

That's all folks

Nine years ago, I wrote my first column for the series that was dubbed "Mediterranean Motoring". This is my last. I happened to be in the right place and the right time to be invited to share my knowledge. Noelia who still works in the CBN office at Benijofar and whom I regularly saw when paying my advertising bill put my name forward after seeing a couple of letters that I had written to the editor about motoring matters. She faced some opposition as it was felt that I may just write to promote my business and whilst promotion has been a beneficial side effect, I just felt that I wanted to give readers good information from a practitioner in dealing with motoring law and specifically how an expat can get his car registered, transferred or driving licence changed in the challenging bureaucratic jungle that exists here in our adopted land

My heartfelt thanks go to Noelia and Raquel, the features editor who has allowed my dribblings to go to press verbatim. James Parkes the editor has always been very supportive and I wish that the lovely Roy Wickham was still around to thank for his great support and comments

Time goes on and after receiving my UK and Spanish pensions earlier in the year I have been gradually winding down and handing over the business chains (with no ball attached) to Leigh my long-serving right-hand man and Dave the newer boy. It is very hard to let go, but now I have to, as the daily battles with the faceless wonders is finally dragging me down, plus my long-suffering wife insists that I must. You know boys, we men always have the last word, "Yes Dear". Anyway, I write about contemporary issues and the rules are ever-changing so, if I am no longer active in business my knowledge will also become dated.

"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts!"- John Wooden

Mostly the articles wrote themselves as situations develop in groups but I have no idea why, though amongst personal favourites were the Christmas specials which allowed the imagination to run riot. The notorious bar room lawyers at first made me despair before I realised that they were in fact a Godsend as I could lay to rest their wild stories whilst setting readers' minds at rest. These buggers have been superseded by the blogs and forums which are about as believable as Madonna saying "ouch" on her wedding night.

It can be hard being an expat and getting the right information, so if you find a useful person or organisation in whatever field, do your best to pass their name on rather than give second hand advice. What might have been the correct information for you may not satisfy the needs of the next person

A different mindset

The Spanish are great to live amongst and eager to help, but they have two significant traits. Summed up by "I don't care if you need a piece of paper from me so that your client can

release his car from the police compound in order to visit his seriously ill partner in hospital many miles away, this document is missing a stamp”. They won’t allow your problems to become their problems and when they join the uncivil service, all traces of humanity and common sense are lobotomised. The rules state the facts and the facts cannot be changed, only interpreted differently. There is a palpable fear of not abiding by the rules in case “Big Brother” is watching.

This may stem from a past regime, but to me it was summed up when I was invited by the then British Consul, Paul Rodway to a meeting with the head of Trafico in Alicante. The Consulate were being repeatedly asked questions about motoring law which were referred to DGT (Trafico), but this was time -consuming, so the idea was that I would field the questions and give answers via a column in the Costa News which was called “Hotline to Trafico”. It soon stumbled, as the staff flatly refused to work with what they perceived to be a journalist which I cannot claim to be. I even wrote twice to the DGT press office in Madrid, explaining that they could vet all questions and answers before they went to press. No response. Fear of criticism perhaps? I’ll never know

Meeting the public

My clients have come from all over the world, not just the UK or Ireland and daily have reminded me that we are similar, with our own cares and concerns and are just good folks doing the best they can with the hand that they have been dealt. Yeah, there have been a handful who I wished had chosen another service provider, but even they in hindsight have given me a good laugh at their pretentiousness. I too have been accused of being patronising and agree that sometimes the ego gets the better of me. Bad debtors have been a rare as rocking horse poo and for some reason a few have not settled their bill, even when their cases were particularly difficult. Something for nothing comes to mind.

Motoring in Spain is for me far more pleasurable than in the UK where everyone is so uptight. It took me a while to get used to the lack of indicators, tailgating and the mysteries of the roundabouts but in sharing this I hope to have eased the minds of my readers to whom goes special thanks for having been so

“When a man retires, his wife gets twice the husband but only half the income”. *Chi Chi Rodriguez*

Spanish Number Plates
Graham Shelton
Orihuela, Alicante
www.spanish-number-plates.com
info@spanish-number-plates.com
966 753 375
605 319 889

