

March 2024

Issue 131

Almería Living

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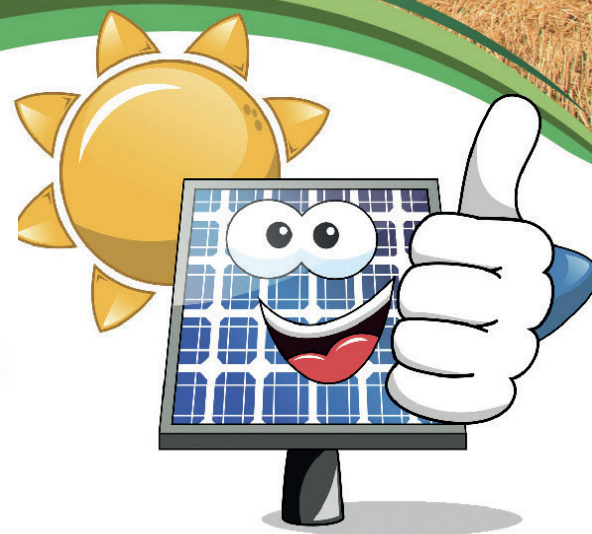
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Los Gallardos, Velez Rubio and many surrounding towns

Welcome to the March 2024 issue of Almeria Living.

I don't know about March winds but boy, didn't we have some hooligans in February. Still no rain - please save every drop you can - enough said!!!!

I would like to wish my special Mum a very Happy Mothers Day (10th) and hope that all other Mums have a good day too.

Wishing you all a Happy Easter & we must not forget St Patrick's Day too!

As always, I offer my grateful thanks to my scribes, who pulled out all the stops again.

Many thanks, as always, to our advertisers, who continue to support our magazine and reap the benefits of doing so. Local businesses rely on our trade so please try to use them whenever you can.

We hope you enjoy your read this month. Please don't forget to tell our advertisers that you saw them in the Almeria Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in April.

Karen (Ed)



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If you fail to obtain a ticket, or if you leave your car longer than you have paid for, you may get fined! But don't panic. Not all is lost...

If you have been fined, there will be an envelope and a small selection of documents under your windscreen wiper. In these it is explained that you can cancel the fine if you pay a small amount of money within 24 hours of the fine being issued. (Or up to 72 hours if you pay a car park attendant instead of putting money in the machine).

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Go to the ticket machine and press the yellow button three times. Then put in the correct amount. Press the green button and out comes a ticket.



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Put the envelope through the slot at the top of the machine. And voila! You've saved yourself over 85 euros.

Epilogue.

Your trusting reporter went out of her way to get fined in order to be able to write this article.

In her eagerness to please, she failed to include the description of the vehicle and fine in the envelope and duly received a 90 euro fine in the post four weeks later.

But even then not all was lost! Armed with the aforementioned piece of paper and the counterpart of the receipt, she bravely swooped on the illustrious Town Hall of Huércal-Overa.

And there all the problems were solved. They duly took note of the fine and the proof of payment and all was forgotten and forgiven.

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I will always say Happy Mother's Day to
you, the woman who started everything

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National Parks in Spain

Spain boasts 15 national parks distributed on the peninsula and the two archipelagos. In March, Nina started our journey to visit them all and so our travels continue



Parque Nacional de Monfragüe was declared a Natural Park in 1979, Extremadura's first protected area. It had a surface area of 18,396 hectares.

It boasts Europe's largest and best-preserved single expanse of Mediterranean wilderness and scrubland. This fact occasioned the status of the park to be augmented to National Park in 2007, the highest level of protection of a natural space in Spain.

The rich and unique fauna in Monfragüe, the many different plant formations, and the spectacular landscape with its geomorphological value all contribute to the outstanding natural and cultural heritage of this corner of Extremadura.

Furthermore, the enormous extensions of shrub and grassland, the river Tagus, the hillsides covered in virtually impenetrable brush, and several animal species in danger of extinction have turned Monfragüe into one of the treasures of European nature, and one of its last virgin ecosystems.

Monfragüe is a very good example of what is called Appalachian relief – a phenomenon named after the native American Apalachee tribe which lived in a similar geological environment.

This relief is typical of old siliceous materials, and it consists of alternating layers of hard, resistant rock such as quartz and sandstone, and slate which is fragile. The hardest rocks constitute the mountainous areas, and the softer rocks are found in the valley, moulded by the waterways.

In 2003, Monfragüe was recognised by the UNESCO as Biosphere Reserve, an international honorary title which vouches for the

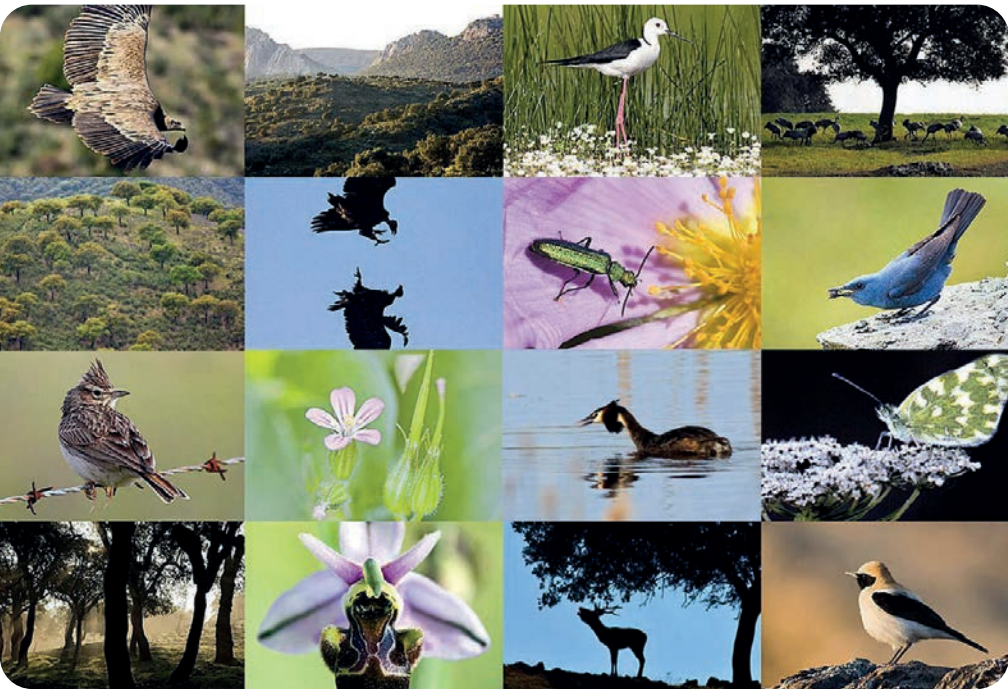
unique value of the area. At the same time, a total surface area of more than 100,000 hectares was denominated Special Protection Area (SPA) for birds under the name of 'Monfragüe and Surrounding Meadows'.

The rich fauna of the park is dominated by bird species, and thousands of national and international visitors travel there every year in order to observe some of the bird species that are difficult or impossible to observe in other parts of Spain and the world. In Monfragüe most of them can be observed fairly close up from the main road.

But the undisputed no. 1 place for bird observation is Salto del Gitano, a lookout point at the top of a 300m tall rock, at the bottom of which the river Tagus flows by. This is a place of reference for ornithologists from near and far, as well as other visitors, who all come to enjoy the sight of vultures, eagles, and other birds of prey flying overhead.

At the end of September, the visitor to the Monfragüe National Park will hear the deep sound of the stags' bellowing. This is one of the few opportunities to see the large males in the wild. When the first rains start falling, the males, who have been spending the summer in the thickets on the mountains, move down to the meadows where the females roam.

As the cold and rain set in, the adult males reach their maximum splendour, and their bellows resound throughout the park. When two



equally strong males meet, a spectacular fight with clashing antlers ensues. The winner gets to mate with the females. In May, after eight months' gestation, the fawns are born.

Other animal species that have made the park their home include civet cats, badgers, lynxes, mountain cats, otters, snakes, and turtles.

Since time immemorial, the Tagus and Tíetar rivers together with the surrounding mountains have offered many incentives for man to settle in the area: Water, fishing, game, and a forest bursting with fruit and berries. These things make it the ideal place to live.

Continued on page 8



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..... Continued from page 7

The first settlers left their imprints in the caves they used for storage and shelter, and prehistoric cave paintings representing humans and animals are exhibited in the Centre de Arte Rupestre de Monfragüe.

Throughout history various cultures have taken root in these lands. The Romans coined the name of the park: Monsfragorum, rugged mountain, alluding to the richness and exuberance of the landscape.

Under Muslim rule, the area was called ‘Al Mofrag’, meaning ‘the abyssm’ or ‘the crossroads’.

The Muslims built a fortress by the same name at the beginning of the 9th century, and it is practically the roof of the park. Its purpose was to defend the crossing points over the Tagus river, and it is full of history and legends, and it offers stunning views over the Monfragüe National Park.

During the re-conquest, the fortress fell into Christian hands, and in the 15th century it was extended, and the ‘Homage Tower’ was added. It is still standing today, and for centuries it kept serving as a defence structure, protecting the border between Extremadura and Castilla y León.

The fortress was part of a network of defence structures built in the mountains at high altitudes to defend and protect the land against invaders and criminals, until it was destroyed during the Independence War.

Next to the Homage Tower is the Virgin of Monfragüe who was brought back from Palestine by the Knights Templar hundreds of years ago. She’s still standing in spite of the passing of the centuries.



From the top of the tower, you see the river and the park in bird’s eye views. It is one of the most impressive observation points in the park, and it offers unforgettable views any time of the year. From the clear sky above and the great Tagus river at your feet to kilometres of green meadows and scrubland spread out in front of you, and the birds flying above the fortress on their way to and from Salto del Gitano.

In 1990, the administration of the park started a new project for more public access and environmental education. The village of Villarreal de San Carlos was at that time in ruins. The park administration bought the houses and outbuildings, and they were restored to accommodate the ever-increasing number of visitors to the park.

Every year, more than 450,000 visitors flock to the park to enjoy the stunning views and the varied and impressive fauna.

Broccoli A Bouquet of Benefits!



Going through the fruits and vegetables I’ve done in this column over the years, I suddenly realised I’ve never done broccoli! What a dreadful omission, and I sincerely ask for your forgiveness.

I shall make up for it forthwith!

Broccoli is very good for you, tasty, available all year round and reasonably priced. What more can you ask!

This beautiful green vegetable is bursting with health benefits: it is filling, helps your digestion, intestinal flora, immune system, cells, and red blood cells.

Full of dietary fibre, broccoli is one of the vegetables that gives you a feeling of satiation for the longest time. The longer you chew the little florets, the more satiation signals are sent to your brain.

The dietary fibre also does a lot of good in your intestine where it stimulates the rhythmic movements and literally kickstarts your bowel movements. Thus, they keep your digestion going and prevent constipation.

And that’s not everything! The dietary fibre furthermore nourishes and increases the healthy intestinal bacteria. In later years, researchers have paid much attention to intestinal bacteria as they are thought to be important for your general health. The more healthy intestinal bacteria the better, so don’t hold back on eating broccoli!

Broccoli is a great source of vitamin C, which benefits your system immensely: Both articulations, tendons, muscles, bones, and skin

enjoy improved health from the ingestion of vitamin C. And of course, it boosts your immune system.

And to top it off, broccoli is one of the best vegetable sources of folate, or folic acid (vitamin B9). Folate stimulates the formation of new cells, red blood cells, and the processing of protein.

The best way of maximising the benefits of broccoli is eating it raw, as both folate and vitamin C may disappear when warmed up. If you aren’t a great fan of raw broccoli, prepare it as gently as you can. Cooked broccoli is far better than no broccoli!

It is very easy to see whether a head of broccoli is fresh or not when you buy it (or come to use it), as the top starts turning yellow when it approaches its ‘best before date’. Do not buy broccoli that is turning yellow, but if you’ve got it in the fridge at home anyway, cook and eat it quickly. It’s perfectly edible, and you want to avoid wasting food.

When you get your broccoli home, cut off the bottom of the stem and wrap it in a bit of wet kitchen roll before placing it in the fridge in a sealed plastic bag.

Use broccoli raw in salads, or steamed, stir fried, or roasted in the oven. You cannot go wrong with broccoli!

Buen Provecho!



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Cooking with Nina



Spring Into March!

After almost non-stop spring weather throughout the winter, we are finally reaching the real thing on 20th March. At 03.06 in the morning.

The way things are going, spring will probably feel like summer, so I daren't even start to imagine what the real summer will be like.

Q.: What do ducks, salmons, cows, and pigs have in common?

A.: They all feature in Cooking with Me this springy month of March!

Each in its own scrummy recipe – I'm really treating you this month. And introducing you to a new culinary delight: Krebinetter! Well, not new in Denmark, but I've never done them here. Interested?

Read, cook, and enjoy!

Killer Sauce (with Salmon)

I know we don't usually have the sauce as the protagonist of recipes, but truth is that lovely as salmon is, this recipe does not revolve around it.

I did nothing special with it, just sprinkled it with salt, pepper, and lemon juice and fried it in a drop of olive oil.

But the sauce... A culinary masterpiece, though very quick and simple. And it lends itself to any fish or meat!

Try it and rejoice!

