

Final Edition

Andalucia, 1988-1995

Setting the Scene

In the early eighties Britain was in an economic slump. Daily manufacturing enterprises folded. The Conservative government was selling off public assets. The confidence restored by the Falkland's War dissipated. Thatcher attempted to bring in a poll tax to replace household rates failed scrapped by Major's Secretary of State Michael Heseltine a couple of years later. Had the pill been sugar coated - offered as a part increase in raising money, it might have been steered away from the rocks. However, as it was, public opinion scuppered it. The government's European policy and its reluctance to join the E.R.M. resulted in Thatcher's forced early retirement and the election of John Major – his working class beginnings being an asset. By a series of steps, Britain's politics became closely linked with the European Union and the Maastricht Treaty. The property market boomed - doubled over a period of four years, from 1985. Partly due to a falling demand for exports and a high interest rate, prices began to fall over the next three years. New buyers found themselves caught in negative equity, when the property's value became less than the original price – experienced by Chris, Josephine's son. The exchange rate soared and an increase in the interest rate followed, to fifteen per cent... Sterling left the E.R.M. and on September 1992, 'Black Wednesday' became a reality. Whilst all this was going on we had moved to College Farm, Buckingham – to be nearer the girl's school – they had pressed to be daygirls... and I had taken early retirement. During my first year at home one of Josephine's clients declared, he wished to sell his home in Spain. This had happened whilst Josephine in Spain sorting out his financial matters. She immediately recognised its worth and agreed to think over the proposition. We gave the idea a great deal of thought going out there for a few days to look it over. The upshot was a quick purchase and we became Spanish property owners. This was the start to our love and captivation of Andalucia and all things Spanish. It also led to Josephine's employers giving her an invitation to develop the peninsular for financial services – to become a Director and service expatriates along the southern coastline... an offer we could not turn down.

Anthony had left Aldenham School the year before working as an organist whilst playing with his band at gigs in the Watford area. Christopher had just left the same school to start a banking career. Helen was about to leave secondary education and go on to do a further education course for music and dance, with an option for a teaching certificate, and Anna had wanted to leave Charmandean – longing to be a day girl. I was prepared to close my freelance work follow on - supporting whatever was decided. We arranged to fly out and survey the area close to Gibraltar where there was the greatest numbers of English residing. We were captivated anticipating the need for a capable financial consultant in the area and our first introduction to Estapona and Sotogrande where the first office was to be set up. Josephine gave an enthusiastic report to Hill Samuel's Directors and the die was cast we were to move there as quickly as possible.

It was summer 1987. Anna had left school and taking Spanish lessons, lodgings found for Helen close to her Drama College... and College Farm sold. Purchasing as many items we thought we would need, flew out to start a new life... it turned out to be quite an experience with many difficulties. Our ventures into opening a craft gallery and art studio, creating a small holiday complex in a terraced garden in Andalucia whilst all the time walking my dog through groves of almond and olive, amongst the tumbling streams and lush banks which lay in the valley bottoms, whilst overhead circled birds of prey from southern Spain. All these happenings occurred over a four-year period, which at the time felt like a lifetime. It was both and severally exciting and stimulating, unsettling and worrying whilst having moments of pure joy and wonder.

Nevertheless, with all this beauty and new made friends, the call of England was stronger. My call upon medical skills definitely made me think that perhaps I might be better off in the UK; Josephine was now back with Hill Samuel - her periods away from Spain were becoming longer. Our daughter had chosen a university course to attend in London. All these factors plus: the forest fire, the lightning strike, not having learned the language, made me suggest to Josephine that perhaps we should up-sticks and make our way back to a home in Buckinghamshire - she did not disagree.

The following ten years were lived at a fast pace included moving numerous times, travelling round the world, producing many pictures and experiencing more of life's demands – making compromises, at the same time engaging in wonderful country walks with my faithful dog, Ruff - something my mother would have understood and appreciated...