

The Guadiana Glue Writers Circle



A winter (2012=2013) on the Guadiana
to be completed...

The Guadiana Glue Writers Circle

I always wanted to write...the question was, what should I write about?

When I arrived on the Guadiana this winter, with my family, I had some spare time, I had the subject, and above all, there was a group of people already there who were keen to write!



This year some exceptional people have come together on the Guadiana—musicians, artists, actors, sporty people, dreamers...—and the mix of talents, of different outlooks, and of different languages went towards making this winter a memorable one.

Thus it was that an idea was floated on the airwaves of Channel 72 (the radio net) and a group of 9 would-be writers assembled for the first time at the beginning of February. Though the majority were native English speakers, there were also Dutch, South African, and a French-speaking Belgian (me!).

I had initially thought to write a joint story, each contributing a part, but it was soon decided that each would write a story adopting the persona of an actual or imaginary animal on the river. The brief was also to include each other's personae in each story!

The idea then was to integrate these stories into one!

YOU'RE confused?! Hopefully you'll soon get the message!!

9 individual stories were finally written, and left to stand alone. We had enjoyed the “writers' seminars” so much that a decision was made to extend them to include poetry -writing, again the idea being to write a poem together- but this developed (again!) into separate poems but with a common theme -the bells!

Then we thought we should put them all together in the library, along with the history of the whole period leading up to this decision, and so other writers were “press – ganged” into writing articles on their particular interest or field of expertise.

It was recognised that there are other languages spoken, not just English! – and so others were asked to translate some parts into, for example, French – or French into English!

The story of the remarkable winter we have spent here is presented to you in this folder. We hope that future years will be equally outstanding, and that other “yachties” will augment this first effort as years go by.

I have derived great pleasure from taking part in this project and from seeing its final “denouement”!

Special thanks to the writers; Nela for the drawings, Lucien, Mireille and Christian for the translation, Keren and Brenda for the pictures, Cristina and Carlos for their help at the library and printing authorisation, Francisco for his kindness and good tips on Alcoutim history...

And thanks to all of you who were there as part of this community and made it all happen: this winter will forever remain one of my best memories!

By Valérie on *RIVEO*

All the pages are printable at the library or on www.batoriveo.org

Alcoutim, March 12th 2013

9 STORIES

Music Night

By Scot on "Sea Warrior"

-“Batatinhas what the hell is that bloody noise. Aye you Batatinhas can you hear it? Oh for goodness sake , its like trying to speak to the dead. Oh wait a minute Im the dead one.....I forgot!”



Sooty had been dead for a while - a bit of a slip on the pier had led to rather a long swim which eventually led to him dying as he could no longer keep himself afloat. Now everyone missed him but he still managed to reappear in various different ways.

-“Batatinhas will you listen up now. There´s a noise like a grating, screeching nutcase coming from the pub and it needs to stop NOW”

One eye lifted slowly as Sooty’s shouting banged around inside Batatinhas’ small but perfectly formed skull. Apart from the eye nothing else moved as he tried to figure out who was shouting at him. He was not one for overreaction or movement unless absolutely essential. The image of Sooty somehow appeared in his head briefly and he realised that although Sooty had been dead for three months he was still finding ways of annoying him. Sooty had always annoyed Batatinhas.

-“Okay, okay I’m awake now leave me alone and let me sleep”

The one open eye closed again momentarily followed swiftly by both big brown eyes opening completely as the real noise managed to permeate through. It was the same every Tuesday night. Those two legged lads would get together and make noises, drink some stuff and a few of them would set fire to sticks and put them in their mouths. Something would go on fire and smoke would come out. Maybe the drink that they had was to put the fire out?

Batatinhas lifted his head, stretched his legs out in all directions, yawned and started to lick himself clean in preparation for another evening on the town. It sounded like it might be a lively one. He started to assess the situation with slightly more awareness and clarity. It was one of those still, tranquil nights when normally all would be quiet. This of course made the banging and crashing which was coming from the pub even more invasive

Oz and Pen were hanging out at the cafe close to where Batatinhas had been sleeping. They too had heard the noise and had come closer to investigate. Oz had never been happy with noise. He hated when loud bangs resonated around the local hills at the weekend and would run for cover.

He had heard the sounds on Tuesdays before and had therefore got a little more used to it. None the less he was none too comfortable with it. He had resorted to lying with his front legs and paws firmly pressing on his ears to block it out.

Pen on the other hand was hitting the groove. She was tapping out a fierce rhythm with one of her large flappy feet as her not inconsiderable back end swayed rhythmically. She was loving it. She was very artistic and flamboyant and if truth be told a bit crazy. She found any kind of expression to be enlightening and exciting.

-“Hey, wo, yea wooo” she quacked away. 'This stuff is good Oz eh'

She looked down at Oz who was still pressing his paws against his ears and had a fearful look on his face.

-“Oh come on Oz lets see some moves man. Its time to boogy!”

With that Pen started to stamp and jive even more doing a little jig around the legs of the chairs.

-“Quack, quack, Qu, Quack Quack, Qu Quack Quack Yea.”

Oz had had enough by now and put his head in one of the bins! It was no better in there in fact the bin seemed to act like some kind of amplifier. To top it off Oz found that his head was now firmly stuck in the opening for the bin. He wriggled and pulled which of course Pen took to be some kind of frantic, way out expressive dance.

-« Oh la la, Oz lets go ! ».

With that Pen started to swing her rear end against Oz which didn't help his plight. Pen was loving it! Oz thought he was perhaps the unluckiest dog in the world especially when he spied in the dim light of the bin one of his other friends.

Plato had been using the bin as a house for the last while because she had been removed from her previous abode through late payment of rent on the wooden box that had had a wonderful river view, patio and outside toilet. She had been rather startled by Oz sticking his head through her front door and had scurried away under an old napkin which she had been using as a bed. She had discovered the napkin the previous evening and it had become something of an item in Plato's life as it not only was a comfortable place to lie but it had remnants of Tosta Mista on it so it had sustained her for the previous 24 hours. She of course realised that eating her own furniture was not going to be sustainable!

-“Hey Oz what's up man” she croaked.

Oz was in no mood for small talk as he was being buffeted around.

-“Hey your really getting down to that noise Oz”.

Oz's eyes were now pretty much popping out of his head. He had lost blood circulation to his brain, oxygen levels were dropping within Plato's small abode and Pen was still whacking him on the bum with her tail feathers.

