out to buy drink, there was an argument under the effects of the cocaine, and then Jorge came out of the kitchen with a knife and David had to defend himself. So Jorge suffered 30 stabbings including getting his throat cut'.

'I was scared', continued Ulises, 'I was scared of both of them'. He admitted in court that they had taken money out of the victim's account - 'I knew the number because he trusted me', he said. He explained to the court how they purchased a can of petrol to set fire to the body and the house.

The case continues.

An Orihuela resident has won first prize in the ONCE lottery. The winner gets €6,000 a month for 25 years! Nine runners-up in the town got €25,000 each.

National police raided six premises in and around the Orihuela area, detaining nine Moroccans. It seems the gang were stealing parked cars and vans, then taking them to a house near Los Montesinos where the vehicles were stripped-down; the parts, with false invoices, were then sent by ferry to North Africa. The spare parts included Mercedes, BMW and Volkswagen engines. Entire vehicles were also sent abroad with false papers and altered number-plates. Other members of the gang, all Moroccans, were also arrested in Alicante, Algeciras and Marbella. More arrests are expected.

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### Getting Old.

\*Getting older is tough. I remember the last time I felt an erection. It was at the movies. The only problem is, it belonged to the guy sitting next to me.

Rodney Dangerfield

\*I used to have four supple members and one stiff one. Now I have four stiff ones and one supple one.

Duc de Morny, 1864.

### Get Mom!

A 15-year-old Amish boy and his father were in a shopping-mall for the first time. They were amazed by almost everything they saw, but especially the two shiny, silver walls that could move apart and then slide back together again.

The boy asked, 'What is this, Father?'

The father (never having seen an elevator/lift) responded, 'Son, I have never seen anything like this in my life, I don't know what it is.'

While the boy and his father were watching with amazement, a fat old lady in a wheel chair moved up to the moving walls and pressed a button. The walls opened, and the lady rolled between them into a small room. The walls closed and the boy and his father watched the small numbers above the walls light up sequentially.

They continued to watch until it reached the last number... and then the numbers began to light in the reverse order.

Finally the walls opened up again and a gorgeous 24-year-old blond stepped out. The father, not taking his eyes off the young woman, said quietly to his son.....

'Son, go get your Mother!' (Pete Dudman & O's)

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### A Euro Vegas in Spain?

Spain's central government said it is prepared to relax some of the country's rules and regulations to allow the so-called EuroVegas casino resort to set up in Spain, but rejected the idea from Madrid's regional premier, Esperanza Aguirre, of creating a "fiscal and legislative island" to accommodate it. US gambling king Sheldon Adelson's planned EuroVegas project will include 12 resorts with 36,000 rooms, six casinos, nine theatres and three golf courses, and involve an investment of up to 26.7 billion euros through to 2022. The tycoon claims the project will create 164,000 jobs directly and 97,000 indirectly.

However, in turn, the 78-year-old US businessman wants to be granted a form of legal limbo, with exemptions from upholding current laws on smoking, employment, immigration, minors, prostitution, money laundering, town planning and other matters. He also wants a generous tax holiday and to receive the land for the project free. Basically he wants an unregulated offshore island in the middle of Spain. Madrid and Barcelona are competing to host the project if Adelson (see photo) opts to build it in Spain.

Speaking in Congress, Finance Minister Cristóbal Montoro said current tax, financial and labor laws are "of course in the future revisable" if they help to attract foreign investment and attract jobs. "The intention of the government is to make Spain an attractive place for foreign investment," Montoro said. "That's all well and good, but no way would this government award licenses for privateering."

Adelson is certainly a heavyweight in the world gambling business. A major contributor to the Republican Party in the U.S., he maintains lucrative gambling business interests in Las Vegas, China and Singapore. With a personal wealth in excess of \$24.9 billion, he is a generous philanthropist but is quick to sue successfully, those who question his integrity or reputation.

My own feeling is that this guy may be just 'testing the water' here in Spain, as he possibly also is in a number of other countries. The entry in Wikipedia is worth reading - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheldon\\_Adelson](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheldon_Adelson).



### Valencia in the mire....again!

High Court Judge Pablo Ruz has issued subpoenas in the ongoing investigation into alleged payoffs of PP politicians that took place to secure a contract to televise Pope Benedict XVI's visit to Valencia in July 2006.

At the prosecution's petition, Ruz subpoenaed the three main defendants in the Gürtel contracts-for-kickbacks conspiracy to testify in May. Francisco Correa, the alleged Gürtel ringleader, his assistant Pablo Crespo and his point man in Valencia, Álvaro Pérez, will testify along with former Valencia regional television director Pedro García over the course of two days, beginning on May 7.

Prosecutors believe that the Gürtel defendants gave García cash and gifts in exchange for a seven-million-euro contract for the live broadcast of the pope's visit. A Gürtel front company, *Teconsa*, a construction firm with no previous experience in broadcasting, was hired to set up television screens and loudspeakers along the route taken by Pope Benedict XVI during his visit to Valencia.

Prosecutors say that *Teconsa* made a three-million euro profit from the overpriced contract.

Looking at the Valencia Government, one reputable Spanish newspaper has reported that the region is holding 17.5 billion euros in almost four million unpaid invoices! Now I calculate that if the region pays one bill every ten minutes in an eight-hour day/five day week (which is most unlikely), it would take 320 years to pay the outstanding invoices!

The Valencia Government has just announced that it is to sack almost half of the workers in its public companies. In total some 5,000 people will lose their jobs.

### Take it from the bottom

A morgue assistant examining a newly delivered corpse finds a cork stuck up its bottom. Curious, the assistant pulls out the cork and he hears a song being sung. 'My Betty-Sue done left me. Betty-Sue's done gone...'

The astonished assistant plugs up the bottom again and calls over the coroner to listen. The assistant pulls out the cork, and once again the corpse's bottom starts singing.

'My Betty-Sue done left me. My Betty-Sue's done gone....'