Ingredients for two:

- 15g butter
- ½ vegetable stock pot (those little jelly stock thingies)
- 100g mushrooms, sliced
- 50g red onion in thinnish wedges
- 50g baby spinach leaves
- 150ml cream
- Salt, pepper, and lemon juice

Melt the butter and jelly stock in a frying pan until golden. Throw in the mushrooms and cook, stirring, until they are quite brown. Add the red onion and cook for another minute before adding the spinach. Cook until it starts withering.

Pour over the cream and let it bubble gently until it has the desired consistency. If it gets too thick, add a little water – I used pasta water.

Season to taste and serve with whatever you have planned.

I had mine with salmon and pasta, it was amazing, and I can't wait to try it with something else!

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Duck's Breast with Stir Fry

What a lovely idea: Duck's breast marinated in orange, soy sauce, ginger and maple syrup! A real treat!

And the marinade from the duck gives a fresh and unusual flavour to the stir-fried vegetables and noodles.

I always break noodles into pieces before cooking them as that makes it much easier to mix them with the vegetables.

Ingredients for two:

- 1 duck's breast, skin and fat scored in a diamond pattern
- 25g ginger, grated
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp maple syrup (or honey)
- 1 orange, grated rind of
- Salt and pepper

- 2 tbsp oil
- 250g egg noodles, broken into smaller pieces and cooked as per instructions on packet
- 2 carrots, cut into matchsticks
- 1 leek, cut into thin strips lengthwise
- 1 red pepper, cut into thin strips
- Soy sauce and pepper

Mix together the ginger, soy sauce, syrup, and honey. Turn the duck's breast in the marinade to cover all over, then cover and set aside. Go back and turn it in the marinade from time to time.

Leave it for at least half an hour.

Preheat the oven to 200°C. Drain the marinade from the duck and reserve it. Place the duck in a small, greased roasting tin, sprinkle it with salt and pepper and roast it in the oven for 25 minutes until the skin is golden and crisp and the meat still pink in the middle.

In the meantime, prepare your noodles and vegetables. When the meat is done, take it out of the oven and keep it warm.

Heat the oil in a wok or large, deep pan, and add the carrot sticks. Cook for a minute, add the pepper and cook for 30 seconds, then the leeks for another minute or so – stirring all the time.

Throw in the cooked noodles and fry and stir until they take a little colour. Pour in the reserved marinade, stir, making sure everything is heated through. Season to taste with soy sauce and black pepper.

Slice the duck and serve it with the stir fry.

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Krebinetter (Breaded Pork Patties)



I suddenly realised the other day that I've never introduced you to krebinetter!

You poor, poor people, and what a nasty person that makes me.

Let me make amends immediately!

Krebinetter are Danish breaded minced pork patties, and they are delicious.

Traditionally they are served with boiled potatoes, a selection of steamed vegetables (such as carrots, cauliflower, leeks etc.), and a sauce.

When I decided to make mine, I took the opportunity to use up some vegetable leftovers which I roasted in the oven. I also had a rest of gravy and some mushrooms, so I quickly browned the mushrooms in a pan, poured over the gravy and heated it through.

I know it looks like a bit of a mess, and I suppose it was with me using only leftovers, but I can assure you that it was delicious.

However, if you want to make it with the traditional side dish, at least the first time, I recommend the above-mentioned vegetables.

Krebinetter for two:

- 300g minced pork
- 1 egg, whisked
- 2 tbsp dried breadcrumbs
- Salt and pepper
- Pinch of paprika
- Butter and oil

Divide the meat into four equally large portions and shape them firmly into balls. Place them on a chopping board and gently flatten them to make them into patties.

Mix the breadcrumbs with the salt, pepper, and paprika.

Turn a patty in the egg making sure it is coated all over, then turn it in the breadcrumbs, pressing gently to make sure they stick. Repeat with the others.

Heat the butter and oil in a frying pan until the butter turns golden. Put the patties in the pan and let them brown at a good heat for a minute or two. Turn them over, fry for another couple of minutes, then turn the heat down to medium-low.

Fry the patties for five minutes more on each side and keep them warm until you serve them.

I can never manage both mine in one sitting, but no problem, they are wonderful warmed up for another meal, or cold in a sandwich!

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MERCADONA

ALBOX

As you may have noticed over the years – I'm mad about osso buco!! I also love beetroots, so as you can imagine, when I saw this recipe in a Danish magazine, I just had to make it.

And I did, and it was GREAT! I cooked it on that very windy Saturday in February, just the kind of day for slow cooking to make your kitchen warm and cosy.

Osso buco is undeniably heavy, rich meat, and a fresh gremolata always goes a treat with it.

I'll give you the full recipe for four – I don't know anyone except myself who would go to the trouble to cook something like this just for themselves.

Ingredients for four:

- 4 slices of beef shank (osso buco)
- Salt and pepper
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2-3 red onions, cut into thick wedges
- 3-4 cloves garlic, thinly sliced
- 800g beetroots, cut into thick wedges
- 400g carrots, cut into thick sticks
- 3 tbsp plain flour
- 500ml dark beer (stout)
- 1-2 tsp dried thyme
- 3 bay leaves
- Drop of lemon juice (optional)

Gremolata:

- 1 bunch flat leaved parsley, finely chopped
- 1 lemon, grated rind of
- 2-3 cloves garlic, finely chopped

First of all, mix the ingredients to the gremolata and put it in the fridge in an airtight container.

Make a few cuts round the edges of the meat slices to stop them from curling up. Season them on both sides with salt and pepper.

Heat the oil in a large casserole dish and brown off the meat in the oil. You may need to do in batches depending on the size of the slices. Set aside.

In the same dish, cook the vegetables at medium heat for 4-5 minutes. Sprinkle the flour over the vegetables and mix well. Pour in the beer and loosen the sediment off the bottom while you bring the beer to the boil. Add the thyme, bay leaves, salt, and pepper and stir well.

Return the meat to the dish and cover. Leave it to bubble gently either on the stove or in a low oven for 2-2½ hours until the meat is completely tender.

Adjust the seasoning and add a drop of lemon juice if you feel the need.

Serve with the gremolata sprinkled over the top and crusty bread or, like me, oven baked potatoes in cream. A sure winner!!

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Valle del Este Commercial Centre and Resort is located in Vera, Almería. The resort lies just 115kms from Murcia and 74kms from Almeria airports and is easily accessed from the A7/E15.

The resort not only boasts a 4* hotel but is surrounded by tree lined avenues and private homes, some of which are occupied all year round and some that are available for short- or long-term holiday lets. Real Estate agents can be found within the commercial centre who will be happy to help and answer any questions you may have regarding the area.

Valle del Este is located in an important coastal tourist enclave in the Levante of Almería (Vera, Garrucha and Mojácar) with more than three thousand hours of sunshine a year, which means that it is the territory of Continental Europe with the highest number of hours of annual sunshine. As a visitor you will be able to bask in the sun whilst visiting the resort and surrounding area.

The resort and Commercial Centre have a great deal to offer, both residents and visitors alike. Here are just a few you might be interested in:

P4Padel - Their name (P4 Padel) stands for 'Passion for Padel'! They love the game, and if you've never played padel before, don't worry! They will help you to develop the skills so that you can discover the passion too! Players of all ages, abilities and nationalities are welcome, and they offer 4 high-quality, newly refurbished, glass backed courts with secure access, all of which are located close together in a tranquil, charming environment right next



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Just across the road from the Hotel and Padel Club you will find the **Valle del Este Commercial Centre**, which is home to several small businesses including restaurants that offer a variety of cuisines from around the world. From traditional Spanish and English meals, prepared fresh for you, to the well-known Sawadee Thai restaurant that plays host to guests both local and travellers from afar.

Within the centre you will also find property management, sales and rental companies, all on hand and ready to welcome you with a smile and advise you on the best product or service for your needs. Amongst the businesses in the Centre, Taylors of Mojacar offer a wide range of quality hats & caps, perfect for keeping the sun at bay.

Or why not just come to sit and relax with a drink and while away the hours overlooking the green in one of the many bars the Centre has to offer.

So, when you are next in the area don't forget to pop along to Valle del Este Resort and Commercial area. You won't be disappointed!

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Caravaca De la Cruz & the Wine Horses

From the 1st to 5th May, Caravaca De la Cruz dresses up to enjoy its festival in honour of the Santísima y Vera Cruz de Caravaca. A main part of this festivity is the outstanding celebration of Wine Horses that takes place during the two first days. This has been declared of International Tourist Interest.



As well as the horses there are parades, battles of Moors and Christians and religious events, such as the Bathing of the Cross.

The history of this unique fiesta centres around the extraordinary story of the Vera Cruz (True Cross). This fragment of wood is said to have been part of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified and it has protected the city since the 13th century.

The presence of the Vera Cruz in Caravaca is the reason for its status as a Holy City, one of only 5 in the world, on par with Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela.

The legend dates back to the days of the Knights Templar, who had to seek refuge in the castle with the townsfolk because they were besieged by the Muslim armies. At one point the water supply became contaminated, people were becoming sick and dying of thirst, so the Knights were forced to leave the castle to look for fresh supplies. They couldn't find any water, but they did find flagons of wine! These were tied onto their horses and without delay raced back up the hill to the castle before the Moorish armies realised what was happening, bringing the precious liquid to the townspeople.

The wine was first blessed in the presence of the Vera Cruz, which was then bathed in the wine and when this was given to the people miraculously the sick and wounded were healed, and the contaminated water became drinkable!

On 2nd May each year, to commemorate this happening, 60 horses are dressed in spectacular embroidered cloaks and run up the hill to the sanctuary one by one, in a race against the clock. Four young men have to run together with each horse without ever releasing their hold so as not to be disqualified.

It can be extremely exciting and dangerous, as the streets are packed with onlookers who part to allow the horses to rush past just centimetres away!

Prizes are awarded for both the fastest horses and those with the most exceptional embroidered outfits.

The cloaks and hoods have all been embroidered by hand, often using gold thread, by members of the Peña (a group of family/friends), who work tirelessly all year to prepare for this special occasion.

The Spectacular Easter Celebrations of Lorca



One of the most spectacular Easter celebrations in all of Spain is in fact right on our door step: in Lorca.

The Easter processions in Lorca were declared of International Tourist Interest in 2007 by the General Secretariat of Tourism of the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade of the Government of Spain.

Furthermore, some of the costumes embroidered by hand in gold and silk, depicting important events in the life of the personages who wear them, are the first fabrics to ever have been declared Assets of Cultural Interest.

This fiesta is also known as 'Blancos y Azules' (Whites and the Blues), referring to two of the brotherhoods of Lorca. Although there are other fraternities in Lorca, these two are the most important and there is a clear rivalry between them to put on the most spectacular and colourful show.

The main processions are on the Friday before Palm Sunday, Palm Sunday itself, Maundy Thursday and Good Friday.

The processions on the two first days are more religious than biblical, in other words not as spectacular and with fewer horses and chariots.

Maundy Thursday and Good Friday evenings see the event of the two main processions of the whole Lorca Easter Week.

The grand processions take place in what is known as 'La Carrera'. There are people dressed as Roman emperors, Egyptian troops, Roman gods in heavy carriages, chariots and on horseback, and sculptures of virgins with rich embroidered robes, luxurious standards, and so on. The standard of the 'Prayer in the Garden' (white), better known as 'the floral cloth', is noteworthy.

The most highly anticipated floats include Cleopatra, carried on the shoulders of Egyptian troops, or the Antichrist, with its demonic appearance. There are also chariot races. On Maundy Thursday and Good Friday, the town is a splash of colour, gold and silver in a Baroque procession where the Brotherhoods (white and blue) try to outdo each other. The Whites gather round the Virgin of the Affliction, while the patron saint of the Blues is the Virgin of the Suffering.

Easter week is one of the most spectacular and emotional fiestas in Lorca. Religious devotion, art, colour and music combine in acts to commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. Members of the different Easter brotherhoods, dressed in their characteristic robes, parade through the streets carrying religious statues to the sound of drums and music – scenes of sober beauty intermingled with spectacular processions. Lorca at Easter is well worth a visit.



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3 Nights
***264€**
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Three nights in 4* hotel
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Running of the Wine Horses

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2nd May

On this day, locals recreate the legend in which the Knights Templar braved the Moorish armies besieging the castle to bring wine to the thirsty inhabitants, barricaded within. Horses dressed in spectacular embroidered mantels parade during the morning and then run up the hill to the Sanctuary in a race against the clock.

There is also a splendid Moors & Christians Parade
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Malaga Christmas Lights

Date option 1

2 Nights
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9th - 11th
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Central to the Lights

Price Includes:
Coach travel
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Breakfast - days 2 + 3

* Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement upon request

Pick-Ups Possible From:
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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Viajes Parra Travel

Malaga Christmas Lights

Date option 2

2 Nights
***245€**
per person

16th - 18th
December

Staying at:
4* Hotel Soho Boutique Equitativa
Central to the Lights

Price Includes:
Coach travel
Two nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2 + 3

* Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement upon request

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Viajes Parra Travel

Benidorm Christmas

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24th & 25th

23rd - 27th
December '24

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Breakfast - days 2, 3, 4, 5
Dinner - days 1, 2, 3, 4
includes wine and water

* Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement upon request

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Viajes Parra Travel

Benidorm New Year

4 Nights
***tba€**
per person

+ Gala Evening
31st

29th - 2nd
Dec Jan

Staying at:
4* Hotel Helios or similar

Price Includes:
Coach travel
Four nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3, 4, 5
Dinner - days 1, 2, 3, 4
includes wine and water

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HOMES & GARDENS

Now We Are One

By Aileen Cleave

Ripper, Sultan and Duke eyed me with exquisite feline contempt from their vantage point stretched along the back of the sofa.