-“Have you taken something tonight Oz” said Plato.

She was looking at Oz and was convinced that he had dropped acid, mushrooms or some such other hallucinogenic substance. There is no way anyone should act like that normally! She of course did not realise that he was being vigorously slapped at regular intervals on the rear end by an overzealous, anarchic' super artistic duck!

Oz was somewhat preoccupied to answer such unnecessary questions and started to squirm and kick more vigorously in an attempt to free himself.

Pen of course got even more excited and was loving every minute as she saw, in her eyes, a completely transformed Oz into the best dance partner ever even though she had to admit it was a somewhat unusual way to dance what with your head in a bin.

Maria, the mule, had been quietly munching away at something tasty that her keeper had left her earlier. She never knew what she was going to get each day which was nice. Variety was her spice of life. She knew that Tuesdays was a night of noise but this night seemed to have been especially noisy and she did feel that she was missing out on something. She decided to investigate but before she should get ready. She took pride in her appearance. She had done her hooves earlier in a nice vibrant red but felt something was missing.

Yes that was it, that shawl that Sooty had given her before he had passed away so abruptly. She had treasured it since and tonight was the night to use it to set off her large alluring eyelashed eyes and newly decorated hooves. She had had a friend straighten her tail and mane earlier with her hair straightener. She was ready. It was never easy for her to get up those damned steps to the cafe from the bottom but she tip toed up as best as a mule can tip toe trying very hard not to chip her hoof paint.

She was glad that she had made an effort when she saw the party in full swing. She too didn't understand why Oz had his head in the bin but also assumed it was also just in the name of having a good time!

By this time Nella had spied the proceedings and decided to land on Pen's back to try to get into the rhythm and Ellie the local dolphin was thrashing out a beat as best she could on the water with her tail.

Batatinhas had eventually managed to stroll up to the cafe and he had donned a pair of sunglasses, had a glass of something special sitting next to him and was hammering out the timing on top of the bin that Oz had his head stuck in. Maria had found her Mecca.

With the help of Maria pulling from behind, Plato jumping around on his nose and Batatinhas crashing away on the top with his sticks, Oz had managed to slide free and had decided that anything was better than having your head stuck in a bin so even he was starting to enjoy himself.

After another half an hour of wild and rhythmic grooving, all of them realised that actually this sound that came from the pub was not too bad at all, life was cool and perhaps this was the place to be.....for now anyway.



OZ by Nela Blinkhorn

The Dolphin Diggory on the Guadiana

By Elly on *EOS (NL)*



These days I'm what you might call an Ancient Mariner. Been there, done that, nothing surprises me much anymore. But as a young dolphin I could still be astonished about a lot of things.

While cruising the Atlantic with my parents I learned a lot about the special position us dolphins have in this world, as we are able to take part in the normal sealife but also get a glimpse of the funny life of the land and sky creatures.

The weirdest of them all are the so called humans: they can swim and walk and fly but none of it really well and they need the assistance of all kinds of gadgets. While all of it can be done so much better by the so called animals. Also they need the help of special coverings to protect them, instead of suitable fur, feathers or blubber.

However, some of them are quite sensible: they move around in artificial fishes. Still quite funny shapes these things are: with one fin, two fins or no fins at all, and all rigid.

Through those artificial fish skins I can hear them communicate with each other. Being a dolphin – i.e. being of superior intelligence – I understand all they say, although much of it still doesn't make sense to me.

When my parents thought I was about ready to fish on my own they sent me to my cousin Gaspard in Portosín to learn some extra ways of fishing.

He taught me how to seek out places where there are a lot of artificial fish together. There you can hide behind a big fin and then make the occasional dash for some food that comes moving along unsuspectingly. It was also quite fun to rub myself against the small artificial fishes and to push them about.

There in the waters of the Spanish rias I noticed how many of the artificial fish were moving along in a southerly direction and I heard them mentioning to each other how they were looking forward to the Guadiana River for spending the winter.

As the rivers in the rias are a good place to play with fellow dolphins and to find plenty of food, I thought that this Guadiana might be a nice change of scenery for me as well.

Well, I got in there alright, but it was rather different from what I expected. For one thing, I could hardly see!

I had to move along by smell, hearing and sense, with the occasional peek upstairs to orientate myself.

I sort of settled down for a while, did a bit of fishing, letting myself move backwards and forwards with the current and wondering about the goings on of all the other creatures there.

Maybe I should have stayed on with Gaspard a bit longer to find out more about the ways of the world instead of figuring it out all single-flippered. But then my cousin's place was a so-called marina (though I don't know what's so marine about it, as all the artificial fish there seem very land-orientated) and the artificial fish in the Guadiana were behaving quite differently.

They were spread out in a funny way with something stretched out from their noses to the bottom of the river to keep them in the same position. They all used baby artificial fish to move to the land and back, and also the big ones on the pontoons were using the small

ones to explore the pontoons on the other side. I was also getting quite confused about some of the land and sky creatures.

Except for fishermen everyone loves us dolphins, but with the land and sky animals there is always one being afraid of the other.

Just about everyone was afraid of Batatinha the cat: the Oz Dog, Finca Dog, Pen, Cockroach and Sparrow and even Maria was getting a bit jumpy when he was around her legs.

To make it even more confusing, the humans were not afraid at all of Batatinha and spoiling him with all kinds of food instead of letting him catch his own. As a result he was wanting being fed more and more, and would let everyone know about it with his loud meow, the annoying creature.

Also this Oz Dog was being fed by many humans, but okay, he was so cowardly he wouldn't even be able to catch a cockroach by himself.

And then I found out that everyone was confused about me! Apparently in general our sort of water animals are not venturing up the Guadiana, but being all by myself how was I to know this. Meanwhile I noticed something happening to me, a kind of, well, stickiness?

Could this be what I had heard those humans whispering about, especially this Cap'n in Nazaré: *"Many go into the Guadiana but quite a few don't ever come out again"?!*

Anyway, plenty of things happening to keep me there for a while, I could write a book about it!

One day I noticed Batatinha floating past me on a raft of caña, screaming and screeching:

-"Help me! I didn't know this was an island! I was only trying to be friendly to this duck."

And there was this duck swimming around the caña raft, laughing at this furry fourlegs.

-"There you are, Batatinha, this comes of trying to creep up on me."