'Don't you think that's incredible?' says the assistant.

'Nay,' says the coroner. 'Any arsehole can sing country music.'



## THE VIKINGS ARE COMING!

Figures for property transactions over the past four years provided by Fastighetsbyrå's Spanish market business The Real Estate Agency, suggest that Spanish property transactions involving foreign residents from the UK, Germany, Sweden and Norway increased 10% in 2011 compared to 2010.

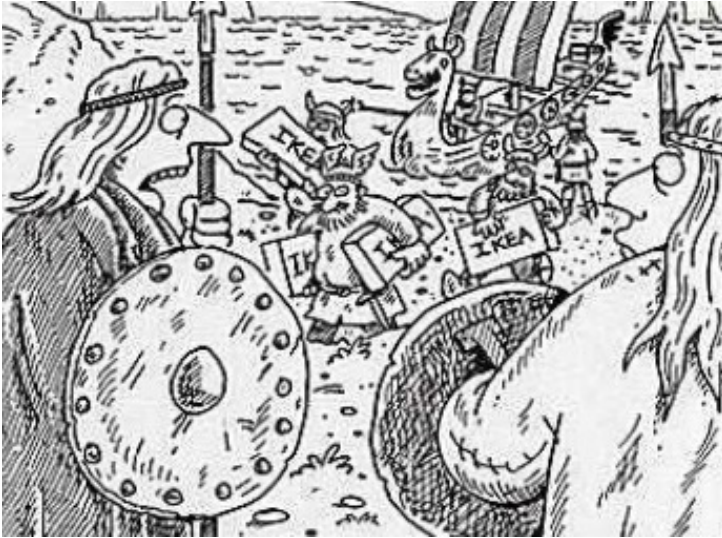
However this total masks some significant trends affecting buyers from individual countries. Purchases by buyers from the UK dropped another 6% last year, but those involving Germans were up 5%, Swedes up 46%, and Norwegians up 61%.

Over the four year period, the number of UK buyers has dropped by 65% and German buyers by 3%. However, the number of Norwegian buyers is up 108%, and Swedes by 138%. The total market is still down 33% from its 2007 peak, the figures also suggest.

Daniel Nilsson, regional head at The Real Estate Agency, said: "The Swedish economy has been much better than compared with, say, the UK. And the Swedish krona has been strong at the same time that prices along the Spanish coasts have dropped 30% to 40%. This has made it possible for many Swedes to realise their dreams of living in warmer latitudes."

Despite the downturn in sales to Britons, Fastighetsbyrå is planning a business push into the UK to attract more buyers to the Spanish market.

Through its existing Swedish business, the company intermediated some 36,000 property deals worth about SEK50bn (€5.7bn) during 2011.



**'Oh no! It's the Vikings! And they've brought their bloody self-assembly furniture with them!'**



\*If you finish your European holiday with more money than when you started, you might very well be a Viking.

\*If you've changed your name from John Smith to Hralfinkel Niflgrimsson, you are probably a Viking.

\*If the best thing you can say about France is that you left most of it standing, you might be a Viking.

\*If your new girlfriend is disturbed to find that you've given a personal name to each one of your kitchen knives, you might be a Viking.

\*If you consider beer and herring a gourmet meal, you might be a Viking.

## The Lion & the Lamb

An American visiting the Moscow zoo was amazed to see a lion and a lamb in the same cage. 'Do they get along well?' he asked the Russian guide.

'They get along fine,' the Russian replied, adding, 'Of course, we have to put in a new lamb every day.'

Leo Aikman

## What a Bloke!

A man walked out to the street and immediately catches a taxi in New York City . The cabbie says, "Perfect timing, you're just like Brian. "

Passenger: "Who?"

Cabbie: "Brian Sullivan. He's a guy who did everything right all the time. Like my coming along when you needed a cab, things happen like that to Brian Sullivan, every single time."

Passenger: "There are always a few clouds over everybody."

Cabbie: "Not Brian Sullivan. He was a terrific athlete who could have won the Grand Slam at tennis or played golf with the pros. He sang like a bird, danced like a star and played the piano . He was an amazing guy."

Passenger: "Sounds like he was something really special."

Cabbie: "There's more. He had a memory like a computer, remembered everybody's birthday and knew all about wine. He could fix anything. Not like me. I change a fuse, and the whole street blacks out. But Brian Sullivan could do everything right."

Passenger: "Wow... Some guy that Brian."

Cabbie: "He always knew the quickest way in traffic and avoided every traffic jam. Brian never made a mistake, and he really knew how to treat a woman and make her feel good. He would never answer her back even if she was wrong; and his clothing was always immaculate, shoes highly polished too. He was the perfect man! No one could ever measure up to Brian Sullivan."

Passenger: "An amazing fellow. How did you meet him?"

Cabbie: "Well, I never actually met Brian. He died. I'm married to his widow." (Kevin Wood)

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Grandma

A boy visited his grandmother with his friend. While the boy was talking to his granny in the kitchen, his friend was eating peanuts from a bowl on the living room table. When it was time to go, the friend called out: 'Thanks for the peanuts.' 'That's OK,' said Granny. 'Since I lost my dentures I can only suck the chocolate off them.'

## Letters/e-mails received.

Following last month's article on the state subsidised holidays for pensioners, I include below part of an e-mail received from Mo & Arthur.

"Regarding your write-up about the pensionistas holidays, I would like to tell you about our trip this year. Arthur and I went to Roquettas del Mar, for 14 days and we were put up in the Zoraida Garden Hotel which is 4 star. It was unbelievable, it cost us 316€ each, full board, with wine and water with lunch and dinner and champagne on Sunday evenings! The staff were very good and if you finished your wine before the end of the meal, they replenished it straight away!

It was self service, and the range of food was unbelievable, something for everyone. The fish dishes included sole, meluza, salmon, trout, sea bass, tuna, cod and swordfish. Meat dishes included pork, beef, lamb shanks, steaks, liver, veal and pig trotters!



