

# TONY AND JILL'S ISLAND NOTES MAY 2013

Harold McMillan, British Prime Minister in the '50s, following his retirement was asked what had had the greatest influence on his period in office. Without hesitation he replied... "events, dear boy, events." And that, when it comes down to it, must apply to most of us. The end of January marked the two years that Jill and I have been resident in Tenerife, overlooking Amarilla Golf Course and although, in the main, things have gone much as we planned. We had not planned for a bundle of fluff!



**IMPEDIMENTA** - When we moved here Muffin, our Welsh border collie, came with us and our plan had been to make the remaining years of her life as happy and comfortable as possible in the warmth. Which has, and is still happening, given that going on for 15, she has given us many health anxieties and that her back legs are not nearly as strong as they were. Anyhow, in June last year, we gave her a holiday when all the family came out for the summer half-term and she had a splendid time with her friends at Poochies Pet Hotel up in the mountains. When Jill, with Toby & Ruth went to collect her, she saw a little bundle of dirty fluff that had the most appealing dark brown eyes, a type that in Tenerife is called a 'Caniche' and looks like a cross between a poodle and something else, but no-one knows what. She appeared to have been abandoned up in the mountains and had, judging by her preferences, survived on lizards, tomatoes, oranges and titbits from a local working stone quarry for several weeks as she also loves JCBs! She was in a terrible state with long matted hair which had to be cut so she could bend her legs and stretch.



conceivable nook and cranny!

Our vet reckoned that she was about 8-10 months when we rehomed her and was in surprisingly good condition. She appeared to be used to people and was well house-trained, so maybe her previous owners fell onto hard times or maybe she just escaped. She is a pert little minx who craves affection and makes one smile just to look at her. Her vet says that she is the only dog who after being spayed, rushes in to the surgery wagging her tail furiously, wanting to say hello to everyone. So, that was one event over which we had absolutely no control!

How did Muffin react to sharing her previous private territory? Well, in most ways it has done her good and certainly gave her a new lease on life. In others, she has become a grumpy old bitch who thinks nothing of taking Scruffs by the scruff of the neck if she oversteps her place. She spends much of her time looking to take the youngsters' food or toys but mostly they get on well enough. Scruffy has swiftly realised that Muffin is the alpha female and lets her pass through doorways first. Muffin has only to show her teeth and the little one backs off. A microcosm of life. It sure must be good to be the alpha in anything - but we love them both dearly.



**PROPERTY** - The other well laid plan prior to moving out here was to buy a cottage in England to act as a bolt-hole if we needed to move back, plus to act as an investment to create income. So back in 2009 before leaving Hayling Island, we set about buying a cottage by the Donkey Sanctuary at Sidmouth in Devon. We ended up with possession of the place, which we had great fun furnishing, but for financial/legal reasons way outside our control and nothing to do with us, we were unable to complete the purchase. A long and involved story [that involves insolvency, but not ours] could follow, but we'll let that pass and eventually in the autumn of 2012 we were advised that the purchase could proceed.

We went over last December, but before committing ourselves to purchase, decided to review our options, including looking at other places. However, despite a very significant reduction in price over the original figure, we concluded that Tenerife had turned out far better than we had anticipated and that we did not really need a bolt-hole [and the hassle of looking after it]. So, a clean break has been made - after all, there are plenty of hotels or rented accommodation if we ever want to go back. We were also helped in the decision by the Spanish tax authorities passing a new law [or revisiting an old law] last December, that foreign residents in Spain [that's us folks] must now declare all their global assets with a view to paying tax on them whether they earn money or not. Failure to do so attracts a vast penalty. This wealth law is so draconian [we are advised], that many people who have quietly lived here for years without declaring assets or income could be wiped out. We are the goody-two-shoes who even declare the contents of our piggy bank on the shelf. That was another event that has influenced us. So no bolt-holes now.

**LEISURE PURSUITS** - People ask us... 'what do you do?' To which the answer is that we seem always to be occupied. Jill, of course, is busy doing everything from cooking, laundry, gardening, Spanish lessons, entertaining, walking the dogs, washing the dogs, as well as doing our household accounts and taxation affairs.

I, on the other hand, am always busy and occupy myself by sometimes sitting and thinking and at other times just sitting. I have also discovered the joys of the internet for researching the great song writers and their music. Busy is not the word for it. So much that goes on in the world requires me to keep on top of it. Suffice to say that we both understand each other perfectly and are very happy together. I can confidently speak for fifty-percent of the partnership.

