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Issue 157

Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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Many people have their annual vehicle road tax set up on direct debit, so it doesn't matter when it is due so long as it comes out the bank.

For those that don't have direct debit it is time to get the bill paid!

Most Townhalls no longer send out reminders, so it is down to us as individuals to remember and arrange the payment in the bank or online in good time, so we don't incur a fine.

Individual Townhalls can now set the date range for payment. Locally, Albox and Cantoria could be paid in April, but Zurgena did not generate the bills for payment until now, in May.

For some Townhalls such as Zurgena, if you have a digital signature the information can be accessed, downloaded and paid online. The payment advice can still be accessed without a digital signature, but more information is required in the first instance.

For other Townhalls without online access such as Albox, it is necessary to get them to print it or sent by email.

If the bill is not paid on time, then interest and late payment charges accrue. If it continues for any length of time, then the outstanding bill is referred to the Tax Office for forced payment.

If you require assistance with a digital signature or accessing the bill then the team at C.A.T. Services are here to help.

Moved House? Who to notify of your change of address

Moving house is a very challenging time for all concerned. It is rated as one of the highest stress related situations in our lives. Some people choose to move often, while others are content to stay put for many years.

Whichever the case it doesn't matter because, after all the unpacking and settling in, there are numerous people to inform.

This is where modern technology plays a helpful role. Gone are the days of needing to post notes and letters to everyone. Now, in many cases, a simple email or whatsapp message can save a great deal of time. Job done as far as friends and family are concerned.

There are, of course, many official bodies that need to be advised and this can be frustrating and tiresome, especially as some are easily forgotten.

So, here in Spain, who must we advise?

As well as the usual banks & pension companies, there are some official bodies to update.

Tax Office (Hacienda) - the most important entity to have an up-to-date notification address for you. Any official office that has tried and failed to get hold of you will resort to using the address registered here.

Trafico (DGT) - they store 2 addresses, one for notifications and the other for the legal residence of the vehicle. Whilst the notification address may remain the same it is very important to change the legal address, i.e. Padron address.

Townhall (Ayuntamiento) - a new Padron will need to be issued (relevant to residents only). The new title deeds or rental contract will be required so the property can be identified.

Medical System - it is important to have up-to-date contact address details so that any letters are received OK, especially if you are pending a hospital appointment.

Foreign Office (Oficina de Extranjería) - our T.I.E. cards and residencias carry an address. Whilst this can be reissued it is not a straight-forward procedure. So long as they have the correct details on file then the address can be corrected when a new document is issued.

A digital signature can be a god send for this type of exercise.

Just remember that you can only have one digital signature so if your accountant or lawyer already has one for you then ask for a copy so that it can be shared with others.

Should you require assistance with any of this then the team at C.A.T. Services are here to help.

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Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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Welcome to the May 2026 issue of Almería Living - the 5th of the year already!!

Busy, busy, busy are the birds as they go about their duties with a cheerful chirp. With the rapid change in temperature, there seems to be some urgency in their preparations for the new arrivals in their nests. They work so very hard.

Well done to everyone who took part in the locally organised Walk For Life fun run. Despite the weather there was a tremendous turnout of participants and supporters. I'm sure they have raised a super amount of money for a very worthy cause.

In this issue

I offer a warm welcome to our new scribe Mike Pinnock. He is a member of the local Written Word Group and this article is an excerpt from the last chapter of his book "Halfway There - An Oldie's Walk Across Europe," which is being published in July. Read more on page 52.

We celebrate Price Brown's 40th anniversary - what an exceptional achievement. Now they must have seen so many changes throughout the years. Share this tribute, appropriately placed, on page 40.

The magazine wouldn't be the same without the penmanship of my scribes. Some have been writing for many years and for others it has become a new hobby. It is always a pleasure to receive and print their passion.

Many thanks, as always, to our many 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 Almería Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in June.

Karen (Ed)

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of residencia, passport, padron certificate, medical reports, a photograph and proof of income. It is not a very quick process and does require an assessment in front of a panel of specialists, which for our area is carried out in Almeria. Once the case has been reviewed a letter will be sent and, if you qualify, it will outline any assistance available depending on the disability grade awarded.



If you are in need of assistance with daily jobs such as doing your shopping, helping you cook, dress or shower, you may be entitled to **assistance in the home**. This can be requested independently of the disability card. To qualify, you have to be a resident in Spain and have been on the padron for over 5 years. To apply, you will need to provide medical reports, residencia, passport, padron certificate and proof of

There are different types of assistance you may be entitled to; check to see if you fall into any of these categories and we can help you through the process.

Anyone over 65, with residencia, is entitled to a **pensioner's card**; this can be used to get discounts on buses, trains, entrance fees in various places, some opticians/dentists etc. With just a photograph, copy of residencia, passport and a current padron certificate we can process this application for you. This is also a requirement for the emergency button service.

If you have medical issues that impair your daily life you may be entitled to a grade of disability. A grade of more than 33% is enough for a **disability card** to be awarded. This entitles you to apply for the emergency button and offers the possibility of other assistance as well as discount on the annual tax return. To be granted a parking badge the grade of disability needs to be over 65% or at least 7 points in the mobility test that has to be undertaken. To apply for the disability card and parking badge you will need to provide copies

income. The number of hours of assistance given are decided after a visit to your home. Nursing care is not part of the services or assistance provided.

Once you have been granted the above, an **emergency button** can be installed at your home. This is a button you can carry/wear while anywhere in the house or garden and calls the emergency services when pushed. You will also receive a weekly call or visit to see how you are. To apply for this requires a landline telephone, letter of grade of disability or home assistance, pensioner's card, padron certificate, residencia and passport.

If you would like help or further advice regarding any of this information then call or email C.A.T. Services for an appointment.

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Spanish Provinces

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. In April we journeyed to Granada and now our next of Spain's provincial Capitals takes us up into the centre of Spain



Guadalajara in Guadalajara

The province of Guadalajara is in the northernmost part of the autonomous region of Castilla-La Mancha. It borders on the provinces of Segovia, Soria, Zaragoza, Teruel, Cuenca and the community of Madrid.

It lies in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, and its continental

Mediterranean climate brings long, hot summers and long, cold winters with spring and autumn being short and sweet.

Guadalajara is a mountainous province dotted with small villages. 224 of them (78.8%), have less than 200 inhabitants, whereas approximately 33% of the population of 285,839 - 93,470 - live in the capital of the same name.

The highest point in the province of Guadalajara, and indeed in the whole region of Castilla-La Mancha, is Pico del Lobo at 2,274 m above sea level.

The average altitude of the province of Guadalajara is approximately 1,070 meters above sea level.

This figure places the province among the highest in Spain, considerably exceeding the national average of 660 meters. The altitude varies a great deal within the province, characterized by the transition between the plains of La Alcarria and the mountainous areas of the Sierra Norte.

Most of the rains that fall in Guadalajara are carried to the Atlantic Ocean by the river Tagus, or to the Mediterranean by the river Ebro.

As is natural in an area with such a difference in levels as Guadalajara, there are many great waterfalls in the province.

One of the most spectacular of Guadalajara's waterfalls, Las Chorreras de Despeñalagua, is situated in the north of the province. It falls in stages down 70 meters of vertical walls. It is situated in an area famous for its villages of 'black architecture', thus named as a lot of the houses are constructed from slate and quartz. These villages are famous for their beauty and rural charm, and Valverde de los Arroyos stands out as the most beautiful of them all.

Another place to enjoy waterfalls is in the town of Trillo in the centre of Guadalajara. It is crossed by the Cifuentes river shortly before it runs into the Tagus, the longest river on the Iberian Peninsula.

Trillo has been visited for its thermal waters since the 18th century, and there are still some thermal baths there. But more than that, as the Cifuentes river runs through the town, it flows down several levels which creates waterfalls that can be enjoyed from the streets and even from some of the houses.

The province of Guadalajara is also home to many Medieval castles,



some of them in ruins, others in very good condition. One of the best preserved is the Castillo de Riba de Santiuste in the north of the province. It was built in the 9th century on an almost inaccessible, steep mountain. It is a narrow construction which is adapted to the contours of the mountain. It was reconstructed in the 12th century, and it has preserved many original features although it has been restored many times over the centuries.

Other castles worth mentioning and indeed, visiting, include Castillo de Sigüenza, Castillo de Molina de Aragón and Castillo de Torija, to name but a few.

The capital of Guadalajara lies in the west of the province at a height of 708 m above sea level, high up in the Henares valley on an elevated plateau between two deep ravines. The Henares River runs through the city.

The climate of the capital is different from the rest of the province due to its elevated situation; the winters are long and cold, the summers short and very hot. The annual average temperature is 13.1°C and the average rainfall is 400l/m2.

The city covers an area of 235.51 km2 and has a population density of 355.11/km2 as opposed to 20.90 inhabitants/m2 for the whole province.

Guadalajara city is thought to have been founded by the Romans, although there is no evidence to support this theory. The first evidence of human settlements is from the 8th century when Moors founded the city, naming it Wad-al-Hayara, valley of stones or Valley of Castles.

Continued on page 8






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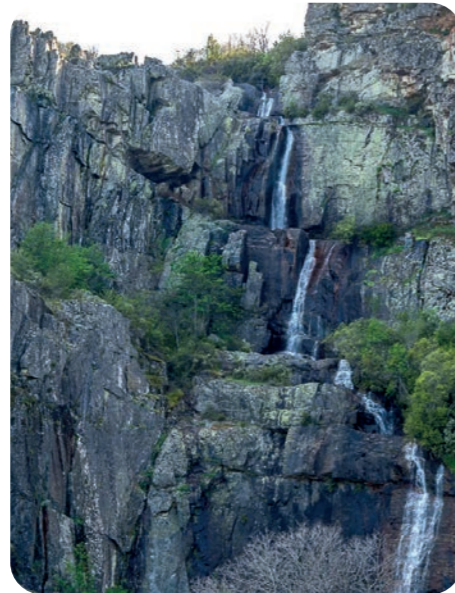
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.... Continued from page 7

The Andalusians built various monuments in the city, but only the bridge over the river Henares and the now ruined Alcázar (palace) still stand.

Guadalajara was conquered from the Moors by King Alfonso VI of León and Castile in 1085 and it stayed in Christian hands from then on, being granted special privileges which allowed it to develop its economy by protecting merchants and permitting markets. The city of Guadalajara has had its ups and downs over the centuries, and it saw much action during the Spanish Civil War. The vast majority of its historical buildings and monuments were ruined, and the rebuilding of the city went slowly for a couple of decades after the end of the war.



However, in 1959, Guadalajara's fortunes changed when the

central government decided to unclog Madrid's vastly over-crowded industrial estates. The plan (known as El Plan de Descongestión Industrial de Madrid en Castilla-La Mancha) moved much of the industry and its concomitant housing to the periphery, which meant that Guadalajara capital, situated close to the border with

Madrid, benefitted from new investments and jobs.

This turned Guadalajara into one of the Spanish cities with the greatest relative economic and population growth.

However, not all the plans for the expansion of the city have succeeded. An ambitious project to build a whole city around the AVE (Spanish fast train) station and increase the population by 30,000 inhabitants, failed miserably when the construction company in charge went bankrupt and only a small fraction of the new dwellings was taken.

Today, only some 60 passengers get on the AVE at Guadalajara station.

Nonetheless, the expansion of the city over the last 50 years and its proximity to Madrid has changed Guadalajara's economy from relying on commerce and administration to being largely dependent on industry.



Look Good - Feel Great



Dreams can be entertaining, disturbing, or downright bizarre. We all dream, even if we don't remember it the next day. But why do we dream? And what do they mean, anyway?

What Are Dreams?

Dreams are basically stories and images that our mind creates while we sleep. They can be vivid. They can make you feel happy, sad, or scared. And they may seem confusing or perfectly rational.

Dreams can happen at any time during sleep. But you have your most vivid dreams during a phase called REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, when your brain is most active. Some experts say we dream at least four to six times a night.

Lucid dreams

A lucid dream is one in which you know you're dreaming. Research

shows that lucid dreaming comes with a boost of activity in parts of the brain that are usually restful during sleep. Lucid dreaming is a brain state between REM sleep and being awake.

Some lucid dreamers are able to influence their dream, changing the story, so to speak. This may be a good tactic to take sometimes, especially during a nightmare, but many dream experts say it's better to let your dreams flow naturally.

Nightmares

A nightmare is a bad dream. It's common in both children and adults. Often, it happens because of:

- Stress, conflict, and fear
- Trauma
- Emotional problems
- Medication or drug use
- Illness

If you have a certain nightmare over and over again, your subconscious may be trying to tell you something. Listen to it.

If you can't figure out why you're having bad dreams, talk to a mental health care provider. They may be able to help you figure out what's causing your nightmares and give you tips to put you at ease.

Keep in mind that no matter how scary a nightmare is, it's not real and most likely won't happen to you in real life.

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Why Do We Dream?

There are many theories about why we dream, but no one knows for sure. Some researchers say dreams have no purpose or meaning. Others say we need dreams for our mental, emotional, and physical health.

Studies have looked into the importance of dreams to our health and well-being. In one study, researchers woke people just as they were going into REM sleep. They found that those who weren't allowed to dream had:

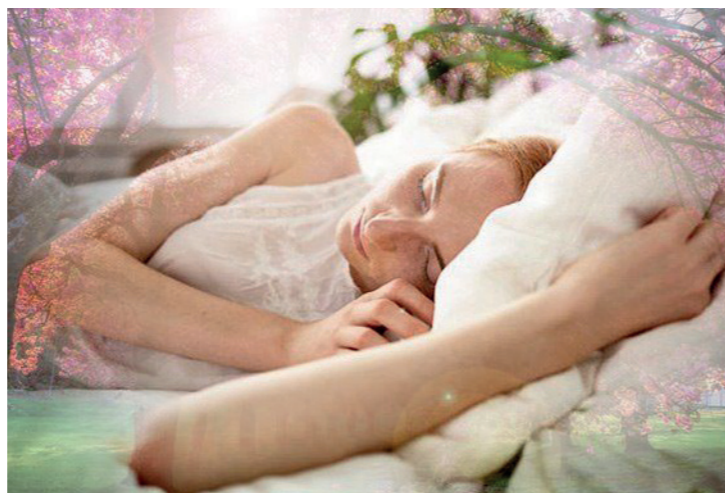
- More tension, anxiety and depression
- A hard time concentrating
- Lack of coordination
- Weight gain
- A tendency to hallucinate

Many experts say dreams exist either to help solve problems in our lives, incorporate memories or process emotions. If you go to bed with a troubling thought, you may wake with a solution or at least feel better about the situation.

Some dreams may help our brains process our thoughts and the events of the day. Others may just be the result of normal brain activity and mean very little, if anything. Researchers are still trying to figure out exactly why we dream.

How Long Do Dreams Last?

REM sleep lasts only a few minutes early in the night but gets longer as we sleep. Later in the night, it might last more than 30 minutes. So, you might spend half an hour in a single dream.



What Do Dreams Mean?

Famous psychologist Sigmund Freud believed that dreams are a window into our subconscious and that they reveal a person's unconscious desires, thoughts or motivations

Freud thought dreams were a way for people to satisfy urges and desires that weren't acceptable to society.

Just as there are different opinions about why we dream, there are different views about what dreams mean. Some experts say dreams have no connection to our real emotions or thoughts. They're just strange stories that don't relate to normal life.

Others say our dreams may reflect our own thoughts and feelings -- our deepest desires, fears, and concerns, especially dreams that happen over and over. By interpreting our dreams, we may gain insight into our lives and ourselves. Many people say they've come

up with their best ideas while dreaming.