The Spanish loved these. Roast pots, perfect mash pots, chips and Dauphinoise pots. There were sausages of every description including English ones and a very good range of soups.



For breakfast you could have continental, full English, toast, marmalade, jam, and a lovely range of rolls.

Every evening there was entertainment of some description. You could also play bingo or dominoes.

We had such a good time and would you believe we were the only English there! We would thoroughly recommending pensioners doing these trips. Some friends of ours went to Majorca under the same scheme and they said that was also excellent."

Mo & Arthur.

(Thank you both for the feedback - Mick)

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An Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman walk into a pub and buy beers. Just as they raise their drinks to their lips, three flies land in each of their pints. The Englishman pushes his beer away in disgust. The Irishman fishes the fly out of his beer and carries on drinking. The Scotsman picks the fly out of his drink and starts shaking it. 'Spit it oot, ye thieving wee bastard! Spit it oot...!'



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### **The Big Apple.**

The New York City Marathon is the only marathon in the world where the starter's gun gets return fire. Every year when it's Chinese New Year in New York, there are fireworks going off at all hours. New York mothers calm their frightened children by telling them it's just gunfire.

David Letterman.

### What are the Spanish royals up to?

The Spanish royal family have been attracting a lot of attention in recent months. Even for a country which has strong republican and separatist influences, the Spanish royal family has been treated with huge respect by the Spanish press, in particular given the key role Juan Carlos played in the country's transition to democracy after the death of dictator Francisco Franco in 1975, as well as his actions during an attempted and unsuccessful military coup in 1981.

Nevertheless, that deference is beginning to be eroded. Earlier this year, a new biography was published which highlighted various allegations concerning the king, Juan Carlos. It alleged that he was a bit of a philanderer with the ladies including having made a pass at Princess Diana. It is also alleged that Queen Sofia has not shared his bed for 35 years. But as Machiavelli intimated 'morals are for ordinary men not princes'; indeed royals have been misbehaving in and out of the sheets for centuries, as have the political 'princes,' Clinton being just one example of many. At least one German newspaper has been reporting on a long 'relationship' between the king and a 47-year-old the German princess named Corinna Zu Sayn-Wittgenstein (see photo). Some illuminating info' on her here - <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/world/2012/0421/1224315007255.html>



However, all the negative allegations seemed to disperse in the wind, until the monarchy came under scrutiny once again following the ongoing investigation and indictment of Iñaki Urdangarin, the king's son-in-law who now faces charges over the alleged diversion of money from some three million euros in contracts he received from the Balearic Islands government to his private companies. A judge will decide in the coming weeks whether Urdangarin, the husband of Princess Cristina, will stand trial. At one stage it seemed that the princess would also be indicted as she was involved in and benefited from payment from the relevant companies. Fortunately for her she was excused by the court. The entire investigation prompted the Zarzuela Royal Palace last year to begin releasing its expenditures on an official website.

Then in mid-April it was revealed that the accident-prone 74-year-old king (five operations in two years) broke his hip after falling in his lodge during a secret hunting trip in Botswana (see photo taken from a previous safari). The other problem here was that the safari company, Rann Safaris, specialises in the killing of big game, such as pachyderms, and charge around €30,000 for killing an elephant.



As was expected, the press and the internet social networking sites 'went ballistic' when the story broke, with lots of criticism of the king, the left and the separatists asking for his abdication. Later, in an unprecedented statement, the king apologised for his behaviour, saying it was a mistake and wouldn't happen again.

All this was ratcheted-up a knot when people were reminded that the king has been Honorary President of the Spanish branch of the World Wildlife Fund for several decades! Its 35,000 members are now running around in ever-decreasing circles, looking for a diplomatic way of 'booting-out' their president.

Around the same time as all of this, it was revealed that the king's 13-year-old grandson had shot himself through his foot with a small-gauge shotgun while hunting!

In 1956 Juan Carlos accidentally shot and killed his younger brother, Alfonso de Borbón, when a pistol he was handling went off accidentally. The future king was 18 at the time, and his younger brother just 14.

Maybe it's time the Spanish royals gave their guns away!

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### Idiot of the Month Award

The Valencia regional health service are attempting to save up to 65 million euros by eliminating inappropriate medication prescriptions. After testing a sample of patients they found that 33% of drugs prescribed were excessive or unnecessary. The regional health councillor, Luis Rosada, wants to introduce variable productivity goals with two concepts, performance evaluation and at the same time, participation in the benefits of saving that occur from good practices. Stricter supervision will be enforced and inspectors will be alerted if the amounts prescribed to a single patient are 'suspiciously high.' All seems perfectly reasonable and admirable. But then he went off the rails by announcing the possibility of a new measure. He stated that a productivity bonus could be paid to medical staff according to the amount of money they save by not prescribing medication and reducing the number of analysis they carry out at medical centres.

Opponents of the scheme claim that the bonus will see doctors being paid more than they actually save in not carrying out tests etc.

Which ever way you look at it it means that medical professionals would be rewarded for not doing their job.

So step forward and collect your prize, Luis.

Hopefully, with the announcement of the new prescription charges, Luis's grand plan will end up in a hospital incinerator, where it belongs.

### Choppers!

A woman drops her false teeth in the park and is unable to find them in the long grass. A passer-by spots her predicament and offers her a spare set. Unfortunately the teeth are too loose so the passer-by offers her a second pair. These are too tight so the passer-by gives her a third set which fit perfectly. 'Thank you,' says the woman. 'I've been looking for a good dentist for ages.'

'I'm not a dentist,' says the passer-by, 'I'm an undertaker.'

A dentist is working on a female patient's teeth when he asks her if she'd mind screaming loudly. She does so and then asks why.

'The football starts in thirty minutes,' he replies, 'and my waiting room is packed.'



**Lime Bar Golf Society Los Altos, Orihuela Costa**

The golf societies venue for the 11th April 2012 was held at El Valle Golf Course.