The sparrow noticed all this commotion and came flying along having a good laugh about this cat now not being able to do any harm. So Batatinha now tried to be friendly to me:

-"Please help and give me a push back to the shore."

Well okay, if I could help in this way I might as well and in no time I had the caña raft up against a platform. But he wasn't thankful at all!

-"Oh no, you silly dolphin, you've dropped me in Spain and I live in Portugal!"

Meanwhile, there came this Finca Dog barking its head off:

-"Get away you stupid Portuguese cat. This here is my land and ducks shouldn't be here either."

So I moved Batatinha to the other shore, full speed, however not realising this Finca Dog had taken position on the caña raft as well.

Upon arrival, the commotion got even worse, as we were awaited by Oz Dog and him and Finca Dog had a good time getting rid of Batatinha, assisted by quacking and flapping Duck and cheered on by Sparrow.

But before I had time to swim away to quiet spot, there were both dogs again, demanding I move them together on the raft to the other side.

Me being a foreigner in this place I decided I'd better do as they wished, but as soon as

these two had done a bit of running around together on the other side, they wanted to be moved back again. All this was making me a bit nervous, especially with silly Duck and divebombing Sparrow around as well.

So there we were, me pushing this caña raft backwards and forwards across the river, in an attempt to please these two Dogs, when all of a sudden both of them gave an awful howl and jumped off the raft, each swimming to his own shore and also Duck and Sparrow took flight in a panic. Looking around I then saw another Dog in the water, whom we had bumped into.

This was a rather quiet creature, lying there motionless. What a welcome change, a non-barking Dog.

Together, we let ourselves move up and down with the current, and he didn't steal any of my fish. The other two Dogs stayed away from us, as well as Duck and Sparrow, so for a while I was quite happy with this new companion.



DIGGORY by Nela Blinkhorn

A sparrow story

By Nela Finca teenager in San Lucar



not
family

sides

I live under a tile on a roof of a home of humans. I do know what "tile" or "roof" means but that's what my told me.

Near us there is a lot of water called a river, on both of the river live lots of humans and lots of animals.

I have only just learnt to fly and have not seen any of this yet, but I really, really want to.

One day, some of my friends and family took me to a place across the river where lots of humans live, they called it Alcoutim. We went to a place where we found lots of human food crumbs, do humans know how much food they leave on the floor? Anyway it's good for us. While we were there we saw a big fluffy bird with four legs, no wings and no beak; he kept asking the humans for food but they did not seem to understand him. Every time he came near us, my friends told me to fly away from him, they said he might catch us.

Later, we flew back across the river and we saw some strange animals that looked like beetles but they were bigger, well, sparrows eat beetles so I thought I'd try and catch one. I swooped down quickly, like I had been taught, landed behind one and pecked at it, they are incredibly hard; it turned around with surprise and said

-“You can't eat me, I know long words like ACOPALIPSE.”

I didn't expect the animal to talk, or what apolcapils, or whatever it was, meant. I was extremely confused, I just said

-“What?”

The beetle thing replied

-“You cannot harm me, I'm infinitely superior, you are but a feathered vertebrate with a small cerebral capacity”

I did not understand a word this beetle said so I politely said

-“Good bye!”

And flew of home with my family.

I asked my family what those beetle things were, they just said

-“They are cockroaches, we don't understand them. Go to your nest now.”

That was my first day of adventure, I cannot wait for tomorrow.



SPARROW by Nela Blinkhorn



BATATINHA by Nela Blinkhorn

Batatinha

By Tom on *El Viento*



I am the cat---not A cat, THE cat!

My name, according to my owner, Philip, is **Batatinha** (Little Potato!).

Can you imagine that? The most dignified, handsome and efficient killer on the waterfront and he names me after a vegetable! I suppose it shows that, like all the humans I meet, he is really not that clever.

To give you another example: I understand all the strange -sounding languages they use, but can THEY speak cat? No. Do they go to evening classes to learn cat? No. Oh, I grant you that they do at least talk to me in their own language but do you know (and this is strange!) they sometimes don't even understand each other?

Well, they understand the words, but they don't understand the MEANING of the words. I mean, sometimes I hear the males and females speaking to each other. HE may say "I like that new dress you're wearing" when what he MEANS is "She's been spending a fortune on clothes again!". She may answer "Thank you, I'm glad you like it!" when what she MEANS is "You pig! I've had this for twenty years and you never noticed before!" It's so much simpler when you're feline----just a couple of purrs, a miaow, a scream in the night and see you tomorrow! AND you don't have to change your fur to suit changes in fashion ---. I can lick myself clean all over. I'd like to see a human do that!

You may notice me guarding the north pontoon sometimes. There, when I'm feeling a bit murderous (as we cats do from time to time) I can practice my skills on the rats who are sometimes to be found there. It also gives me pleasure to watch the reaction of dogs when they see me---they rush to attack then suddenly realize that I'm not going to run away.

They stop.!

THEN I give them the stare! Have you ever seen a dog trying to pretend it isn't there----or wishing it wasn't?!

Strangely, I have recently seen a dog that isn't really there. Difficult to explain, really, the humans don't appear to see it, and seem to walk right THROUGH it on occasion, and it isn't frightened by the stare. Maybe it's all in my mind and I need to see a psychovet. Mind you, the last vet I consulted stuck needles in me and THEN tried to put his finger in a VERY strange place! He had to see a doctor and get needles stuck in him AND stitches in his finger----wonder if doctors try to put their fingers where vets do?

I quite like watching dogs with their people. Some of them jump at their every command, but some need more training. If they were MY people I wouldn't allow them to behave the way they do, shouting and screaming and expecting me to fetch sticks. They all need a quick scratch with a sharp claw: you have to train people properly, you know, especially if you're going to let them off the lead in public!

I haven't mentioned the ducks --DON'T ask me about the ducks! Oh all right then! The local ducks are possibly the dirtiest creatures you could meet---they defecate wherever they are (some dogs do this too, though I blame the owners), often in their sleeping places, and then sleep there.

The young ones are quite tasty, though----! As a matter of interest, there's a foreign duck which has arrived on the river recently, and SHE looks quite tasty! She seems to be quite a flighty piece, forever flying off on international flights to Spain.