"Foolish human" I imagined them saying. "We know you've had cat enemy number one secreted in the study for over a week now. We don't need to see him, we can smell, hear and sense him."

I'll try reasoning with them, I thought and sat down on the chair in front to ensure I had their undivided attention.

"Look, guys," three pairs of yellow eyes stared back at me without blinking. "Remember how you came to be here, in this very comfortable home? Remember how cold and hungry and afraid you were?" There was an almost imperceptible widening of the eyes at the word afraid. Not an emotion any one of them would readily admit to. "When you had to prowl and hunt and sleep in those dangerous streets?" Ripper stretched a little further and Sultan and Duke humoured me with a slow blink. "Well, we welcomed you into our home, didn't we? Fed you, nurtured you and loved you, did we not?"

This was met with an impassive stare.

Continued on page 26



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..... Continued from page 25

"Anyway, this new little fella," I swear that Ripper's expression was sardonic, "this little fella was thrown onto the streets to fend for himself and he wasn't doing it very well - not nearly as well as you guys did". I looked at them hoping for some sign of approval, none was forthcoming.

"OK,". I stood up. "I want you all to be very nice to him and welcome him into our family. His name is Josh and I'm going to talk to him now, explain how important you guys are and stress how respectful he must be towards you".

I went into the kitchen where Lucy was preparing chicken for the animals' supper.

"We'll do it today, Lucy". Our eyes met and Lucy took a deep breath.

I crossed the hall, went into the study and was met with an ecstatic bundle of red fur.

"OK Josh, calm down, I need to talk to you."

I sat down and Josh positioned himself between my knees, his tail and whole rear end moving in paroxysms of happiness. He had been extremely nervous when we first brought him home ten days ago. The rescue centre thought he was about 10 months old and for the majority of his young life, had been confined to a cage, so he was terrified of everything. But now his natural resilience was coming to the fore, and he was curious about his surroundings.

It was getting harder to keep him separated from the cats, and already we loved all four animals, so it was imperative that this introduction went well.

"Listen, little fella", I took Josh's head in my hands and looked down into trusting brown eyes, eyes that assured me he understood every word I said.



"Cats live here with us, very important cats." Josh acknowledged this with a loving lick of my hand. He knew this already, of course. Smelt them the first day. "It's very important, Josh, that we all get along just fine, OK?" Totally fine by me, shrugged Josh.

The cats were still redolent on the sofa which I took to be a good sign, better that they were all in one place. Lucy went to sit with them and murmur soothing sounds. I attached Josh's lead, made a fuss of him and filled my pockets with tiny pieces of treats. I told him again, most earnestly, that his very future depended on his exemplary behaviour.

Trying not to let my tension travel down the lead, I opened the sitting room door and we entered. Josh stopped in his tracks, ears pointing upwards. The cats were perfectly still apart from a small warning hiss from Sultan. I gave Josh a small treat and some encouraging sounds and walked him round the room.

He made to go towards the cats but I pulled him back with a firm no. Lucy reassured Sultan with a gentle tickle behind his ears.

I walked Josh round and round the room, gradually getting closer to the cats. He eventually lost interest in the cats and Ripper, by now totally bored, stretched, jumped onto the sideboard and made his elevated way to the door. The floor was now a place to be avoided.

Lucy and I began to breathe easily. There had been no skin and hair flying and we decided for a first introduction, it could be deemed a success. So now we were one.

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 74

1					8	
				9	5	1
6						
6				4	3	
	9	3	1		4	8
8						2
7	3		5		4	
	9			2		7
1		8				6

Easy

Regular Sudoku

Every Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically.

				4	6	
			7			3
2	8					9
	7	5				6
	9				7	
		4		2		
	5	7		6		
4						
3			1		5	

Medium

1		2		3		4		5		6		7
8										9		
10		11				12						
13								14				
15				16				17				18
19				20						21		
22						23						

Across

- 1 Definitive
- 5 Sped
- 8 Medleys
- 9 Martini ingredient
- 10 Give or take
- 12 Stockpile
- 13 Salutes
- 15 I, for one
- 17 Dead tired
- 19 Holiday ____
- 20 Principal church
- 22 Ivory
- 23 Decorates

Down

- 1 Hot beverage
- 2 Upper limb
- 3 More deficient
- 4 Complimented
- 5 Ascends
- 6 Camel, e.g.
- 7 Fancy meals
- 11 Skin medication
- 13 Composed
- 14 Takes heed
- 16 Contests
- 18 Utters
- 21 Tease

Well I Never - Julio!!

My body was washing up, but my mind was elsewhere when it stumbled upon a homely little scene from years gone by.

The scene is the kitchen of the house of Mr & Mrs Church. Their 11 year old son Julian is upstairs composing a song.

Mr Church stumbles into the kitchen clutching his bleeding thumb. 'Hit my ***** thumb putting that **** fenced panel back up. ***** hurts.' He grumbles.

'Run it under the tap, dear, and I'll put a plaster on it' his wife soothes.

But he is not to be mollified. 'What's that dreadful racket that useless boy is making?' 'He's singing. He is composing a song, and one day he's going to be famous.'

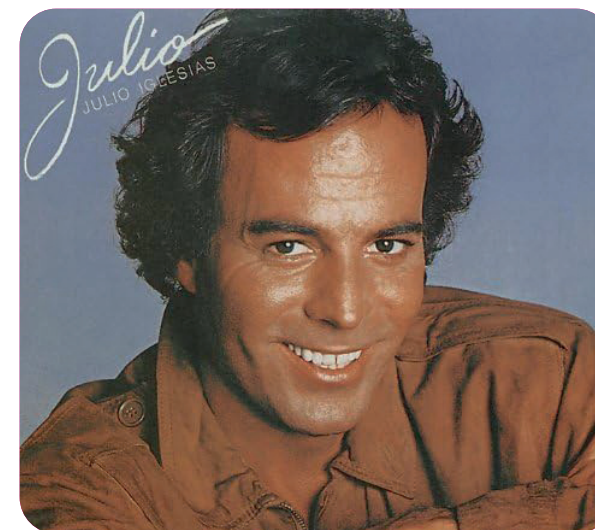
'Well, tell him to shut up - he's making a dreadful row!'

Mrs Church regards her husband thoughtfully, then calls up the stairs 'Julian dear, come down now. Dinner's nearly ready.'

As Julian enters his father fires at him 'Done your homework, have you?'

'No Dad, but my music is more important than homework. Anyway, it's only maths and science. I won't need them to be a singer. One day I'll be famous.'

His father snorts, and is overcome by a fit of coughing. As he struggles for breath Mrs Church gently interjects 'I think perhaps you shouldn't sing until your voice has properly broken - perhaps give the singing a



rest for a month or two.'

'But Mum, I'm composing a new song.'

'Yes dear, but homework is important, otherwise you'll fall behind in class - after all, you are in big school now.'

'But Mum.' He looks so crestfallen that his mother enquires 'What are you going to call your song, dear?'

'To all the girls I've loved before.' He answers. 'It's a love song.'

His father, purple in the face from coughing, wheezes 'To all the girls I've loved before! You're not through puberty yet! You don't know what girls are - if you caught one you wouldn't

know what to do with it!' He begins to laugh, but is overcome by a fit of choking.

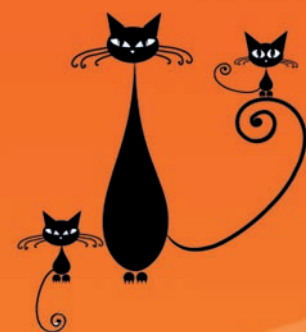
Julian's lip begins to tremble. Hastily his mother steers him to the door. 'Why don't you go back up to your room, and I'll bring you some dinner up on a tray. Then you can keep out of your father's way and do your homework in peace.'

'Thanks Mum.' Julian exits, and his mother smiles fondly after him.

When Julian grew up he left home, changed his name, sang his song, and became internationally famous - not as Julian Church, but as Julio Iglesias.

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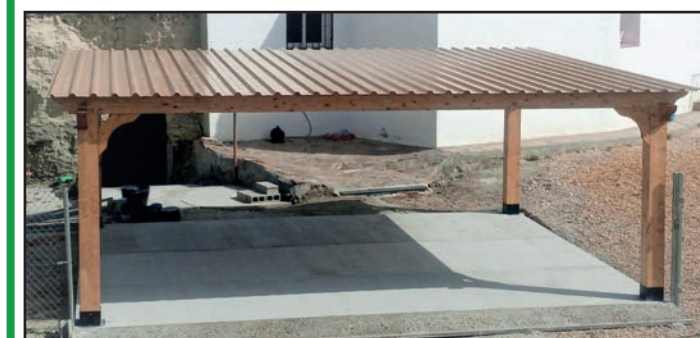


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By Jos Biggs

“Oh, Please...!” Aaaaaghhhhhhh!

– A True Story for Easter

By Donna Walker

I received the “Triple No Treatment” earlier this week. If you’ve ever tried unsuccessfully to get something done that an official decides shouldn’t be done, you will know exactly what I mean by the TNT.

They look at whatever it is you’ve handed over, and the head begins shaking (1), followed by a tutting sound (2), and finally, as you look ever more hopeful/pleading/desperate, the index finger also starts waving from side to side (3) along with the head.

What this means is a successful outcome is not looking good.

Now this happened to me in Albox on Wednesday as I found myself at the third possible outlet for a SEUR collection of an item I was returning that I had purchased from Amazon Marketplace. And it transpired that one of the returns labels I had sellotaped for eternity to my squiffy bag was the wrong one. And no, there would be no possible collection with this label. Never.

But wait! Ha! I had a “Gotcha” idea. I had sellotaped the wrong returns label over another returns label I had also been sent. (I don’t know why I was given two different ones, but it happens, I suppose.) This first one had been rejected by outlet no.1, but could there be a possibility....? It was worth a go, surely?

I found a little space on the counter and delicately tried to pare off



the second label, triumphantly handing it over to the SEUR lady for one more go. She took her scanner and, joy of joys, it gave a little beep, the green light lit up and she sort-of nodded in what I took to be a sort-of successful sort-of way. As we left the shop, parcel-less, the degree of elation I felt was quite ridiculous.

Now, in a few weeks’ time we will be reminded by the massive celebrations here that Semana Santa is upon us. And there is a link between my SEUR experience and this particular festival. Please keep reading!

You see, my parcel was accepted not on the basis of anything I could say or do, but because something in the package was acceptable. I could have had a full-scale paddy (indeed, I had come close at outlet no.2), and/or the SEUR lady could have been wonderfully sympathetic and bought me hot, sweet tea, but neither would have done any good. And what’s this got to do with me and the message of Easter, you may ask?

Well, the bare, stark, Biblical truth of the Easter story is that God the Father accepts us purely on the basis of the sacrifice Jesus, his son, made when he died for us on the cross on that first Good Friday. That well-known verse in John 3:16 puts it so succinctly:

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son.

Whoever puts his trust in God’s Son will not be lost but will have life that lasts forever.”

It is a humbling thought in our goal-orientated, self-help world, that none of us can ever persuade God that we’re rich, or good, or religious enough to earn a place in heaven with him when we die. But then, that’s the incredible beauty and kindness of the whole thing: we all get the same opportunity because Jesus opened up the way for each and every one of us to take him up on his invitation:

If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)

May I wish you a joyful Easter, and please do check out on my Facebook page with my personal favourite traditional and modern Easter hymns and songs throughout Easter week beginning on 25th, Palm Sunday. I’d love to know yours, too!

Love, Donna x

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Fun in the sun

Last month the Almanzora Group of Friends went on a day trip to the Sierra Nevada ski resort and the Nevada Shopping complex in Granada.

The idea was so popular that two coaches were needed to cover the demand, and a total of 108 members happily set off at 8 o'clock in the morning.

After a 30-minute break in Guadix, the group arrived at the ski resort just after midday.

Today the resort is a thriving centre of activity, but over a hundred years ago it was just an isolated area in the Sierra Nevada ranges. It is said that the idea of building the resort was the brainchild of the then Spanish consul in Helsinki, Angel Ganivet who hailed from Granada. Living in a snow covered skiing mad country like Finland inspired the diplomat to suggest that a resort be developed in the mountains near his hometown, Granada, so that people there could enjoy similar activities.

Skiing started in Sierra Nevada in 1912 when the first mountain refuge had been built. Already in 1914 Spain's National Sports Week was held there, and since then many national and international events have taken place in the resort, the latest in 2023: the Snowboard Cross World Cup.

The ski slopes are on the northwestern side of Veleta, the third highest peak on the Peninsula. It is Europe's southernmost ski resort.

The season normally runs from December to May, and last year more than a million tourists visited, 80% of them skiers.

Sierra Nevada ski resort is serviced by two gondolas which run from the lower area. This area, which is at 2,100 metres, is where the restaurants, shops and hotels are located. The gondolas go up to the mid station, Borreguiles, at 2,675 metres. In addition to the gondolas there are 22 lifts which service the 105 kilometres of alpine ski runs.

