

The Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting will be held this year 10.00 am on Sunday 6th December at the Village Leisure Hotel, Dolomite Business Park, Coventry.

If you want to attend and book a room, it is better to book early. Quote the code WIMP041215 when calling the central reservation team on 0871 222 4582 for a preferential rate of £65 Bed and Breakfast. This code doesn't work for online bookings.

I will be standing for election as your Owners' Representative again. I understand that Ivan Pengelly is also prepared to stand for election as your President again. However, you may wish to have a choice this year, so I am also prepared to put my name forward as an independent owner/president also.

Any nominations for President, Owners' Representative or other other proposals should be submitted to Wimpen together with proposer and seconder by 7th September.

The AGM is your opportunity to have your say and vote. If you are unable to attend, you may direct your chosen proxy to vote for, against or abstain each resolution.

You can also leave voting to your proxy's discretion and if you don't have a particular person to choose as your proxy, you can always choose me, your Owners' Representative or Ivan, your President as your proxy

Full details of the AGM will be sent out in due course.



Finance

At this stage of the year, our financial situation is looking promising, due in part to much improved rental income and a saving in labour costs

	Actual	Var on Budget
Income	€429129	€10518
Expenses	€432712	(€40513)
Surplus/ Deficit	(€3584)	€51029

Our income at this stage is some €13,000 more than last year which is a very healthy start to our reinvigorated rental programme.

The bad debt provision is €21,500

Keeping in touch

I hope you found this newsletter informative. While I have always appreciated this annual newsletter, I have always felt that, as an owner, I wanted to be kept better informed.

To enable that I have now created an Owners' Website, an Owners' Facebook Page and a private email list of owners who wish to be kept informed by email. To join my mailing list, go to the website below and sign up.

Roger Barrow

Las Casitas Owners Representative

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YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Thank you for electing me as your Owners' Representative. I used the opportunity of my stay at Las Casitas in weeks 10,11 and 12 to carry out a site inspection with the Resort Director, Jose Jimenez, to discuss various matters with Denice the resort manageress and to meet formally with Ivan Pengelly, Managing Director of Wimpen, and with the management of Onagrup, who now own Wimpen.

I also met a number of owners at my twice-weekly 'surgeries' to answer questions and follow up various issues on their behalf. My first few months as your representative have been very busy indeed, and the recent acquisition of Wimpen by Onagrup generated an enormous number of questions, emails and phone calls. There has been a lot of misunderstanding about the acquisition, the Holding Company and the role of the Community of Owners, which I hope this newsletter will clear up.

Some of you will have seen the interim bulletin I sent out by email. Unfortunately, under Spanish Data Protection Law, I do not have access to a full list of owners' contact details so I am gradually building my own mailing list, let me know if you would like me to add your email address.

Useful Information

Escituras, Inheritance, Holding Company, NIE Numbers, Power of Attorney, Rental rates. Week Numbers? Confused?

You can find everything you ever need to know on my Owners' Representative website www.casitas.rogerbarrow.com. You can also leave comments there to share with me and other owners.

The week numbers have changed this year due to the 6 year cycle, so make sure you book your flights on the correct date. At least one owner turned up a week early!

My meeting with the Señor Germán Castro, General Manager of Onagrup, helped me understand much more about Wimpen's new owners, who are a very large and successful company managing timeshares throughout Spain and Andorra. They have over 54,000 owners, 54% from English speaking countries. All their resorts are Royal Crown.



Wimpen will continue to operate separately with regard to the day to day management of Las Casitas for the time being with the same personnel as before. However, Onagrup will take more control of rentals, where they have considerable experience, using their brand 'Ona Las Casitas' and thereby benefitting from better discounts from various global Internet rental sites like Booking.com and Hotel.com.

We will soon have details of how we can benefit from exchanges, and discounted rentals in their other resorts.

Onagrup are proving to be very responsive to my requests and fully recognise as owners, they report to us.

Rentals

This is where we are going to see the biggest change with Onagrup. Their professional marketing is going to ensure much of our unoccupied time is taken up with rentals, and already in the first quarter, our income has increased by €13,000.

The pricing of their rentals will be based on the market rate for the time of year, which is generally higher than the rental rates previously offered by Wimpen. This will mean that after they take their 15% commission, owners are more likely to receive full reimbursement of their maintenance charge and the Community will receive a higher income. Onagrup estimate that a new rental system will generate an extra €65,000 income for the Community. This will make a huge difference.