Once again the weather can only be described as perfect for golf, the course was in good condition. For most of the 23 players it was their first time on the course and proved very testing for the high handicappers. This resulted in fairly moderate scores but did not diminish a very enjoyable day.

The competition was in the stableford format, and the scores were recorded, as follows:-

Nearest the Pin on the 6th was Dave Kirk.

Nearest the Pin on the 9th was Nev Greenwood.

Nearest the Pin on the 12th was Tony Whyatt.

Nearest the Pin on the 15th was Stuart Coleman.

Silver Class runner up was Nev Greenwood with a score of 26 points.

Silver Class winner was Barry Shawyer with a score of 27 points

Gold Class runner up was Damien Stead with 33 points.

Gold Class winner was Steve Cottle with a score of 31 points on the count back better back 9.

Best score of the day was Mick Slater with 33.

Yet again a very enjoyable days golf in pleasant company, thank you to Norman Dobson who managed this event for us and also thanks to the Staff at The Lime Bar for a most enjoyable meal. Anyone wishing to join our friendly society please phone George on 693 789 082 or the Lime Bar at Via Park III Los Altos.

Colin Clarke.



**Chinese - An introductory course.**

The preponderance of Chinese businesses in the Cabo Roig and other areas has led to some minor communication problems. Never shy of grasping the cultural and educational nettles of modern Spain, the Dream Scene is proud to introduce an introductory course in Chinese (Mandarin) to assist our readers over those often seemingly insurmountable linguistic hurdles.

- That's not right.....Sum Ting Wong
- Are you harbouring a fugitive?.....Hu Yu Hai Ding?
- See me asap.....Kum Hia Nao
- Stupid man.....Dum Gai
- Small horse.....Tai Ni Po Ni
- Put the light on.....Wai So Dim?
- I thought you were on a diet.....Wai Yu Mun Ching?
- This is a tow-away zone.....No Pah King Hia
- Our meeting is scheduled for next week.....Wai Yu Kum Nao?
- Staying out of sight.....Lei Ying Lo
- Have you put manure on the garden? .....Hu Flung Dung
- He's cleaning his automobile.....Wa Shin Ka
- Your body odour is offensive.....Yu Stin Ki Pu
- Did you go to the beach?.....Wai Yu So Tan?
- I bumped into a coffee table.....Ai Bang Mai Ni
- I think you need a face lift.....Chin Tu Fat
- Nappy/diaper .....Sak a Pu Pu
- British TV soaps .....Lao Ze Sho
- Barman .....Ten Ding Ba
- There's no need to raise your voice!.....Wai U Shao Ting
- Will I lend you €50? .....No Fu Kin Wai

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**PHOENIX GOLF SOCIETY**

The April outing of the Phoenix Golf Society was held at Saurines Golf Course which was a Polaris World Course designed by Jack Nicklaus.

The course was in excellent condition with difficult greens. Despite the moaning about the extensive use of shale instead of grass a good day was had by all.

Overall Winner - Richard Hirst, Gold Category - Rob Hughes, Silver Category - Dave Whiteman, Bronze Category - Terry Dunn, Winners of nearest the pins were Rob Hughes, Ken Sutton and Josh Sutton. The 'Must Try Harder' trophy went to Andy Edwards.

Comments were made as to how steady Terry Dunn's game was which proves time and money is better spent on good tuition rather than the latest 'super-duper' equipment.

Our next outing is at Alicante on Sunday 13th May, visitors welcome. Details can be found at the Phoenix Bar Via Park 5.

Rob Hughes

**The three-day-pass.**

An Israeli soldier asks his commanding officer for a three-day-pass. The officer says, 'Are you crazy? You have to do something spectacular to get a pass like that!' So the soldier goes off but comes back a day later in an Arab tank.

The officer is impressed. 'How did you do it?'he asks. 'Well,' says the soldier, 'I jumped in a tank, went to the border, and drove along it 'till I saw an Arab tank. Then I shouted to the driver, "Hey! Do you want to get a three-day-pass?" And we exchanged tanks.'



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### Not turning up!

Until the new Transparency Law takes effect (if ever) one must rely on the odd report in the Spanish press to answer certain questions about the nuances of Spanish life. I came across the following information in a short article in *La Verdad*, concerning health appointment absenteeism, not in Alicante, but in neighbouring Murcia.

They reported that 317,775 patients who were due to attend an appointment with a specialist in a hospital, did not turn up! This means that the percentage of no-shows was 27.83% (almost three out of ten users did not attend their appointment).

Interestingly, when it came to the no-shows at the *saluds* (health centres), this was just 10.3% (1,003,266) of the appointments with the family doctors and paediatricians.

Now I would have thought that people would be very keen to see their specialists, and not almost three times likely to forget it.

The no-shows, of course, just result in delays and poor productivity. I would imagine the statistics are similar in our area.

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### Dating.

♥A girl brings her boyfriend home after a night on the town. Her parents are in so she tells him to be quiet. Unfortunately the boyfriend is desperate to use the loo, but rather than send him upstairs and risk waking the parents, she tells him to use the kitchen sink. A few minutes later he sticks his head round the corner.

'Have you finished?' she whispers.

'Yes,' he replies. 'Have you got any paper?'

♥A young couple park in Lovers' Lane. 'It's very peaceful,' says the girl.

'Listen, you can hear the crickets.'

'They're not crickets,' replies the boy, 'they're zippers!'

### Argentina versus Spain!

First, in 2008, she nationalized privately run pension funds in Argentina, which many Spaniards had invested in. She then kicked out the governor of Argentina's Central Bank, rewrote the law which then allowed her to plunder the Central Bank's reserves to the tune of US\$30 billion. But what has really 'put the cat among the pigeons' was the decision of the Argentinean President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (left) on April 16th to expropriate and nationalise 51% of YPF, the former state oil company, which had been sold to Repsol, a Spanish firm, in 1999. The president did not reveal how much she plans to pay Repsol in exchange if anything.