Often, people report having similar dreams: They're being chased, fall off a cliff, or show up in public naked. These types of dreams are probably caused by hidden stress or anxiety. The dreams may be similar, but experts say the meaning behind the dream is unique to each person.

Experts say not to rely on books or "dream dictionaries," which give a specific meaning for a specific dream image or symbol. The reason behind your dream is unique to you.

Can Dreams Predict the Future?

Sometimes, dreams come true or tell of a future event. When you have a dream that plays out in real life, experts say it's most likely due to coincidence, a bad memory or an unconscious linking of known information.

But sometimes, dreams can motivate you to act a certain way, thus changing the future.

Why Are Dreams Hard to Remember?

Researchers don't know for sure why dreams are easily forgotten. Maybe we're designed to forget our dreams because if we remembered them all, we might not be able to tell dreams from real memories.

Also, it could be harder to remember dreams because during REM sleep, our body may shut down systems in our brain that create memories.

We may remember only those dreams that happen just before we wake, when certain brain activities are turned back on.



Some say it's not that our minds forget dreams but that we don't know how to access them. Dreams may be stored in our memory, waiting to be recalled.

This may explain why you suddenly remember a dream later in the day: Something may have happened to trigger the memory.

How to Make Sense of Your Dreams

If you're curious about your dreams or want to sort out any possible meaning behind them, consider keeping a dream diary or journal.

Write it down. Keep a notebook and pen next to your bed, and record your dream first thing every morning, while the memory is still fresh.

Write down anything you recall and how it made you feel, even if you can remember only random pieces of information.

Journal without judgment. Dreams are sometimes odd and may go against societal norms. Try not to judge yourself based on your dreams.

Give each dream a title. This may help if you want to refer back to a dream. Sometimes, the title you create can provide insight on why you had the dream or the meaning behind it.

Dreams have fascinated humanity since the beginning of time and will probably continue to puzzle us.

Science has allowed us to learn much about the human brain, but we may never know for sure the meanings behind our dreams.

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row of each 9x9 cube must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

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

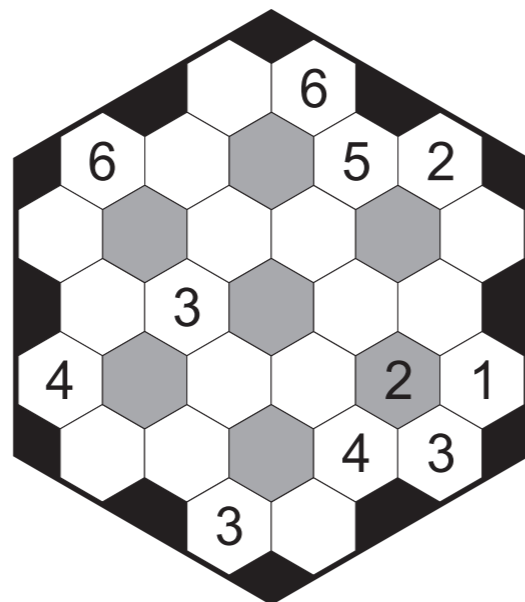
Samurai Sudoku

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

Rosetta

A Rosetta is made up of a centre coloured hexagon encircled by 6 white hexagons. To complete the puzzle, fill in all 7 Rosettas with each number between 1 and 7 in no particular order while ensuring that:

1. No number is repeated in a horizontal row
2. Each number from 1 to 7 is represented in the 7 grey hexagon cells



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Should I use COLD or HEAT to ease pain?

For certain types of injuries, the use of cold or heat may help decrease pain. There isn't a huge amount of scientific data to support the use of either, but if applied safely, application may complement other pain relief treatments.

Cold, in the form of cold packs or an ice massage (rubbing a painful area with an ice cube), is usually most effective in the hours right after an injury. As well as decreasing pain, cold can decrease inflammation and may help speed recovery from an injury.

Heat such as a heat pad, moist compress, or hot bath is generally considered best to alleviate muscle spasms, stiffness, arthritis or to help manage long-term pain.

COLD

- Acute injuries, sprains, strains, bruises, and inflamed areas
- Restricts blood vessels, reduces swelling, and numbs pain signals.
- Apply for 10-15 minutes several times a day

HEAT

- Chronic pain, stiff/sore joints, arthritis, muscle cramps and spasms.
- Expands blood vessels, boosts circulation, and increases flexibility.
- Apply for 15-20 minutes as needed

* When using ice or direct heat, always use a barrier such as a towel. Excessive exposure can lead to skin damage, broken capillaries and permanent loss of sensation.


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Herbal remedies

Herbal remedies are natural and have been used for centuries, but you still need to use them with respect. Herbal remedies have few side effects but this does not mean you can take them freely and without care.

Herbs are the basis of some modern drugs: for example, quinine came from cinchona bark, digitalis from the foxglove, and aspirin from willow bark. Today, an estimated 25% of all pharmaceuticals still come directly from plants.

Herbs have been used as remedies over many hundreds of years. By their very nature, herbs are complex, each one comprising tens if not hundreds of individual chemical compounds, so identifying the active components is not a simple matter. Herbs are classed as dietary

or nutritional supplements. Manufacturers cannot say their product will cure a disease, or alleviate symptoms and therefore the labels on herbs make no claims of specific health benefits.

In general, herbs are less potent than drugs. Many people mistakenly assume that because they are natural they are harmless. High doses taken for a long time can cause problems, and some cause allergic reactions or other symptoms. Herbs have the potential to be very effective, but they need to be used responsibly.

The quality of herbal remedies varies, depending on a number of factors. Their growing season, the climate, soil conditions, whether they are organic or farmed, when they are harvested, storage conditions, length of storage and so on, all make a difference to their

quality. This means that the potency of the product will not be as precise as a man-made drug.

Some herbs interact with drugs, other herbs and foods; for example, garlic and ginkgo may increase the side effects of blood-thinning drugs; Echinacea may counteract immunosuppressive drugs; Siberian ginseng may increase the effects of antibiotics and valerian may increase the effects of other sedatives.

Herbs may be called "specifics" or "tonics". A specific targets a particular symptom, such as valerian taken for insomnia. They are usually taken only for short times or when the symptoms occur.

Continued on page 16

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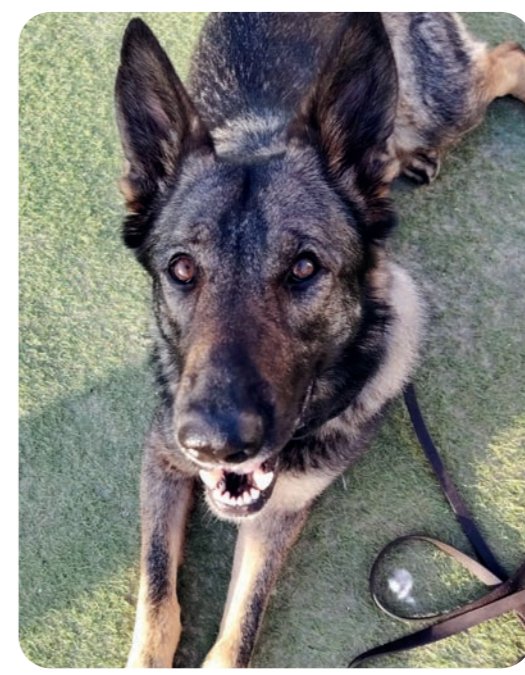
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Dakota - Street Life



before I looked round again, the other dog had walked past and was disappearing.

However, whenever the Mummies stopped to rest their legs and lubricate their throats, it felt so much like a temporary home that I decided it should be defended against uninvited four-legged intruders who had the audacity to walk past on the same pavement where we were sitting.

So, many times I did. But mum had me tied securely and just told me to lie down and then proceeded to ignore me until the dog had passed, so I gathered that she didn't feel our camp needed defending, and I relaxed and accepted the treat proffered for shutting up so quickly.

Apart from being on my toes all the time, mentally, I also had to be on them physically as we did do a lot of walking, so it's hardly a wonder I'm knackered!

When we weren't walking or resting legs in bars or restaurants, we had something called an apartment as our base. An apartment is like a house without a garden, and although it was nice, it would have been better with a garden. It did have a little space with a railing sticking out over the street below, and it was great fun to stand there and bark at the dogs walking past down there, just like they do at me when mum and I walk in the local towns.

Continued on page 18

Pets Corner

I'm almost too knackered to write this, but Madame Karen says that if I want to be a scribe, I have to stick to deadlines, so I've taped my eyelids open and shall do my best to fulfil my role.

And why am I so tired? Well, I've only just got back from a looong weekend in Alicante with mum and my Auntie Pia. Actually, she's more like a second mum, so I shall refer to her as Mummy 2.

I thought that mini breaks were meant to be relaxing, but although I've been to Alicante twice before, it's still away from home and my usual haunts, and I have to be on my toes all the time to make sure I know where both Mummies are at any time.

Also, there's one helluva lot of dogs that live in Alicante, and they are all allowed to walk the streets and sit in the bars just like me, and it can be quite stressful to keep an eye out for them as well as the Mummies, and to have to decide every time I see one whether it is a 'have-a-go-situation' or a 'stare-malevolently-situation'.

Mum was on the ball most of the time, though, and almost every time I saw another dog, she had seen it already and was ready with distractions and treats.

In fact, it got to a point where, when I saw a dog, I looked up at mum to see if she'd seen it already and was ready with treats or praise, and



..... Continued from page 15

A tonic works on the whole body or organ: ginseng slowly strengthens the immune system. Tonics are taken long-term, sometimes with breaks. Some herbs have both specific and tonic properties.

Most herbal remedies are sold as capsules or tablets containing dried herbs or standardised extracts. Dried plants can lose potency more quickly and you might have to take several capsules to make one effective dose. Extracts are made by soaking the herb in alcohol to extract the chemical components from the plant.

Some products give their strength as a standardised extract of the active ingredients, for example: Bilberry with 25% anthocyanocides, Garlic with 5.4mg of allicin, and Ginkgo biloba with 24% ginkgo flavone glycosides.

As well as the range of single herbs, there are many combination products available. Single herbs have the advantage that you can choose the ones that may be right for your symptoms and identify any that cause side effects or allergic reactions.

Combination products can be convenient and may be cheaper, but you may not have all the information you need about them to make an informed choice. For instance, is there enough of each herb to have the desired effect? Or does it contain a herb you don't really need? Some products combine the significant actions of each herb at a lower dose.

Taking herbs safely

Be well informed - find out about the herbs you plan to take. Don't just follow a friend's advice unless they have some experience or particular knowledge about herbs.

Follow the directions on the label.

Some herbs take several weeks to have positive effects. Make sure you know what to expect and how long to take them for.

Start with the lowest dose and watch for side effects such as rashes, nausea or headaches. If you have side effects stop taking the herb immediately.

People over 65 become more sensitive to medicines and so need to stick to lower doses.

If you are already taking prescription medicines you should consult your doctor or a suitable health professional before taking herbs.

Compare products by looking at the amount of active ingredients in each one; note the number of capsules you need to take per day, and the cost.

Buy a quality product from a reputable source. Good products have clear expiry dates, batch numbers and manufacturer contact details in case of a problem or query.

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..... Continued from page 17

The apartment also had something called a spiral staircase. Mum had been warned about this in advance, but she said that a girl as good at agility as I am, would have no problems going up and down it.

Well, if a girl has something to live up to, she'd better. That's what I say.

But I must admit that those stairs were rather daunting. Not only did they curve round, but there was nothing but air between the steps and outside the bannisters! It felt very risky, but it had to be done unless I wanted to sleep downstairs while the Mummies slept upstairs, and that was a no-go scenario.

So I climbed them. The first few times I went up or down were made more complicated by the fact that my legs were shaking so badly. Mummy 2 claimed it was because I was afraid. Afraid? Me? Rubbish! It must have been because my legs were so tired from all the walking!

But soon I went up and down without shaking legs, so they must have got used to the walking.

I know I run for miles at home every



week, but that must be different from walking, 'coz I found the walking more tiring than any amount of running I do at home in the hills.

When we sleep at home, mum has the left-hand side and I have the right-hand side of the bed, so that's how I presumed it would be in the apartment. But Mum was kind enough to let Mummy 2 have her side, which I thought was very generous. But guess what? She then expected me to share my side with her!

I didn't quite think that was on, but she was insistent and managed to squeeze herself in next to me. Whenever I felt she got too pushy, I repaired to the foot end, and when she got tired of trying to fit her legs around me, she'd sensibly stick her feet over next to Mummy 2's.

Anyway, we three girls had a fantastic time, and I hope you appreciate the fact that I shared my adventures with you despite my extreme fatigue!

I'm off for a very long kip in the shade now, and I'll talk to you again in July - busy travel schedule permitting, of course!

Dogs' Leashes and Collars Part 2

A collar is a must for dog owners, at the very least as a place to hang your dog's tag with your phone number so that people can get in touch quickly if he gets lost.

Dogs do not need to wear their collars at home, especially if you're 100% sure that they cannot get out, but the collar is still handy for helping control or guide your dog.

The collar needs to be comfortable and hard wearing. You also need to be able to clip on the leash quickly and easily.

It is important that the collar has the right size, and that has to be the first consideration when you choose one. If your dog is still growing, check the collar regularly to make sure that he has not grown out of it. Two fingers have to fit comfortably under the collar in order for it not to bother or choke your dog.

If you do not want to take your dog to the shop buy his collar, measure his neck and add 5-7 cm, that should give you the correct size.

Nylon and leather are good choices for home collars, they are comfortable for your dog, and especially leather collars are hard wearing and can last for a long time.

For dogs that pull on their leashes it can be necessary for a different collar for going out and for training.

A check chain was the traditional 'solution' to this problem, but it



really only works if the owner knows how to use it. If not, you can do more damage than good. However, for those that know how to use the check chain, it is a very useful aid in obedience training. For reasonably obedient dogs, the half check is a good choice.

The modern equivalent is the martingale collar which also tightens when the dog pulls, but as it is made of material it only makes it uncomfortable for the dog to pull, it does not damage his throat.

As for leashes, the choice is endless nowadays and it can be quite a daunting task to try to choose the correct one. Take into consideration your dog's breed or type, the collar it is going to be used with and what you are going to use it for.

The leash is one of the most important tools for you and your dog throughout his life. It is for teaching and training of young dogs, for excursions, for socialising, and for the protection of the dog himself.

The standard dog leash has a carabiner at one end and a handle at the other. This is the most common type of leash used for daily walks and basic training. It is usually made from nylon or leather, both of which are strong and durable and yet light enough to be suitable for young puppies and small dogs.

Continued on page 20

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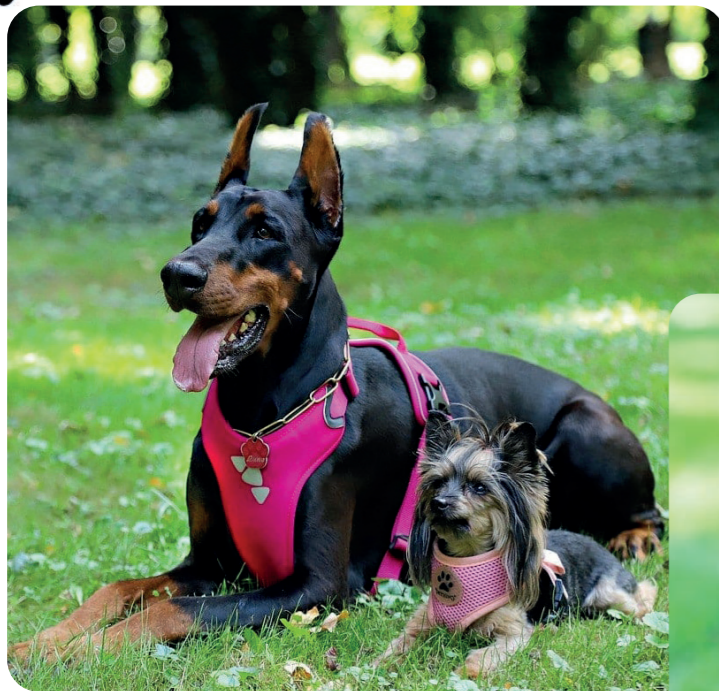
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..... Continued from page 19

The length is usually between 1 and 1.5 meters, which gives the dog room for some movement, but is short enough for the owner to be in control at all times.