Owners Renting Extra weeks

On the flip side, from next year owners wishing to rent extra weeks will probably find they have to pay more, or that the weeks they want are unavailable.

However, Onagrup have recently introduced an unannounced change in owners rental procedure and some owners were recently shocked to find when they tried to rent extra weeks, that as well as an increase in price they we asked to pay the full amount up front, with no option to cancel, and no information about which villa.

This new system was introduced without my knowledge, and I explained to Onagrup that such a change was unacceptable.

As a result, I found myself deep in negotiation with the General Manager of Onagrup, who has now agreed to:

1. Reinstate the previous price and system for the remainder of 2015 including right to pay deposit 130 euros, balance payable 42 days before occupation.
2. From 2016, the market rent for the week will apply, with a 20% owners discount. This also applies to owners booking on behalf of friends and families.

3. Owners will still be able to pay a deposit, the balance 42 days before occupation. Non owners will pay up-front and have no right to cancel.

4. Owners will be informed which villa has been booked, but will also be advised that under the new rental arrangement, in order to maximise rental space, this villa is NOT guaranteed and will be confirmed on arrival. I can quite understand this.

To guarantee the weeks you want it is worth considering purchasing extra weeks now that it is no longer a lifetime commitment. With maintenance fees now less than rental costs, you would probably get your money back in a two or three years if you can purchase at a reasonable price.

Short Term Rentals

Onagrup are now accepting short term rentals. Initially this is bound to cause some hiccups and a few owners recently encountered a problem with a group of young neighbours who had booked one night to attend a local disco/fiesta.

For owners, a one night rental might be a benefit and we do need as much rental income as we can get.

However, I am discussing with Onagrup/Wimpen a procedure to deal with this in future including a stronger security presence, a premium rental for non-owners on short term rental and monitoring of who and the age of those wishing to rent.

Please let me know if you have problems. Please bear in mind that with more and more unoccupied weeks, it is vital we rent out unoccupied time or we can almost certainly expect sizeable increases in our future maintenance fees.



Internet Service and TV



This has been a common source of dissatisfaction among owners so I met on site with an internet expert from the UK to review the configuration. I also carried out a complete site survey from the terrace of every single villa to test the internet connection to find the dead and slow spots.

I found some of the hotspot antenna were not working and some villas have no WiFi signal at all. The best I found was 2.5mbps, which is really not good enough. The average speed around the site is 1.5mbps. You can see the results of the survey at www.castas.rogerbarrow.com/internet.html.

The bar (devolo) has between 6 and 9 mbits, but the configuration means that it drains bandwidth before the signal goes out to the rest of the resort. It is also insecure so can be used by others outside Las Casitas, or sitting in the car park, with no security about what kind of sites they might be accessing.

As a result I have been able to recommend some improvements with addition of an extra ADSL line and extra hotspots. The internet providers are installing a new high speed mast at Femes and I also met with the President of Las Brisas who is planning a new fast internet service, to see if we could work together to share the cost with both sites benefitting.

Wireless signals do not travel through the metal and concrete construction of the walls, so reception inside villas can never be guaranteed.

I also met a number of owners who did not fully understand how to connect their devices, so I have provided reception with a set of instructions to be given to every owner which should help.

The Resorts Director is also looking into the possibility of upgrading to digital TV with more channels which is also being considered for Las Brisas.

Harbour Extension

A new harbour extension at Playa Blanca, which has been in the offing for some 10 years, has now been approved and building is likely to start this year,

The existing harbour in Playa Blanca occupies a space of 91,470m², the new extension will add a further 114,099m² to the facility. The expansion project includes a new breakwater from the land to the south with a total length of 300 metres and depth of 17 metres. From there, the new section will run parallel to the existing harbour wall for 440 metres with more space available for sport, fishing and commercial vessels as well as improving the operation of the port.

The new and improved harbour will have 182 berths on floating pontoons, of which 17 have been assigned for fishing vessels and the new exterior section will handle the commercial traffic including cruise ships. Car parking, harbour offices, shops and restaurants have been included in the plans and will improve the western part of Playa Blanca which now is a bit run down .

I understand that the 'unofficial' car park will not be affected, but it will mean more traffic on the main road. I have already discussed with the gardeners additional perimeter planting to help shield Las Casitas from any additional noise.



Reception

Denice and Julie are looking forward to welcoming and helping you to enjoy your holiday.