All this has made front-page news in Spain, with indignant Spanish diplomats now calling on the EU for support. Argentina is risking a diplomatic showdown with Spain and scaring investors needed to unlock the country's vast shale gas reserves. It comes after Repsol just announced a large find of hydrocarbons in Vaca Muerta area last February. They said that the petrol and gas production capacity of Argentina could be doubled in ten years by the find.

The takeover is risky for a nation that is not yet rehabilitated after the world's biggest default in 2002. Argentina needs investment of \$25bn (\$15.7bn) a year and foreign know-how to develop its deep-sea oil fields and tap its Vaca Muerta shale gas reserves, the world's second biggest after China. The country has already raised eyebrows by revoking licences for YPF and Petrobras, and capping payments to oil companies at \$42 a barrel. (Mrs Fernandez is known for eccentric behaviour. Wikileaks cables show that US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was so disturbed by her actions that she requested a psychological profile of her.)

Cristina Fernández has sacrificed her country's relationship with its biggest foreign investor to satisfy her hunger for cash and nationalist symbolism. And of course she has also ratcheted up the question of the Falkland Islands with the usual flag-waving and histrionics. But then again, this is not the first time that an Argentinean regime has tried to camouflage its economic incompetence.

### Early warning system.

A man bumps into a friend who's been recovering from flu. The man asks how he's feeling. 'I'm better, thanks,' replies his friend. 'It was actually a wonderful experience. 'Wonderful?' says the man. 'How can flu be wonderful?'

'I learned my wife really loves me,' explains the friend. 'She was so excited I was home, every time the postman, milkman or dustman came by, she'd run out shouting, "My husband's home. My husband's home!"'

### Number of mortgages granted hits record low.

Just when it seemed things couldn't get any worse, they did. With Spain's housing market now well into the fifth year of a dire slump, the number of mortgages granted in February saw the sharpest fall since the National Statistics Institute (INE) began compiling the series in 2004, when the sector was still in the grip of a massive boom that turned into a bubble and burst.

At the same time, house prices continued their downward spiral in the first quarter, heightening the threat to the balance sheets of a banking sector already heavily weighed down by toxic real estate assets.

The INE said last week that the number of home loans granted by the country's lenders in February declined 47.1 percent from the same month a year earlier, compared with a fall of 9.4 percent in January. The figure has now fallen for the past 22 months.

The total amount of money lent for home purchases in the month declined 54.8 percent from a year earlier to 2.77 billion euros, while the value of the average mortgage dropped 14.6 percent.

The number of mortgages granted fell across the country, with the biggest fall suffered by La Rioja where the decline was 70.8 percent. The regions of Asturias, the Canary Islands, Cantabria, Extremadura and Murcia and the North African enclave Ceuta also posted falls of over 50 percent, while the figures in the Basque Country and Navarre were in the low double-digits.

Separately, leading appraiser Tinsa said average house prices in the first quarter fell 9.2 percent from a year earlier after a fall of 11.5 percent in March alone. Aragon led the falls with a drop of 16.2 percent followed by Navarre with 16 percent, Catalonia 12.8 percent and Madrid 11.7 percent.

The main drag on the demand side for housing is high unemployment, while on the supply side an estimated glut of around one million unsold housing units needs to be run down to get the market moving again.

However, there are also restrictions on bank credit due to the difficulties lenders are facing precisely due to the sorry state of the real estate sector. The Bank of Spain estimates that the banks are exposed to toxic property assets valued at 175 billion euros, with provisions eating up capital. With the wholesale markets virtually closed, Spain's banks have had to make heavy use of European Central Bank funding.

To resolve the problems facing the banks, the government is considering requiring that lenders remove their toxic real estate assets and transfer them to separate companies. That would come on top of a process already underway in which the banks have to increase their coverage for potential losses on retail assets by 53 billion euros. (Source: El Pais.)

The fall in property values has been much more dramatic in the coastal areas, particularly in the south, the south east and east. Properties are now selling some 40 to 45% less than the peaks in 2007, but where the sale is distressed the discount is usually more than 50% of the peak. A bank repo-sale of a quad in Dream Hills was recently sold for €100,000. It is now very difficult to get a mortgage unless the property you are buying is from the bank's own portfolio.

### Sensitivity Training

The room was full of pregnant women with their husbands. The instructor said, "Ladies, remember that exercise is good for you. Walking is especially beneficial. It strengthens the pelvic muscles and will make delivery that much easier. Just pace yourself, make plenty of stops and try to stay on a soft surface like grass or a path. Gentlemen, remember – you're in this together. It wouldn't hurt you to go walking with her. In fact, that shared experience would be good for you both."

The room suddenly became very quiet as the men absorbed this information. After a few moments a man, name unknown, at the back of the room, slowly raised his hand.

"Yes?" said the Instructor.

"I was just wondering if it would be all right if she carries a golf bag whilst we walk?"

Brings a tear to the eye doesn't it? This kind of sensitivity just can't be taught. (Kevin Wood & others)

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## Unemployment in Spain

The government claims that 70% of all those unemployed are claiming state benefits, however, this figure has been contested by Brussels who recently compared official numbers of those without work to the amount and number of benefit payments currently being paid out.

As of the end of 2011 the EU recorded a total of 5,273,600 (up to 5,750,000 today!) officially registered as being unemployed in Spain, of which the percentage of these people found to be in receipt of some kind of state benefit payment was found to be just 57%.

According to the latest figures available, this means that there are about 2.2 million unemployed people who receive no benefits or subsidies (43% of total unemployed).

This figure does not include those in state sponsored retraining schemes, though to number around 300,000.

It is though that there are around 1.4 million people receiving unemployment benefit (at an average of €865 per month for a minimum of 4 months and a maximum of 2 years) and another 1.6 million people on an average payment of €426 euros per month for a period of between 6 and 18 months.