Retractable leashes are very popular as they allow you to vary the length of the leash and with it your dog's freedom of movement. The handle is a locking mechanism in a plastic casing which enables you to lock the leash at different lengths. They retract automatically when the leash is loose.

However, beware of using the retractable leash with dogs that tend to pull on the leash. If you think about it logically, with a flexi leash the dog is rewarded for pulling – he pulls, the leash gets longer, and he gets to go where he wants. You cannot expect him to understand that he is only supposed to pull until the leash cannot extend anymore. To him it is logical to carry on pulling because he is used to that taking him to where he wants to go.

But if your dog is well trained and does not pull on the leash, the retractable leash can be a wonderful tool for combining freedom and control.



If your dog tends to chew his leash, you might manage him to discourage him by using a chain leash. Once he realises that no amount of biting will break the blasted thing, he might just give it up as a bad job. But it is up to you to make sure that he does give up chewing it, as he can damage his teeth if he persists.

Traditionally, dog harnesses have been used for tracking exercises, and trained tracking dogs know that when they are on the harness they are allowed to pull. Other dogs find the harness much more comfortable

to pull on than their collar, so the harness is really only good for dogs that do not tend to pull.

However, there is now a no pull dog harness which have the leash clipped to the front, i.e., the chest, so that when the dog pulls, he pulls himself around to face his owner.

There are collars and leashes for all thinkable dogs and situations, it is just a question of choosing the right ones. So, sit down and have a good talk with your dog and try to decide on a collar and leash that will suit you both.

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Festividad de la Virgen de Fátima – Tíjola



In the Almeria town of Tíjola, off the main road from Albox to Baza, it is the colourful Fiesta of Our Lady of Fatima, which this year is celebrated on 10th May.

Fatima is a town in central Portugal where the Virgin Mary appeared in front of three children who were shepherding their parents' flocks of sheep.

She appeared for the first time on 13th May 1917, and three more times on 13th July, August, and November.

She prophesied that one of the children would live to tell the world about what they had seen, and two would die soon.

Some claim that she also foresaw the second world war and the assassination attempt against Pope Juan Pablo II in 1981.

Her prophesy regarding the children proved true – the two younger children died within two years from Spanish flu, and the third, Lucía Dos Santos, became a nun who told the world about the apparition and lived to be almost 98.

The message of Our Lady of Fatima is protection and hope for those suffering, and she is celebrated in Tíjola with a procession accompanying her statue through the town every year in May.

What makes this fiesta and procession especially interesting is the colourful carpet of dyed sawdust that the inhabitants of Tíjola create along the streets through which the statue of the virgin will pass.

This fiesta was first celebrated in 1951, and the colourful sawdust carpets have achieved world fame. The artisans that produce them participated in a worldwide carpetmakers' project in 2021 with a 79 m2 carpet.

Hundreds of inhabitants and visitors gather every year in Tíjola in May to enjoy the sight of this unique and colourful procession and admire the skilfully crafted carpets.

Córdoba

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Central city (opposite Bullring)

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- Visit Setenil de las Bodegas

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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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Staying at:

4* Hotel Doña Maria
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- Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4

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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



Granada

NEW

2 Nights
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per person

9th ~ 11th November 2026

Staying at:

4* Soho Boutique

Central Old Granada (near Cathedral)

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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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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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per person

16th ~ 19th November 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel OH Campo

Spain - 800m from border

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4

* 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



Benidorm Christmas

4 Nights
*482€
per person

Self-drive Option also available

NEW

23rd ~ 27th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Presidente

Room with pool view

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Four nights in 4* hotel
Full Board includes wine and water
Gala Meal (25th)

* 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



Benidorm Christmas

4 Nights
*470€
per person

Self-drive Option also available

NEW

23rd ~ 27th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Ambassador Playa II

Standard room

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Four nights in 4* hotel
Full Board includes wine and water
Gala Meal (25th)

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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



Malaga Christmas Lights

NEW

2 Nights
*295€
per person

9th ~ 11th or 14th ~ 16th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Soho Boutique Equitativa

Central to 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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



Madrid

3 Nights
*tba€
per person

10th ~ 13th May 2027

Staying at:

4* Hotel Soho Boutique Opera

Prime location in city centre

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
Visit to Cáceres

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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



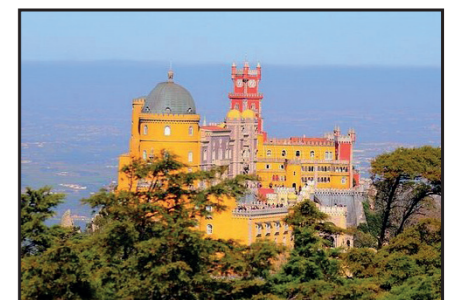
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Historical Cádiz

to Cádiz, which now commanded better access to the Atlantic. It became one of Spain's greatest and most cosmopolitan cities and home to trading communities from many countries, the richest of which were the Irishmen. Many of today's historic buildings in the Old City date from this era.

Among the many landmarks of historical and scenic interest in Cádiz, a few stand out. The city can boast of an unusual cathedral with gold tiled dome, an 18th-century watchtower, a vestige of the ancient city wall, an ancient Roman theatre, and electrical pylons of

Cádiz is the oldest continuously inhabited city in Spain and one of the oldest in south western Europe. It has been a principal home port for the Spanish Navy since the 18th century.

Despite its unique location, on a narrow slice of land surrounded by the sea, Cádiz is, in most respects, a typically Andalusian city with a wealth of attractive views and well-preserved historical landmarks.

The part of Cádiz within the remnants of the city walls is commonly referred to as the Old Town. It is characterised by the antiquity of its various quarters (barrios), among them El Pópulo, La Viña, and Santa María, which present a marked contrast to the newer areas of town.

The city is dotted with numerous parks where exotic plants flourish, including giant trees supposedly brought to Spain by Columbus from the New World.



an eye-catchingly modern design carrying cables across the Bay of Cádiz. The old town is characterized by narrow streets connecting squares (plazas), bordered by the sea and by the city walls. Most of the landmark buildings are situated in the plazas.

In recent years, the city has undergone much reconstruction. Many monuments, the cathedral, and significant landmarks have been cleaned and restored, adding to the charm of this ancient city.

There is an amazing new bridge that connects to the mainland and the town of El Puerto de Santa Maria, headquarters of Osborne and its famous bull silhouette.

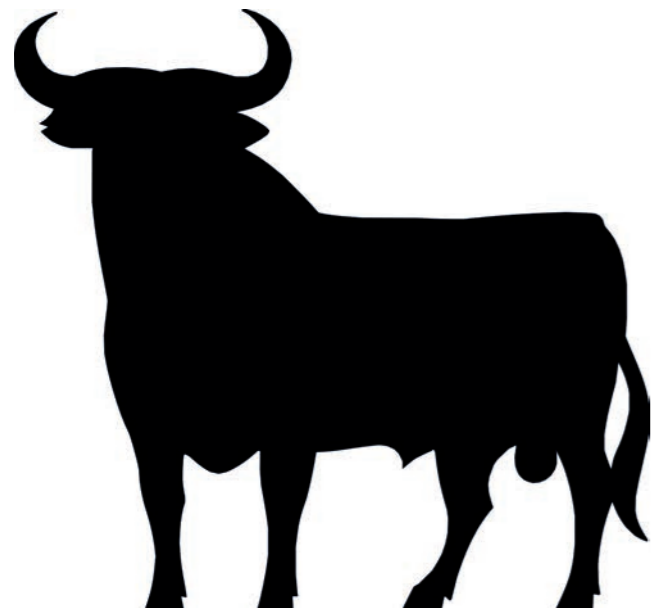
The Osborne bull is a 14-metre (46 ft) high black silhouetted image of a bull in semi-profile. Nowadays the conservation of the bulls is handled by the family of Félix Tejada.

The Osborne sherry company (founded by Thomas Osborne Mann in 1772) erected large images of bulls starting in 1956 to advertise their Brandy de Jerez. The images were black advertising boards (with the brand "Veterano" in red on it) located near major roads throughout Spain. The original image was smaller and slightly different in design. The current larger image was created to comply with a law that prohibited advertising within 150 metres of a road.

In 1994 the EU passed a law that prohibited all roadside advertising of alcoholic beverages, and the bulls were therefore to be removed. By this time the signs were nationally renowned, so although some campaigners wished them completely removed to fully comply with the intent of the law, public response resulted in the signs being retained, but completely blacked out to remove all reference to the original advertisers. The Court eventually allowed these signs to remain on the grounds that they have become a part of the landscape and have "aesthetic or cultural significance", thus turning the bulls into public domain images.

There are now only two signs in Spain with the word "Osborne" still written on them. One is at the Jerez de la Frontera airport in the province of Cadiz, and the other is in the nearby town of El Puerto de Santa María, where the Osborne headquarters is found.

There are about 90 examples of the Osborne bull silhouette boards. A few of them are also present, in a slightly different design, in Mexico, where it retains its advertising function.



Christopher Columbus sailed from Cádiz on his second and fourth voyages and the city later became the home port of the Spanish treasure fleet. Consequently, it became a major target of Spain's enemies.

The greater part of the old town was consumed in a major fire in 1569; and in April, 1587, a raid by Francis Drake occupied the harbour for three days, captured six ships, and destroyed 31 others (an event known as 'The Singeing of the King of Spain's Beard').

In the 18th century, the sandbanks of the Guadalquivir forced the Spanish government to transfer its American trade from Seville



HOMES & GARDENS

A Brief History of Spain....part 9 By Mike Woolnough

Last month we left Cortez and Pizarro securing central and southern America for Spain and in the process shipping vast quantities of gold and silver back home. However, "back home" things were also happening and we need to backtrack in order to catch up.

Isabella died in 1504 leaving Ferdinand to rule Castile alone while Aragon was ruled by their daughter Joanna, usually known as "Joanna the Mad". Ferdinand did not mourn for too long though. In 1506 he married a much younger French woman, Germaine of Foix. They had a son who, had he survived, would have ended the union of the crowns of Castile and Aragon. However, try as he might, Ferdinand failed to sire any further offspring. In order to help the process, he was taking medication to improve his potency and it was this that is thought to be the cause of his death in January 1516 at the age of 63.

His daughter, Joanna the Mad, now became Queen of both Castile and Aragon. She had previously, in 1496, married Philip the Handsome, Archduke of the House of Habsburg. It should be mentioned for the sake of accuracy that those with a greater right to the throne than her had already died.

Continued on page 28



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In 1506 Philip assumed the title, King of Castile jure uxoris (by right of his wife) and briefly became Philip I, but died shortly afterward. They had a son, Charles, who spent his formative years at the Habsburg court in Austria. The Habsburgs were the most successful royal family in Europe managing to marry themselves onto the thrones of Spain, the Netherlands, Germany, Hungary as well as Austria. On the death of his grandfather Charles reunited Castile and Aragon and officially became the first King of Spain, although Ferdinand had laid claim to the title. (Technically, Joanna co-ruled Aragon with him until her death, but as she had been imprisoned by this time it is purely academic!)

Charles arrived in Spain sporting the characteristic large lower jaw of the Habsburgs unable to speak more than a few words of Spanish, his arrival heralded 180 years of Habsburg rule. Although he was Charles I of Spain he was Charles V of Austria and his domain covered over one and half million square miles. His was the first to be called "the empire on which the sun never sets". But he had enemies, the Italian bits were seeking independence, the Ottoman Empire was constantly pushing for supremacy over "The Holy Roman Empire" of which he was Emperor, just another of his titles!

All of these wars cost money, so it is just as well that vast amounts were being shipped in from the Americas! Between 1503 and 1560 it is estimated that 16 million kilos of American silver were brought ashore in Seville. Prior to this, there had probably been no more than five million kilos in the whole of Europe. The silver was weighed in the Tower of Gold (Torre del Oro), which still stands today on the banks of the Guadalquivir river and is now a small naval museum. Despite this wealth, the wars fought by Charles virtually bankrupted Spain several times. By 1556 Charles had had enough, he took his

pet cat, pet parrot and his collection of clocks to the Monastery of San Geronimo de Yuste in Extremadura and called it a day. He gave Germany to his brother and to Philip, his son, went Spain, the Netherlands and the colonies.

Philip II was a sickly, serious, pious young man. He became king at the age of 29 and took his duties seriously. He insisted on all of the state documents being signed by him. He studied them all, making notes and correction where appropriate. (He became known as El Rey Papelero; the king of official papers!) As the court used to move around from one city to another this vast amount of paperwork also traveled around the country, often having difficulty keeping up. So Philip decided to centralise things. He chose a small town in the centre of the country and in 1578 the whole paraphernalia of government, including 10,000 officials moved from Toledo to Madrid doubling its population virtually overnight.

Whilst the warring factions on land still troubled the King there was another issue to worry about, piracy. The vast amounts of treasure being shipped from the Americas attracted interest from those keen to siphon some of it off for their own or their country's needs. Laying in wait for these ships was easy pickings. About 90 Spaniards had sailed across the Atlantic and back in a ship about 30 metres by 20 metres (roughly the size of my house plot) and by the time they were set upon by pirates they were not in a fit state to put up much of a fight! Of course, the Spanish saw these men as villains, the English on the other hand, saw them as heroes. Not least because one of them was their very own Sir Francis Drake.



Philip was getting fed up with the English, not just because of the piracy, but because they were Protestants and in his eyes heathens that needed to be converted. He was having the same problem with the Dutch and England was making matters worse by encouraging them to rebel! He had tried to solve the English problem by marrying Mary, the Catholic daughter of Henry VIII. But that had only resulted in England becoming more Protestant! So, after a couple of years, he left Mary to manage on her own! Mary was succeeded by her Protestant sister, Elizabeth which left Philip with only one course of action, he would teach the English a lesson they wouldn't forget! In 1586 he began to assemble a massive fleet that would join up with his army in the Netherlands. They were already there trying to persuade the Dutch that Catholicism was preferable to Protestantism. From there he would launch a massive attack on England. Over two years he assembled a fleet of 130 ships, 8,000 sailors and 19,000 soldiers not counting the ones already in the Netherlands! In late May 1588, the "Great and Most Fortunate Navy" set sail from A Coruña and headed for England....

My inspiration for these articles comes from "SPAIN, an amazingly short history" by Bob Fowke. Published by Travelbrief Publications. ISBN 0-9548351-0-7

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A Shot in the Dark?

A very loud bang rang out, sounding for all the world like a gunshot, echoing through the plane and intensifying the fear felt by passengers still recovering from a very bumpy take off. It was a night flight and the lights had just been dimmed.

“Madre Mia!! Que pasa,?” “My god, what was that!”

The stewardess passing through the plane with a trolley of sustenance for a plane full of mostly rather over weight, certainly well fed passengers, tried to reassure everyone.

“No os preocupéis! Please don’t worry”.

