

Some social differences (that struck me) between Spain and the British Isles

Daniel González García

Housing

British and Irish people tend to live in detached or semi-detached houses, with two floors, stairs and garden. Spanish people tend to live in flats. British towns normally have most of the shops and services concentrated in the centre, and the residential areas spread around it, needing a vast extension to accommodate relatively few people, whereas Spanish towns have a more compact structure.

-Despite the cold weather, they don't have blinds on the windows:



-Some windows close with a strange system based on a metallic stick (not very efficient from my point of view):



-Some switches (specially in the bathrooms) are on the ceiling and have a rope:





-Electric showers are common:



-Plugs are different:



-If you have a TV at home (no matter whether you watch it or not, or which channel do you watch) you have to pay an annual tax called "TV license".

-The floor is covered with wall-to-wall carpet: (so they use the Hoover very often)



-Some drains are outside the house:



-The kitchen always has a grill:



-Back-yard gardens are common, BBQs are organised in the summer (and some people are fans of gardening, there are many "weed-phobics" and the neighbour with the shortest lawn becomes a kind of "social hero"):



-From my point of view, the most symbolic element in a British house is the kettle, there's no house in the whole Britain without it. And sometimes you may also find other "boiling devices":



-As a traditional and old house there are some "Elisabethian" houses, with wooden beams:



Food

Breakfast is usually more important than in Spain (whereas lunch is less). A full English traditional breakfast may contain beans, tomatoes, black pudding, mushrooms, scrambled, boiled, poached or fried eggs, hash brown or potato scone, fried bread, bacon, sausage... (apart from tea, toasts, coffee, orange juice...):



-British people use sauces very often, particularly distinctive is the "Marmite" (yeast extract with a very strong flavour, people usually argue about whether they like or dislike it –in a way that reminds me of Spaniards arguing whether the Spanish omelette should have onion or not):



-There is a wide variety of pasties (Cornish pasty, chicken and mushrooms pasty, kidney and liver ...), pies (Shepherd's pie, Cottage pie.. with minced meat and smashed potatoes), roasts, and different "pub food" dishes (half pound Aberdeen Angus beefburger, fish and chips, scampi, gammon, breaded mushrooms, Scottish haggis...). There are as well loads of tacky "fish and chips" where you can buy fried fish or burgers to take away:







Pubs & drinks

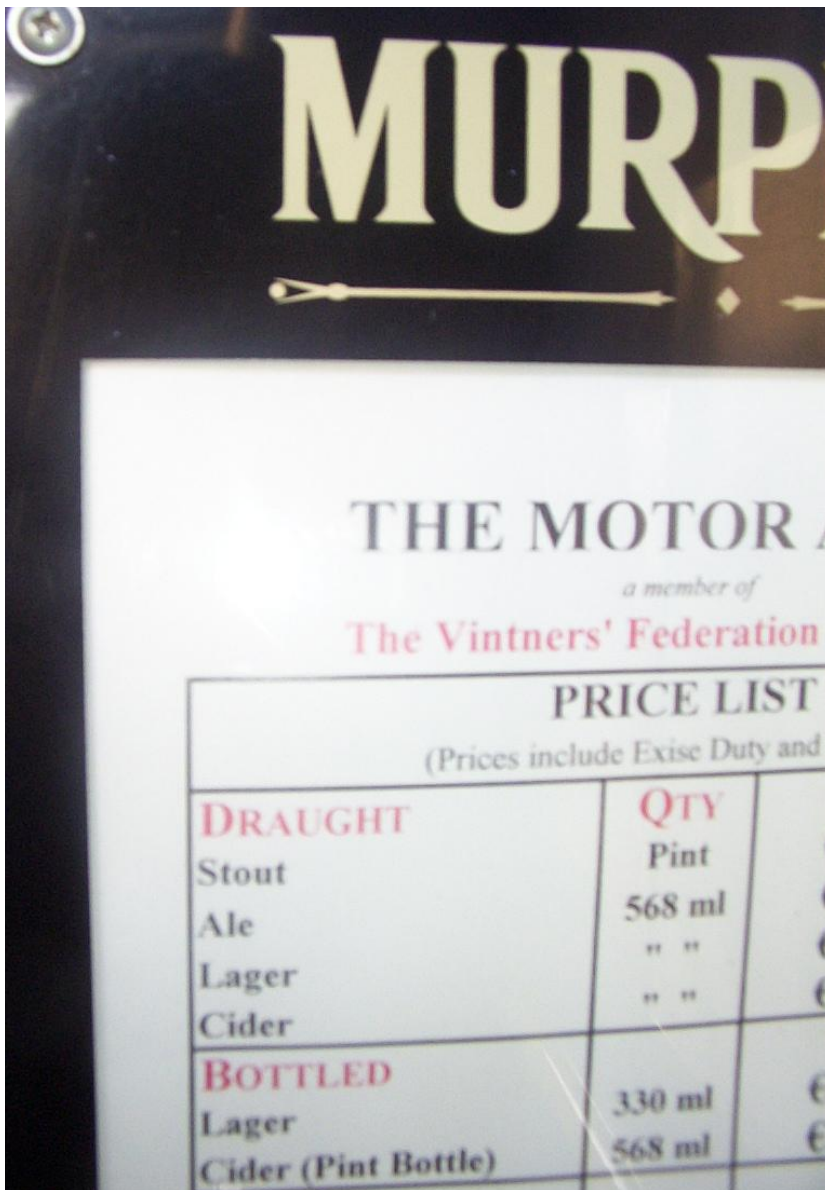
-The pub is a kind of social institution where people of all age, sex and condition gather in a laid-back atmosphere. Some names of pubs are common or similar (The Black Bull, The White Hart, The Swan, etc.). They usually organise activities such as live music concerts, karaoke competitions or pub quizzes:



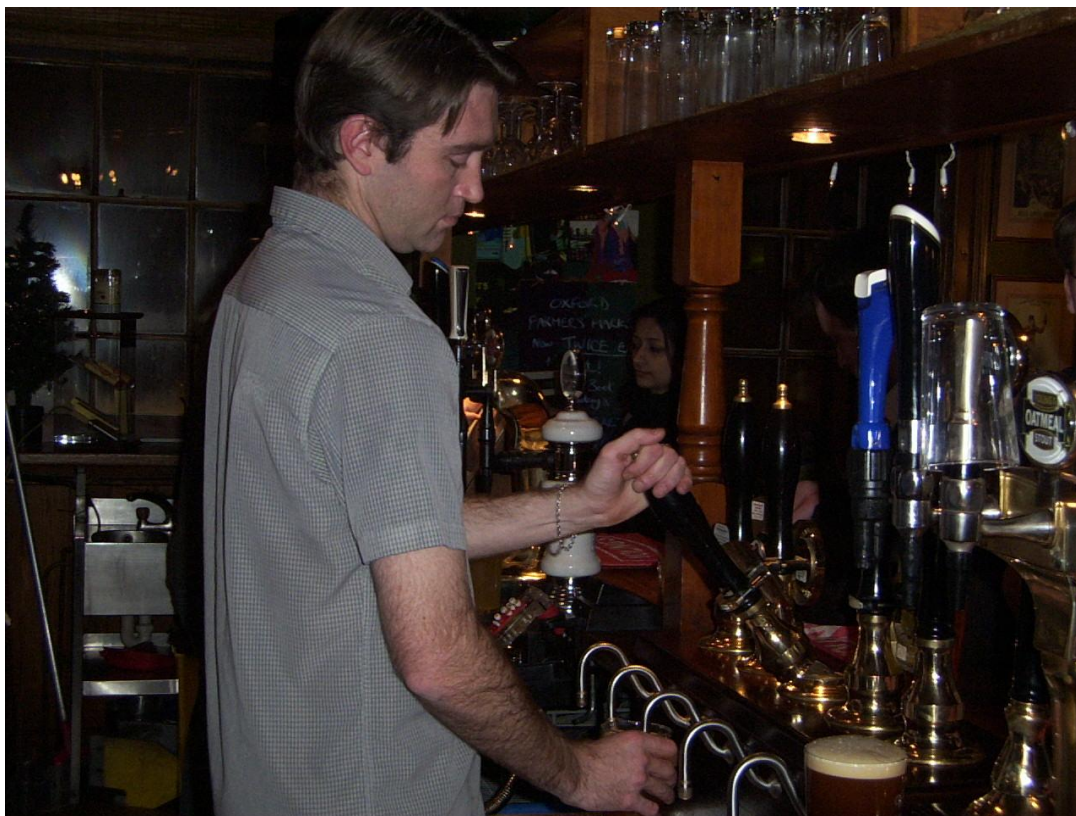




-The most characteristic drink you can have in a pub is beer. It is served in pints (568 ml.), there are a wide variety of beers, but from my point of view Real Ales (or Cask Ales) are the most interesting ones. They are normally brewed in small regional breweries, they aren't pasteurised (they have to be consumed in a very few weeks time) and they don't have carbonic gas added, so they need to be hand-pumped to be served:



PRICE LIST		
(Prices include Exise Duty and 1		
DRAUGHT	QTY	
Stout	Pint	€
Ale	568 ml	€
Lager	" "	€
Cider	" "	€
BOTTLED		
Lager	330 ml	€
Cider (Pint Bottle)	568 ml	€





-Another interesting point from my point of view is that smoking is forbidden in all Ireland and UK pubs (and other public places):





-Cider is also widely consumed, both in bottles and on draught.

-Some soft drinks don't exist in Spain: Sunkist, Irn-Bru, Dr. Pepper.

-And we can't forget the "national drink", the tea, there are loads of brands and types.

Sports

-Some sports are very popular in Britain, but not in Spain (or they aren't played here): Rugby, cricket, bowling:







-Besides, in Ireland and Scotland there are celtic games: Gaelic football, hurling, shinty. In Scotland, specially in the summer, there are Highland Games, and "Ceilidhs" with traditional dances:







Traffic

-Britain is the "country of the roundabouts", there are many of them. In some cases, the roundabout consists of a single white point on the asphalt, making impossible to turn around it, and becoming a very dangerous spot in my opinion:





-Not being enough, the British invented the "magic roundabout":



-As a whole, secondary roads are narrow (with no "shoulder" or "berm" whatsoever), and in rural areas single track roads abound, when two cars meet one of them must wait in a "passing place":



-In residential areas there are bumps and narrowing points to calm traffic:





-There are very few zebra crossings, and crossing the street for pedestrians is sometimes dangerous:



-But when there is a zebra crossing, it is clearly signed and always respected by drivers. When it is close to schools, sometimes there is a "lollipop lady":



-Pavements are usually made of asphalt, and pedestrians nearly always have to press a button to have way to cross at a traffic light:



-In Ireland, traffic signs have so much information that they are usually difficult to understand (or even to read):



-And of course, British and Irish people drive on the left...

Others

-Shocking ways to cross a fence in the countryside:





-Typical boxes to raise money by charities:





-Party poppers (I have never seen one of them in Spain):



-There is a extensive network of canals, with sluices and locks, and rivers are usually navigable (there is a very characteristic narrow boat):



-British people like betting:



-There are traditional measure units (yards, pints, ounces, feet, inches, pounds,... –also known as "imperial" units-).





-The remembrance day (or popphomey day) is widely celebrated:



-The newspaper sold by the homeless (in Spain "La farola") is called "The big issue" in Britain:



-Shops don't close at lunchtime, but they usually close at 5-6 pm:





-In parks and different areas there are special vans that play a song and sell ice cream:



If you find some error in this document, or you would like to give me your view about this topic, please, feel free to contact me.

Daniel González

daniel [at] gonzalezgarcia (dot) net