If I were a duck, I wouldn't choose to live in a place where orange sauce is so readily available. Safe enough if you're a Bombay duck, I suppose

Other strange animals have arrived on the river in recent times---the fish in the river tend to be not very good to eat, but my servant brings me sea fish, which are very nice. I've seen one which has come up the river from the sea, they say, but it looks a bit big even for me to eat. It also has a permanent smile on its face, as if it knows something I don't know. I find that a bit unsettling because how could ANYONE know more than ME?

I mentioned my owner, well, servant really----you all know him, he works in the Riverside Tavern, and I know you spend most of your lives there; quite a personable young man who speaks his own language plus English (a REALLY strange language, in which lots of letters aren't pronounced---- Scots is SO much more logical !) but more importantly, has a reasonable command of cattish and catters --sorry, caters --- to my every whim (well, almost). He's no good at catching mice, though, I have to do that myself! While I remember, he did say that on Tuesday evenings, some humans try to speak cattish, but they are not doing it very well. They call it singing but Philip calls it "caterwauling" and they really need to take lessons. I may be able to advise, given enough catfood---

I see that a cockroach colony is trying to establish itself on my side of the river. Now I'm not speciesist, but I think they should confine themselves to the Spanish side, where such insects may be welcome-- yuck, dirty beasties ! They carry disease, you know----unless you know different.

I have noticed a little sparrow fluttering around recently----I'll pass the word to my pussycat friends not to eat her up just yet.

Small history of Alcoutim by Penelope who has left Ulysse home to travel on her own...

By Valérie on RIVEO (B)



Now here is a turn up for the books!

I've been here for several weeks, on the Rio Guadiana and I no longer have any wish to fly anywhere else. Not that I have lost my wings or that my feathers have wilted. No I simply don't have that will anymore! But let me tell you how this happened...

Several months ago, I decided I had had enough of the rain and the cold, I decided to take my feathers and webbed feet, take flight, and leave Belgium for the south, just to see if I could get a trace of my roots.

After many adventures I finally arrived in the waters of my ancestors: the Rio Guadiana ! The name « Guadiana », inseparable from my species, means Duck River*.

Whereas in other places we lived on ponds, here our kingdom was a river. And what a river!

My grandfather had told me so many tales about it when I was small that I couldn't help shedding a ... feather when I discovered it! It was even more beautiful than I had imagined.

But let me introduce myself. My name is Pen. Penelope Duck VII ! Grand daughter of a Portuguese immigrant, I'm a duck! A female duck actually. Careful, not any old duck! The common mallard is not a close relation. I'm from a much nobler and prouder lineage. My white head and body covered with black feathers give me a real "Doña" or Portuguese noble woman look!

We are actually a good bunch who are united by this magic river Most of us came from a little fog shrouded island to the north of Belgium. They are, by the way, comical because although they are from the same island, they don't quite express themselves in the same way and some of the males prefer the skirt while others would rather wear a bowler hat. In spite of these considerations some of these close relations are quite cute... They have kept a certain rebellious and mysterious look with a mask, which is probably related to an ancestor who has rampaged through the area signing his charitable acts with a Z! He also had to fly away one day and has by the way become a famous immigrant overseas but that is another story...

But let's come back to my Pépé and the Rio ! Most of my ancestors had distinguished themselves on the Rio by acts of high bravery. The situation on the Rio, which is 800km long and often the border between Portugal and Spain, is quite special. And even more so in Alcoutim, where I had settled.

Here, two villages face each other, two villages that had known wonderful stories but also terrific dramas. Alcoutim facing San Lucar, and the ducks in the middle, on the water. Discreet, efficient and diplomatic.

We were the link between the two countries. Fado or flamenco, it didn't make any difference to us, especially when we would take a few dance steps on the waters.

(Nowadays, I'd go dancing on Tuesday nights at the Riverside! I would then gather with all my new friends, listening to music. We would then also dance Scottish dances and a strange one with the head in a bin (see Oz's story!). Very funny!)

That's where the stories my P  p   was telling me had taken place.

At that time, both countries were living in total harmony. Both villages were having fiestas together and the bells were ringing in unison. The young were visiting each other, flirting and getting married, without any consideration of nationality. They would then choose one bank or the other to settle and raise a family.

We, the ducks, were then still well regarded. So well that some of us were sometimes even invited as VIPS at some parties. And these privileged few had such a high success, we wouldn't see them again! They surely had gone elsewhere to spend their suddenly-made fortune ...

But time changed and soon a war ended that happy and carefree life. Men were killing each other. We ducks never really understood why, but we guessed they knew. No more fiestas, no more mix weddings, no more round trips on the river... It was as if the sky had fallen on this part of the world. Men in uniforms were mounting guard on the river banks and would shoot at anyone trying to swim across the river! Even the bells weren't ringing together anymore it was as if they were echoing men's fury. What a period !

But it was without counting on my ancestors' bravery. Ah! They were made from another steel at the time of my P  p  . So, when Batatinhas IV's grand-father, Batatinhas I the cat, asked my grand-father to help him cross the river so that he could meet with his cat lover on the Spanish side, P  p   didn't think too long and decided to give him a webbed feet! Poor Batatinhas II, he had tried on a dolphin's back but that had been a disaster! Anyway, that's where my P  p   had the great idea of building, with his pals, a... wooden duck!

Of course, it was just a matter of thinking about it, but HE had had the idea first (Ulysse tried after that with a horse)!!!

Men had lots of other preoccupations than worrying care about ducks, were they lame or wooden ones!

Every evening, Batatinhas would slide into the manufactured duck and in silence my P  p   and his pals would swim across, under the "guarda civil's" nose and beards, who wouldn't notice anything!

What P  p   didn't know was that his behavior had been noticed by Francisco, the port's guard. The latter, anxious to help his poor father who was risking his life smuggling by swimming across every night, made an agreement with P  p   to pass other items than a cat in his wooden duck...

That's how flour, sugar, coffee and other desired items were taking the Rio to Spain. And the transporter would bring sherry or cognac back to Portugal.

Luckily the slaves and cows traffic was over! It was a duck, not a horse ! They had even asked him to pass with the bells from Portugal to Spain... but that's another story!