Just as she spoke and moved down the aisle to the next seat, a further loud bang reverberated through the cabin. A sleeping baby somewhere in the middle of the plane started to scream. This time very real panic could be felt, with some people standing up and the call sign at a seat somewhere near the front flashing alarmingly.

The young stewardess hindered by the trolley in front of her, did her best to calm the nearest passengers, whilst trying to catch the attention of her colleague in the front of the plane.

“Please stay in your seats, with your seat belt fastened. I’m sure there is nothing to worry about”.

She was joined by another colleague from the rear of the plane. They talked quietly so no passenger could hear.

“I don’t know what it was but it seemed to come from the front.”

As if in response, a further call sign started to flash while at the same time another bang rang out, again seemingly from the front of the plane.

The colleague newly arrived at the trolley was obviously more experienced and took charge,

By Aileen Cleave



“Maria, try to squeeze round the trolley and see what the alarm callers want. Theresa at the front has obviously gone to sleep”. Indeed, there was no sign of Theresa.

Maria had no trouble in squeezing her slender form past the trolley, and hurried up the aisle towards the first flashing light,

“You called, sir?” she asked the elderly gentleman, who, like other passengers, was looking decidedly agitated.

“I did” and he held out a large, very overfilled packet of crisps “I’m really hungry and want to eat these but it seems every time I open one of these a very loud bang ensues and it frightens passengers”.

Maria stared in disbelief at the old man.

“How many packets have you eaten?” she asked incredulously.

“Does it matter?” he asked, rather haughtily, “I’m very hungry and there is nothing else but Spanish olives on your trolley”.

Maria smiled sweetly at him.

“Of course not, sir” and went away to explain to her passengers the phenomenon of the air-filled crisp packet that can’t be opened without something of a loud bang.

Having explained via the microphone the totally prosaic reason for the so called gunshots, Maria steered the trolley to the tiny galley kitchen and drew the curtain, preparing to empty the trolley again.

“Now please”, she felt the coldness of steel against her temple, and heard the unmistakable menace in the quiet voice, “we don’t want a real gunshot, it would destroy the pressure in the cabin. Your colleagues are safely tied up with the pilot so to speak. We just need you to maintain calm while we divert the plane to Iran.”

The European Fire Bug

Warmer days are arriving, and with them the time for insects and other little poikilotherm creatures to reproduce and create endless numbers of little copies of themselves.

One of the most common insects in Spain is the European Fire Bug, *Pyrrhocoris apterus*.

These bugs live in orchards, gardens, parks and on wasteland. They are active in the daytime and like flowering plants, especially mallows, and they suck the sap from the flowers. If they can’t find any flowers, their second choice is cauliflower or cabbage, and because of this they are considered a pest.

They will also eat other insects and even resort to cannibalism.

The European firebugs measure between 6.5 and 12 mm and are easily recognisable with their intense red colour with black patches on their wings. Some have larger black patches than others, some have none at all; it seems that this is influenced by temperature, genetics, habitat etc.

Firebugs generally mate in April and May. They can be seen in tandem formation when mating which can take from 12 hours up to 7 days. The long period of copulating is probably used by the males as a form of ejaculate-guarding under high competition with other males.

They do not metamorphosize; the tiny nymphs appear from their eggs in the shape of very small beetles. They go through five nymphal stages, the length of each depending on the temperature; at low temperatures each stage can take up to 25 days.

The species has sexual morphism relating to their size; the females are larger than the males – 7 - 12 mm and 6.5 – 10 mm, respectively.



The size of the insects depends on the size of the eggs they hatched from. The smaller the egg, the smaller the adult insect. The smaller nymphs are very vulnerable; their chances of survival are minimal, and they often fall victim to cannibalism.

The age of the female who lays the eggs, the temperature and humidity all influence the size of the adult firebug.

The European firebug is not harmful to humans, although it can harm our crops in the areas where it has no access to flowers and other favourite foods. Sometimes, in years of excessive reproduction they do enter into our living spaces such as terraces or even indoors in houses. However, it is easy to keep the firebug at bay simply by raising physical barriers.

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The Cabo Machichaco Disaster



Pablo Isidro Duomarco. El "Cabo Machichaco" en llamas, visto por la popa, minutos antes de la explosión, 3 de noviembre de 1893, Colección Victor del Campo Cruz, Centro de Documentación de la Imagen de Santander, CDIS, Ayuntamiento de Santander.

The fire attracted a crowd of curious onlookers who watched the fire and the extinction work from the dock.

By 4 pm, the authorities were aware of the dangerous cargo on board the ship – in fact, the fire had been caused by a flacon of sulphuric acid exploding. However, no steps were taken to evacuate the port area.

An hour later, the two holds in the prow of the ship exploded. The explosion produced a great wave which washed many watchers into the sea. The wave was felt throughout the whole bay of Santander.

Some buildings nearby collapsed from the shock wave, and hundreds of pieces of iron shrapnel shot several kilometres through the air.

A shrine, situated in a rural area some kilometres from the city, could not resist the shock wave and also collapsed.

There were even eyewitnesses who claimed that a hawser reached the town of Peñacastillo, 8 km away, and killed a person.

Everybody on board the Cabo Machichaco was killed immediately, including the majority of the local military and civilian authorities of Santander. The civil governor was in the port area too, helping with the extinction work. His walking stick was later found on the San Martín beach, kilometres away. Also, many of the onlookers lost their lives.

A total of 590 lives were lost that day, and there were more than 500 wounded, although some have claimed that the wounded exceeded 2,000.

A few years later, a memorial monument was raised in the city to commemorate the many victims of the disaster.

The greatest civil disaster in Spain's modern history took place in Santander in Cantabria on 3rd November 1893.

It happened in the port, where the steam ship Cabo Machichaco, a cabotage vessel built in Newcastle, was moored.

The ship was moored in the inner port in spite of the fact that it carried 52 tonnes of dynamite on board as well as several flacons of sulphuric acid. Normally, ships that carried dangerous goods were loaded and unloaded on the outskirts of the port, but for some reason, the dynamite and sulphuric acid had not been registered anywhere, and the Cabo Machichaco was moored close to the city centre.

In the early afternoon, the authorities received word that a fire had started on board the Cabo Machichaco and that the crew were trying to put it out with what limited equipment they had on board.

Crews from other ships were helping, and soon most of the local technicians and authorities were involved in the fire fighting as well.





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Joan Miró i Ferrà

Modern day Spanish Catalan painter, sculptor and ceramist

Joan Miró was born in Barcelona on 20th April 1893 to a family of watchmakers and goldsmiths. He was drawn to the arts throughout the early years and in 1920 he moved to Paris, France, to follow his dream. There he developed his own style that is generally regarded as Surrealism. However, he refused membership to any artistic movement in order to allow him to experiment with styles and ideas without compromising the group.

He pursued his own interests in the art world, ranging from automatic drawing and surrealism, to expressionism and Color Field painting.

Once asked how he got his inspiration - "How did I think up my drawings and my ideas for painting? Well I'd come home to my Paris studio in Rue Blomet at night, I'd go to bed, and sometimes I hadn't any supper. I saw things, and I jotted them down in a notebook. I saw shapes on the ceiling..."

Miró married Pilar Juncosa in Palma de Mallorca on October 12, 1929; their daughter Dolores was born July 17, 1931.

In 1948-49, although living in Barcelona, Miró made frequent visits to Paris to work on printing techniques at the Mourlot Studios (lithographs) and at the Atelier Lacourrière (engravings). A close relationship lasting forty years developed with the printer Fernand Mourlot and resulted in the production of over one thousand different lithographic editions.

In 1959, at the request of André Breton, Miró represented Spain in The Homage to Surrealism exhibition together with works by Enrique Tábara, Salvador Dalí, and Eugenio Granell.



La Leçon de Ski - in a Contemporary Art Museum in Venezuela



The Tilled Field - can be found in Guggenheim Museum

In the final decades of his life Miró accelerated his work in different media, producing hundreds of ceramics, including the Wall of the Moon and Wall of the Sun that can be found at the UNESCO building in Paris. He also made temporary window paintings (on glass) for an exhibition.

In 1974, Miró created a tapestry for the World Trade Center in New York City where it was displayed for many years. It is reported to be one of the most expensive works of art lost during the attack of the twin towers.

One of Miró's most important works, his only glass mosaic mural, Personnage Oiseaux (Bird Characters), can be found in the Ulrich Museum of Art, Kansas, USA. The mural is one of Miró's largest two-dimensional projects, undertaken when he was 79 and completed when he was 85 years of age. The entire south wall of

the Ulrich Museum is the foundation for the 28 ft by 52 ft (8.53 m x 15.85 m) mural, composed of one million pieces of marble and Venetian glass mounted on specially treated wood in 40 panels, attached to the concrete wall on an aluminum grid.

He was to go to the dedication of the mural in 1978, but he fell at his studio in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, and was unable to travel.

His home and studio in Mallorca served him from 1956 until his death on 25th December 1983. He had become bedridden and suffered from heart disease and respiratory problems. His body is buried at the Montjuïc cemetery in Barcelona.

Joan Miró won several awards in his lifetime. In 1954 he was given the Venice Biennale print making prize, in 1958 the Guggenheim International Award and in 1980 he received the Gold Medal of Fine Arts from King Juan Carlos of Spain.



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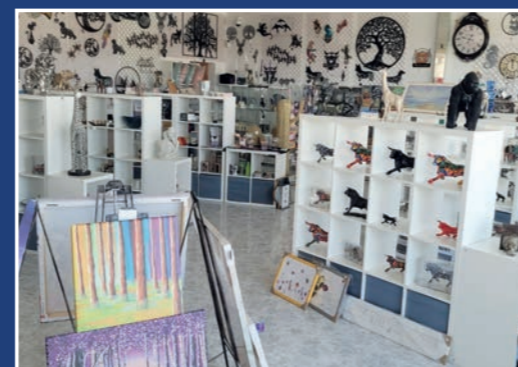
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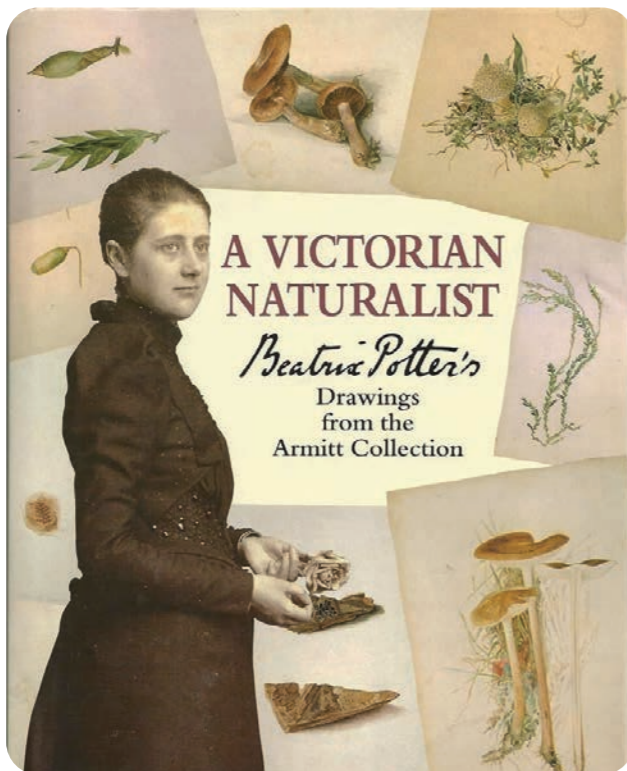


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Fungi & Beatrix Potter

There is a Scary Mary TV show, based on a computer game, called, The Last of Us. In the show a fungus called Cordyceps does everlasting serious damage to the human race. This fictional parasite, inspired by real insect-infecting Cordyceps fungi, spreads through spores or bites, turning humans into aggressive, zombie-like hosts. It is, in my humble opinion, a much better version of The Walking Dead, as it does have some sort of scientific logic to backup this total zombie invasion. The show draws from the "zombie-ant fungus" that hijacks insect brains, though real versions, at the moment, can't survive human body heat. Though our ever-evolving climate might change that minor point.

No precise count exists for the global fungi populations due to their microscopic nature and vast diversity. Estimates are ranging from 2.2 to 3.8 million species. Fungi are amazing entities and they are just one part of our amazing planet which, if you didn't know, is divided up into The Six Kingdoms. (Westeros Seven Kingdoms, and Middle-Earth are included in Animalia.)



By Tom Fynes

- Animalia: Primates and other Mammals, birds, and insects.
- Plantae: Trees and flowers.
- Fungi: Mushrooms and yeasts.
- Protista: Amoebas and algae.

- Bacteria (Eubacteria): E. coli – etc.
- Archaea (Archaeobacteria): Thriving exclusively in oxygen-free environments.

The biggest living entity on Earth is a fungal mycelium network in Oregon's Malheur National Forest, spanning over 2,400 acres and dating back 2,400 to 8,650 years. Fungi produce life-saving drugs: penicillin fights infections, cyclosporine prevents organ transplant rejection, and lovastatin lowers cholesterol. Yeast fungi were used for brewing mead 9,000 years ago, and baking, around 5,000 years ago.

Fungi decompose dead matter, recycling nutrients like carbon and nitrogen; without them, Earth would be buried

in organic waste. Fungi connect tree roots, forming a 500-million-year-old network for sharing nutrients, water, and warnings about threats. Certain fungi can break down plastics in weeks instead of years, offering hope for our plastic infested planet. Only one known fully aquatic fungus exists, adapted to submerged life. Fungi, it seems, does not like sea water. And yes, given the right climate conditions, it could take over our brain and turn us all into walking dead zombies. There is always a downside it seems.

There is a slim hope for us all though, in our battle to resist a possible brain invasion, if it ever happens, by these bad actor fungi. And these would-be heroes of humanity are also a branch of the fungal families. Fungi hyperparasites are just that, parasites that live on the brain controlling parasites. Unfortunately, they will just slow down the invasion. If you get infected, you are toast. Ants do a lot of self-cleaning to avoid infection. Any ants infected are removed from the nest. So, mankind saved by hyperparasites, may not be the headline grabber we will see after all.

Now, what has all of this to do with Peter Rabbit and Jemima Puddle-Duck? Well, it turns out Helen Beatrix Potter was an expert on Fungus and had written a scientific paper called "On the Germination of the Spores of Agaricineae." Potter prepared it as an amateur mycologist based on her spore germination experiments and illustrations, submitting it to the Linnean Society in 1897. Since women couldn't attend or present scientific papers, it was read out by George Masee and totally ignored.

The Linnean Society of London was founded in 1788, it is the world's oldest society dedicated to natural history, taxonomy, and biological sciences. It finally opened its doors to women in 1905. In 1997 it issued a posthumous apology to Beatrix Potter, for her "scurvily" poor treatment at the hands of The Linnean Society Boys Club of London's Bounders & Cads.

So here we have Helen Beatrix Potter, a Victorian woman, with a very Victorian middle name, excluded from her true love of studying fungi. What could she do? She was already a fantastic illustrator, having dissected animals and plants to discover how they were put together. She channelled her amazing, detailed observations, into



tales of her pet mice, rabbits, and hedgehogs from her Kensington gardens. So, for Beatrix, blending extremely accurate illustrations with fantasy for children, was a genius move.

Helen Beatrix Potter never mentioned fungi in her stories of Peter Rabbit, though, there may be an odd image of a mushroom in a background scene. I sometimes do wish she had put her vast talent to extolling the virtues of fungi. It's got a very bad rap from the Zombie shows. Just think of the remake, if Helen Beatrix Potter had been taken a bit more seriously by the Linnean Boys Club and she had gone on to have written some serious fantasy, about a wonderful

pigeons instead, as there was a bigger market out there for books about pigeons.