I have been discussing with them ways that service at reception can be improved and the arrival process can be streamlined and I made a number of recommendations:

- Blue pool towels to be left in villas.
- Reception computers to be upgraded and properly networked so that both can be used at the same time.
- Two receptionists to be on duty at busiest time when possible.
- Owners to inform reception advance of arrival if internet access required so that it can be prepared if possible.
- Reception to be a source of all required information by owners so they are not asked to call Tenerife. Reception to offer to call Tenerife on owners behalf if they wish to arrange extra weeks rentals, or require information not available to reception.
- All visitors, renters and owners to be invited to Welcome meeting when they check-in. I
- I have asked Denice to always introduce the Friday welcome meeting when possible and to review the use and suitability of outside reps making sales pitches for their excursions. They do not pay us any commission for sales achieved, should they?
- I have also asked Denice to try and to make a point of walking around the resort in the days following arrival to check that guests are settled in and have no problems.
- Villa handbooks to be brought up to date.
- Elderly and frail guests to be offered assistance to get luggage to villa (maintenance man or gardeners could perhaps be used for this).



These are only recommendations and I don't know yet whether all can be acted upon, but please let me know your experiences and ideas. I know Denice and Julie are keen to offer you the best possible service.

I do encourage owners to go to the Welcome Meeting at 12.00 on Fridays and not just for the free sangria! You may think you have heard it all before, but there is always something new and you get a chance to meet other owners and visitors. You can also use the opportunity to ask Ronnie any questions that you may have for me, he will pass them on.

Please remember to inform reception of your expected arrival time. Villas are available for occupation from 4pm and although reception will endeavour to accommodate early arrivals, it really cannot be guaranteed, especially if there are a large number of owners changing villas.

Maintenance

Although the villas are starting to look a little tired, David and Johnny, our maintenance men, continue to work hard making repairs.

There are surprisingly few entries in the maintenance book at reception, and I would urge owners to take some responsibility to ensure maintenance problems are entered so they can be dealt with quickly.

However, I have also requested that Wimpen have a rolling programme of detailed inspections of each villa, specifically to identify maintenance items.

The Holding Company

From my meetings with owners and emails I have discovered that there is a lot of misunderstanding about the Holding Company, and anxiety about the weeks held there since the acquisition.

The Holding Company is owned by Wimpen but only as caretakers of all the owners weeks transferred to the Holding Company and any unsold weeks. It is clearly stated in our contract with the company and in the resolution that was passed by the 2009 AGM that this is the case and that in the event of a change of administrator, the Holding Company will change hands also.

I am appointed a Director of the Holding Company. Unsold weeks in the Holding Company do not carry voting rights at the AGM. You still have the same ownership rights for weeks that you transfer to the Holding Company, but you are not stuck with them for life if you don't want them in the future.

The cost of transferring weeks to the Holding Company is to cover the complex legal costs of doing so, it is essentially a sale and change of escitura and is really in the long term interests of all owners. Not only does it make it easier and cheaper to buy and sell weeks, it also ensures there are no nasty shocks in the event of the unfortunate passing away of one of the owners, which then makes the week impossible to sell. A surviving spouse would find themselves in a lifetime debt and possibly being chased by debt collectors.

Statistics

There are currently approximately 1014 individual owners at Las Casitas, some of these will be couples so the number of actual ownerships will be less.

At present there are 494 owners whose weeks a have been transferred to the Holding Company, of these 244 weeks have been relinquished by owners and are now available for purchase. These weeks ideally need to be sold so that rentals remain in the minority.

The cost covers any number of weeks that are in your name, and to make the transfer you will need to hold the escitura in your own name, NIE number and will need to have arranged Power of Attorney for Wimpen to sell. Wimpen can advise you further on this.

If the week is in joint ownership, then both parties will need to sign, eve if they have separated or divorced. In the event that one partner has sadly passed away, then the situation is more complicated, and an inheritance escitura is required that can cost around €1,500 to €2,000 to arrange, possibly more. Wimpen can advise on this also.

It is a one-off cost that will give owners total peace of mind, and i would urge owners to transfer their weeks.

Relinquishing your weeks is not an ideal solution for the Community, and as the costs to sell or transfer is low, hopefully owners who no longer wish to use their weeks will attempt to sell them, either privately or through Wimpen's resale programme.

The Community of Owners

This is a legally constituted organisation of which every owner is a member. Unlike many timeshare resort, at Las Casitas the Community holds ALL the power. All the blocked and unsold weeks in the holding company are owned by the Community. If sold or rented, the money after commission, goes to the Community.