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### Education Cuts

Education Secretary Montserrat Gomendio said the regions would be allowed to raise university fees so students would pay a maximum of 25% of the cost of their studies, up from 15% before. Annual costs are on average around €1,000 at present.

The government confirmed this week it will allow regions to increase classroom sizes by 20% and make teachers work longer hours, increasing from 20 to 25 hours per week.

The government also want schools to remain open during June.

### Good Question!

A school class goes on a field trip to the local police station where they see pictures of the country's ten most wanted criminals. A little boy points to a picture and asks if it really is the photo of a wanted person.

'Yes,' said the policeman. 'The detectives want to capture him very badly.'

The boy replies, 'So why didn't you keep him when you took his picture?'

### CHANGES TO HEALTHCARE IN SPAIN - The New Prescription Charges.

The conservative Popular Party government of Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy has announced education and healthcare cuts of 10 billion euros, the biggest assault on the welfare state since Spain returned to democracy. The cutbacks come on top of savings of 27 billion euros in the 2012 state budget aimed at meeting the daunting challenge of reining back the deficit from 8.5 percent of GDP last year to 5.3 percent this year. Both education and healthcare, which are in the hands of the country's 17 regions, were largely responsible for the failure to meet the deficit goal last year of six percent of GDP.



I have had to rewrite this article a number of times, as the information which has been released to the media, is sketchy and incomplete. Hopefully next month I will have more definitive information.

Pensioners who use any prescribed medicines will have to pay 10% of their costs when they collect them from the pharmacy. The new legislation imposes a monthly limit on what they pay from 8 to 60 € depending on their income, but whatever the income, all pensioners will pay 10% and then the administration will calculate the refund which the Ministry of Health has six months to repay. Our region, Valencia, are the worst payers in Spain! The new legislation for pensioners see them paying 10% to a maximum of €8 a month if they earn less than €22,000 (Some sources quote the figure as €18,000). If they earn from €22,000 to €100,000 the limit goes to €18, and above that the limit is €60. These limits are to be revised each year. Applying this system will of course be a bureaucratic nightmare. It raises lots of questions, for example, how will the chemists know what to charge?

(Pensioners on non contributory or minimum pensions will continue not having to pay. There may also be exceptions for serious diseases. The co-payment scheme also includes orthopaedics, splints, wheelchair hire, dietary products and non emergency ambulance transport.) The new changes have not been thought out but it is the poor and elderly who will suffer. Exactly how and when this graded system of charges will be implemented remains unclear. As the prescription system will now be effectively 'means-tested' it is probable that new SIP cards will have to be issued, which may contain details of the income of the claimant so that the dispensing pharmacist can levy the correct charge. Otherwise, how will they be able to tell? However, there are 47 million SIP health cards in circulation which may need to be replaced and it is estimated that this will cost between 470 and 900 million euros!

Working people currently pay 40% of the cost of medicaments, and under the changes this remains only to those who earn less than €22,000 a year. Wages up to €100,000 will see a 50% co-payment, and above that 60% will be charged. The unemployed will pay nothing, but one newspaper has reported that those over 26 years old who are not paying into the social security system will lose their health card.

### Health Tourism

In an effort to stop the Spanish health system being abused by foreigners, the Health Minister, Ana Mato, announced that it would no longer be sufficient just to be on the Padrón census to obtain a health card. Now fiscal residence will be demanded, meaning that those who are in Spain without their papers can only have access to the Emergency Department, Maternity and Childcare.

Now this will not be a new problem for us in the Valencian Region, as this is already a requirement here. The government insists these measures are the only way to sustain the social welfare system, whose defects it blamed on the previous administration. El Pais has reported that almost 500,000 illegal immigrants in Spain will lose their free healthcare entitlement following the recently announced changes to the healthcare system.



My doctor is great. If I can't afford the operation, he touches up the X-rays.

Joey Bishop



&



J.J. And Rob would like to say a huge thank-you to everyone who was involved and who supported the **Help for Heroes Charity Night** held at Belushi's on March 31.

We are pleased to announce that the amount raised on the night was €855, plus the sale of wristbands to date - €225, which together with the amount raised by The Monday Club - €145, brings the grand total to €1,225. Thanks to your generosity and hard work, this is an incredible achievement. There is still more money to count which has been raised by The Monday Club and then the total will be sent to the charity.

Thank you to Stewart of Macklin's Welcome Inn, Mick & Tid, Crysta Pools, Tony of Tony's Bar, San Miguel, Dave & Mel, Steve Rag Tags, Justine & Dave, John & Margaret, Jan & Jeff, The Phoenix, Galadriel, Jimmy at the Chinese restaurant in Via Park V, Lee, Steve the Barber, The Jester Magazine, All Bar Sue, Jim & Thelma, Tom & Bernie, Flabulos, Barry & Marion, Roger the Dodger, Margaret (J.J.'s Mum), Iceland Supermarket, and Steve H.

Many thanks also to Alan Warden and Dave Holtom who kindly gave their time and talent to make it a wonderful evening enjoyed by all. And thanks to the hard-working ticket sellers - Steve, Karren and Margaret.

There are so many people to thank who helped make the fundraiser a success and we apologise if we have missed anybody out.

Well done everybody and thank you for your support.

J.J. & Rob.



### Lets Do Lunch! Part 1.

I suppose it is fair to say that little good ever comes out of a recession, but there has been one welcome change here in Spain. Just a few years ago, if you went into a restaurant in the C.B., you were handed the a la carte menu but the Menu del Dia - even if it was available - was never offered unless you asked for it. Now, restaurant owners are trying a bit harder and not only offering a Menu del Dia at lunchtime but supplying a Menu De Noche in the evenings as well.

Franco decreed that every worker had a Franco-given-right to a reasonably priced and substantive lunch and restaurants by law had to provide this service every working day. Franco, never fearful of enforcing his way upon the masses also ruled that workers had the right to use the facilities of bars, cafes and restaurants as a means or resting during siesta. A worker had the legal right to enter a bar, with his own sandwich (bocadillo), perch on a bar stool, munch away, and then use the toilets. Although no longer law, many restaurants choose to continue the M del D as a way of generating custom and goodwill.