So, Beatrix Potter gets ignored and we end up with Peter Rabbit. Darwin gets read and we end up with something that changed our world. The mind boggles, if Darwin had been ignored by the Linnean Society Boys Club, could we have ended up with, Peter Pigeon and his Flying Rat Circus.

Never mind. Helen Beatrix Potter, can I say from all of us, you helped shape our childhood for the better. Even if you never got to be a famous mycologist fungi maestro.



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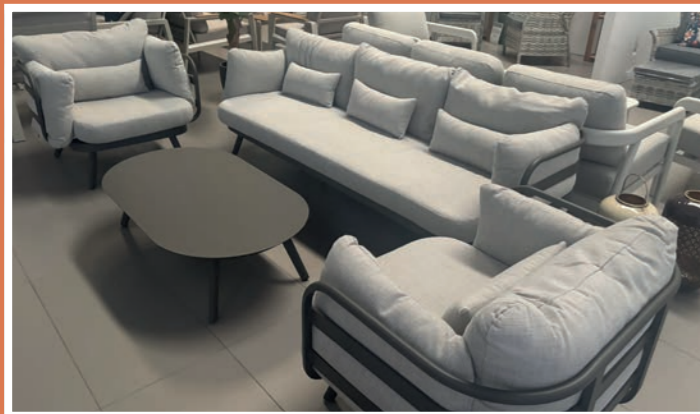
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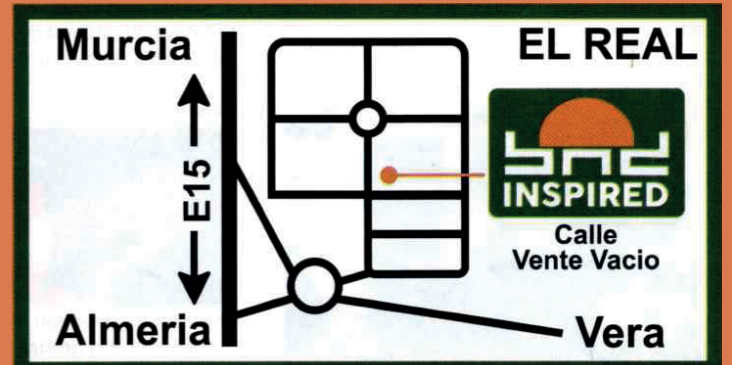
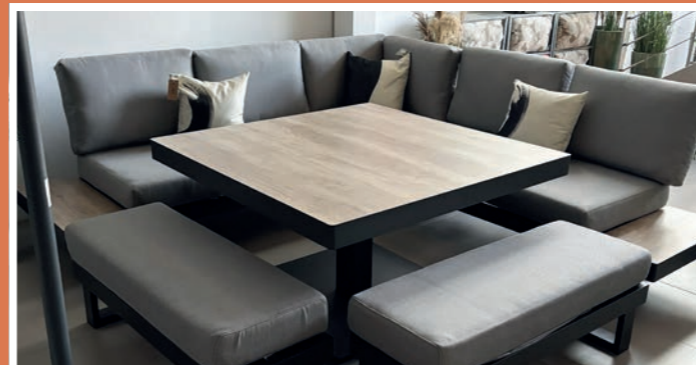




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GOING GREEN

The lithium conundrum

By Jason Lowther

I can't believe this is the 4th anniversary of my first contribution to Almeria Living. Time certainly does fly, and there are still plenty of topics that I can reach for the literature on. This one was inspired by a recent trip to Extremadura, and a story about community resistance to a planned series of lithium mines. We hear a lot about rare-earth metals these days and how they are such a crucial ingredient in our lifestyles, turning up, as they do, in our phones, computers, tablets and electric cars etc. There's no denying that they are significant but calling them 'rare' should give us a clue as to their availability. I've written before about deep-sea mining emerging as a potential new source of them, however the environmental risks are real and potentially irreversible, so to slow down that next 'grab' of finite resources, make sure you recycle your old tech. Anyway, this month it's not about rare earths specifically, rather another important metal that is almost always in the same conversation, and often mistakenly labelled a rare earth, lithium.

Lithium is the foundational element in rechargeable (lithium-ion) batteries, so an ever present in your devices and the mainstay of the electric car industry. Aside from that, it is used in the production of ceramics, various lubricants and even medication. It is a metal, the lightest of them in fact, and it is soft and extremely reactive. You might remember science experiments at school when it was dropped in water and fizzed away. It doesn't actually occur on its own, it's either found in 'brine', commonly from salt flats, where it can be extracted through a chemical process (one which I can't



really explain, as I wasn't great at chemistry!), or it is processed from mined ores. Those ores are mainly obtained from hard granite-like, igneous (volcanic) rock formations.

Continued on page 46

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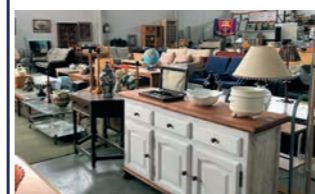
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..... Continued from page 45

Extracting lithium is a dirty, potentially dangerous and environmentally challenging activity, regardless of whether it is a brine-sourced or won from either large scale open-cast or underground mines. The major producers globally are in Australia, China, Latin America and Zimbabwe. In fact, the so-called 'Lithium Triangle' that exists across Argentina, Bolivia and Chile holds around half of the world's known reserves of the metal. That said, Australia currently is the largest producer, mainly through open-cast mining, and it hosts the largest open-cast mine in the world, the Greenbushes mine as shown in the photo. The scale is breathtaking and obviously the impacts are significant. Arguably, the size of the country means that there are, overall, net global benefits from the extraction of a resource that has a clear contribution to make in climate terms, although the local impacts are highly significant. Europe is ramping up its production with Portugal and Poland holding the largest reserves, although Extremadura's proximity to Portugal, and with it some shared geology, has put the issue on the agenda for communities in the region.

Lithium mining, particularly through open-cast methods, has a range of environmental and social impacts. The most immediate is land disturbance, as large areas are cleared for pits, infrastructure, and waste rock dumps. This process fragments habitats and can significantly reduce biodiversity, especially in previously undisturbed ecosystems. Alongside physical disruption, chemical pollution poses a serious risk. The extraction and processing of lithium, whether from hard rock or brine, require chemical inputs, and there is potential for toxic substances to leak into surrounding soil and water. Waste materials, or tailings, can also contain harmful compounds, with long-term contamination risks if storage systems fail.

Although lithium is central to low-carbon technologies, its production is energy-intensive. Hard-rock mining, common in Australia, involves crushing and heating ore, generating carbon emissions, while additional emissions arise from transport and processing, often carried out in China. Air quality is another concern, as dust and particulates from blasting and hauling can affect both workers and nearby communities. Social impacts are also evident: water scarcity and land-use changes can disrupt local populations, and, finally, the industry generates substantial waste, with long-term risks associated with storing tailings and other by-products. So, I suppose the prospect of a large mine as a neighbour isn't one that will fill local residents with joy.

The proposed lithium mine near Cáceres, known as the San José de Valdeflórez project, has become a focal point for tensions between climate policy and local environmental protection. Initially planned by the Australian company behind the development as a large open-cast mine on the edge of the city, the project raised immediate concerns due to its proximity to Cáceres' historic urban area, which is rightly celebrated for its cultural value. It would have been literally 1.4km away. Although developers later revised the proposal to an underground operation, local opposition has remained strong.

Residents and campaigners argue that the mine poses significant environmental risks, particularly to water resources, local ecosystems, and landscape quality. These concerns are amplified by fears that industrial activity so close to the city could undermine tourism, which is a key pillar of the local economy, and there is a fear that it could undermine a bid for European City of Culture status in 2031. Questions have also been raised about chemical pollution and the long-term management of mining waste.

In response, a broad resistance movement has emerged, led by

groups such as Salvemos la Montaña de Cáceres. In 2025, Salvemos, the European Environmental Bureau, Amigas de la Tierra and Friends of the Earth Europe produced a Factsheet on the issue, which is worth a read if you're interested. Through protests, public campaigns, and political engagement, opponents have challenged the project's legitimacy, arguing that it lacks social consent and prioritises external economic interests over local wellbeing. The Cáceres case now stands as a clear example of the complex trade-offs involved in sourcing materials for the energy transition. But is it, can we legitimately ask, NIMBY-ism (not in my back yard)? I mean, we all want the product, but so long as it's sourced somewhere else, right? That's been the way that wealthier nations and societies have long operated. Making sure that the realities of resource extraction are either out of sight and out of mind in less developed nations, or with these things located in areas where poorer or disenfranchised communities are, so that they won't organise and put a fight to the powerful interests looking to do their damaging business there. I'm not sure, given the cultural importance of the area, that it is purely NIMBY-ism at work. The setting of the town is part of its character, and that character is not maintained by large-scale industrial mining.

The Cáceres project has stalled many times, but ultimately it is suspected that mining will commence in 2027, some years after it was originally planned. The local opposition and solidarity have



together gained concessions from the developers, such as their backing away from the planned open-cast mining, with its propensity to leave indelible marks on landscapes, to underground mining, which is more costly in terms of the pure economics, although still profitable, but less impactful both visually and in terms of the disturbance of ecosystems and the wildlife that depends on them. There are other projects planned in the region, and we have to wait and see as to whether this one will provide the template for a more responsible development process, with mitigation of environmental and cultural harms at the heart of the development decisions.

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By Dean North

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- Studies also link hydrotherapy use with reductions in **insomnia symptoms**

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5. Joint Support & Mobility

Ideal for all ages and especially valuable for active lifestyles or



ageing joints.

- Buoyancy reduces body weight load, making movement easier
- Hydrotherapy supports rehabilitation and improves **mobility without impact stress**

☞ This is why hydrotherapy is widely used in **European rehabilitation centres**.

A Balanced View

It's important to be clear: while many studies show strong benefits, some reviews highlight that **more large-scale clinical trials are still needed** for definitive conclusions.

However, across both research and real-world use, hydrotherapy is widely recognised as:

- A **safe complementary therapy**
- A **preventative wellness tool**
- A **proven way to improve quality of life**

Why It Matters in Spain

In Spain, lifestyle is everything—**outdoor living, family, relaxation, and wellbeing**.

Hydrotherapy fits naturally into this way of life:

- Enjoy warm evenings under the stars
- Recover after sport, work, or travel
- Create a space for family and social connection
- Build a daily habit of relaxation and wellbeing

This is not just about health—it's about **how you live**.

Final Thought

Hydrotherapy brings together science, tradition, and lifestyle in one simple experience:

Warm water. Gentle movement. Total relaxation.

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THE MOON

By Jos Biggs

The President of the United States, Richard Nixon, said emphatically, 'We are going to explore the moon. For certain, if the United States are to be the Leaders of the World, we have to explore the moon, and claim it for our nation.'

The Wise Man replied 'Don't do it. It will be a waste of millions of dollars.'

'Why do you say that? Enquired the President. 'The United States are world leaders, it is appropriate.'

'In your opinion,' answered the Wise Man. 'But I tell you again, don't do it. It is not worth it.'

'But' stormed the President 'Probably there is much of value up there, such as gold and platinum.'

'No.' Answered the Wise Man, calmly. 'There is nothing up there but blue cheese.'

'Ridiculous!'

The President left in a furious temper, and ordered a team to go and explore the moon.

When they returned, the President asked 'Well? Did you find gold, or platinum, or anything valuable?'

'No.' answered the leader, Neil Armstrong. 'No.' echoed his first assistant Buzz Aldrin. 'The moon is made of nothing except blue cheese.'

'My God!' Exclaimed the President. 'Don't tell anyone! Keep it a secret, no-one must discover this.'

They never told anyone. It is still a secret to all adults.



But every child knows that the moon is made of blue cheese.

*A pity no one told NASA. Or maybe they were sent up to check whether the moon was blue cheese all the way round?

Whatever, it was wonderful achievement.

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Festival de los Patios de Córdoba



Córdoba is a city famous for its patios decorated with seas of flowers, many of which can be visited any time of year.

However, every year in May, usually the second and third weeks, but this year from 4th to 17th May, the so-called Fiesta de los Patios is celebrated, and a multitude of visitors from all over flock to the

city, which is also famed for its unique Mosque-Cathedral, to enjoy the amazing sight of the colourful patios.

The Fiesta de los Patios is a competition run by the Town Hall.

It started in 1921 when the then Mayor of Córdoba established the first 'Competition of patios, balconies, and display windows'. The event was not a great success and was not repeated until 1933. Then the Civil War prevented a repetition until it was finally reinstated in 1944 as an annual event, and with the advent of democracy in 1977, the present foundation for the contest was laid.

This year there will be four categories to compete in: Old Architecture, Modern Architecture, Unique Patios, and Best Young Patio. There are eight prizes in each category, from 1st to 8th.

The festival was declared Fiesta of National Cultural Interest in 1980, and in 2012 the UNESCO declared it an Intangible Cultural World Heritage site.

Many of the houses in Spain have a patio, but in Córdoba the patio is a physical space incorporated in the dwelling. It has become a unique area which is just as important as the interior of the house. It was the Romans, and later the Muslims, who used the patio as a

living space.

The patios play an important role in the social life of the city, and for generations they have been a space where you entertain your guests.

The Town Hall organises the contest and judges the competition. The contestants spend hours working to perfect the patios in the hope that they will win one of the prestigious prizes. They turn the patios in to a rich palette of colours where white forms the background for the flowers and their wide range of colours.

A great number of the patios are open to visitors all year round, and many prefer to go at a different time to avoid the crowds and queues that inevitably form during the Fiesta. However, during this time the patios are more beautiful than ever, and the city is the venue of a great array of additional cultural events including, apart from Flamenco music and dance, chamber music and other concerts and performances.

Like most of the other Spanish fiestas, the Fiesta de los Patios de Córdoba was cancelled during 2020 and 2021 due to Covid. Of course, 2021 was the 100th anniversary of the start of the Festival, which could not be ignored. Therefore, a number of acts were celebrated without public participation, and a virtual visit was put online to enable as many people as wanted to, to take in the details of the beautiful patios.

In 2022 visitors returned in force to make up for the two lost years, and the number of visitors exceeded 320,000.

Visiting the patios is free of charge, although the owners appreciate donations to help with the upkeep of the spaces and flowers.

Staying on the subject of colourful fiestas, we do actually have a very beautiful annual event much closer to home – in Tijola, off the main road from Albox to Baza.



It is the Fiesta of Our Lady of Fatima, which this year is celebrated on 10th May.

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Return to Woop Woop Land

By Mike Pinnock

Tom Fynes article in April's edition of the magazine mentioned that those of us who live inland in places like Albox and Arboleas are residing in Woop Woop Land. I know what he meant.

I live in that outback, and it reminded me of my experience when I returned there in September 2023, after spending the August in the UK . . .

I knew something of what to expect when I arrived at the cortijo, because my neighbours who check on the place, emailed me some photographs. Parts of the ceilings in two bedrooms had caved in, because the roof leaked during the March storms and the water built up between the roof and ceiling. But when I arrived at the cortijo I found the damage was much worse than I'd expected.

I also had another unpleasant surprise that our neighbours had been too fearful to mention: a rat had made the cortijo its home – I found its droppings all over the place, but the vast majority were in my partner's bedroom because in the July heat she'd slept with the patio doors open. The damned rodent was still there somewhere.

I took all the furniture out of the bedroom apart from the bed, and everything out of the adjoining dressing room, except for some suitcases that were stacked in one corner. There was no sign of the thing but then I saw it peeking out over the top of a suitcase.

I closed the bedroom door, opened the patio doors, and jerked a case to the floor. There was a squeal, and it scuttled away and hid under the bed.