The Community chooses which company they wish to employ as Administrators and with sufficient notice, can cancel their contract if they are not up to the job. Ivan Pengelly is the elected President of the Community and the only reason we have an elected Owners' Representative is because Ivan wears two hats, our President and MD of Wimpen the Administrators.

As your elected representative I am in a strong position to hold Onagrup Wimpen accountable on your behalf.

Timeshare Sales

Wimpen will continue to manage sales for the time being. While the timeshare sale market has to all intents and purposes died, there are a number of unsold weeks in the Holding Company and we don't want them sitting there unsold. I have now agreed with Wimpen that these can be offered for sale at much more reasonable prices, and while I was at the resort, two owners were able to secure a really good deal on their purchases.

Owners who like to regularly rent extra weeks may find they are already taken up and not available, and also more expensive to rent than before, so should seriously consider purchasing extra weeks. It is no longer a lifetime commitment. Check the asking price, then make an offer, you might be surprised! Let me know how you get on.

Sale of owned weeks

Owners with escituras who have their weeks in the resale programme probably need to review their asking prices given the current state of the market, and the fact that unsold weeks in the Holding Company are going to be available at a lower price. Of course it is more expensive to sell a week where the owner holds the escitura.

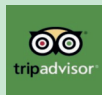
The cost of transferring a week that is in the holding company is just £100 if sold privately, and if sold through Wimpen's resale programme will include their commission.

Trip Advisor

There are a number of comments on Trip Advisor, most of them very good and just a few that are indifferent.

Trip advisor is becoming an increasingly important tool in a successful rental program, and many potential renters or buyers will look there before deciding to visit us.

Positive comments will undoubtedly help the Community, but please, if your experience as an owner does not match up to expectations, or if mistakes are made, please don't tell the world, tell me! I will try and get it put right for you and future guests.



The Las Casitas Bar

Ronnie and Maureen continue to be warm and welcoming hosts at the Las Casitas Bar. Those of you who were

concerned about the security of their tenure following the recent acquisition of Wimpen by Onagrup need not worry, their contract is with us, the Community of Owners.

The green canopy at the bar has really reached the end of its life, it leaks, it is filthy, it is noisy in windy conditions and looks unsightly. I have been discussing with the Resorts Director what should replace it, that is in keeping with Las Casitas status as an RCI Gold Crown resort, possibly something with an opaque acrylic roof, and concertina doors that can be fully opened. I have told him we don't want a 'greenhouse' like Las Brisas. This won't happen in the very near future and depends on costs and available funds. More information soon I hope.

Please support the bar, it is the hub of the resort. Look out for new menus and Ronnie wearing a smart new uniform Coming soon I understand!

Villa Upgrade

The Villas and especially the furniture are looking tired, some of the furniture is original from the 1980s, and badly needs upgrading.



Some of you will have seen the proposed upgrade with new furniture in the show villa No 2 or the pictures in reception. Having personally inspected the new furniture, there is some evidence of damage to the chairs and the veneered dining table, and I suspect they may not be robust enough to cope with ever changing owners and renters.

The settees are much more comfortable but many feel the colour and fabric may be impractical and would quickly become stained. The new curtains and pictures look nice, so do the bedrooms but some owners feel the villa has lost its authentic 'Spanish' feel.

However we have to think of future generations and certainly younger owners seem to prefer a more contemporary look.

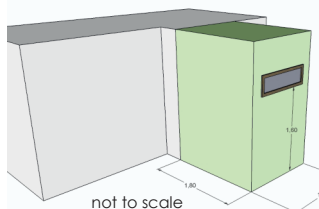
The survey in reception showed that the majority liked the proposed changes, with 292 in favour and 100 against. Upgrade to the bedrooms will be going ahead and we still have time to review the lounge and dining room furniture before a final decision is made.

Second Bathroom in Two Bed Villas

This came up a few years ago and was rejected. However, times have changed and the rental market is now absolutely vital to the financial health of Las Casitas, and failure to rent empty and blocked villas will undoubtedly lead to a sharp increase in maintenance costs. A two bed villa with 2 bathrooms is going to be much more attractive in the competitive the rental market.

The bathroom will take the form of a small extension to the 2 bed Villa and permission will need to be obtained from the Town Hall

Much of the cost may come from the sinking fund with the balance from all owners, as it will benefit the whole resort with only a small increase in maintenance, which will be much less than possible increases if we fail to rent. This will all be subject to a proposal at the next AGM. I hope you will support it.



Security

We now have a new security man who is on duty during the night and who we share with Las Brisas.

If you need him at any time, there is a bell push outside reception you can use to call him.

