

## Nationalist cars

Many years ago whilst serving in the Royal Navy I rode a bus in Malta. On the dashboard was a shrine to Jesus. It didn't take long to realise why it was necessary on this very Catholic island. The tyres were bald on the ramshackle vehicle and the driving was truly frightening. I'm certain that the brakes didn't work. Praying seemed to work though

Many drivers like to adorn or personalise their cars and the younger the driver the more so, with boy racers covering the interior with shag-pile, tinting the windows purple and trying to see around boxing gloves hanging from the rear view mirror. I'm sure the girls are really impressed just as Shania Twain was with her immortal words "I can't believe that you kiss your car goodnight" from her song "That don't impress me much"

## Bumper stickers

Those of us with grey hair will remember the triangular stickers that adorned the few cars on the road when we were young advising the whole world that they had been to Babbacomb, Blackpool or Barton-under-Neasewood. We Brits have always been fond of flaunting our perceived superiority over each other. Nodding dogs followed then the furry dice (dear God), whip aerials and the ubiquitous announcement of the occupants' names like Kevin and Tracey or Reg and Doris

The Yanks go in big time for bumper stickers such as "Keep your distance asshole" or for Mafia members "Toucha my car and I smasha your face". Utterly charming. Here in Spain the most popular stickers are bulls, donkeys and the iconic image of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Oddly enough these seem to proliferate more on cars driven by expats than those of the natives.

## Showing allegiances

Many car plates in the UK now display membership of the four home nations, a relatively new phenomenon. During England's one and only victory in the football World Cup way back in 1966, Wembley was awash with Union Jacks. The Cross of St. George was as rare as rocking horse poo and you had to cross the borders into Scotland and Wales to see the Saltire or Dragon. Perhaps as a backlash against rising nationalism in those nations the English have now started finding their own identity separately from being British. Whatever; more and more vehicles replace the letters "GB" on their number plates by SCO, WAL or ENG. Northern Ireland is even trickier so I won't touch on this, except to say that I have re-registered cars belonging to people from both camps over there and the differences in their plates can be discerned

## Oh Catalonia!

Regular readers will know that my articles are normally sparked by recent occurrences and this week's is no exception. A client has just bought a Spanish registered car that was previously owned by a chap in Barcelona. I was amazed to see that his number plates carry the word CAT for Catalonia though interestingly enough (well to this anorak anyway) it still shows the EU flag. I've showed it to a number of Spaniards who were incredulous. Many locals in my village are concerned about the drive for Catalan independence as they don't want the country split up with many saying that Cameron did a good job over the Scottish issue (or bad if you are a Scots Nat') as opposed to Rajoy who is being far too intransigent

The lawyer with whom I work says that it is almost certainly illegal. I can't imagine the police forces in Barca losing too much sleep over it but I shall replace his plates anyway as the non-separatist police on the Costa may not be so blasé

Whilst we're on the subject of personalising the inside of cars it should be mentioned that nothing must hinder the driver. This not only affects the use of mobile phones and sat-navs but your vision must equally be unobstructed, so it may be sensible to avoid covering your windshield with dangly bits!

Spanish Number Plates

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