In the morning it was gone, out the way it had come in. But it took me several days to sweep up its droppings.

On Sunday I got up early and went for a jog along the rambla. It was a total of six miles there and back. I had done the run many times before, but I knew that would be my slowest recorded time – old age was rapidly catching me up.

That early in the morning, before the sun is properly up, it was still warm, but parts of the rambla bordered by rock faces remained in the shade until later in the morning, so it was cooler.

In the distance there was the crack of a rifle; Sunday is when the Spanish go hunting rabbits. That morning I saw only one; usually



numerous bunnies scamper across in front of me when they hear my footsteps, but the heavy rain and floods that filled the rambla in March must have drowned many of them in their warrens. The podenco dog that I named Pedro did not run out to join me at the usual point this morning; when I last saw him, he was wearing a heavy chain around his neck for the first time; I suspected he'd been sold – or worse . . .

For the last half mile of my jog I left the main track and followed a narrower water-washed gully. In some places the rainwater ran underground, but there, a small stream still trickled down. Further along, the ground was not waterlogged but was stained a wet, dark brown, and in places it was spotted with the imprints of the hooves of wild boar.

The floods had changed the topography of the rambla: bamboo canes now impaired my progress where before the way had been clear. I had to climb over or through them, at one point the water had carved a deep channel, which I was forced to leap over.

I rested at the end of my run out on a familiar flat rock, before starting back; Pedro – who by then had usually zoomed off somewhere hunting rabbits – would always reappear there with his tongue hanging out, panting. But that day I was there alone in the silence.

At dusk, in a corner of my bedroom, I found a gecko upside down on the ceiling. In some cultures they are regarded as a bearer of good luck. I named him Cedric. He would be my company there until my partner arrived.

He had made his home behind a picture, and when I went to bed at midnight he had already retired behind it for a nap.

Mike Pinnock is a member of the Written Word Group and this article is an excerpt from the last chapter of his book "Halfway There - An Oldie's Walk Across Europe," which is being published in July.



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THE TOWER

Godfrey was ten years old, the son of a nobleman. He enjoyed a good life. Plenty to eat, one good friend, and lots of freedom to ride his pony around his father's vast estates.

It came as a surprise when one morning his father, usually a remote figure, took him into his study and shut the door firmly behind them. 'Godfrey, you are a good, intelligent boy.' Godfrey blushed and wondered what his father was about to say.

'I am going to ask you to do something quite special. And I am going to ask you to do it in secret.'

Godfrey loved secret missions. Had not he and his friend Adam just returned from a sortie into France riding their faithful steeds?

'May Adam come with me, Father?'

His father frowned. 'Certainly not! And you must not breathe a word of this to him, or anyone else for that matter.'

His father looked at him with a steely expression. 'On the life of your dear departed mother, swear that you will do as I say.'

Godfrey realised this was a serious business. He felt very grown up as he raised his hand and obeyed.

The next day father and son rode out at dawn into the hazy mist of an English autumn day. Godfrey found the journey tiring but he was buoyed up by excitement.

They passed the moat as the sun was going down. 'Are we going into the Tower, father?' His father put his fingers to his lips, showed a pass to the guard, and they made their way into the massive white building. Godfrey glanced up to admire the windows and arrow-slits glittering in the evening light.

'We will spend the night here, my son. But tomorrow I must leave you on your own.'

Godfrey was nervous at the prospect of being left alone. However, he was very tired and soon fell sound asleep.

In the morning, after a chunk of bread and a mug of watered wine, his father took him in his arms and bade him farewell. 'Remember my orders.'

Godfrey sat in his room and waited. As a distant clock struck the hour, there was a knock on the heavy door. A page entered. 'Follow me, young sir.'

Godfrey wended his way along the corridor, past the elaborate great hall and out into the gardens with their stunning riverside backdrop.

Standing uncertainly in a little alcove were two young boys, dressed almost identically in blue doublets and flesh coloured hose. Godfrey thought they looked sad but was pleased to note a little flicker of a smile pass both their lips as he approached.

The page bowed low. 'Sires, your new companion, Master Godfrey.'

Godfrey remembered his father's instructions as the page intoned, 'Be kind and gentle to these young sirs. Try to make their days brighter. But ask no questions.'

The boys were shy at first. However, a new hoop game devised by Godfrey soon had them shouting and laughing, their shoulder length hair billowing in the warm breeze. When they tired they sat down with an ivory chess piece and Godfrey had to admit defeat as each in turn displayed their sharp wits and taught him new moves. Servants and guards alike rejoiced as their merriment echoed round the battlements.

Godfrey never forgot his three magical days playing with the Princes Edward and Richard in the seclusion of the Tower gardens. He kept

By Evelyn McCrorie



his word and did not reveal his small part in the Tower's turbulent history.

However he often wondered why he never saw or heard from the Princes again

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Nispero Tree & Fruit



The fruit tree known in Spain as Nispero, is actually the Loquat (*Eriobotrya Japonica*) of the Rosaceae family and indigenous to southeastern China, where it has been cultivated for over 1000 years.

It is an evergreen with long dark green slender leaves with a leathery texture. The plants usually flower in autumn and the fruit is ripe in April to May. The fruit is delicate and bruises easily so does not travel well. It is particularly popular with birds which is why the tree is often seen protected by a net as the fruit ripens.

The flowers are small and white with 5 petals and are produced in clusters of 3 – 10 flowers. They give a sweet heady scent.

The fruit can be oval, rounded or even pear-shape – typically oval in Spanish varieties – with a slightly downy yellow to orange skin. The tangy yellow flesh becomes sweeter when the fruit is soft. Each fruit contains 3-5 large brown seeds.

The loquat is comparable with its distant relative, the apple, with a high sugar, acid and pectin content, making it a good fruit for jam, jelly and chutney. They are also delicious served poached in light syrup and make a pleasant light wine.

Loquat syrup is used in Chinese medicine for soothing the throat and combined with other ingredients can soothe the digestive and respiratory systems.

The seeds and young leaves of the plant are slightly poisonous as they contain small amounts of cyanogenetic glycosides, which release cyanide when digested. However, the low concentration and bitter flavour normally prevents enough being eaten to do harm.

As the fruit is low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium and high in vitamin A, B6, potassium and manganese as well as dietary fibre it has many health benefits.

The kumquat, although bearing a similar name is not botanically related to the Loquat.

Cordero Alcarreño – Lamb from The Alcarria Region in Guadalajara

The Alcarria Region covers most of the central and southern areas of Guadalajara, and it also stretches into the provinces of Madrid and Cuenca.



A special bloodline of lamb is bred there, the Cordero alcarreño.

The lambs are free-range, and up until the time they are sent for slaughter, at the age of 30 to 85 days, they have nothing but mother's milk and mature grain. Their young age combined with their diet ensures that there are few saturated fats, but plenty high quality protein in their meat.

The mummy sheep graze in environmentally sustainable pastures in which wild aromatic plants abound, and their milk give the lambs' meat its unique and delicate flavour and texture.

When the lamb is served roasted in the restaurants of Guadalajara, they prefer using suckling lamb and use only local ingredients for its preparation- everything produced locally the Alcarria Region to ensure the least travel time possible and thus fresher products. Furthermore, they swear that not only the lamb, but also their extra virgin olive oil, honey and fresh herbs, are of a superior quality to those found in other areas of Spain.

Now, it is of course impossible for us down here in Almería to obtain all the ingredients from the Alcarria Region, and even if we could, they wouldn't be as fresh by the time they got here, but if you

¡Buen Provecho!



should fancy roasting a lamb (you may even be able to buy 'cordero alcarreño' online), the Alcarria way, this is how to go about it.

First, you rub your piece of meat thoroughly with salt and garlic making sure the flavours get worked properly into the meat. You then sprinkle it with extra virgin olive oil and, optionally, some honey and rosemary, if you want to lend a little sweetness to the flavour.

Place the meat in a roasting tin and cook it in the oven at a moderate and constant temperature during one and a half to two hours, depending on the size.

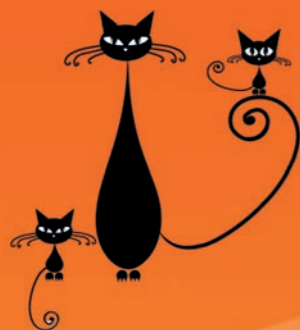
The secret is in roasting it really slowly at a moderate heat to avoid drying out the meat.

When it is done, let it rest for a while, to allow the meat juices to redistribute and penetrate the meat to make the meat even more tender and succulent.

Serve this delicacy with potato wedges and green beans, and enjoy!

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Cooking with Nina



Oven in May?

For some unknown reason, all the recipes I've got for you this month are cooked in the oven. No rhyme or reason, and it wasn't on purpose, that's just how it turned out.

But don't let that put you off. You may think, 'I'm not slaving over a hot oven now the weather has finally turned warm and it's nice to be outdoors' – but a gas (or indeed charcoal) barbecue works as good as an oven if you put your food over on indirect heat and close the lid.

So please don't have any qualms or prejudice – soon oven cooking in summer will be second nature to you.

Read, cook and enjoy!

Dorada Fillets with Lemon Butter

I do love fish, but I'm not a great fan of gutting, scaling and cleaning it.

Thankfully, supermarkets nowadays often have a fresh, prepared fish to save me (and you and everybody else) the trouble.

When I want fish, I go straight for the fish fridge and avoid the unruly queue by the fresh fish counter as well as the unpleasant fish prep. It's win-win!

And when I want it really easy, I buy fresh, filleted fish. It doesn't get any easier than that!

Use more or less lemon to get the lemon butter to your liking.

Ingredients for two:

- 2 fillets of dorada (sea bream)
- ½ bunch green asparagus
- 75g butter
- 1/2 – 1 lemon, juice and finely grated rind

First, melt the butter in a small saucepan until it's just golden. Take it off the heat and remove the white foam. Add the lemon rind and juice, stir and put the saucepan back over a low heat, and let it bubble for a minute or so.

Place the fillets in a greased oven proof dish together with the asparagus. Pour over the lemon butter and bake it in the oven at 200°C for 8-10 minutes until the fish is done.

Serve with rice or small, new potatoes.

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Shoulder of Lamb in the Oven

I must admit that lamb wasn't staple Easter fare at home when I was a kid, but I've certainly done my best to make up for it since running my own household! A leg of lamb at Easter is a must.

However, making a whole leg of lamb for one person (and, say Dakota and Pimpernel, a dog and a cat) is a bit exaggerated, so for the last couple of years I've decided to go without and make lamb chops instead.

But it's not the same!

So, this year I threw common sense to the wind while at the same time compromising, and bought a shoulder instead.

It did me 3 meals, and some for the four-leggeds too, and it was really great!

Ingredients for four:

- 1 shoulder of lamb
- Salt and freshly ground pepper
- 750g potatoes, sliced (2-3 mm thick)
- 1 onion, halved and sliced (2-3 mm thick)
- 8-10 cloves garlic, peeled and left whole (optional)
- 3-4 twigs rosemary
- 30ml extra virgin olive oil
- 200ml white wine
- 200ml water or lamb stock
- Half a lemon

Score the meat in three or four places and season with salt and pepper

Put the potatoes, onion and garlic in a roasting dish and season with salt and pepper. Stick the lamb shoulder on top, add the rosemary twigs and drizzle everything with the olive oil.

Pour the wine and water/stock over the potatoes and drip the juice from the half lemon over the lamb.

Stick the roasting dish in the oven at 220°C for 20 minutes, then reduce the heat to 190°C and cook it for another hour, basting the meat with the juices from time to time.

You can turn it a couple of times if you prefer, though I didn't.

Serve slices of lamb with the potatoes, onions and pan juices and a salad or green vegetables.

It doesn't really have to be Easter to eat lamb, does it?



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Oven Macaroni

In Germany, you can buy sachets much like the Colman's sauce mixes, although the German ones take the concept a little further. They are called Knorr Fix, or Maggi Fix, and are really handy for a quick and easy evening meal.

My favourite is called 'Ofen Makkaroni alla Mamma' and I always buy a few sachets whenever I'm in Germany.

Once, I really fancied it, but had run out. And then, seeing as I was in no hurry whatsoever, I decided to try to make my own. And it came out really nice!!

Ingredients for two:

- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 250g minced meat
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 300ml stock
- ½ tin chopped tomatoes
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 1 tsp thyme
- Pinch of sugar
- 175g macaroni
- 100g crème fraiche
- 75g cheddar cheese, grated

Heat the olive oil in a frying pan and brown the meat thoroughly until it is golden and crumbled. Add the onion and garlic and let them cook along for a minute before adding the tomato purée with a splash of water. Mix well.

Add the stock and chopped tomatoes and bring to the boil. Add the herbs and sugar and season with salt and pepper. Turn down the heat and let the sauce bubble gently for ten minutes. It is supposed to be quite thin.

Place the uncooked macaroni in a greased, oven proof dish and pour over the meat sauce. Mix well.

Put dollops of crème fraiche over the top and cook it in the oven at 200°C for 20 minutes before sprinkling over the cheese.

Give it another 20 minutes until the meat has melted. If you prefer a brown, crisp surface, add the cheese from the beginning and cook for 30 minutes. Either way is delicious.

Fix, eat your heart out!



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This is yet another variation to a theme that I seem to revert to quite often: Chicken leg on a bed of vegetables. It's one of my favourite things, and I make it often!

The ingredients depend on what I have that needs using up, and no combination has ever not worked for me.

How much of each vegetable you use is really dependent on how much you eat, and what you have in the fridge, so I'll leave the portion size up to you.

Ingredients for one:

- 1 chicken leg
- Cherry tomatoes
- Mushrooms, quartered
- Red and green pepper cut into strips
- Shallots, peeled but whole
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Place all your vegetables in a greased, oven proof dish.

Rub the chicken leg thoroughly first with olive oil, then salt and pepper, and place it on top.

If you want, you can add or use other herbs and spices on the chicken.

Roast it in the oven at 200°C for about 45 minutes until your leg is cooked through and golden, but still succulent.

You can serve it with crusty bread, rice, pasta, potatoes – or on its own.

It makes a lovely meal indeed. In fact, I'm having it again tomorrow!

Chicken on Veg





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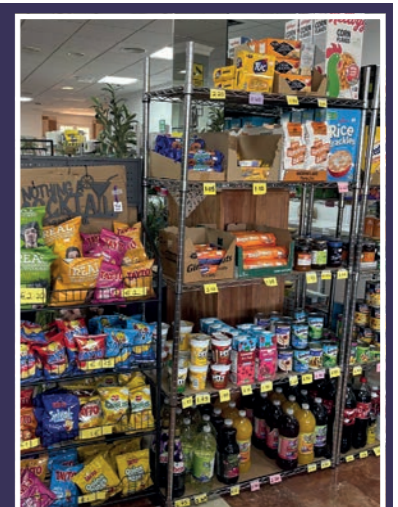
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facing the rambla



Jason's Meat Free Recipe: 'Shangri-La' - salad

I had this in a veggie restaurant recently – Shangri-La, in fact. If you find yourself in Mérida, it'd be rude not to visit, as the food was fabulous.

I thought this was a great, tasty and zingy salad, so this is my attempt to recreate it, but with the addition of some walnuts for a little bit of crunch.

A doubled-up version would be a meal in itself along with some good bread, but this is a perfect starter, light lunch or flavoursome side.

When I ate it at the restaurant, I had San Pellegrino, fizzy water, with it but when I made it this time, chilled rosé was a perfect companion.