As you can see from the adverts in this issue, many local cafes and restaurants offer some great deals and value for money. But if you fancy going further afield for a reasonably priced Menu del Dia, you might like to check out some of the establishments I mention briefly below. There are scores of suitable dining places locally but this is just a few taken at random.

You will have noticed that most of the Chinese restaurants do a very cheap MdelD, sometimes even at six or seven euros a head, including wine! However, in my experience these meals tasted just like what they were - just cheap meals. The best Oriental/Asian MdelD I believe is still **Maritao's Kitchen** in Playa Flamenca Commercial 965 325 079 (reviewed in November 2011 DS). Here it is called the *Chef's Recommended Menu*, which features a selection of at least nine starters and seven main courses. Try the Mongolian beef skewers for starters and the *Baozai* for main. Two courses will cost €8.95 and three, €9.95. The price does not include any drinks but they are very reasonable here. This menu is also available in the evenings which makes it a popular place for parties.

A very popular place for Euro-expats and Spanish is the **Portico Mar** restaurant in Campomar, 966 725 603. Any time I have been there, lunchtimes or evenings, it has always been packed. Here the MdelD costs €15.95 and includes wine or beer etc., €18.95 in the evenings. Overall, I would class the food as acceptable. The prawn cocktail starter was mainly lettuce, the garlic mussels were diminutive and the leg of lamb was shredded rather than sliced. But everybody seemed to be enjoying themselves. Its popularity for parties means that you have to be prepared to sit through several recorded 'Happy Birthday' songs in various languages. After three or four of these, I wanted to kill somebody!

Then there is **La Finca Country Club**, formerly Eduardo's, 965 322 830 at Dehesa de Campoamor. As with its predecessor, La Finca is more about location than content. The MdelD at €9.95 was very poor. Dining by the pool can be very nice but it does not compensate if the meal has no heart. Wine was extra at €3 a glass and a large beer €3.50.

Travelling towards Guardamar and then in the direction of Rojales on one of the back roads near Rojales, you will find two good restaurants, **Restaurant Vilorien's** 966 712 263 and **Salon Paco** 966 713 917. Salon Paco is about two or three miles from Guardamar on the CV 910. This is very Spanish, some would say 'as rough as a bear's ass,' I would just say rustic and functional. MdelD is priced at €10 (closed Mondays) and I think it increases to €12 at the weekend. **Paco's** can be very, very busy at lunchtime and it is essential to book. I had an *Arroz a banda* one lunchtime and it was superb. Wine is included in the price, which jumps to €20 in the evenings for the same food! The menu is difficult to negotiate but if you enjoy real Spanish food then you must pay it a visit.

Just 20 metres past Paco's there is a sign and a right turn to **Vilorian's**. This is one of my favourites and it is a shame it is a bit of a trek to get there. The restaurant has a Spanish country house feel with appropriate decor to it and the staff are excellent. The food, mainly English, is very good and the dishes creative and delicious. The MdelD, which includes wine, is priced at €12.50 per head. The menu changes daily, but it features at least seven starters and seven main courses. In the starters, which may suit smaller appetites, you might find spaghetti with a Chorizo and Bacon Varbonara and Parmesan crust or Calarmari and Mussels in a savoury olive oil with salsa verde. For mains possibly Braised beef and veg in a puff pastry case with hand cut chips or Pan fried lamb's liver and bacon on mashed potatoes with onion gravy. Their roast beef is exceptional. As this is a very popular venue for the Brit's and Scandinavians particularly, it is wise to book and well worth the trip.

Much closer to home there is **Restaurant Pizzeria Altomar** by the Chinese *todo* near the bottom of Los Altos. Although Altomar is well known for their varied a la carte menu, they also do an excellent two course MdelD for just €6.90. The food, as with anything prepared at the Altomar, is always freshly cooked quality food. Not a huge meal, there is a choice of ten starters, the favourites being their excellent soups or the scrambled eggs with chopped fresh veg and prawns (not many). There is a varied selection of ten main courses, one of my favourites being the pork escalope/schnitzel with mushroom sauce. If you would like a dessert, the charming, efficient and multilingual Sarah would be pleased to show you Altomar's choice of desserts. This is the best selection I have seen anywhere on the Costa Blanca and features large cakes from top class bakeries such as Moritz. These cost just €3 a serving. Drinks are not included but are priced very reasonably. Quality and great value. More in future issues.

### Wrinklies!

Charlie was a very sprightly 85-year-old. He thought he'd give the ladies at the Old Folks' Home a bit of excitement and ran across the lawn naked. As he passed a couple of elderly spinsters, one said to the other, 'My goodness, Annie, what was that that just passed?'

'I don't know what it was,' said her companion, 'but it certainly needed ironing!'



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After an inordinate amount of time researching the rise of Liberalism in Spain in the nineteenth century, I started to get 'brain-rot' and a nervous twitch. Even the dog was hiding from me! Thankfully relief arrived when I noticed that the first of May was approaching, allowing me to postpone my tortured account of Spanish Liberalism and instead relate the much more interesting story of events leading up and including to the Battle of Manila Bay, which took place on the first of May, 1898. We non-Spanish Europeans know very little about the Spanish American War. The war was very short, 10 weeks in all, and never actually reached Europe, taking place only in the Pacific and the Caribbean. And the Spanish, who got a hiding from the Yanks during it, are quite keen to forget about it.

During the Cuban struggle for independence from Spain, which began in February 1896, Spain introduced brutally repressive measures to halt the rebellion. A Spanish General, Valeriano Weyler Nicolau - who became known as 'Butcher Weyler,' successfully countered the rebellion by introducing terror methods: periodic executions, mass exile, destruction of farms and crops. Weyler's methods reached their height on October 21, 1896, when he ordered all countryside residents and their livestock to gather in various fortified areas and towns occupied by his troops within 8 days. Hundreds of thousands of people had to leave their homes, creating appalling and inhumane conditions in the crowded towns and cities, which were virtually concentration camps. Several hundred thousand died in these camps.