The visitors from the Group of Friends had two and a half hours at the resort. Many explored the lower area where the shops and restaurants are, whilst the more intrepid members rode the gondola to the mid station where all the action was.



There were skiers and snowboarders everywhere, painting a lovely picture in their colourful ski gear against the backdrop of the white snow and blue sky. It was warm on the slopes with the sun shining from a clear sky.

The organiser of the trip had chosen the perfect day for the outing.

At 2.30 the coaches set off for the Nevada Shopping complex. The scenery on the descent from the ski resort to Granada was spectacular, only marred by one unnerving sight, that of pine trees covered in what looked like snow,

but turned out to be processionary caterpillars' nests, ready to hatch by the look of them.

The coaches arrived at the mall at about three, and the group had two hours for lunch and shopping. Most, it seemed, concentrated on the food.

The mall was first opened in November 2016. It is Andalucía's largest commercial centre, and one of the largest in Europe.

It covers an area of 266,986 m2 and houses 280 shops and 40 restaurants. There is parking for 6,000 cars. For shopping addicts this facility must seem like Heaven.

The coaches departed for home just after 5 pm with over a hundred tired, but happy, campers. They made a quick stop at Guadix, and most people were home by 8.15.

It was a fantastic day out!

If anyone is interested in joining the Almanzora Group of Friends, they can be contacted on tel. no. 602 495 306.

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Black Vulture

The black vulture (also known as the cinereous vulture) is Spain's largest bird of prey. With its unmistakable silhouette, it soars in complete silence above the large Mediterranean forests of southwestern Spain. This majestic bird, together with the griffon vulture, the Egyptian vulture, and the bearded vulture constitute the few species of vulture living in Europe.

It is one of the world's largest birds, but it is not only its size that stands out. As opposed to other species of vulture, it does not make a sound as it soars across the sky.

This large bird is easily identified thanks to its wingspan. Its wings are wide and can span over three metres, somewhat more than the griffon vulture.

The black vulture planes rather than flies, and only very rarely flaps its wings. When it is on the lookout for prey, it soars across the sky in complete silence moving its head from one side to another. When it catches sight of carrion on the ground, it folds its wings and launches itself downwards, generating a buzzing sound.

In spite of its name, the black vulture is in fact dark brown. Its neck and part of its head are bare, whereas its face and the top of its head are covered with very dark down. At the base of the neck, it has a collar of short, pale feathers.

The black vulture usually lives in ravines with dense vegetation, preferably in pine, cork oak, or holly oak trees. Apart from



southwestern Spain it can also be found in Mallorca. There is a population of some 100 specimens living in a colony that was established centuries ago, and today it is the only island population of black vultures in the world.

Flying at lower altitudes than other vultures, the black vulture is able to spot small carrion that other vultures miss. Rabbit is a great favourite. One of the characteristics of its eating habits is that it prefers muscle to the viscera as opposed to other species of vulture. Furthermore, it is able to catch some live animals such as squirrels, lizards, and tortoises, as remains found in some nests bear witness to.

Black vultures do not reproduce every year. But when they do, the incubation starts in March. Both parents participate in this task which takes 55 days. In early May a single chick is hatched. The parents take the incubation very seriously and experts say that it takes a lot to make a sitting black vulture leave its nest.

The plumage of the young is black. They stay with their parents for about three months. They reach sexual maturity at 5-6 years of age.

The black vulture has a life expectancy of some 20 years, although some specimens have lived to over 35.





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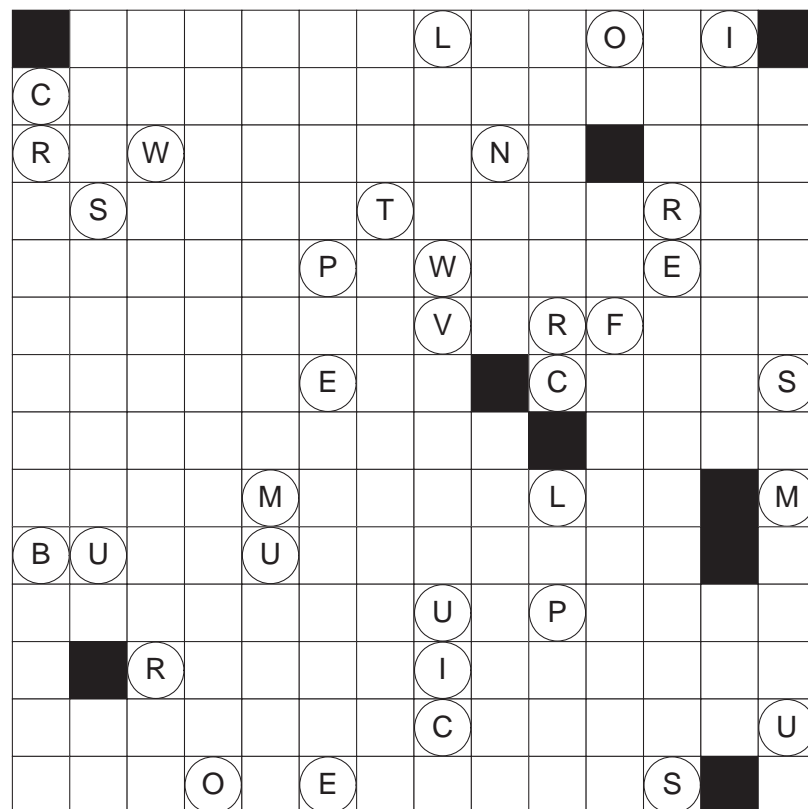

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Puzzle Time

Reverse Word Search



Puzzle solutions on page 74

Each of these circled letters is the first letter of one or more of the words on the given word list.

Your task is to fill in the grid completely using only the given words. No word will repeat itself. Words can be positioned the same as in a regular word search – horizontally, vertically or diagonally, reading frontwards or backwards.

Remember, any starting letter may be used by more than one word at the same time!

ArBrag	Leash	Refinements
Braises	Maple	Rowdy
Coins	Miser	Serve
Collaborations	Mosque	Sprint
Cropping	Needy	Supposed
Epics	Opticians	Trims
Error	Outlandish	Unifies
Evoke	Peeks	Uphills
Eyelids	Piddle	Uphold
Foster	Pimple	Upturn
Impend	Plane	Vinyls
Inert	Preys	Whites
Invest	Ravings	Wrinkled
Lapse	Recouped	

Wanted: Geek

I enjoy driving, especially here in Spain, where the roads are good and seem under-used, and rain and fog are virtually unheard of.

Such a contrast to the journey I used to make to work, which necessitated leaving a lane and joining a B road in the depth of Devon. To do so I had to recklessly squeeze my car's bonnet into any gap which appeared in the nose-to-tail grind, and pray that the rest of the car would fit in unscathed.

From then on all I had to do was: Watch out for the BMW coming up behind in a determined effort to overtake at least six cars in a row, regardless of whether he could slot back in or not. Apply the brakes the instant that the car in front stood on his, because the BMW had just cut in and sliced off his car's front mirror and bumper, while praying that at that moment the driver three inches from my back bumper was not texting his girlfriend.

And then there were the road kills – I'm surprised that rabbits, pheasants and badgers are not endangered species, so great was the number of their splattered remains along the verges.

I rose, tranquil and calm, above these daily dangers. I did not get rattled or road raged, at least not until I encountered Spanish drivers and roundabouts!

Spanish drivers love indicators – they pop the Hazards on at every opportunity, but can they use them to indicate a change of direction? Apparently that is as unreasonable a request as asking them to use a litter bin!

It annoys the hell out of me! I approach the roundabout, see a car coming and not indicating, assume it is going on round, only for it to slide off at the previous exit, leaving Henry sitting waiting



unnecessarily in first gear, and me ready to commit murder!

But I have a scheme – a scheme to turn adversity into prosperity – all I need is a geek! A geek who can invent an in-car gizmo which I can activate, and which will recognise the owner of the offending car through the number plate. The gizmo will then access their bank account, hack their passwords, and extract a modest sum, say 10€, which it will then pay in to a secret Swiss bank account in my name.

I'm not greedy, nobody is going to miss 10€ immediately, and by the time they do I will be rich beyond the dreams of avarice!

Any geeks interested? Contact me using the secret password – Roundabout.

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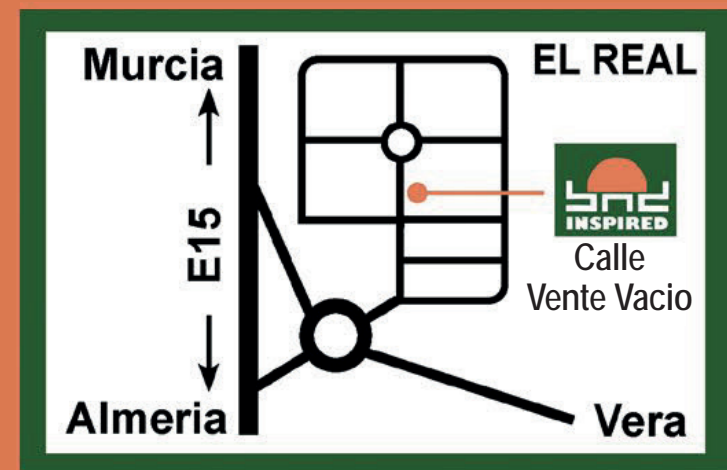
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Awakening

*Spring - season of a new dawn
Burgeoning flowers, chorusing birds
The air is crisp, the sky a blue dome
Winter's chill forgotten.*

*Spring is earth's awakening
A time of creation, a time of rebirth
A sleeping giant returning to life
A yearning raw desire.*

*The scent of Spring's morning dew
Stirs the soul to new heights
Urging it to seek opportunities
To take the time to dream.*

*To dream of possibilities
To kindle a spirit of adventure
So the strength to soar is mustered
As a new window opens.*



Hope

*Winter is departing
Its winds replaced
By gentle breezes.*

*Though chilly indoors
Morning breaks
Etched in sunlight.*

*Inside, my fire roars
Outside, the air warms
Beckoning me softly.*

*Next door, oranges glow
Lemons glitter
Their leaves glisten.*

*This, the season of hope
Ephemeral blossom
Garlands the hills.*

*The sky is welcoming
Bee-eaters will return
To herald summer.*



A Spring Quartet

By Evelyn McCrorie

Daffodils

(Confessions of a Parish Secretary)

*I had a disagreement
With a colleague once
About how to spell daffodils.*

*He was right
And I was wrong
Only one "L" he gently chided.*

*That dear man is long dead
Died far too young
Left a gaping hole.*

*I'll never forget his wry smile
As he told the whole church
(For he was a vicar).*

*How we had fallen out only once
And it was about
the spelling of daffodils.*

*When I see those beautiful flowers
Sunny yellow, smiling at the sun
I remember my friend John.*



Forgotten Fruit

*They sparkle in the morning haze
And cry out to be plucked
But no-one is listening.*

*Eventually, reluctantly they fall
To lie dormant on the dusty ground
To await their demise.*

*Surely this cannot be happening!
Surely someone notices
Surely someone cares!*

*Not so long ago a younger Sebastian
would have been harvesting
His fine crop and sending it to market*

*To produce sparkling juice
Set out on breakfast tables
For discerning customers worldwide.*

*The colour orange portrays joy and warmth
Not devastation and decay
Not a lonely death.*

*How sad the economy is so dire
That Sebastian's oranges flourish
Then wither in the unrelenting sun.*



The Two Rs...

By Vic Davey

I worked out the other day that I have been writing for this Mag for something around 11 years, covering just about every subject under the Sun and then some. Where have all those years gone?

Consequently, pretty much everything I write is 'fact based'. I was intrigued then when, back in January last year, I had the opportunity to join a local Writer's Group, based in Albox, which was just starting up.

This brought together a bunch of people, passionate about writing, some already published and really talented. Writing is largely a solitary activity with few opportunities to talk to other like-minded folk about the subject in order to develop, improve and get inspiration. So much so that for me, I have been able and encouraged to write a whole lot of fiction, since we review and enjoy each other's work when we meet each month.

Just recently and to celebrate our First Birthday, we decided to hold a "Writer's Open-Mic" event for folk to come along and either read some of their own work, be it poetry, stories or anecdotes, or just listen to others. We advertised extensively, hoping people would be attracted; had a great poster created by one of our members, and also involved the Euro Weekly and Spectrum radio to spread the news.

To be honest, we had little idea if anyone except The Group and our partners would turn up. We had organized a room at The Meson in Arboleas, a professional photographer and a Guitarist to entertain us during the intervals. We set the date for 7th Feb at 13.30.....

The great day arrived, and the Writer's Group members waited, nervously, to see if their hard work had paid off. We needn't have worried, people streamed into the room and in the end, we found it difficult to seat them all!

I am pleased to say, the whole event was a resounding success!!



Everyone was entertained by the superb writing of those who read, both Group members and guests who turned up on the day, some having to overcome their fear of reading to the public for the first time but, hopefully, not the last.

The Writer's Group had envisioned a monthly event, depending really, on how the first one turned out. Our fear was unfounded, and we have already started advertising the next which will be held again at The Meson on 8th May at 13.30, but in their larger Kubatin room!

The Group's next Monthly meeting is 15th March at The Meson Arboleas at 10.30 am. You are more than welcome to pop in and see us for a chat and to listen to more stories.

So, from the germ of an idea by Bernie Albrighton and David Waters and as a result of their vision and hard work, we hope for many more such events in the future.