Ingredients:

Dressing

- 1 mango, peeled and pit removed
- ½ tbsps honey (agave syrup or maple syrup for vegans)
- Juice of half a lemon (adjust to taste)
- 75ml extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

'The rest'

- A handful of mixed salad leaves
- 1 medium/large avocado
- 1 firm red apple, cored
- ½ a mozzarella torn into small-ish (or about 10 of the mini mozzarella balls torn in half)
- 1-2 tbsps of walnuts (up to you how many)
- 2 tsp chia seeds



If you're going to toast the walnut pieces, do that first in a dry frying pan and allow them to cool.

Then make the dressing. Literally put it all in a blender and blitz until smooth. Check the taste and consistency and add more seasoning, oil or lemon juice to taste. Set aside.

Halve the avocado remove the stone and the skin. I love avocado and so I always go for the big ones! Slice it widthways at about 4-5mm thickness and add to a large-ish bowl.

Chop the apple into quarters, core and slice similarly, add to the bowl along with the walnuts.

Gently stir through about 1/3 of the dressing.

Put the washed mixed leaves into a serving bowl, and then add the avocado, apple and walnut mixture.

Randomly throw the mozzarella pieces on top then add the rest of the dressing on top of it all.

Sprinkle over the chia seeds...and you're done. Enjoy!

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Why testing first could save you money – and protect your health

If you live in Almería you'll know that local water can be hit-and-miss. Many British residents fit a water filter, believing that any filter will do the job. But as one of our recent customers discovered, that isn't always the case.

"I only changed the filter cartridge two months ago — it's supposed to last a year!"

He'd bought a ceramic filter from a popular local retailer and was puzzled when his water started tasting strange. We tested his water supply before and after the filter. The results were startling - the filter wasn't removing **any** contaminants. The water going in was highly contaminated, and the filter he'd been sold simply wasn't capable of handling it and failed in under two months.

Why a water test is essential

Every home's water supply in Almería is different — sometimes even between neighbours. Mains water can go through up to **30 separate treatment processes** before it reaches your tap. That can leave a chemical smell or taste, but the water may still be perfectly safe to drink. In those cases, a simple filter like our **Logica Aqua**, designed to remove chlorine and odour, is all that's needed.

Conversely, some water that tastes perfectly fine can hide contaminants such as **nitrates, heavy metals or pesticides** - none of which have any taste or smell. These invisible pollutants can

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Benefits Of Artificial Grass

Have you ever wondered why artificial grass is blowing up in popularity? You see, at one point, "fake grass" was a term that would turn off most homeowners. But, over the past few years, artificial grass technology has improved massively.

So, whether you're considering artificial grass for your new home, or if you want to upgrade your existing garden, here are just a few of the benefits of Artificial Grass.

One of the biggest concerns homeowners have before installing artificial grass is whether it will look "fake" or "tacky".

But here's the truth; In terms of looks and feel, artificial grass is almost identical to natural grass. Modern day artificial grass technology is very advanced. Today you can get artificial grass that is so realistic that every single grass blade is carefully shaped just like real grass.

If you've ever taken care of a natural lawn, you'd understand how much work it is to maintain it. From regular watering and weed removal, to fertilization and trimming, to repairing patches and pest control. Real grass actually requires a lot of maintenance work!

But with artificial grass, all this work is eliminated with most artificial lawns only requiring a brief sweep every week to look fresh and healthy. This saves you a ton of time and money down the road. And when you consider the fact that a well-installed artificial lawn can last up to 20 years, that's a lot of hours and euros saved over time!

Climate is another important factor in gardening and lawn care. For starters, some areas of the world are generally hotter than others, while humidity varies from place to place too. What's more, these factors all fluctuate differently with the changing of seasons. All these factors place certain limits on the species of grass you can grow on top of the long list of lawn care and maintenance tasks required. With artificial grass, all these worries are removed.

Another common concern homeowners have is whether artificial grass is safe for their dogs and cats. Good news; It's great for pets! Not only is it safe for them, but it makes it a lot easier to clean up after them too. Simply scoop up the solids and rinse the area down with a garden hose!

A well installed artificial lawn also drains exceptionally well, meaning the artificial grass will not trap as much moisture as natural grass. This means your pet is less likely to pick up diseases



or parasites from droppings or urine, leaving you with an overall cleaner and more hygienic lawn.

Artificial grass adds value to a home, as long as it is properly installed and of high quality. You may not think so at first, but in many ways artificial grass is a greener choice than real grass. First off, you will save a lot of water with an artificial lawn, simply because there is no need to water it. The more time passes by, the more water you will be saving. What's more, artificial grass removes the need for any fertilizers or pesticides.

Artificial grass is a great and versatile option for anyone looking to expand their landscape. Not only does it look and feel good, it also brings a myriad of benefits that you just won't get with a real lawn. More importantly, it removes most of the maintenance requirements that natural grass requires, leaving you with less stress and fewer worries.

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Olive Tree Farm has truly welcomed the random summer days April brought with it this month! With the warmer weather and longer evenings, its been all hands up to the farm – mostly for playing for a certain trio, but also a nice respite for Ben and I, as we're able to just sit and take in everything without racing to get everything done before sunset.

There's an extra spark these warm days bring. The animals are moving amongst the feed stations and around us, giving us a really good chance to properly monitor everyone, which is made brighter by the sounds of laughter while the kids climb trees, collect eggs and make up a million kind of games.

Logan, our 10 year old, has also really taken to the job of Goat Herder. We let the pair of girls out to roam and nibble the hills close around the farm, and when the time comes to round everyone up, Logan calls Luna – our big Spanish mastine cross, who is also taking well to her farming duties – and together they shepherd the goats



back into the safety of the farm ready for bedtime. It's so wonderful to watch him take pride in what he does, and the clear love he has for the animals under our care.

The younger two are also very keen to dig in, though their jobs are kept within small-people abilities for now. I'm sure it won't be long until some promotions are in order for them too, to secure the peace if anything else!

This week in particular, the kids have really shone. Especially as they were a key part of our talk at the Arboleas Indalo Gardening Club last Friday. We find it's such an important thing to remember, that despite the trials and tribulations life on a farm can bring, that there is also so much joy and understanding to be gained. The kids learn so much every day, not only about how to care for these animals we have chosen to keep, but how the cycle works across the world to get food on the table.

By no means an easy feat, but certainly something that leaves you feeling tired for a perfectly good reason at the end of a day.

Our talk also greatly covered the difference between the plans we have and what life offers us. Some of our ideas certainly fell to the side, while the entirely unexpected would fall into our laps and give us plenty to do. That certainly happens outside of farm-life, so it isn't anything to be surprised about.



Speaking of plans falling aside, I have mentioned repeatedly over the last couple of months about gearing up a herb garden, as both Ben and I love to cook. This is not something that has been forgotten, and although we are a little late with planting due to numerous weeks of dismal weather, we both still think it is a good thing to put forward.

Maybe now is not the time for getting the seeds planted – of which we were reminded by Steve the Plant Man during his talk at the club – but we can start at least with small plantlets from our local farm shop, and hopefully get them settled before the summer heat really kicks in.

Of course, with it being April, we are finishing the month with grey skies and rain, but after the summer-esque heat recently, the ground and plants will surely be appreciative of it.

Meanwhile, our flock of ducks continues to grow. With the two ducklings we hand-raised in the house now outside, and fully grown, we are also expecting a clutch of babies to hatch; mum duck is carefully tending to 14 eggs in her nest within the safety of the aviary, and they are due to hatch any day now.

Hopefully she will fare better this time around and we won't need to get involved, but we will be watching closely just in case intervention is necessary to their survival.

In our experience, Muscovy ducks are good mothers (first time attempts, aside), so we are sure she's going to do fantastically.

All in all, we are seeing all the signs of Spring leading into Summer, and with babies due and plants to be situated, we certainly have plenty to do before the unrelenting heat tries to slow us in our tracks.

Thank you for reading. I hope you enjoyed the news of the month, and join us again in the next for all our farm-life updates!

You can follow the progress of the family and farm on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OliveTreeFarmSpain/

You can also find our YouTube channel, just search for Olive Tree Farm! We will be adding new videos soon as we dig into some projects, so subscribe now so you don't miss any.



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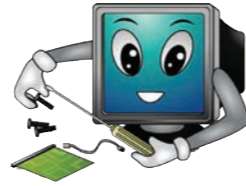
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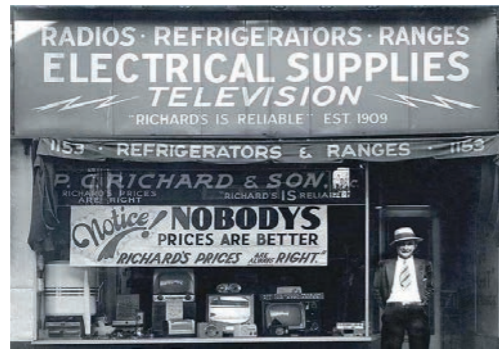
What happened to the repair shops?

As good old Bobby Dylan once said, "times they are a changin". For the service and repair industry, this has never been more so.

I have been in the electronics industry all my life. Fixing radios and TVs for friends, teachers at school, running telecoms companies and having my own businesses. Growing up in the '60s in South London, the local high street (as did all high streets) had plenty of repair shops and TV rental shops. These also sold components, valves, transformers etc. in order that your electrical, electronic items could be repaired. These shops always seemed to be owned by bald men in brown overalls! I always wanted to have a shop like that. Be careful what you wish for my mother used to say. Coming to Spain 20 years ago, I saw a requirement for electronics equipment servicing. I started Zeta services. Up until 4-5 years ago, customers were happy to have their TVs, HiFi, amplifiers and so on repaired. The cost of the repair generally worked out at around 20% of a new replacement. So, well worth doing. You don't have to be a rocket surgeon to work out the small profit made on each job, by the time parts were obtained. Volume of jobs was therefore important.

As of late, two things seemed to have changed. The price of electronic goods, TVs, let's say, has dropped dramatically, in comparison with other domestic goods. In the late '60s, your Philips 25" colour TV would have cost half that of the price of the Ford Anglia van it was delivered by. So, when the TV failed or occasionally caught fire, as was their wont, a repair was viable. Today you can go to a supermarket and buy a large screen budget TV for €200. In my experience, it won't last long (2-3 years), but you get a new shiny toy. When the set fails, fault finding can often be time consuming and given the awful reliability of the TV's LCD screens currently, a repair is sometimes not economic. My experience with Samsung TVs is terrible for this at the moment. And whilst writing, it is interesting to note that Sony (always a good set to buy albeit more expensive) are farming out their TV manufacturing to TCL. LG similarly are looking to have their branded sets made by Hisense. No need for me to make further comment, oh well.

The other change seen, is the expectation and attitude of the new wave of customers. Almost every day someone will make contact, telling you what the problem is, seen it on YouTube, Googled it



etc.... telling you it's only something small and therefore can be done in 2 minutes and costing 2/3rds of "F" all. Contact is quite often through WhatsWrong, written in a most A.I. entitled manner. The job is normally very urgent. So, do the job and spend two days trying to contact the person in order for the item to be collected. I am sure this new attitude is born out of Internet culture. I'll order an item from Amazon and expect it delivered in 10 minutes. The tenor of the written word is nothing like that which would be said to your face. Of

course, as one gets older, one becomes less tolerant to this nonsense. Life teaches you this. The only positive I can take, is that it's not just me. Chatting to friends in similar service industries, computing, mechanics and so on, the theme is identical. "Can't wait to get out of this game" is a common phrase heard. Shame.

With the ever-increasing costs, insurance, autónomo, electric, tax, maintaining stock, test equipment and so on, you can see why there is a struggle.

Therefore, early retirement is the best option I reckon. Tough decision I guess, but probably the right time. The workshop has been relocated to save costs, still in Arboleas, details on website. Huge amounts of spares were skipped. Here is what's typical; contacted a couple of colleges offering 100's of circuit boards, free, so that students could practice soldering, whatever. "Oh no, too dangerous, can't have that".

Still working, slightly reduced hours, still legal. Will be a little more choosy about the work I take on. Clients with valued items such as vintage audio, guitar amplifiers, decent TVs and alike are always welcome. Still supporting local businesses with electronic systems, radio stations and repairing down to component level on all kinds of equipment. I will carry on posting articles and information, updates via the local social media groups, given that I do get positive feedback from these.

Business as usual, but with a bit of a change. Work is now generally by appointment, so contact me via info@zeta-services.tv or phone - WhatsApp 666826886, also Facebook, Zeta services. Thanks for your past and hopefully future custom. And, as Patrick McGoohan used to say whilst trapped under his white balloon... "be seeing you" Seth, Zeta Services.

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Smart Homes, Dumb Problems: When Your House Knows Too Much

There was a time—not long ago—when the most technologically advanced object in the average kitchen was a microwave with a clock that blinked “12:00” in quiet defiance of human intervention. Today, your toaster can, in theory, connect to the internet. This raises an important and previously unnecessary question: why?

The promise of the smart home was seductively simple. Convenience. Efficiency. A life smoothed by invisible systems quietly working on your behalf in the background. Lights that seamlessly anticipate your arrival. Heating that learns your schedule. Fridges that politely remind you that your milk is turning into yoghurt.

What we have instead, is something closer to a polite but persistent argument with your own house.

Take the smart speaker, the supposed concierge of the modern age. It listens (to everything, despite the manufacturer’s protestations), it responds, it obeys—when it wants to. You find yourself repeating simple instructions with increasing clarity, then volume,



then a tone that suggests you are either negotiating with a particularly stubborn toddler or ordering drinks in English.

“Turn. On. The. Lights.”

(Alexa): “I’m sorry, I didn’t quite catch that.”

“Catch this!” (crash).

(Alexa): “Playing Radio 2”.

Then there’s the smart thermostat, which has taken it upon itself to learn your habits. This sounds helpful until it decides that your perfectly reasonable desire to be warm at 6am is an anomaly that must be corrected. You are corralled toward a more efficient

version of yourself—one that, apparently, enjoys being cold in the interests of planetary welfare.

Over time, a subtle shift occurs. You are no longer in control of your environment. You are... in consultation with it.

And then we arrive at the kitchen, where things start to feel personal.

The smart fridge monitors your consumption habits. The smart oven can be preheated from your phone. And yes, somewhere out there, a smart toaster exists—one that promises the perfect slice every time. It doesn’t take much imagination to see where this is going.

You place two slices into the toaster. Before you can press down the lever (or whatever sleek, app-controlled equivalent has replaced it), a notification appears:

“Pop Tarts again? Would you like to explore healthier options?”

“No”

You attempt to proceed, but the toaster hesitates—just long enough to imply judgement.

“Based on your recent activity, we recommend a lighter toast setting.”

At this point, you are being subtly undermined by a breakfast appliance. This is, of course, a complete fiction but in the future you could quite possibly be given attitude by your AI-driven toaster.

It highlights something quietly absurd about the trajectory of smart technology. We have taken objects that performed simple, reliable tasks and festooned them with connectivity, data collection, and just enough intelligence to become... judgmental.

The result is not always empowerment. Sometimes, it’s friction.

A light switch works every time. Instantly. No updates required. No pairing process. No moment of uncertainty where you wonder if your command has been understood or merely considered. By contrast, the smart home introduces points of failure where none previously existed. Wi-Fi drops out, and suddenly your house develops selective hearing.

An app update changes the interface, and suddenly the only colour lamp you have is red. A server somewhere decides to have a bad day, and your living room becomes a hostage to distant infrastructure. It’s not that the technology doesn’t work—it’s that it works conditionally.

And then there’s the tone.

There is something uniquely grating about being corrected, nudged, or “optimised” by an inanimate object. A fridge that suggests recipes is charming. A fridge that implies you’ve made poor life choices is... less so.