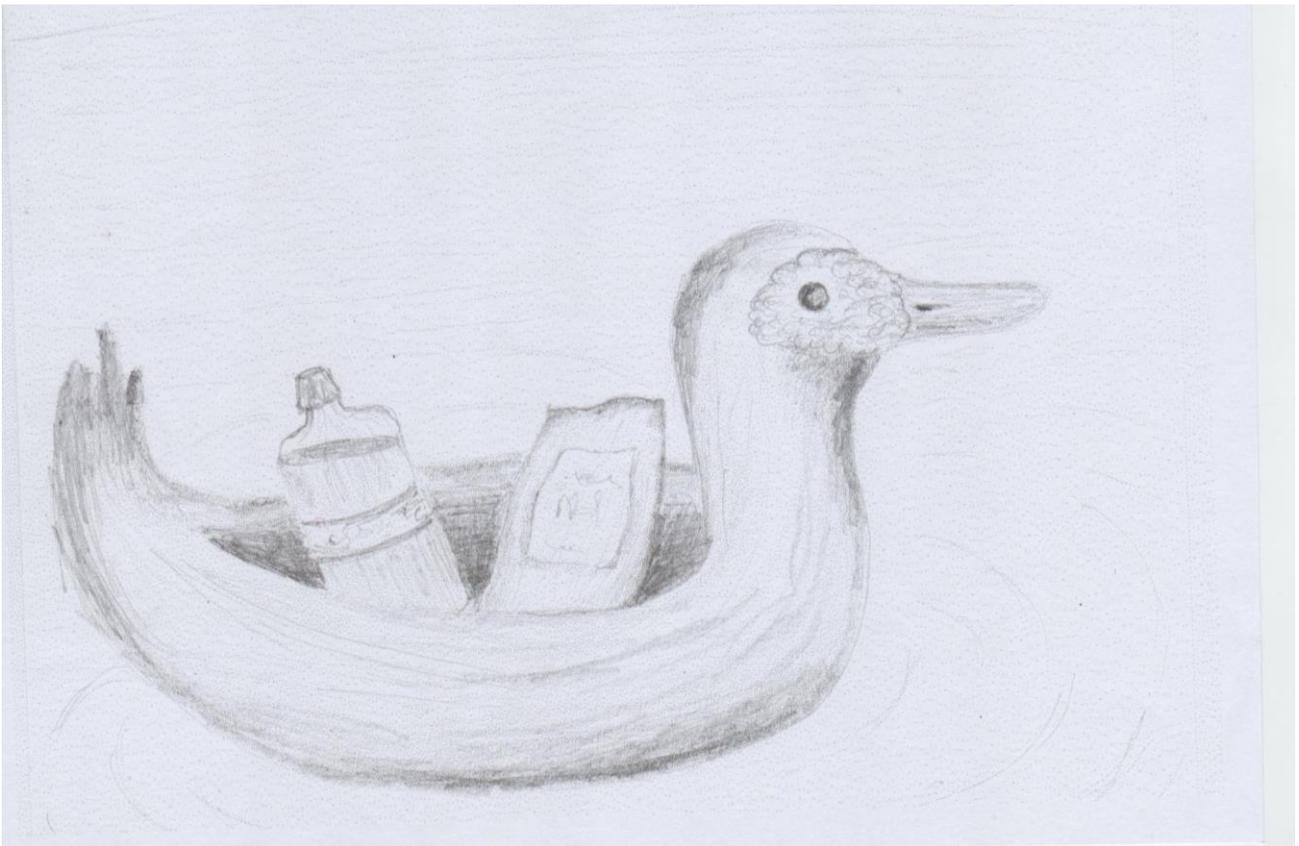
If many were suffering from the war, my P  p   was getting his fat!

He became a respected and respectable duck. He then financed a hospital for lame ducks, a pontoon to host sailing ducks... Alcoutim became a nice little but busy and prosperous town, while San Lucar was still sleeping in the sun of Spain.

In the 50's, when cars and roads appeared, the smuggling business chose this new transport means; My grandfather found himself then technically unemployed and had to find a solution to survive. To keep up his standards, he decided then to leave Portugal and emigrated to Belgium...

To be followed in a next chapter... but it all depends on my drake who meanwhile is knitting and making tapestry... He could be impatient and find himself another female duck !

*Guadiana = Ouadi (river in arab) and Anas (ducks in latin)



PEN by Nela Blinkhorn

VAMOS PRESENTAR CANTIGAS...

By Hiltrut E. Lowe on "Catar"



My name is Bennie..., oh wait, on second thoughts, I would like you to guess who and what I am...

- Clue 1: I am a tiny larvae, approximately 2.5 mm in length.
- Clue 2: My body is soft and even though I belong to the insect family, I have no wings.
- Clue 3: I belong to the families Bostrichidae, Dermestidae, and Anobiidae of the order Coleoptera.
- Clue 4: I feed on the paper or binding of books, but I am also devoted to reading (or is it eating?) the classics.



Do you have it yet? ... Yes, I am a bookworm - thus my name *Bennie Bookworm* - and I am fortunate enough to live in 'Casa dos Condes', the public library in Alcoutim, where I have an unlimited supply of my favourite dish - the classics! But I have to be on the lookout for two people in particular - Cristina and Carlos! They are in charge of this place and do not like me feasting on their books!

This place where I live is amazing! Not only do we have hundreds of books and strange electronic-things buzzing around me all the time, but we have exhibitions, workshops, concerts, educational talks, to name but a few. Another thing that amazes me about the humans that frequent this place is that they speak different languages - Portuguese, English, Spanish, Dutch, German, French, and these languages are particularly prevalent at *Sexta a Noite* - Friday Evening Concerts.



Take the Christmas Carol Concert for example, which was held on December 21, 2012. It was the third such concert held here at 'Casa dos Condes'. I do not know much about the first of these concerts - you see, I wasn't born yet - but Mama-Beetle told me that it was very loosely structured with lots of acapella singing in both Portuguese and English. Luckily two people called 'Chris' and 'Dave' brought their tenor and alto saxophones with them and accompanied some of the singing.

I do have some memory of the second concert, because I was a few months old then - I remember it was way before Christmas when I first started hearing carols being practiced on a keyboard by someone called 'Hilly' and then some weeks before the concert more people joined her - 'Chris' on the tenor sax, 'Dave' on the alto sax and singers 'Alex' and 'Anna'. And don't forget the five Portuguese ladies that came most evenings for a practice with 'Hilly' - their *cantigas* really appealed to me, so powerful and different from the English carols! The night of the concert the 'audience' was wonderful too - I got the

impression that they did not realise that they were to be a part of the concert. A programme with all the carols to be sung was handed out at the door and the audience was expected to do *all* the singing, and sing they did! Quite an enjoyable evening it was, too.