If, in the meantime, you would like more information, our contact email address is thewrittenwordgroup.albox@gmail.com. If you would like to view and read Member's work, or even contribute, please take a look at www.twwgroup.blogspot.com.

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GOING GREEN

By Jason Lowther

Urban greenspace – an oasis in the heat island

I read an article recently about a series of protests in Madrid over the local council's tree-felling, in what has been a long running saga. The whole thing seemed so counter-intuitive. Why would an urban locality want to lose valuable 'green' in their environment? It turns out that the local communities do not, but the local council is keen to press on with the plan to extend the city's metro system. The issue though, losing trees from urban areas, goes further than Madrid, which I will return to later in the article. It is about the inclusion and maintenance of 'green infrastructure' in cities or other urban areas.

The cooling benefits of water and foliage have been a feature of the design of settlements in hot climates since time immemorial. The ancient Egyptians, Persians and Chinese amongst many other civilisations put considerable efforts into creating green spaces, often with water features. A trip to Sevilla and the Jardines de las Real Alcázares will provide you with possibly the greatest example of a late-medieval garden in Spain. The influence of the Moors, present in the city from the 8th Century AD, is highly visible. As well as the Real Alcázares, there are several other gardens spread around. In Islamic societies, the planned urban garden concept was dual-purposed, to give a vision of heaven on earth and to provide a respite from the severe heat of North Africa, Southern Europe and the Middle East. The evaporation of water and the shade provided by the trees and other plants offered the means to keep cooler, and the design of buildings with small windows around a planted courtyard remains a winning design in that respect.

Fast forward to the 1930's and an early version of air conditioning (AC) was developed. It was very expensive at first, but really took off in the 1960s. Being able to avoid the searing temperatures and, in some locations, sticky high humidity, at the flick of a switch proved to be a gamechanger and AC spread around the world. It is one of those cruel ironies that the power used to keep us pleasantly comfortable when working or sleeping, contributes about 4% per year of global greenhouse gas emissions. That may not seem like much at first glance, but it is double the rate of global aviation.

The modern city, as a maze of hard surfaces with towering buildings of concrete, glass and steel, and kept comfortable inside with AC,



does not offer much scope to accommodate green spaces, and is hotter outside as a result. Modern, 20th century, city design has resulted in the unintended consequence of what are termed urban heat islands (UHI). An UHI is created as a result of the reflective and heat storing capabilities of the building materials. It means that cities are around 3-4°C higher than the surrounding countryside. Pavements and roads can reach temperatures way in excess of the actual air temperature and, just like a domestic storage heater, retain that heat as a reservoir that slowly dissipates later. Often, as seasoned city travellers may have experienced, the temperatures stay high even at night. One consequence of this is that more energy is then consumed in AC, which keeps the cycle of warming ticking over.

At the extreme is Phoenix, in the USA, where last summer it posted an unwelcome record of 31 days with temperatures at or above 43.3°C (110F) and, a 16-day period where temperatures did not drop below 32.2°C (90F) at night. Usurpingly this had a dramatic effect, especially on those people without homes, who literally had no escape from the heat. The city was forced to open cooling stations and offered means to rehydrate its citizens, although there were several fatalities. It is planning to adopt a more natural solution, and to that end is halfway through an ambitious project to shade at least 25% of the city with a tree canopy by 2030.

Continued on page 46

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..... Continued from page 45

It has been anecdotally stated for years that green spaces in cities have benefits. Academics at the University of Surrey punished research in February quantifying that assumption. Their research revealed that wetlands, parks and botanical gardens have a significant effect in cooling cities (www.surrey.ac.uk/global-centre-clean-air-research, if you want to have a look). Botanical gardens showed the greatest average decrease in temperature at 5°C, and street trees, although marginally less effective were still able to register an average 3.8°C drop. Having spent time in Murcia (the city, that is) last summer, I was glad of that momentary cooling, even if I wasn't entirely sure how much it was helping and precisely why! The study also found that the bigger the greenspaces, to a point, the more effective the cooling impact would be, with the hottest areas having the least greenspace, and the coolest the most.

Aside from providing welcome shade, urban greenspaces, with or without water features, provide cities with natural means to be more resilient to flooding, as the trees and vegetation soak up excess water than cannot penetrate hard surfaces. They also provide wildlife habitats and sometimes corridors for birds, bats and pollinators, which gives a helping hand to a bit of natural wonder to liven up the concrete. As well, greenery removes carbon from the atmosphere and trees, in particular, play a vital function in absorbing airborne pollutants, helping to contribute to improved urban air quality.

City planners are not always on the same page however, as the kerfuffle in Madrid is currently demonstrating. A plan in February 2023 was to see over 1000 trees cut down, partly to make way for an expanded metro line. A hard-fought campaign involving local



residents and environmental groups including Ecologistas en Acción, drew concessions from the PP-dominated administration to the extent that the number of trees to be felled was cut in half. That is still a net loss of 500 mature trees though! The February flare-up occurred as the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Paseo del Prado and Buen Retiro is under threat from the chainsaws. The issue, as is often the case in matters to do with town planning and development, one of consultation or consideration of alternatives. Given that the UHI impact in Madrid ranks as one of the top six world-wide, assessed at an average of 8.5°C hotter than its surrounding countryside by the sustainability consultants ARUP, there must be a case to determine a better approach.

So significant is the strength of feeling, it prompted a European Parliamentary question to the EU Commission in December. The basis was what the Commission thought of the threat to the EU's climate targets and what it felt the impact of the loss of the trees would be on the quality of Madrid's urban environment. The Commission's response, that it was a matter for the Spanish authorities, precludes any EU intervention in the near future, but it will serve to keep the authorities on their toes, which is all we can ever really do as citizens – try to make power accountable.

It is not only a Madrid problem though. Across Europe there have been many such instances. In the UK Sheffield Council contracted out maintenance of the city's trees to a private contractor, which felt it was more economic to cut them down. Cue city-wide protests, disruption and ultimately jail time for some of the protestors. The programme was in the end halted, but hundreds of mature (and loved) urban trees were lost. More recently Plymouth made the news when the, then – he was forced to resign over the issue – leader of the City Council decided to not wait for the results of a public consultation on tree removal in Plymouth city centre and to cut them down in the middle of the night. It was deemed unlawful, in the end, but over 100 trees were cut down. They are, as with these lost in Madrid to be 'replaced'.

Greener cities are cleaner cities. They are cooler, more pleasant and more biodiverse. Thoughtful planting and park maintenance can act to mitigate the effects of pollution, flooding and noise, and can help slow or banish traffic from certain areas. It gives city dwellers a bit of space and allows birds and animals a refuge, where it might otherwise be difficult. More than that, green spaces in cities are good to look at and be in, softening the hard edges and surfaces, and providing a place to just 'be'. Ask your local councillors what the plans for your locality are and whether they intended to make the most of what greenspace has to offer.

Jason's Meat Free Recipe: Melanzane Parmagiana

A staple in my house ever since I first had it at an amazing Italian, in Birmingham (more kilometres of canals than Venice, after all...) 30 plus years ago. It's a classic southern Italian dish, which is made from layers of aubergines, tomato sauce, basil, and cheese. A sort of pasta-free lasagne which is great hot or cold and can be made in advance and cooked up to a couple of days later. It also freezes well, so it's a total all-rounder. Although it takes about an hour, it's super easy to make, it's rich, it's gooey, it's absolutely delicious and makes great use of local and easily available ingredients. You can leave the wine out, (and/or the breadcrumbs if wanting to keep it gluten free). You can also grill the aubergine slices with a spray or brush of oil instead of frying, to make it a bit lighter – the taste will still be fantastic. It is possible to use vegan 'cheese'. I've tried, although I can't lie, it isn't as good.

Ingredients for two (or four as a starter)

- 2 medium aubergines
- 1 ball (125-150g) Mozzarella
- 50-70g Grated veggie parmesan (or other Italian hard cheese, or hard Spanish ewes-milk cheese)
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Olive oil to fry
- 2 tins chopped tomatoes (or the equivalent of very ripe fresh tomatoes)
- 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped or crushed
- 2 tbsp red wine (optional)
- 1 tsp sugar/honey
- 1 pack of fresh basil leaves, torn
- 1 tbsp breadcrumbs (optional)
- Salt and black pepper

Method

Slice the aubergines lengthways about 5mm thick – no need for precision, thin is what you're after. Put the slices in a colander and sprinkle them with salt. This used to be done to remove bitter compounds, but aubergines have pretty much had that selectively bred out of them. What this does is draw out excess water, making them firmer for the frying stage and less likely to go soft. Set them aside for about 40 mins or so and make the tomato sauce.

Finely chop the garlic and gently warm in the extra virgin olive oil in a medium saucepan until it becomes aromatic. Stir in the tinned or finely chopped tomatoes, sugar/honey and the wine. Gently bring to the boil and simmer over a low heat, partially covered and stirring occasionally until the sauce has reduced to a thick 'ragu'



consistency. If you have a stick blender, give it a whizz. If not, then crush any bits of tomatoes

with a wooden spoon. You can of course cheat and use thick passata, but remember the garlic, wine and sweetener. Season to taste and set aside. Rinse the aubergine slices and pat dry with kitchen paper.

Heat some olive oil in a frying pan and, in batches, fry the aubergine slices on both sides until golden. Stack them up on a plate as you're going. When they're all done, spoon a little smear of the tomato sauce on the bottom of a shallow dish/cazuela and then cover in aubergine slices. We always do separate dishes, as I can be greedy... Either thinly slice or tear small pieces of mozzarella on top and a few bits of torn basil and then cover with the grated cheese. Top with tomato sauce again and repeat until you've used all the aubergine. Finish with the last of the grated cheese and the breadcrumbs. Remove after 20 mins in a medium-hot oven. It should be bubbling. Sprinkle over the rest of the basil and leave to stand for 10 mins or so. Great served with a bit of salad and crusty bread. Enjoy!



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19th MARCH – DÍA DE SAN JOSÉ

Happy Father's Day

In Spain every day has its own saint's name, and the name of March 19th is San José – Saint Joseph.

Día de San José is a holiday in certain regions of Spain, but it is not a national holiday. It is also Father's Day all over Spain.

And that is actually quite logical, because San José was, of course, Jesus's father and the head of the Sacred Family.

After Santa María (Saint Mary) he is considered the most important of all saints by the Catholic Church because God chose him to protect His most valued treasure.

Numerous towns and cities all over the world have been named after San José, the most famous one probably being San José in California.

Also here in our little corner of Spain do we have a town by that name. It is a very attractive little fishing village turned tourist destination, which is a very popular place to visit; people from all over the world go there to enjoy its beautiful beaches and its many charms.

Father's Day is celebrated in Spain much the same as in other countries. The tradition was started back in 1946 when the school mistress of a girls' school took heed of her pupils' fathers' wish that their daughters had a day to honour them, just like they had one for the mothers.

She instigated Father's Day on Día de San José because San José was considered a model father and family head. The idea spread slowly to other places, and by 1953 it had become a national phenomenon.

If you fancy a day out on March 19th, do go down to our local San José, it is well worth a visit, especially on its saints day!



The Resurrection story

After Jesus Christ was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea had Christ's body placed in his own tomb. A large stone covered the entrance and soldiers guarded the sealed tomb. On the third day, a Sunday, several women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Joanna and Salome are all mentioned in the gospel accounts) went to the tomb at dawn to anoint Jesus's body.

There was an earthquake as an angel rolled back the stone. The guards shook in fear as the angel, dressed in bright white, sat upon the stone. The angel announced to the women that Jesus who was crucified was no longer in the tomb, "He is risen, just as he said." Then he instructed the women to inspect the tomb and see for themselves, then he told them to go and tell the disciples. With a mixture of fear and joy, they ran, obeying his command but suddenly Jesus met them. They fell at his feet and worshipped him. He said, "Do not be afraid. Go tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me." They went into Jerusalem and reported what they had seen, Peter and John immediately ran to find that the tomb indeed was empty.

When the guards reported what had happened to the chief priests, they bribed the soldiers with a large sum of money, telling them to lie and say that the disciples had stolen the body in the night.

Jesus appeared to 500 people over the next 40 days. One appearance was at the Sea of Galilee while several of the disciples were fishing and he cooked a fish breakfast for them!

Why is the Resurrection Important?

Christianity hinges on the truth of the resurrection. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall



never die."

Jesus could have been thought of as simply a great teacher and a good man. After he rose from the dead, his followers knew for certain that he was who he had claimed to be "the resurrection and the life", the Saviour of the world. Many eye-witnesses experienced dramatic changes in their lives after meeting him, ruling out the possibility that the resurrection story is an invented one.

The resurrection made it possible for Christians to receive the power of Christ's life living inside of them through the Holy Spirit. It sealed the Lord's promise that all those who believe in him will experience resurrection life and share in eternity.

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What is Happening in the Local Property Market. March 2024

By Voss Homes Estate Agents with offices in Huércal Overa & La Alfoquia

February was yet another fantastic month for property sales for us and March is going to be amazing with our diary filling up already with buyers coming from the UK, Netherlands, Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Ireland etc.

One myth that we really, really have to stop right now with property sellers is the massive misconception that the British are no longer buying in Spain. Please spread the word that this is absolutely ridiculous and people need to stop assuming that it will be other nationalities that will buy their properties.

