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PAGE 1 TOPICS:

INTRODUCTION

THE MOVE OUT

NEWSLETTER

Introduction....

As you can see the flag now flies over 'Casa-Britannia'. We have only been here a couple of months but so much has happened in that time it seems much longer. The amount of work to do is enormous and as we intend to do most of it ourselves nearly every day has a 'steep learning curve' somewhere in it!

I think the best way to tackle this Newsletter is to write headed paragraphs on all the aspects that might be of interest, supplying pictures when possible. So here goes.....

The move out....

There are basically two choices you have concerning your belongings when moving to another country. Take 'em or leave 'em! We decided to take them. Not only did we decide to take what we already had but to purchase a lot of stuff in advance that we would need when the business is finally up and running. I suppose the thinking behind this was that in the long term it would save us a lot of time chasing around Spain with all the handicaps like - new environment, the language barrier and the Euro! In England we knew where to purchase everything we needed and we could also easily judge the quality and compare prices for good value (after all we have a limited budget for this project.) At this moment in time I am glad we did this. Although we have Baza (*Batha*) a good size town about 45 minutes drive South and Huescar (*Wescar*) a medium sized town 20 minutes drive North, neither have what we would call in England 'Superstores' and how would you find them anyway when the Yellow Pages is un-comprehensible!

We then had to decide how to get it all over here. The cheapest quote from a removal company was about £3,500; this was for picking our belongings up from one address. We had belongings in Sandwich, some in storage in Herne Bay and a serious number of beds and mattresses at a store in Canterbury awaiting collection. Each time you added another 'pick-up' point the price escalated.

In the end we decided on a rental van (7.4 ton). We picked it up from Ashford, loaded it and crossed the channel in less than twelve hours. 'We' being a driver, Elaine and myself. If you thought like us it would be much cheaper than the haulage firm think again. It worked out about the same.



PAGE 2 TOPICS:
THE WEATHER



"Eventually our own water pipes became frozen and we were without water for ten days....."



The Weather....

Trust us to move out during the coldest winter here since 1952! An hour and a half drive south is the coast at Almeria (*Almaria*) where a lot of soft fruit and vegetables are grown. In January a persistent frost and snowfall (hardly ever heard of in this part of Spain) wiped out the lot! The Tomato crop was destroyed (the Strawberries never stood a chance) and Lemons froze on the trees. (Well, it saves putting so much ice in your G&T I suppose ☺)

In Castillejar (*Castilleckar*) during the first few days of the freeze we had frequent water cuts due to burst mains in the village. Eventually our own water pipes became frozen and we were without water for ten days before the local council came out and put a temporary patch pipe in from another source. Little did we know that the 'locals' leave their taps dribbling all night during frosty weather to keep the pipes from freezing up. Lesson learned.

The majority of the accommodation in these parts are cave houses (*Cuevas*) which have the advantage of an almost constant year round temperature of 68 degrees. They are warmer in winter than 'normal' houses (like ours) and cooler in summer. Houses here are built to be cool, which is fantastic for nine months of the year and satisfactory for the other three months. That's because normally (let's take last year for instance) they only had four nights over the whole winter when the temperature dropped below zero. Protracted freezing weather this year has meant since we came out here we have been constantly fighting to stay warm. Our neighbour Emilio (more about him later) has loaned us an old wood-burner, which I have installed in the lounge. (It isn't pretty but hey when you are freezing yer 'butt off' who cares!) He and another neighbour then took me out in the Transit and filled it full of wood from a dried-up riverbed a couple of minutes outside the town.

As I write this (1/3/05) we are experiencing our second snowfall of the year. This is the third day of constant snow. The town has even managed to adapt a couple of tractors to snow ploughs and are clearing the main roads.

MY NEIGHBOUR'S DAUGHTER MARIA HAS BEEN BUILDING A SNOWMAN.... IT LOOKS LIKE WE ARE JUST ABOUT TO GET INVOLVED IN A SNOWBALL FIGHT!!



The Neighbours....

Our neighbours are great. To the front of us we have Maria and Francisco who sold us Casa Britannia (formerly Casa Almendri.) They live in a rather snazzy 'new build'. Behind us we have a number of cave houses.

One belongs to Emilio and Ramona. Emilio is the brother of Maria (above.)

The closest cave to us belongs to another 'Maria' and Huto Snr (a farmer). Huto Jnr and his sister live with them and above their parents cave have busy hairdressing business.

Huto Snr spends a lot of his time out on the 'campo' (a couple of miles from the town) with his heard of bulls (*Toros*). They also own another cave out there and Huto Snr often stays there to be close to his precious animals.

Anyway....Huto Snr often brings wood and supplies from the farm to his family on a big green cart pulled by two of his huge bulls. You can hear when he turns up as the bulls have big bells around their neck. On one such visit he was complaining about his 'grinding' wheels. Somehow I ended up helping him to prop his cart up to investigate. After fetching all my tools across we managed to discover two sets of 'well' worn brake shoes! He took them to the local garage from where they were dispatched to Granada city. Huto walked past our window (hands in pockets, whistling) every morning then for the next two weeks on his way to the garage to check if they had been returned. Eventually they came back and his cart was successfully repaired. For taking the time to help a neighbour we have become almost family. We now regularly receive gifts of fresh bread, eggs, homemade wine and 'cartloads' of firewood. (Plus some 'donations' from the bulls for the roses 😊)



PAGE 3 TOPICS:

THE
NEIGHBOURS

DELIVERY OF A CARTLOAD
OF FIREWOOD!

PAGE 4 TOPICS:

THE
NEIGHBOURS..CONT

The neighbours....cont

It's at this stage I must report on a particularly nasty game the 'natives' play with us called... "Let's invite the 'loco Ingles' (*mad English*) round and give them a big hangover!" Every time we fall for this devious and quite malicious trick. Unfortunately we can't say "no" as we would hate to offend. ☺



See what we mean!



EMILIO

MIGUEL

HUTO SNR



But we have ways of getting them back.

"Right you lot, listen to this".....

"Ha, that will teach you!"

PAGE 5 TOPICS:**RENOVATIONS**

THE ORIGINAL DRIVE



(THE BUILDER'S MATE)



THE NEW WALL

Renovations....

In between the bouts of bad weather the sun shines and it's quite mild. During these periods we have started a couple of the many building projects. We decided we would work outside during the cooler months and inside during the hotter ones. The drive at the back of the house was breaking up and too steep to use. Getting vehicles to the back of the house was impossible...so where better place to start?

We decided to enclose the bar door with a wall and bring the drive in at an angle to take the steepness out.



Next door were doing a lot of renovation work so we stole all their rubbish as hardcore for the new slope.

On the opposite side of the 'new' drive is an old Almond tree and a grapevine (that according to the neighbours produces excellent grapes.) We decided to build a timber support for the vine enclosing the tree, with a low wall at the base. Between this wall and the new wall around the bar door is where the drive will be. Eventually....



THIS WAS THE LAST PICTURE I TOOK BEFORE "SNOW STOPPED PLAY..." AS YOU CAN SEE THE CONCRETE DRIVE SLOPE ITSELF IS STILL NOT IN PLACE...MANYANA, MANYANA.....