Some new friends we met back in February/March, introduced Jill to a walking group of 'swallows' - people from northern parts of the EU who overwinter on the island and return home for the summer. She only managed 3 walks before they packed up for the season but is looking forward to rejoining when it starts again in October. Many walks are in the mountains where it isn't wise to go on your own in case of an accident or cloud coming in, so the group leader has a GPS to ensure that they don't get lost, with the addition of safety in numbers. She returns from these excursions with a weary Scruffy and photographs of wild flowers and mountain scenery to show me - both of them happily collapsed on the settee exhausted!



**EATING OUT** - The one interest that we share completely is researching restaurants. We do not live high on the hog but regularly go out to eat, either for lunch or dinner together, or with friends, and now have a database of eateries on the island. Tenerife is mainly a semi-tropical holiday destination but one that is rich in variety for those on holiday and for us residents. We live in a residential property in a residential area and we rarely trouble tourists and they rarely trouble us.

What is interesting is that the range of restaurants spans the gamut of nationalities and cuisines from traditional Canarian food through French, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Lebanese, Chinese, Argentinian, Indian and.... you get the idea. Obviously, stuck out in the Atlantic, fish comes high on the list and is superb - for those who like it! For the rest, there is excellent beef and lamb [mostly imported] and quality home grown pork and chicken. As for vegetables, there is little that you want that you can't have, much of it grown in the hill regions of the island in extremely fertile volcanic soil. In fact the variety is mindblowing and in the main, quality is very high as there is little insect damage.

In the past few months we have discovered a Canarian restaurant in the hills that also offers camel rides, while on the coast we favour a terrace overlooking the sea at La Caleta where the chicken is superb. We have also now sampled a new Indian curry house in San Eugenio which is as good as we have had anywhere, an Argentinian steak house where the meat is more than agreeable and a really excellent pizza place in El Medano - cheap too! For a longer day out, one of our favourites is El Monasterio, a

hacienda-style complex of five separate restaurants each with its own character, built on a terraced hillside surrounded by its own banana plantation. Ornamental ducks, cockerels and peacocks strut between the tables and would happily share your plate with you as you admire the spectacular views over the north of the island, as one of our visiting friends who has an aversion to feathers discovered. Would you believe that the speciality dessert is Banana flambe, with the fruit picked from enormous branches hanging on the terraces. Definitely not for those on a diet.



We've also had several pleasant eating surprises - somewhat typical of 'residents' who shun 'tourist' areas. The other evening in Los Cristianos, we were shopping for a long promised bauble for the vault [which also looks super on Jill's neck]. The jeweller is in what I call 'The Drain', a narrow pedestrian street or alley well populated by tourists and overrun by sales 'touts' - not our normal eating destination. However, as it was getting late, the shop owner recommended the restaurant next door called 'The House'. It was very good, both the service and quality of the food was excellent and confirmed that despite economic woes, the island is striving to provide visitors with a good holiday experience. Rest assured the research continues!



**AND THEN THERE IS DRIVING** - Yes, plain old driving the car. Normally we don't think twice about jumping in behind the wheel and zooming off to the shops, restaurant or whatever, however, there are times when we are reminded that this commonplace activity is controlled. When you pass a certain age the authorities no longer give you authority to drive without checking up on you more regularly. No more ten year licences! When my UK driving licence expired this year, we discovered that we could no longer have it renewed in the UK 'cos we don't have a residential UK address. So, time to get a Spanish issued licence - no big deal as the EU has co-ordinated this so that all 27 countries in the union issue the same licence. Looks the same except that the UK one has 'UK' printed in the glorious circle of golden stars while the Spanish one has an 'E' [for Espana] - simples! So, knowing that bureaucracy in Spain [read the Canary Islands] is tedious, the first step for expatriates with a tenuous grasp of the language, is to find an outfit who will do all the administration for you. Last year we found a local company, set up by a husband and wife team, who organised our national health insurance for us and was now happy to get the driving licences sorted. As Jill's licence didn't have too much time left either, we decided to get them both done and dusted together.

This was definitely an expense we found worth while as there has to be time-consuming communication and much paperwork between 'Policia' [Los Cristianos] 'Trafico' [Santa Cruz] and DVLA [UK] to ensure that we are bona fide UK citizens and deserving of a temporary Spanish licence. After several weeks we were told that all was in order but now we had to undertake the obligatory medical examination and driving test. A bit nerve racking, but Elie, one of the bosses of the outfit we used, was on hand to assist and translate. We had a thorough examination for blood pressure, eyesight and hearing. The hearing one was fun as you sit in a soundproof booth with headphones and have to push a button every time you hear a bleep. The technician who pushed the button sat outside the booth window. I know that I have an age induced hearing shortfall at the top end of the scale and I know what I can hear, or not. Now, far be it from me to cheat on such an important test but when you can see the girl push the laptop button one is tempted to push one's own button to suggest that you have indeed heard the bleep. So I did, missing about four of them 'cos I'm sure they expect some shortfall.