There are many, many thousands of British buyers still wanting all the benefits of owning a property or living in Spain... just like you did.

Many people are thinking that Brexit means the Brits don't or can't buy in Spain any more. In fact Brexit is one of the many reasons why so many people want to leave the UK and for the same reasons you did. Many British buyers have no issues with meeting the new requirements and many are buying properties as holiday homes which they will maybe retire to in the future.

Many sellers believe the Brits are not buying because they think the UK economy is in a mess and that the Brits are only after the cheap bargains. In fact the opposite is true. Remember that property prices continued to rise in the UK and many people in their 50s, 60s



& 70s are inheriting their parents properties and it is quite normal for people to come over with €200,000, €300,000 or more. Also a lot of people are cashing in very large personal pensions.

Also, there is this misconception that the British have low budgets and only want the cheap bargains but this is far from the truth. Like buyers from all countries everyone just wants "value for money" and if anything it is often other nationalities that expect the sellers to drop their price drastically.

Two other vital points for property sellers.

Avoid estate agent who are offering cheap commission deals. If an agent is offering this then you have to ask "Why?.. Are they not going to advertise my property or try to sell it as much as they should compared to sellers who are paying the full price? By all means go with the agents who offer the cheap deals but you WILL find out the hard way that "You get

what you pay for" and you will be switching to another agent soon.

One more thing... If your property is already on the market, and other agents knock on your door with fabulous, fictitious stories saying they have buyers who want to buy your property then please don't fall for their "rubbish". Just tell them to contact your existing estate agent and arrange the viewing through them. Then tell your existing agent.

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Pets Corner

That's it! We've done it! No way back now. Thankfully!

She was spayed on her 11 months' birthday – what a way to celebrate you could say. But it gave way to celebration eventually.

We went for her pre-op tests the week before. Danica had originally said that they would do them the same day as the op, but Javier wanted the chest x-ray in advance so that he could just double check with a cardiologist that everything really was in order.

It's those small details that make you realise that you have placed your best friend in the safest possible hands.

She wasn't sedated for the x-ray. Even though there were three of us, it was not easy to hold my strong girl still – she wasn't too impressed with being lifted up and laid down on her side and told to stay still, and she kept trying to get up every time they were ready to shoot.

Finally, she lay still for the two seconds it took, and we all relaxed. Including Dakota – she now finally laid completely still and had to be roused so that we could lift her back down onto the floor.

And then came the day for the actual operation.

I think I told you before that a laparoscopy specialist was coming to do it by camera, so it was minimal invasion and recovery time. That was a great comfort to me in the days of worry up to the operation, but you never know what will happen when somebody is under anaesthetics, and although I was confident that everything would go just fine (otherwise I obviously wouldn't do it), I couldn't help worrying about some unforeseen complication or reaction.

I had been asked to bring her at 3.45 in the afternoon, and we duly showed up on the doorstep. As always, when there is no other patient about, Dakota was given the run of the clinic and thoroughly examined all the rooms, including the operating theatre which met with her approval. Just as well she didn't know what lay ahead! She messed about a bit with a stuffed dachshund she found until it was

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Dakota – She Is - Safe



time for more serious things.

She was given two injections in her behind. Quite painful, Javier warned, but my brave girl didn't flinch. Then she and I went into

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the waiting area, and I sat on the floor with her while she started falling asleep.

My thoughts drifted back to the last time I had sat on that floor with a German shepherd – my deeply beloved Cora’s last moments before we were parted forever. I thanked God for the fact that I was now sitting there with a young, strong dog with her whole life before her.

Soon Dakota was fast asleep. They lifted her onto a gurney and rolled her away to the operating theatre. And I had to kill time in Huércal Overa until they phoned to say all had gone well and I could pick her up. As I left, I realised that not for one moment had I stopped and asked myself whether I was doing the right thing in getting her spayed, which to me meant that I definitely was!

I received the joyous call a couple of hours later: Everything had gone absolutely fine, and I would be able to pick her up when she was a little more awake.

When I got there, she was ready to come out of recovery, although it was impossible for her to walk straight.

Javier asked me if I knew who the specialist was, which I didn’t. It turned out to be Alejandro, who had been Cora’s physiotherapist

when I was trying so hard to get her better!

Javier said that when he saw Dakota there, asleep and ready, he couldn’t stop stroking her, and kept saying what a beautiful dog she was. Javier then told him that she belongs to Cora’s mum, and bless him, Alejandro remembered Cora! He always commented on what a happy, happy dog she was.

So, I immediately gave him ten out of ten both for Dakota and for Cora.

When the time came to get Dakota to zig-zag to the car, Javier and Danica promised to lift her in for me, although I wasn’t quite sure how I’d lift her out on my own at home. When I opened the car door, she jumped in before they got a chance to help her! She also got out on her own at home no problem.

The day after I was off work and stayed at home with her. She was a bit dozy, and just quietly potted about from chew to toy to bone.

She had two small incisions with a stitch or two each, and they didn’t bother her. She did not worry them and has not needed a collar, thank God!

She’s back to normal now, everything went fine, and we’re having the stitches out in a week’s time.

Thank you to Javier, Danica, and Alejandro for a minimally unpleasant experience!





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The Power of Fragrance

Inhaling, smelling, sniffing – the human nose is capable of detecting the most diverse aromas. However, the act of smelling encompasses more than the simple scent. If something bothers us, “it stinks”. How are our actions influenced by what is in the air?

On average, an adult will inhale and exhale 26,000 times per day. Despite the millions of scent molecules entering our nose, humans are capable of detecting and distinguishing only about 10,000 of the 400,000 scents that exist on earth.

At the same time, these must be highly concentrated. This makes us humans rather poor smellers - microsmates. By comparison, the mucus membrane of a cat’s nose covers five times as much surface as that of a human, and while dogs possess approximately 240 million olfactory cells, humans must make do with only about 10 million.

All these insights do not change the fact that science knows considerably more about the other four senses than it does about the olfactory sense. The visual sense depends on the wavelength of the light, and the auditory sense detects frequencies and amplitude.

The factors that make a difference during the act of smelling are not easily discerned. This is why we refer to the other senses, when we describe a scent. A fragrance is therefore heavy or floral, or it



is circumscribed by using comparisons, such as “smells of freshly mown grass”. Researchers are nevertheless certain: our olfactory sense, and what it perceives, exerts a vast influence on our daily lives – consciously and unconsciously.

Continued on page 54

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..... Continued from page 53

For example, certain emotions may be elicited if they are connected to a scent – a fact that has been recognized since antiquity. The Greek philosopher Aristotle knew: “Man does not perceive a fragrance without experiencing a sense of either pleasure or displeasure.”

Our sense of comfort also depends on what we smell. Even our mood and our actions can be manipulated, or even directed, by fragrances. Industry in particular has discovered this power of manipulation called scent branding. For the past few years, supermarkets have been enveloped in the aroma of freshly baked bread, and movie theatres smell of popcorn where there is none.

All these manipulations have the same goal: to prompt impulse purchases that visitors may not have considered in the absence of the surrounding smell. Or they are supposed to feel so comfortable that they will always return. An American hotel chain sprays its lobbies with the scent of apple pie so that guests will feel immediately at home.

They are taking advantage of the fact that the olfactory bulb is integrated into the limbic system, the very region of the brain that is responsible for processing emotions. This is why scents will typically elicit an instinctual response and only rarely a rational one.

Olfactory perception is passed directly from the hippocampus to long-term memory storage, without being filtered. For this reason, scents are closely linked to memories. When we inhale certain fragrances, images, emotions and even physical reactions often appear instinctively. Surrounded by the smell of freshly baked cookies, we think of Christmas. If a person ahead of us on the street wears a perfume that reminds us of someone familiar, that person will appear before our mind’s eye.

This also works the other way around. Looking at a photograph from



our childhood, at times the very smell that our memory associates with the event will enter our noses – although it is not present at the time.

Every person has their very own olfactory memory triggers. The important difference is whether the salty smell of the ocean or the warm summer rain is linked to positive or negative memories.

Our olfactory sense not only influences our purchasing decisions and our memories. Love, too, goes through the nose. “Whoever controlled the fragrances controlled the hearts of men”, says Jean-Baptiste Grenouille, the perfumer with the distinct ability to discern fragrances in Patrick Süskind’s bestseller “Perfume”.

We are under the impression that when it comes to the choice of a partner, external factors decide whether or not we will find someone attractive. However, it is finally the nose that guides us. Men and women with distinct aromas, in particular, will find each other interesting. The fragrance of the body represents an expression of our immune system. This is the reason our olfactory system prefers those potential partners whose bodily scent – and therefore whose immune system – is as different from our own as possible. Such a union will produce offspring who are equipped with an ideal and especially robust combination of both immune systems – an evolutionary mission that should not be underestimated.

There are, however, factors that may change olfactory preferences: the contraceptive pill, but also age and past experiences influence our reactions to scents. Even if the aroma may be the initial trigger – once we get to know a person more closely, all the senses will have their say.

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What is Proximal Hamstring Tendinopathy?

Proximal Hamstring Tendinopathy (PHT) is a problem with the tendons at the back of your thigh. It typically manifests as deep buttock pain at the top of the hamstring – where it attaches onto the ischial tuberosity of your pelvis (often called your ‘sit bone’), which can extend down the back of the thigh towards the knee.

PHT occurs when the tendon is overused or overloaded, and is often classed as a ‘repetitive strain injury’. The process can occur over many weeks or months, or can happen more rapidly with one, highly intense exercise/activity.

If not treated properly, it can be a persistent and recurring problem.

Symptoms of PHT may include:

- Dull ache in your buttocks, thigh, knee or lower leg
- Leg stiffness when walking or bending your knee.
- Increased pain on stretching or exercising the hamstring.
- Weakness in the hamstrings.
- Pain with running, lunging or squatting.
- Pain when sitting, especially on a hard surface.

Most people with PHT pain respond very well to conservative management. This includes a progressive, loading exercise programme, designed and managed by your Osteopath, as well as hands-on techniques such as massage and mobilisations, Trigger Point Therapy/ Medical Acupuncture.

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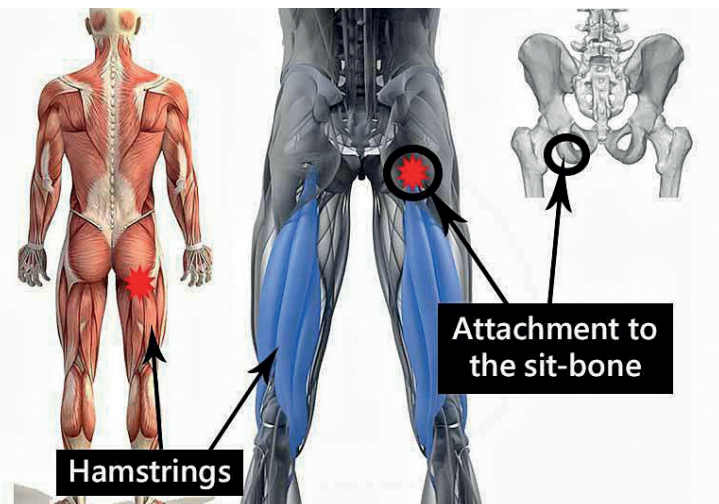


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What Does Your Beauty Spot Say About You?

You've probably brushed it off as a minor addition to your body all this while, but it turns out, your beauty spots have deeper meanings attached to them.

While always used to having absolutes, human nature often marvels at the small imperfections that come their way. Even on our own body, beauty spots can have fascinating effects on the appeal and is quite significant when it comes to its relation with our personality and nature.

Some of the old systems consider the various positions of beauty spots on the body to be revealing of your future path or some of the most innate tendencies. Do you have any beauty spots? You may have spent all these years trying to cover it up with expensive makeup, but maybe it's time to flaunt them, for they reveal a lot about your personality too.

On your leg

If you have a spot on the leg, then you are likely to have a calm and silent side to yourself. You probably feel that your actions have more impact than words. Moreover, you don't like to go back on your word and make it a point to stick by your promises. You are not too vocal about things that displease you, you try to avoid too much drama.

Sometimes, people around you feel that you don't like to wait. However, you like putting your thoughts into actions when the time is right. Most of the times, you strive to ensure that you are efficient, but a lack of it does not stop you from trying. You also have a latent energy to explore things and probably like to have a lot of experiences at once.

You are observant of your surroundings and like to have a clear idea



of where you are and where your going - literally and figuratively. There is a high chance that you're attracted to simple pleasures in life and are not scared of change.

Around the mouth/lips

If you have a beauty spot over your lip, then there is a high chance that you are driven by ambitions and like to live your life through success. You are probably dedicated to pursuing your dreams and tend to draw confidence from this attitude. Moreover, you also like to express your thoughts, and uncertainty annoys you.

A mole on the corner of the lips also suggests your undying love for food and finer things in life. You have a set goal for yourself and a standard that you don't want to fall from. You are socially adept and like to have friends around you - but only those who have been with you through thick and thin.

There is a high chance that you are not impressed by others' materialistic possessions. You tend to be more objective when dealing with complications and problems. While you can really

control your emotions well, you need a powerful release from time to time.

On the back

Most of the beauty marks on the back suggest that a person is honest and likes to have an open mind. However, there is a high chance that you are somebody who learns from their experiences. Subsequently, you are also somebody who is wise and hardworking. You derive a lot of peace from your functionality. Moreover, if you have a beauty spot on your back, you are also likely to be decisive in your actions and are not fazed by too many choices. Your knowledge allows you to think on your feet when quick and fair decisions need to be made.