The US was understandably shocked by the events in Cuba, so close to their won shores. US President McKinley remarked that this "was not civilized warfare" but "extermination." Both Joseph Pulitzer of the New York World and William Randolph Hearst of the New York Journal recognized the potential for great headlines and stories that would sell copies. Both papers covered Spain's actions and Weyler's tactics, in a way that confirmed the popular disparaging attitude toward Spain in America. In the minds, schoolbooks, and scholarship of the mostly Protestant U.S. public, the Catholic Spanish Empire was a backward, immoral union built on the backs of enslaved natives and funded with stolen gold; conveniently forgetting of course, the history of the widespread use of African slave labour in North America.

U.S. Attitudes were further inflamed when a private letter from Enrique Dupuy de Lôme, the Spanish Ambassador to the US was intercepted by the Cuban rebels and published by Hearst, in which de Lôme referred to the US President William McKinley, as 'a low politician, weak and catering to the rabble.' McKinley then sent the *USS Maine* to Havana to ensure the safety of American citizens and interests. On February 15, 1898, *Maine* sank in Havana harbor after suffering a massive explosion. The news of the explosion and the death of 266 sailors stirred popular American opinion into demanding a swift belligerent response. Spain denied having caused the explosion and despite several investigations, the latest by National Geographic in 1999, the cause of the explosion has never been determined. But it didn't matter. The American Press blamed the Spanish anyway. The US Congress demanded Spanish withdrawal and authorized the President to use as much military force as he thought necessary to help Cuba gain independence from Spain. When the Spanish refused to withdraw, the US Navy blockaded the island. Spain declared war on April 23. On April 25, Congress declared that a state of war between the U.S. and Spain had existed since April 21, the day the blockade of Cuba had begun.

On May 1, 1898, the Battle of Manila Bay (see right) began. US Commodore Dewey's squadron, consisting of six brand new warships, sailed into Manila harbour. The 10-ship Spanish fleet, all lying at anchor, was completely taken by surprise. Several of the Spanish ships were so old and rotting that they could barely float. The Spanish bureaucracy knew they could not win a war and saw resistance as little more than a face-saving exercise. Spanish logistical 'cock-ups' also worked against their defence, sending explosives meant for naval mines to be sent to civilian construction companies. The Spanish fleet in Manila was seriously undermanned by inexperienced sailors who had not received any training for over a year. Even though the Spanish shore batteries and fleet returned fire, their range was too short. In desperation, one Spanish vessel, *Cristina*, with just two men able to man her guns, bravely tried to ram the Americans, but was shot to pieces. Dewey's forces quickly defeated the Spanish fleet, the only US casualty being a sailor who died from a heart attack. On the Spanish side, around 400 sailors died.



Dewey's victory in Manila announced to the world that the United States was now a formidable naval power. Dewey was honoured and awarded the exalted rank of Admiral of the Navy, a rank never awarded to any other American. The Spanish American War marked North America's entry into world affairs.

On a lighter note: On June 20, a U.S. fleet commanded by Captain Henry Glass, consisting of the armored cruiser *USS Charleston* and three transports carrying troops to the Philippines, entered Guam's Apra Harbor, Captain Glass having opened sealed orders instructing him to proceed to Guam and capture it. *Charleston* fired a few cannon rounds at Fort Santa Cruz without receiving return fire. Two local officials, not knowing that war had been declared (Guam is 1,600 miles from the Philippines) and believing the firing had been a salute, came out to *Charleston* to apologize for their inability to return the salute, asking to borrow some gunpowder so they could return the salute!. Glass informed them that the U.S. and Spain were at war. The following day, Glass sent an officer to meet the Spanish Governor to arrange the surrender of the island and the Spanish garrison there. Some 54 Spanish infantry were captured and transported to the Philippines as prisoners of war. No U.S. forces were left on Guam, but the only U.S. citizen on the island, Frank Portusach, told Captain Glass that he would look after things until U.S. forces returned.

By the Treaty of Paris (signed Dec. 10, 1898), Spain renounced all claim to Cuba, ceded Guam and Puerto Rico to the United States, and transferred sovereignty over the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million.

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I'm not an alcoholic, ..... alcoholics go to meetings, I go to the pub.

Beer - the reason I wake up every afternoon.

-Hey, Mr Peterson, there's a cold one waiting for you.

-I know, and if she calls, I'm not here.  
(Woody & Norm from Cheers)

Man, I was an embarrassing drunk. I'd get pulled over by the cops, I'd be so drunk I'd be out dancing in their lights thinking I'd made it to the next club.

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Congratulations to Veronica H. of Los Balcones on winning the bottle of Bailey's. Adolph's House, or Casa Adolfo a cafe/bar, is on the N332 at the beginning of the Cabo Roig strip, opposite the new large lighting emporium.

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**Age Concern España** now have a website in English.  
You can find it at [www.acespana.org](http://www.acespana.org)

**Marriage.**

I love being married. I was single for a long time, and I just got sick of finishing by own sentences. (Brian Kiley)

A man in love is incomplete until he's married. Then he's finished.  
(Zsa Zsa Gabor)

Three women are talking about their love lives. The first says, 'My husband is like a Rolls Royce, fast and incredibly powerful.' The second says 'Mine's like a Porsche, fast and incredibly powerful.' 'Mine's like an old Skoda,' says the third. 'It needs a hand start. Then you have to jump on quick once you got it going.'

My wife treats me like a God - every evening at dinner I get a burnt offering.

A woman goes to the doctor for a check-up. When she gets home her husband asks, 'So how did the appointment go?' She replies, 'He said, I have a body of a 20-year-old.' The husband says, 'Oh yeah? And what did he say about your 40-year-old ass?' She replied, 'Your name didn't come up.'

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