Next, the eyesight test. Also a bit of a giggle because I know that when I have my eyes tested normally I have difficulty reading the bottom couple of lines on the test chart, but then I realised that those two lines were missing from the chart anyway and I could actually read all the letters. Good test.

Then came the driving test. This involved sitting in front of a computer screen on which two red, independently rolling roads wound [undulated] up or down the screen with a large white ball in the middle of each road. The test was to hold two 'T' handles [one in each hand] and twist them to ensure that the ball in the middle of the road stayed in the middle of the road. When it wandered and hit the roadside there was a bleep - big on bleeps this licence test! Neither Jill nor I play computer games so were concerned by our lack of co-ordination and thought we were bleeping too much. However, to our amazement, we were told that out of the possible 3600 bleeps in the couple of minutes allocated to the test, both of us had scored well below a 100 which were extremely good scores. Thankfully, we both passed the test, in fact all the tests with flying colours - phew! We concluded that this could explain

why so many cars carry bodywork damage on the island. Parking is definitely NOT one of their skills!

So, the test documents went back to 'Trafico' and two weeks later we were sent brand new five-year licences in the post. Amazing, as at my age in the UK I would have been given only a two year licence so it was worth going through all the hoops. We are now the proud owners of new driving licences - us and the Spaniards who score thousands on the rolling road computer game!

Our Nissan Qashqai 'Katie', which we are still delighted with, went in for her second year service last week. I turned up at the garage to ask when and the guy shrugged and said... 'now?' I arranged for the following Monday at 10am, turned up, waited for an hour whilst they did it, paid 86 euros and left with a fully serviced car! He told me that next year they would change the oil filter - wow!



### TRAVELS & VISITS -

The summer half-term last year was the first when both sides of the family visited at the same time. Toby and Ruth stayed with us and Jon and Jess with the 3 kids stayed at a local villa half a mile up the road, with heated pool and restaurant to use when they weren't with us. It was a VERY packed seven days of fun and laughter on all sides, with many trips to the beach, beachside eateries and a wonderful day spent at Siam Park, one of the big attractions on the island. A vast water park has been created on the west coast with numerous rides for all ages and a massive 'wave' pool which everyone except myself tried out. Grace, our eldest



grandchild said to her mum.... "look at granny swimming serenely over that huge wave." I think Jill felt immensely flattered that she wasn't considered too old to be enjoying herself! It was an exceptionally successful break for all and one we hope will be repeated again soon - maybe at Christmas.

This year we have decided to take a short break from island living and go on a river cruise between Amsterdam and Basle in late September. I've always wanted to do it but was put off by having to 'dress up' and being a casual sort of bloke it didn't appeal. However, I am assured that it isn't necessary with this particular company so can look forward to the event with complete equanimity.



We have just returned from a jaunt to the UK which started with a family reunion in Bristol with both our families which was terrific. Then off to Portsmouth to attend the AGM for the 'Friends of Stansted Park', the stately home which Jill has been involved with for 14 years and for which she continues to edit the quarterly newsletter. She was very chuffed, not only to see so many familiar faces, but also to receive Honorary Membership for all her efforts. We stayed with a close friend in Petersfield and caught up with others by dining out on several evenings. On our last Saturday we attended a memorial lunch at Stansted for Ruth Tomalin a ninety three year old authoress, poet and friend who died last November and whose dad had been head gardener for nearly 50 years to the Bessborough family. Having enjoyed minimal sunshine during our travels, a warm and sunny spring day helped to make it especially memorable for everyone.



Finally home, and deplaning in the evening into 25°C made coming home to Tenerife a very great pleasure. Do we regret making the move? Not on your life. We are looking forward to more friends visiting us again this year.

**PS** - Jill has enjoyed purchasing a few new baubles and bangles, so I have invested in a new Lumix FZ200 camera which I must now learn to use before the family descend on us for the summer half-term break. A few are included in this missive. Happy days!

Until next time.

Jill & Tony Waring

*Photos in sequence: Palm Gardens at Amarilla Golf; Scruffy's 1st day; before & after clipping last week; Muffs & Scruffs in harmony; mountain walk scenery; eating out with friends; happy families at Siam Park, Medano, Teide & Bristol; sunset last night from our balcony at Palm Gardens.*