Your friends often find you in their time of need for guidance and counsel. You are also somebody who does not waste time in pursuits that don't yield desired results. You are keen and precise about your goals. While you see a lot of people not being able to reach their potential due to distractions or too many big challenges, you like to keep your efforts close to simple steps that make complex victories possible.

On your neck

If you have a beauty spot on your neck, then it is highly likely that you are somebody who is passionate and kind. You are a warm person with a lot of energy and will. You are not somebody who can get manipulated easily by people, as you are also intuitive. Though



you tend to base a lot of importance on being able to be there for people, you don't waste time on people who are unjust. You hardly let the conventional wisdom of the society stop you from being kind to others.

You are a supporter of dreams and like to inspire people around you. A lot of your friends may feel that you are a source of encouragement and like to share their intimate goals and passions with you. You like positive and good experiences and feel that they bring you closer to your inner self.

You are not somebody who'd abandon a friend or family in need. No matter how dire the situation may get, you'd make sure that you stick by the people who believe in you and whom you believe in.

On the face

Beauty spots on the face have a lot of meanings to them and suggest qualities associated with individuality,

determination, strong-headedness, intellect and more.

If you have a spot right below your eyebrow, then you are likely to be a person with a keen intellect and a discerning eye. You like to apply and live your knowledge. You are driven by the need for higher perspectives and performance.

Continued on page 58

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..... Continued from page 57

There is a high chance that you try to keep pushing your limits and learn new things. You also tend to be competitive and fierce when it comes to asserting your will. You generally don't like to take 'no' for an answer.

A lot of people around you might feel that you are a little intimidating and self-centred, but you just like people to be able to do their best. Since your standards of performance and living are high, you tend to expect others to have a similar approach to things. But you have a caring heart that opens for a select few.

On your feet

You are likely a person who thrives on personal freedom. You probably have an easy-going mindset and jolly attitude. And you're also somebody who likes to move around. You like the idea of multiplicity and have an inner voice of a leader. You like to do things your own way, and don't really bother about authority or extra explanations.

You tend to have a considerate approach to your actions and know what your consequences could mean to others - hence, you don't waste time in explaining too many things. You have complex thoughts and unusual connections that run in your head that produce some of the most memorable experiences for people around you. You're also somebody who can't stay in one place for too long.

You like to move around and travel. Moving around and meeting new people often brings peace to you and restores your energy. You have a healthy sense of humour and a fluid personality that can mingle with almost any crowd.

On your hands

If you have a beauty spot on your hand, then you are likely to be



somebody who is an out-of-the-box thinker. You like to bring change to the things around you and help people who are in need. While you tend to have an artistic mindset, you are more inclined to put other's needs before yours.

Somehow you have a knack of knowing when people need you and they're usually surprised to find you at their side. You are driven by the need to heal people and wonder what the world would be like if you could heal everybody.

You are not daunted by overwhelming odds as you are likely to have a strong sense of self. You are also somebody who likes to take initiatives and probably that sets you apart from the usual crowd. You are likely to have some of the most unconventional ways of doing simple things and like to enjoy the sense of new beginnings. Spreading positivity comes naturally to you and open spaces inspire you.



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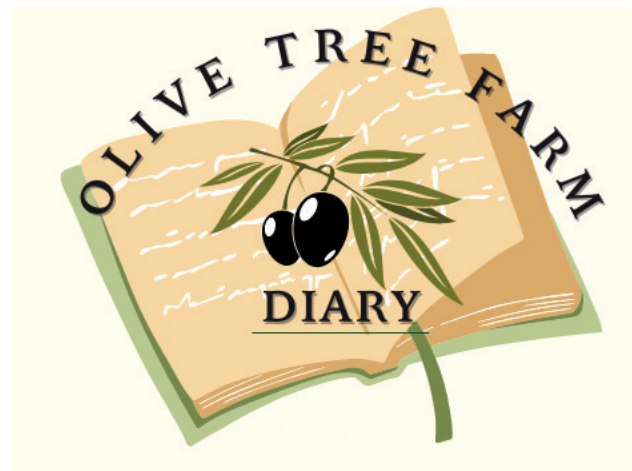
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Wow, what an amazing February we've had here at Olive Tree Farm! The warm end to January gave us an influx of eggs and some bright ideas to start off the month; we decided to dig the old incubator out to see if it still works. No argument off the kids!

We hand selected some of our White Star eggs, although we weren't sure if they'd be fertile yet (our eagle eyes hadn't witnessed any evidence yet), but we decided it was worth a try. And just to be safe, we added a couple of eggs from some of our older girls.

We tried to be sure to pick the more rounded shapes in the hope to hatch more hens, avoiding the more pointed ended eggs which are supposed to have a higher male rate. It'll be interesting to see if it works.

14 eggs went into the incubator on February 4th, giving us 20-21 days to prepare for some new arrivals. We candled them 3 days later, a process where you hold an egg over the end of a torch to see



through and see what's going on. All of them showed a healthy black spot and veins, fantastic!

Unfortunately, on day 10 — at our halfway point — we were hit with a sudden thunderstorm. At the first crack in the distance, Ben and I looked at each other in horror. There'd been no sign of storms on our weather apps, and we'd been hit with this problem in the past. Years ago, we've lost entire clutches of eggs due to thunderstorms. Whether it was us incubating or the clutches the hens themselves were sitting on.

As per a quick search to explain the whys in a non-magical fantasy way: "The thunder changes the humidity in the atmosphere and can dry up the airspace in the egg, it also decrease's the humidity in the incubator and can kill the embryo. It usually affects eggs in the early stages, 1st 10 days and also the last 3 days."

We were worried. Rightfully. We candled again the following day to see what the damage was.. 3 lost, but we still had 11 viable eggs. It was the biggest sigh of relief!

So, while we continued to watch the humidity levels and remembered to turn the eggs every 5 hours or so, we dealt with areas of some of the other animal's lives.

8 year old Logan is very proud of his and Ben's efforts to fix up the goose house, because our girl has moved in, made herself comfortable, and has built up a clutch of six eggs (five in the photo)!

And Ben has finally seen a successful mating between her and the males, which we haven't spotted since the girls arrived on the farm, and this gives us a budding hope for some goslings up there for the first time in 9 years.

Inspired and motivated, Logan and Ben cracked on immediately with the next project — to get the ducks' housing perfected and finished. They fixed up a perfect-sized nesting box and raised it up off the ground with thick planks of wood screwed into place, ramp and all, and then they positioned it perfectly under the ducks' favourite tree, lifted just above the surface of the channel's water flow.

It took the girls roughly 48 hours to get in there and settle in, and now they are happily up to four eggs! What an egg-cellent month this is!

We're going to let the goose and ducks keep their eggs for now and see what happens, so fingers crossed over these next few weeks!

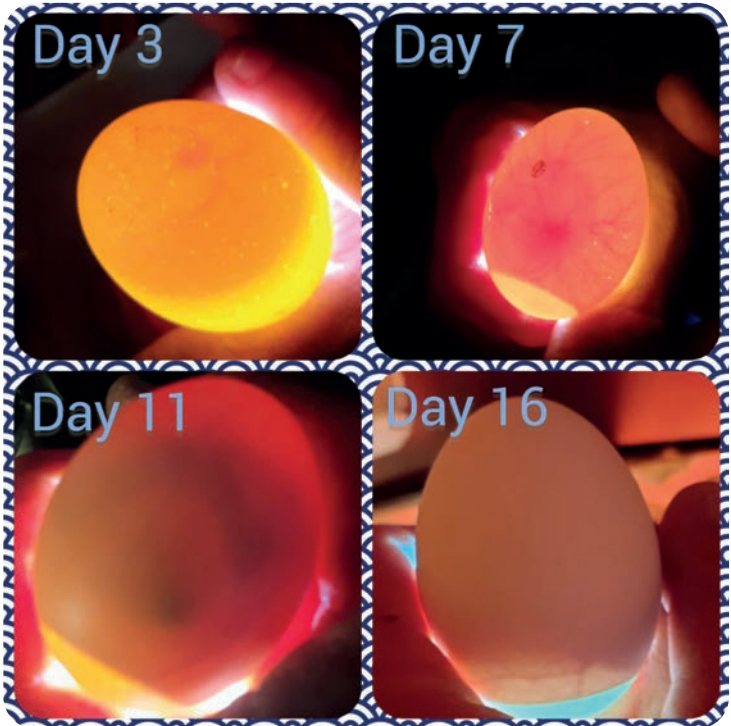
And, finally, 20.5 days after we began incubating the chicken eggs... They hatched in the early hours of Sunday morning, the 25th of February.

We have 10 healthy chicks in the growing on tank, and unfortunately one remaining egg that didn't hatch. All around, and all things considered, this wasn't a bad hatch at all!

With sudden storms and so much to do, we're so pleased with our hatch rate, and couldn't have asked for more. It'll be a few weeks before we can tell if our egg selecting at the start gave us more females, but we'll be sure to keep you updated!

Thank you for reading, we'll be back next month with more of our farming adventures.

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Here's a quick question for you:

What's your favourite song and do you know why?

Sound is one of the five (some say 6) ways that we interact with the Universe around us and is very complex. There has been extensive research into how sounds are made, how they behave and their relationships with each other and us.

My research for this article came across much about the mathematics of sound and music but no-one seems to really know why sounds have the effect they do, just that they do.

Our reactions to the sounds we hear are hard-wired from the days when we lived out in the open and our survival depended on avoiding being eaten or trampled over.



– gladly) I will just have to accept that middle C has a frequency of 261.63 Hertz and move on.

The main benefit of being constantly aware of sound is that it is always “live”. Our eyes are shut when we sleep (unless your name is Gandalf the Grey) but we still hear everything and the input is still processed by our unconscious brain.

Different sounds invoke differing responses; a baby crying is a dissonant and tense sound, one where the harmonics are random and not multiples of the original sound which will always be clashing or unstable – an alarm call,

like an ambulance siren. Your brain will recognise it as a call-to-arms and cause a neurological response.

If you are asleep (unlikely with a newborn baby, I know) then you will wake up. If you are already awake, you will tense up and be ready for action, whatever that may be.

Many animals use this method; dogs bark at a perceived threat – one of the reasons that they were domesticated some twenty thousand years ago. The bond we have with dogs now transcends their somewhat limited vocal cords and dissonant vocabulary.

Somehow even cats, who generally treat us with barely concealed disdain and contempt have managed to ingratiate themselves. Other, usually softer sounds are generally pitched at frequencies which are pleasing and relaxing to hear – birdsong or a gentle breeze.

Incidentally, it was thought that birdsong was the basis for Western music but this is not necessarily the case. Studies have concluded that although birdsong is generally pleasing on the ear, it does not necessarily mean that the birds are singing “music”.

They do not follow the scales and chord progressions used by music. Birdsong is used to communicate using pitch, rhythm, and melody to convey information. That information is not necessarily detailed and specific in terms of language as we understand it. It is used to convey basic messages such as “This is

my patch” or “I’m big and strong – don’t mess” or “Hello ladies, want some ‘us’ time?”.

The way we use musical notes carries a much less specific message, eliciting the required response from the listener. Nature, however will occasionally throw a curve ball into the mix and that ball belongs to “Polly want a cracker?”

Extensive studies have been made of why Parrots mimic human speech. The general consensus is that it is part of their social integration behaviour. Parrots have learned to mimic the group around them in much the same way that dialects in human language are formed, part of belonging.

A lone Parrot cannot feed and protect itself at the same time but a group can share responsibility. By having their own code, as it were they can easily identify each other.

All animals develop differing dialects naturally but birds such as Parrots can actively change it depending on their surroundings. They are so adept at it that they are able to mimic human speech. Again, ‘how’ is not very well understood apart from analysis of Parrots’ brains that shows they have a highly-developed communication section and it differs from other birds, having much more complex vocal cords.

Incidentally, the physical size of the brain does not necessarily correlate with intelligence. Animals with larger bodies generally have larger brains for a specific reason. Your body relies on electrical impulses from the brain to function and a larger body needs more “juice” to run it.

You need a decent-sized engine. You wouldn’t run a truck with a two-cylinder engine from a Fiat 500. It wouldn’t move. You need a dirty great 8 litre diesel.

Outside of mammals, birds have proven themselves to be highly intelligent; Crows are problem solvers and many birds have complex migration routes. Parrots do not necessarily understand what they are “saying” but are fitting in with the social group in which they find themselves. They are keen observers of behaviour and the fact



that it will say “Good morning” to you when you enter the room is because that is the sound it has heard being made on a regular basis when someone enters the room.

They are able to remember up to roughly 500 phrases irrespective of language. They can learn English, Spanish, German... any language or combination thereof. It is not uncommon for Parrots to use Spanish with one person and English with another because they remember the difference.

So, how does all this relate to your favourite song?

Well... a well-written song will connect with the listener on a fundamental level. The rhythm or beat is related to our heartbeat – a continual sound in the womb. It evokes a place of ultimate safety and belonging and a decent beat will have you up on your feet before you know it.

Your favourite song will always have a connection to a certain point in time; your wedding dance, the party on the beach where you met the love of your life or the song that was everywhere during your first year in Spain.