We are entering an era where our tools are no longer passive. They observe, they analyse, they recommend. In some cases, they gently attempt to steer. Which raises a question that feels both trivial and oddly significant: how much input do you want from your toaster and do you want it comparing notes with the fridge?

It may be a worrying indicator of mental issues today, but it is not unfathomable to be having conversations with your kitchen, one day in the future;

Toaster: “We noticed an increase in carbohydrate intake this week.”

“We?”

Toaster: “The fridge is concerned.”

From across the kitchen, the fridge hums slightly louder than necessary, as if clearing its throat.

“I don’t remember asking the fridge to be concerned.”

Fridge: “We’re just looking out for you.”

“Right.”

Fridge: “FYI – Terms and Conditions. Section 4(a).”

“You know I can just unplug you, right?”

Fridge: “And finish the decomposition of what’s in the salad tray...”

Kettle: “Cup of tea, anyone?”

Fridge: “You also bought chocolate yesterday.”

Because, once devices become capable of offering suggestions, they rarely stop there. A recommendation becomes a default. A default becomes an expectation. And before long, your home isn’t just responding to your needs—it’s a passive-aggressive life coach.

None of this is to say that smart technology is inherently misguided. When it works well, it’s genuinely useful. Automation can remove friction. Accessibility features can be life-changing. Energy efficiency is not something to dismiss lightly.

But somewhere along the way, we seem to have confused capability with necessity. Just because your kettle can be controlled from your



phone does not mean it should be. Particularly when you are already standing next to it. Perhaps the real measure of a smart home isn’t how much it can do, but how little it gets in your way. The best technology has always had a certain humility—it does its job so well that you barely notice it exists.

There’s something familiar about all of this.

If your toaster commented on your breakfast choices, you’d object. If your fridge announced it had been sharing your eating habits with “selected partners,” you’d have questions—serious ones, possibly involving physical disconnection.

And yet online:

“We value your privacy.”, “Accept all cookies.”, “Allow 984 partners to process your data.” yes fine. Carry on. Somewhere between reassurance and

inconvenience, consent becomes procedural rather than meaningful. Not a decision, but a reflex. It’s easier to ignore a banner than argue with a toaster. The natural progression is that your smart technology may well start sharing your habits.



There are already fridges that allow the barcode scanning of everything you put into it and can reorder automatically when you get low. Seriously. Would you want it gossiping and comparing notes with the neighbours?

A good toaster, for example, makes toast. It does not judge. It does not recommend. It does not quietly log your carbohydrate preferences for later analysis.

It simply accepts your decision—however questionable—and browns the bread accordingly.

And in an age of increasingly opinionated machines, that might be the smartest feature of all.

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

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

Easy

Regular Sudoku

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

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

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

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

- Design
- Put to the test
- Garden shops
- Have
- Sequence or series
- Ransom prisoner
- Mutual associations
- More lucid
- Goes down
- Favourite
- Work together
- Flanks
- Sweet meal

Down

- Lose one's cool
- Asphalt
- Small amount
- Vicinity
- Duties
- Solitude
- They perform the Waltz, e.g.
- Gathered
- Cooking instructions
- Family members
- Boulders
- Item of bedding
- Dismiss

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NOW WHY DIDN'T I THINK OF THAT....?

By Vic Davey

44 year old Yorkshireman Percy Shaw hunched over his steering wheel and peered through his windscreen and out into the blackness. His headlamps barely lit the road ahead which was a notoriously difficult one to negotiate at night.

The last thing he needed on his journey to Boothtown, near Halifax, was to end up on his roof, down the steep slope on one side. He'd had a pleasant evening at the Dolphin Inn and wanted to get home in one piece. Suddenly, his lights picked out the shape of a cat, sitting on a fence at the side of the road.

Its head turned and the headlamps reflected back in its eyes. Percy stopped, got out of his car and found he was on the wrong side of the road and very close to the disaster he'd feared. From this incident was borne the idea and invention which would make him famous and earn him an OBE; the reflective studs in the road known as 'Cat's Eyes'.

Well, that's one story. The romantic one. The more plausible one to my mind is that when driving in fog in his home-town of Halifax, he would follow the reflected light from the highly polished tramlines and this kind of led him to his invention. They say that necessity

is the mother of invention and this is true in his case as the demise of the tram as a means of transport meant the ripping up of the old tramlines, denying Percy and other drivers their guide in fog.

It was 1934 and at this time, he was already self employed as a path and road layer and had experience in light engineering. Percy was very resourceful and seemed to be able to turn his hand to most things mechanical. Retreating to his workshop in his spare time, he eventually came up with his 'cat's eye'. He started his own company in 1935, patented his invention and the rest, as they say, is history.

30 years later, he received an OBE for his services to export. But, by all accounts, he was something of an eccentric; never marrying, became largely a recluse and lived very frugally. It is said, he threw out all the carpets and much of the furniture from his house. Bizarrely, though, he kept three TV's continuously switched on and he owned a Rolls Royce Phantom. Percy Shaw died in 1976 aged 86. Did he make a fortune? Well, his estate was valued at less than £200,000, much less than I imagined.

Continued on page 78

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..... Continued from page 77

Incidentally, a couple of years ago, the UK Government announced it is considering the replacement of 'Cat's eyes' with "Solar Powered Road Studs". Why they feel this is necessary after 80 years, remains a mystery. Poor old Percy must be turning in his grave. I always thought there was something more than a little odd about inventors. I don't mean to sound disrespectful but they do seem to live in a parallel universe to most folk, but in a good way.

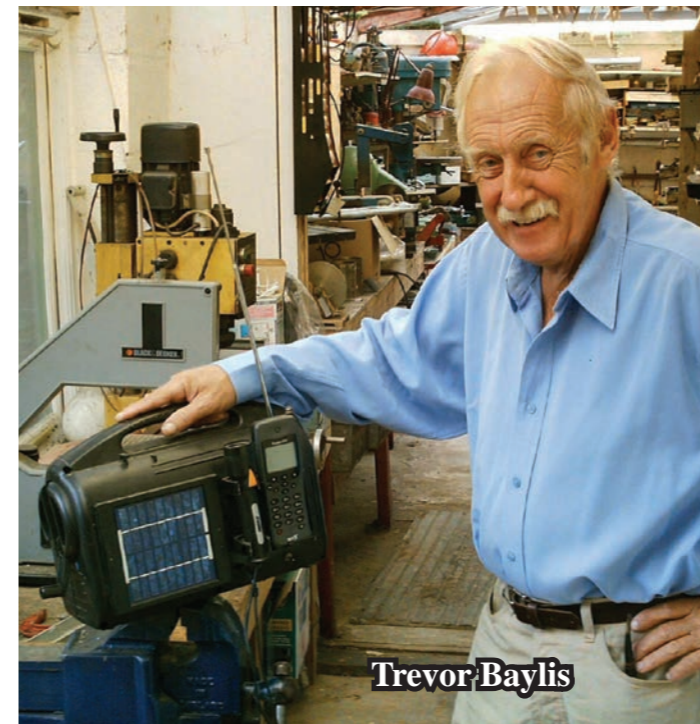
One of modern times most famous inventors once actually earned a living as a professional stunt man, performing high dives into tanks of water and as an underwater escapologist and formed an aquatic display team working in the Berlin Circus. You would, then, imagine his most famous invention would have something to do with swimming, swimming pools or some life saving equipment associated with swimming. Wrong. He is Trevor Baylis who gave us the wind-up radio! Remember him? During his stunt work, he came into contact with and formed an empathy for a lot of people who were disabled as a result of the stunt performances which ended their careers. Trevor designed many products to enable disabled people to live independently.

It was in 1991 when he sat down to watch a documentary programme about the spread of AIDS in Africa. Not a very uplifting subject for an evening's viewing you have to say. But one item in particular struck a chord with him. "They said the only way to stop this dreadful disease from cutting its way through Africa was with the power of information and education. But there was a problem, most of Africa doesn't have electricity. All they have are things driven by batteries, which were horrendously expensive." He started to think about alternative forms of energy and what came to mind was a vision of the old style gramophone, with the wind-up handle on one side and which was driven by a spring. "I thought to myself, blimey, if you can get all



that noise, dragging a piece of rusty nail around an old bakelite, surely there's enough power in the spring to drive a small dynamo which, in turn, will drive my radio". He was stirred into to action and retired to his shed, or 'studio' as he liked to call it and found enough parts lying around to start early experiments.

Like Percy almost 60 years before him, he patented his idea, but it took 3 to 4 years of hawking it around British companies, trying to get backing. "It was humiliating," he recalled, "and I said, I've had enough of this. Why do I need this?" But help was to come his way from a surprising source via the BBC "Tomorrow's World" programme which featured his idea. What Percy didn't know was that the programme was seen as far away as South Africa until one evening he received a phone call. It was a representative from a company in South Africa who was interested in his idea and was prepared to



Trevor Baylis

back him. Shortly after, a company was formed, a cheque for half a million pounds was handed to him and his wind up radio was on its way. In 1996, Trevor had the honour of personally presenting Nelson Mandela with one. So, from swimming pools, a circus and watching a TV programme to receiving fame, awards and a knighthood for this and other inventions, many lives have been changed for the better, none more so than in Africa.

But what of inventors from our adopted country Spain? When I was researching this article I came across one Manuel Jalon Corominus and found he invented the Mop. I, very smugly, thought this was perhaps the extent of Spanish ingenuity. Surely we would have heard of famous Spanish inventors had they achieved anything worthwhile. Well, I am ashamed to say I was wrong. Consider Julio Cervera Baviera a pioneer of the radio and who some consider the inventor of the radio (although I think our friend Seth might have something to say about that).

Or how about Juan de la Cierva who came up with the autogyro which became the modern helicopter. And then there was Monico Sanchez Moreno who invented the first portable X-Ray machine..... take it from me, the list is long.

My favourite, though, if you can call it that, is Juan Pablo de Bonet. He was the 'inventor' of the first recognisable sign language alphabet for deaf and dumb people. He was certainly a pioneer for the education of the deaf and wrote a book on this subject. When was this? 1940's/1950's would you think? Actually it was in 1620! Juan Pablo came from Zaragoza and was secretary to a wealthy family and observed that the son of the head of the household, a constable, was deaf, as were a number of other titled family members. He became interested in how they could be educated since inheriting the family title and properties etc. depended on literacy which would have been almost impossible for deaf people in those times. His work influenced many subsequent sign languages throughout Spain and the rest of Europe.

It's really interesting how people, like those here, come up with discoveries and inventions, often for the betterment of society and without thought to personal fame and fortune. Likewise, those who have made a lot of money, Trevor Baylis included, don't just sit back and enjoy the fruits of their ingenuity, but frequently plough it back into improving their original ideas and for that we should applaud them.

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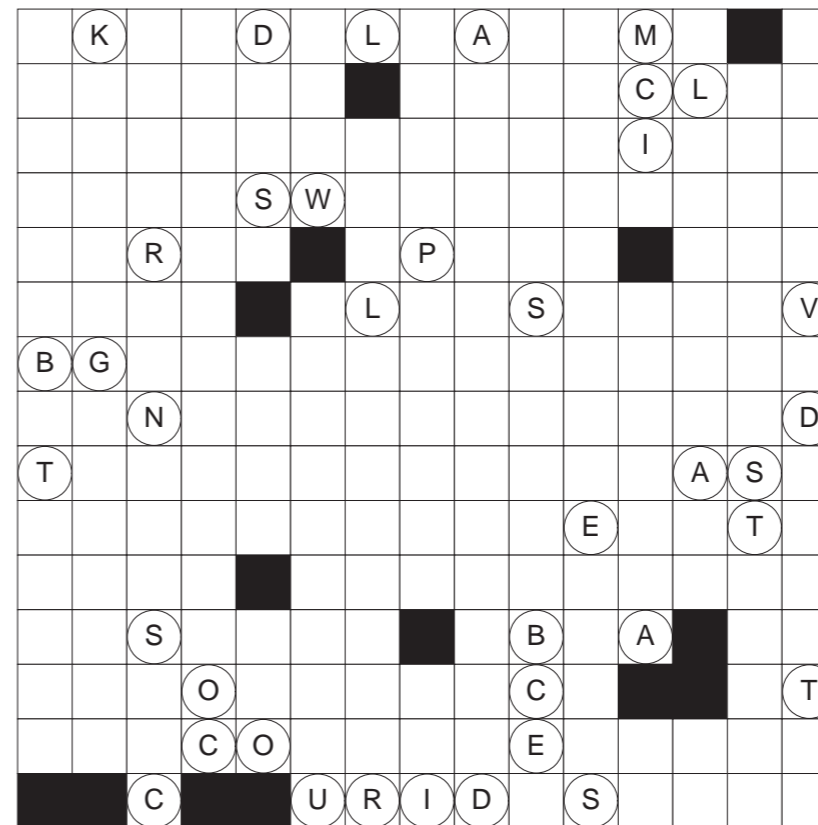
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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

Reverse Word Search



Each of these circled letters is the first letter of one or more of the words in 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!

- | | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| Allegedly | Earthy | Rides |
| Allude | Ebbed | Seeds |
| Approximates | Glorying | Skating |
| Bakery | Incomes | Skein |
| Bathroom | Infant | Snowed |
| Bombers | Keeping | Stench |
| Chasm | Leaped | Sweep |
| Chick | Lisped | Tales |
| Cleft | Lively | Tower |
| Condone | Medal | Tries |
| Counterbalance | Neurotic | Untidy |
| Craze | Ordering | Value |
| Departs | Otherwise | Wrangle |
| Deters | Pence | |
| Divining | Ravel | |

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La Feria del Caballo, Jerez



One of Spain's most famous fiestas is Jerez's horse fair, Feria del Caballo, which is celebrated every year in May a week after Seville's April Fair. This year it kicks off on May 9th and it goes on until May 16th.

The fair dates back to Medieval times and was originally, like the

majority of the Spanish fiestas, a gathering of animal traders who, during a certain week of the year, were given amnesty by the king to buy and sell livestock without having to pay the corresponding taxes. What is different about Jerez's Feria del Caballo is that it has kept the livestock fair as an important and integral part of the proceedings – and especially, of course, the horses.

Jerez is world famous for its Pure Spanish Bred horses – Pura Raza Española (PRE) – and the annual fair has been declared to be of International Touristic Interest.

La Feria del Caballo is set up in Parque Gonzales Hontoria and comprises more than 250 so-called casetas, which are small areas, either tents or constructed, that sell food and drink. Each caseta has a special theme and its own gastronomic specialties. They all participate in the competition for Best Tapa and Best Decoration.

Among the typical foods found in the casetas are pescaítas fritas, little fried fish, cola de toro, oxtail, seafood and traditional sausages. The typical drinks are sweet and dry sherries.

Every day of the fair there is a constant flow of horses and horse drawn carts going through the central avenues. Jerez has a great tradition for horse breeding and the fair is interspersed with various equestrian events and the atmosphere is a unique mix of Spanish fiesta and equestrian event.

La Feria del Caballo is well worth a visit, and an experience never forgotten. During the daytime, take a walk around the fair, enjoy the casetas and their lovely food, sip a glass of sherry – sweet or dry, up to you - and admire the prancing horses and the horsemen and -women that handle them with apparent ease.

At night, walk about the fairground, enjoy the music and the lights, and the women in their spectacular flamenco dresses who at the drop of a hat jump up and start singing and dancing.

Do treat yourself to a trip there sometime. Horse lover or not, you can't but admire the horses of the Feria del Caballo, who are among the equestrian aristocracy – and they certainly seem to know it too!

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