And then came last year - the third and most enjoyable of the three! I don't know quite where all the musicians suddenly came from, but now I could hear keyboards, saxophone, guitars, harmonicas, a choir and a children's choir! I was particularly impressed with the teamwork that prevailed. A couple called 'Bob' and 'Kate' are our classical geniuses and their choir sang fabulously. 'Dave' just has to look at the key and he can play and improvise any work. His wife 'Anna's' singing is well-known to everyone and I particularly like what she does with that little egg (maracas) she sometimes holds in her



hand. Some of the many newcomers to the Christmas Concert are 'Tom' and 'Jak' with their impressive improvisations on their strange but lovely instruments called harmonicas, 'Scot' and 'Paul' on their guitars, 'Maura' with her fabulous voice and her husband 'Paul' on his drum.

The evening started on a sad note; their friend and fellow musician 'Chris' passed away a few months before, so the first song on the programme - Good King Wenceslas - his favourite, was particularly dedicated to him. I liked that! Some of my favourites were:

- the children choir singing *Away in a Manger*,
- the combined English and Portuguese singing of *Jingle Bells & É Natall* (see link http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0ycrw_744E)
- the three Portuguese ladies - Fatima, Rosario and Suset - had us spell-bound with their Portuguese carols,
- the violin (Nela) and mandolin (Robin) accompaniments to the Irish carol *The Holly and the Ivy Girl* sung by 'Anna', 'Maura' and 'Esther', went exceptionally well,
- the children particularly enjoyed singing *Feliz Navidad*,
- the jazzy version of *O Christmas Tree* performed by 'Dave' and 'Hilly'
- but my all-time favourite was *Silent Night* in Portuguese, German, Dutch (Louis) and English. That final verse, sung in whatever language you preferred, was pure magic.

I am so lucky to live in a place like this - the public library in Alcoutim. I once heard someone say "Location is everything!" and this is so true in my case. It's because of my location that I have become an educated bookworm! I am blessed - I not only eat information, but I hear it, I see it, I touch it and I live it!

Three cheers to 'Casa dos Condes' - Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!

...And now they are talking about holding the next 'Vamos Presentear Cantigas' in either the local church or outside on the square! No, No, No, No! Please, you can not do this to me...



Maria the Fashion Mule

By Knicki on *BELLEZA*



A mule is the offspring of a male donkey and a female horse
Well that's what my Mummy Told Me!

I never knew my Daddy, but My Mum said he was a very Handsome Donkey!
Pedro was his name, and apparently he was a "Ladies Man!" Whatever that means....

Anyways...I had better introduce myself...

My Name is Maria...I think I am seven years old, in the way the stick creatures measure time.

I live next to the River Guadiana on the Spanish side ???? What does that mean, I wonder?

Life, generally is good now...the stick creatures no longer chastise and beat me like they did in the past.

I no longer toil endlessly under the hot bright circle like I used to, and get good food to eat and have a nice house to rest in!

The little stick creatures feed me interesting treats and give me kisses and cuddles.

I have almost forgotten the bad times of the odious stick creature who took me away from my Mother.

They were truly sad times of little food and vicious beatings. I lived in a sort of red haze of pain and blood until that fateful day. As usual it started with BlackBeard ranting and hitting me with his stick!

We set off down the path by the River to the place where Stick Creatures kill the Green Spirit growers to make them suffer. Red Flame death so that they might keep warm and burn other creatures and devour them. [EditorsNote: Trees/Firewood Cooking].

They loaded the bodies on my back till I could hardly stand, let alone walk the torturous trail, recently made slippy and treacherous, with the falling Sky River of many Moons.

As always,I did my best, but at the tricky bit near the rock, where the frog lived, I slipped badly.I heard and felt a sharp crack on my leg, and fell bodily to the earth.

Blackbeard screamed and hit me seemingly endlessly with his weapon....I awoke! Time had passed, THE DARK was approaching and I was still on the ground.

There was no sign of Blackbeard Stick Creature. My friend The Cat was gently licking my nose.

-*"Ah!" He said..."So you are awake! Good! I have sent The Dog for the Nice Lady Stick Creature. She will help I'm Sure!"*

-*"Help? What do You Mean Help?"* I replied.

-*"Blackbeard said that he would be back at New Light to take You back in pieces!"* responded The Cat.

I started to shiver and shake uncontrollably....

-*"WOOF!" "WOOF!"*

-*"Goodness Me Maria!" "Whatever has befallen Thee?"*

It was the Raven Haired Nice Stick Lady with my friend the Dog!

-*"Ah! I see! Blackbeard has gone too far this time I fear!"* She said. *"Can You stand?"*

Gingerly I tried to get up...My left front leg ached beyond measure...but I soooooo wanted to please the soft spoken Stick Lady!

The Dog and Cat [Editors Note: Good Name For A Pub!] encouraged me.

At the fourth attempt I managed to stand shakily on three legs. The Raven Haired Stick Lady felt my injured leg.

"Well! Your working days are over Maria! I shall take you to my Finca! My children will give you the Love and Affection that you have never had. I shall deal with that Rogue Blackbeard!" she snarled, but there was a kind shining light in her eyes.

The journey back to her Finca was as a Tortured Dream, but her soft words of encouragement and the gentle nips on my legs from my friend the Dog helped me make it safely there.

THE REST IS HISTORY!

I DON'T WANT TO TELL YOU ANY MORE NOW!

BECAUSE I AM INTELLIGENT! XXX

MARIA by Nela Blinkhorn



A Guadiana Ghost Dog Story

By Barry on *Belleza*



The forecast winds struck the river with an unabated fury, the sky now darkened to point where it seemed it would never grow light again.

I had been ill for weeks, getting steadily weaker, my aged body, finally betraying my once youthful vigour. I thought back to those seemingly magical times of five summers ago, when I explored with my friends a place we turned up at on calm waters. And as I did so, I slipped from that tortured life into the dreams of my death

I was never a good traveller, and often used to lie on the roof of this house that moved on the water, feeling very, very ill. I remembered our arrival vividly, my human friend, and my sister. We tied up to a large floating plank of wood, my sister and I leapt off, onto this plank and then straight to the grass that grew alongside the river, to sniff the odours of this new place.