It doesn’t have to be happy or sad, triumphant or mellow – it just has to mean something to you.

What’s your anthem?



It’s not just us humans that can distinguish sounds. Anyone with a dog will know that they can tell the difference in sound between a roll of Sellotape being opened and a packet of biscuits from 100 metres away during a hurricane... For now (unless anyone can enlighten me

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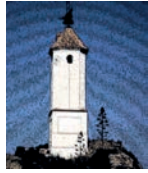
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Joe Meek (1929-67) Recording engineer and record producer

57th anniversary of his passing, I had to write something. For those of us that grew up in the '60s, Joe Meek may be a familiar name. I would call him one of the truly innovate record producers / sound engineers Britain had. I had a 45rpm of Monte Carlo, by the Tornadoes on the Decca label, which was one of his productions. I wore it out!

As a youngster, Joe realised his love for electronics, taking over his father's shed, modifying radio sets and making all sorts of electronic gear. After finishing National Service as a radar engineer, he worked for the Electricity Board in the Midlands. He had become very interested in music production and recording and managed to acquire a secondhand record disc cutting machine.

Joe left the Electric Board and joined a radio production company, making material for independent record labels and radio stations such as Luxemburg. He gained much admiration following his work on the recordings of the Ivy Benson's all-girl Dance Band and Jazz Trumpeter Humphrey Littleton. Joe understood the importance of "engineering" the recordings. Remember, in the late '50s for most of us, all we had were AM, Medium wave wireless sets and 78 rpm records. These had very limited frequency and dynamic ranges. So, to make the most of that, Meek compressed, topped-tailed the recordings, so that they sounded as good as possible when played on little record players and budget radios. Humphrey Littleton recalled that on a recording of 'Bad Penny Blues', Meek had compressed and uplifted the piano to give a big thumping presence. Littleton went mad, as recording was released without his hearing it first. He thought it didn't sound original. However, it was a smash hit. Well, got in the Top 20!

In 1960, Meek set up Triumph Records and eventually moved into a 3 storey flat above a leather shop in London's Holloway Road. One room was a control room, with lots of home-made recording equipment. 2 track tape machines, mixers, echo chambers, compressors etc. Ferrograph, Vortexion, EMI, all household equipment names. Other rooms contained various microphones and special effects gear. He would have piano and guitars in one room, drums and bass in others and some vocalists in his bathroom. Musicians such as Joe Brown often complained of getting electric shocks from microphones and guitars! Artists recording there included Lonnie Donegan (Cumberland gap), Johnny Leyton (Just Like Eddie), The Honeycombs (Have I the right) and of course The Tornadoes with Telstar, which was a number one



hit in '62. This set Joe up as the go-to producer. A classic example of Meek's playing around with recordings, can be heard at the beginning to the record Telstar. The strange Sci-Fi mechanical sound introduction, was actually a recording of an old tractor played at a slower speed and backwards. His recordings were over-dubbed many times, adding different instruments and vocal and effects. This detracted from HiFi quality. The record companies Joe used to press the records always complained about the quality of the recordings. But Meek knew this would produce a distinctive sound. It did. And, people loved it.

Joe was known to be hard to work with, and during the mid '60s, he was running into financial problems. The royalties for the record Telstar, Joe never got. A French composer said Joe had copied his tune. The case was eventually dropped, after Joe's death. The remains of his recording company was awarded £3 million. He was convinced that Decca Records was bugging his studio to steal his recording secrets and would not let anyone into the building if he was not there. He had a real "thing" about communicating with the dead and would leave tape machines running all night in the hope of recording voices from the other side. He produced the Mike Berry recording "Tribute to Buddy Holly" following Buddy's death. Of course, being gay in the 60s was a bit of a problem and in '63 he was fined for importuning. He never recovered from this, and it fed an on-going depression. Many musicians slipped through his hands and it's said that Brian Epstein asked Meek what he thought of a group called the Beatles. Joe said don't sign them up, they're no good! Another faux pas was his agreeing to record a small band as long as the singer was replaced. The singer being a young Rod Stewart. In '67, in his recording studio, Meek shot himself after killing his landlady.

It is very sad thinking about someone who paved the way for modern recording techniques ending up like this. He was an early experimenter with compression, reverb, direct connection of instruments into recording desks, multi-tracking and so on. Phil Spector, well known for his "Wall-Of-Sound" image, said that he owed much of this to Meek's own inventiveness. I could go on and on, but not enough pages.

So, off to pop my copy of Telstar on the radiogram. Listening Joe? Pop into my shop one day. Seth Pittham. Zeta services

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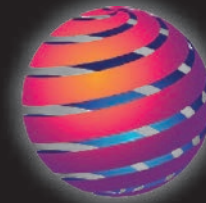
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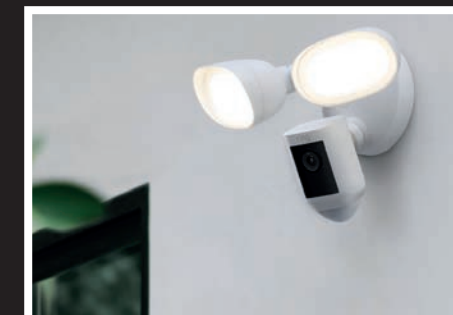
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Slightly higher savings rates may not mean cash is keeping pace with inflation, which has just dropped from 11% in the autumn of 2022 to around 4.00% in the UK – the lowest for two years, but still above the Bank of England's target of 2%*. The rate in Spain is currently around 3.4%***, from around 6.00% a year ago.

3. When is the right time to return to investing?

Whilst savings rates may look attractive, knowing when to invest is difficult to judge, especially if markets are volatile. Holding funds in cash savings, possibly waiting for investment conditions to improve or volatility to reduce, means you may risk missing the market upturn. Historically stock-market based investments tend to do better than cash savings over the longer-term.

What are the options?

Investing may not be for everyone; we know this but many people can benefit from getting good financial advice and making some subtle changes to their wealth management to make their money work for them.

So, ask yourself the question: are my cash savings getting a return anywhere close to inflation?

If you would like to discuss how making some changes to wealth / savings can make a difference, then get in touch and ask for your free Wealth Check.

The value of investments can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested. We can't predict the future. Past performance isn't a guide to future performance.

* UK Current inflation rate: 4.6% as at 31/01/2024. www.bankofengland.co.uk

**Spain Current Inflation rate as: 3.4% at 31/01/2024. <https://www.ine.es/en/index.htm>

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According to a report issued by Trafico, the following are some of the most dangerous frequent infractions and their corresponding fines.

1. Check your tyres!

Driving on worn tyres or with an incorrect inflation pressure on wet, snowy or icy roads causes a significant loss of adhesion.

Continued on page 72



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..... Continued from page 71

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2. Without lights!

The headlights not only illuminate, they also place the vehicle on the road. Driving without lights when these are necessary, or with damaged or low lights, makes it difficult for other drivers to calculate the width and position of your vehicle.

Before getting into your car, check the lighting of your vehicle: driving without adequate lighting at times of poor visibility (sunset and sunrise, at night, with fog ...) is a risk that can be avoided and is considered a serious violation with a penalty of €200.

3. Moderate your speed!

When we approach pedestrian crossings without traffic lights, residential areas, schools and buses that are at their stops we must



moderate the speed, or even stop the vehicle if necessary, to avoid accidents. Violations of this rule for driving without caution or even negligently are considered serious when they cause danger and are sanctioned with up to a €260 fine.

4. Use your indicator!

You will surely know from your own experience that there are manoeuvres (a lane change, for example) that are signalled at short notice or not signalled at all, these can cause sudden and unexpected shocks and risks. Warning your manoeuvres to other users is mandatory and not doing so is a serious infraction with a penalty of €200.

5. Stay in the correct lane!

On motorways and highways it is common to see drivers occupying the centre and left lanes while the right is free. According to the regulations, on interurban roads with more than one lane per direction, cars must always drive on the right. Failure to do so, hindering the driving of other drivers, is a serious infraction with a €200 fine.

6. Stopping on a bus stop!

Stopping and parking on bus stops is disrespectful to other road users



and dangerous particularly to the pedestrians who may have to walk into the road to get on the bus. That is why these are considered serious infractions and incur a €200 fine.

7. Give way or Stop?

Mandatory stop signs are usually located at crossroads where visibility is poor or zero. For this reason, you have to completely stop the vehicle to observe that there is no risk. The law establishes that to make another driver who has the right of way break or manoeuvre, or not stopping at a regulated intersection with the mandatory stop signal, is a serious infraction and is sanctioned with a fine of €200 and the loss of 4 points.

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9. Opening the car door

After parking, we take off our belts and get out ... Be careful! Before opening the door, look in the rear view mirror, it can cause serious damage to a cyclist who passes by your vehicle at that precise moment. This type of negligent behaviour that causes danger to other users is considered a serious infraction and a fine of €260.

10. Parking on the pavement

When you park, occupying part or all of the pavement for whatever reason, you 'steal' a vital space from pedestrians, possibly 'pushing' them to dangerous situations when they walk on the road to get past the badly parked vehicle. Parking on pedestrian areas is a serious infraction and carries a fine of €200.



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Pedal Power

A first bike is the childhood equivalent of a driver's license, but those familiar, two-wheeled, pedal-powered machines (and the outdoor trails best for riding them) aren't just for kids — bicycles transformed the nature of human mobility and are even a great way to get around in some cities. The two-wheeler concept dates back centuries, but modern bikes only emerged fairly recently. Once merely a novelty, bicycles are now a multi-billion dollar industry and a part of human culture on nearly every corner of the Earth.

The First Bikes Were Called 'Velocipedes'. Before there were bicycles, there were velocipedes. Primitive, pedal-less, and un-steerable wooden precursors to bikes emerged at the end of the 18th century, but in 1818, a guy named Baron von Drais earned a patent for a device with a padded saddle and a steerable front wheel. The patent was filed under the name "velocipede." The term "bicycle" did not emerge until 1869.

Some Velocipedes Were Known as 'Boneshakers' for Good Reason. In the 1860s in France, the Michaux Company produced a type of velocipede known as the "Boneshaker." It was a fitting nickname. The beastly bikes weighed 60 pounds, could go as fast as 8 mph, and rode on solid tyres. It would be an understatement to say they were uncomfortable to ride.

The First Geared Bike Was Called the "Ariel". In 1871, a man named James Starley made a huge leap forward in the history of cycling when he developed the first geared bike. Known as the Ariel, the gear system combined technology from three different patents. Although it was limited to the shortcomings of primitive front-wheel-drive velocipedes, cyclists could now change gears — but it wasn't easy.

The Path to Safety Bicycles Was a Rocky One. Although gears helped, there was a huge flaw with the first two-speed bicycles: riders had to stop, dismount, remove the wheel, flip it around, and reattach it. Then, if they weren't completely exhausted by the process, they could keep riding. Life improved for early bicyclists when John Kemp Starley invented the first safety bicycle, the Rover, in 1885. With two equal-sized wheels and a chain drive train fixed to the rear wheel instead of the front, the Rover effectively killed whatever limited enthusiasm there was for the velocipede.

The Wright Brothers Started on Two Wheels. Before they conquered the skies, the Wright brothers were a force to be reckoned with on the ground. Both Wilbur and Orville were caught up in the bike craze that took off in the 1890s after the invention of the safety bicycle. Orville even won a rocking chair in a race once, but they didn't just participate in the trend — they profited from it. The brothers owned several bike shops in Dayton, Ohio, before going into bicycle manufacturing and design. Ingenuitive and ambitious by nature, they were responsible for many significant cycling



innovations. The Wrights were a success, quickly earning and saving thousands of dollars in a time when most Americans made just \$500 a year. Much of their profits went to financing their more ambitious project — the one that made them famous and allowed the human race to travel through the sky.

The Sport of Cycling Is More Than 150 Years Old. The first true bike race took place between the entrance and the fountains of Saint-Cloud park outside of Paris on May 31, 1868. The race, which was won by an 18-year-old Paris-born English expatriate named James Moore, spanned a distance of 1,312 yards.

Cycling Pre-Dates Baseball and Basketball in the U.S. Cycling doesn't just go back a long way in Europe, it's one of the oldest sports in the United States, as well. America's first bike race took place in Boston on May 24, 1878. That's 13 years before the invention of basketball and two years before the emergence of America's pastime, baseball. Cycling became wildly popular in America at the end of the 19th century, and it was one of the biggest and most popular sports in that country. By the 1890s, more than 600 pro cyclists competed on a coast-to-coast national circuit from San Francisco to Boston and in every major city in between. The country was home to more than 100 cycling tracks.

Madison Square Garden Had the First Velodrome. It is known worldwide as the home of the Rangers, the Knicks, and every concert worth seeing — but it's actually the fourth venue to bear that name. The first MSG was located, fittingly, near New York City's Madison Square in the late 19th century and was leased to P.T. Barnum. It was the home of the very first velodrome, a special type of cycle racing track that was used when the sport was at its peak in the U.S. The Garden was to cycle racing then what it is to basketball today — the centre of that sport's universe.

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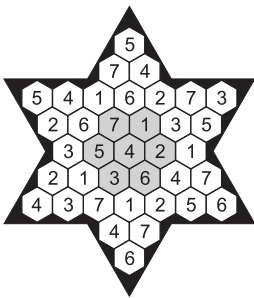
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Puzzle Time Solutions



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