And here I was again, no more aches, no more pain, back in this wondrous place of steep streets, floating houses and bustling people some of whom spoke languages I could not understand.

It was the night and I thought I'd make my way to the place where people gathered to eat to see if I could spot my friend or my sister, I turned my head and saw the dog of the man that visits the floating houses in the morning,

The little dog pulled back and moaned the most pitiful moans imaginable I was certain he could see me. I was mortified to find that the dog who had happily chased ducks down the slip with me, was in complete and abject fear of me. The dog gave another whimper, barked then turned and fled., the hackles clearly raised along his back.

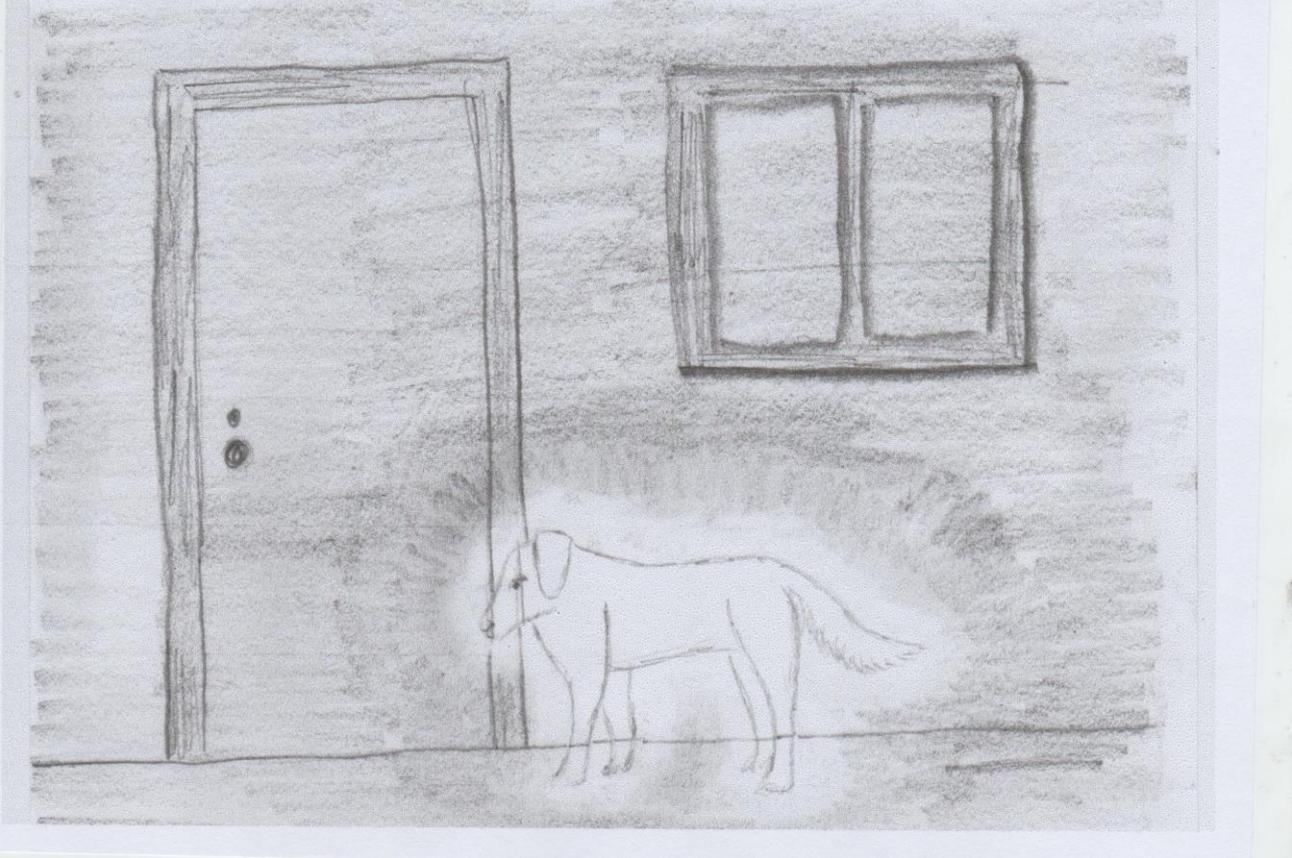
As I stood wondering at this turn of events, only the mists on the river moved, slowly, the water had taken a turgid quality, that of the slow moving mud that was the famous Guadiana glue. the world around me seemed to have stopped, moving only as if in slow motion.

I trotted to the eating place, it was closed, there was no music playing, the chairs were stacked alongside the tables, the umbrellas folded shut, the place had an air of abandoned desolation I had never seen before, there was no happy chatter, no sparrows hopping around pecking at crumbs, no constant movement of people and animals of my memories.

The house opposite where the other dogs lived was shuttered against the increasing winds, the same winds that had removed the mists from the surface of the river,

I ran to the quay hopeful of finding the house of my friend, where I hoped to find him and my sister. In my haste to get there I ran through without noticing, the obstacles that I would have previously had to detour. The house was there, the door closed the lights on, I leapt for door and flew through unstopped by the wood of the door.

And as I skipped across the cabin, I remembered the touch of my friend, the gentle tick of the wheelhouse clock, and the wind outside, crying across the night.



SOOTY by Nela Blinkhorn

The point of view of a Spanish cockroach

By Esther living in San Lucar



I crawl out of my comfortable cubby as the sun is setting. At last, it's my time to shine. I can hardly understand the sleep and activity patterns of humans (and most animals for that matter). They enjoy great big shining lights-especially the sun, oh horror- and run around in a frenzy of daft excitement whilst they have it and seem to be rendered useless when it's not around. I attribute these strange habits to their inferiority.

They do not realize that it blinds them and that it is far more logical to navigate in the dark. Most of their habits are caused by their inferiority, if you ask me. I have no time to go into detail, I must get going. The dark night is short, there is much to be done and I am an incredibly busy individual of infinite importance (I amuse myself by incorporating alliterations in my day to day language, it impresses the ladies and keeps me on my toes, so to speak).

Today (tonight) I have an agenda.

Eat. Reproduce if at all possible. Discuss the meaning of life with anyone of my species (or any other by default) I may happen to bump into on my meanderings.

A quick polish of my impressive shell, a wiggle of my hyper-sensitive antennae to assure myself of their existence and I'm ready to face the world. I am careful as I hear my six feet click across the tiles of the house.

As usual at this time, the humans seem to have retired to their horizontal positions. Things look promising, I've already found a crumb. I head towards my go-to area of restauration. An agile trip around said cupboard satisfies my hunger and does away with that undesirable empty feeling I'm so prone to.

Where are the ladies to be found on this fine evening, I ask? I can feel inside me a desperate need to spread my genes. Although I have no interest whatsoever in my offspring (another daft human habit), my intelligence, my good-looks and my wit are too good not to pass on.

Off I go. It's a chilly night, full of sounds I am well-acquainted with. A cat in the distance. A night-bird in the distance. Melodic human sounds in the distance.

A dog in the- GOOD LORD!- the creature stands right in front of me! Always a quick thinker (and acter, may I add), I veer to the left and attempt a clever weave between his legs. Somehow, though I am moving my feet with amazing agility as fast as they will go, his head keeps up with my body. Though my body continues to scurry, more by instinct than by any wish I seem to have to keep going, I sense that the dog means me no harm. As he pants along beside me, trying to look nonchalant at the fact that he is keeping up with my pace though I can see that he struggles, his face turns towards me with a look of dim curiosity. He is hardly the kind of animal I would usually want to hold any kind of conversation with, it is far below me, but I have admittedly been feeling a bit alone as of late. Besides, though I won't stoop down to human level, I believe that one must interact with individuals of all walks of life to truly understand the workings of society.

I stop. He stops. I move to the right. He moves to the right. I try the same with the left. He enthusiastically jumps to the left. I wave a leg.

Unnecessary to expand on what he does next. I am about to drop a sarcastic "simon says..." comment as I catch myself. I am a respectable fellow, proud of my diplomatic abilities. I nod and with a flick of my antennae, wish him a fine day. He pants idiotically. I cringe interiorly at his lack of social aptitude but continue as I would with anyone respectable. The conversation we have is hardly worth mentioning as he speaks only in words that make no sense.

-“Big fiesta on the Portugese side!” He pants excitedly.

I nod as if I knew what he’s talking about, convinced he doesn’t know himself.

-“They’re so loud, so loud, so loud!” He continues.

Nod.

-“The Spanish aren’t happy, no they’re not, oh no they ain’t.”

Is it just me or is he repeating himself?

-“It just makes me wanna bark, baaarr..” He runs away barking, having been distracted and attracted by a human walking by. Just as well, as I need to hide in their presence. I scurry off to the side of the road to hide in a comfy-looking carton containing a few cool, rounded pieces of metal. It’s terribly comfortable in here, I instantly feel at home.

As I crawl to a good vantage spot, I ponder the dog’s confusing speech.

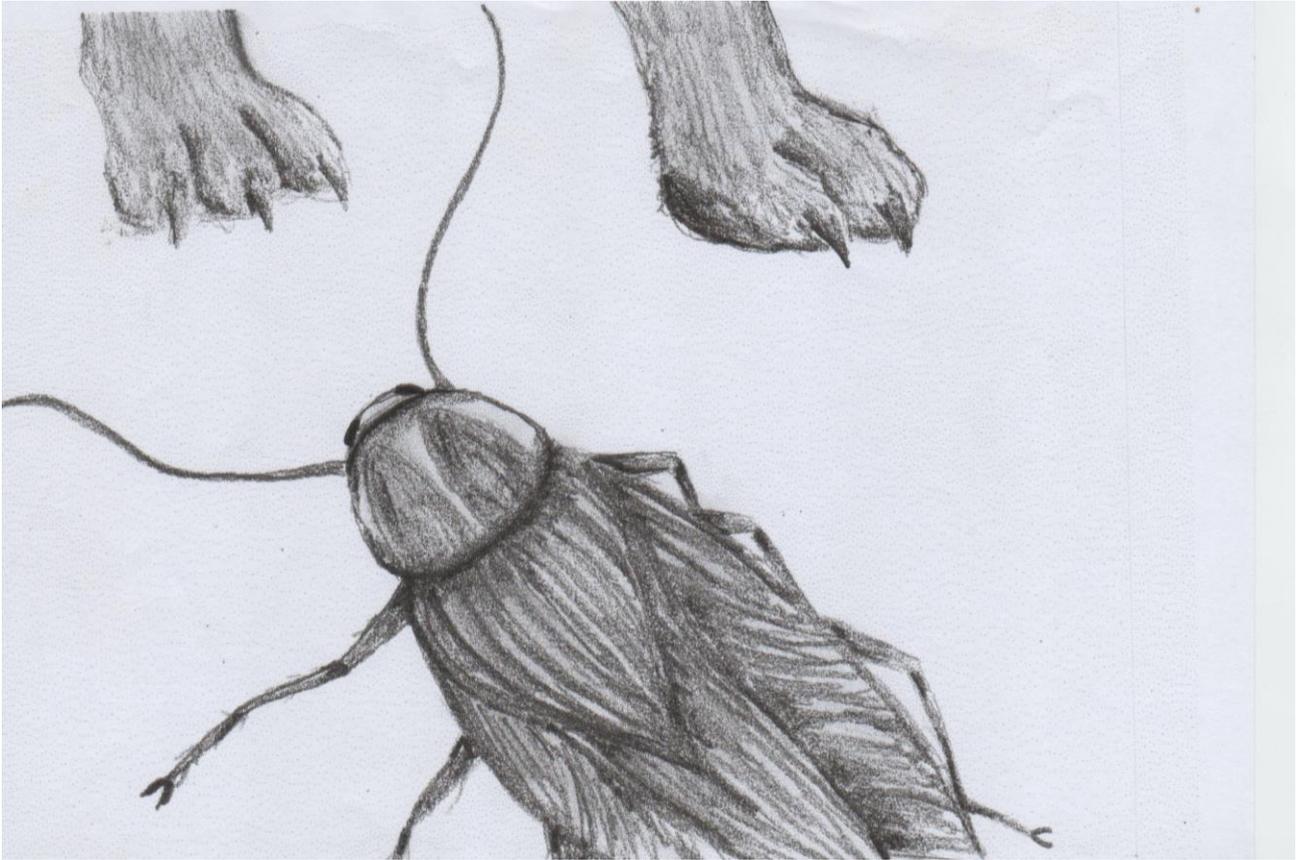
-“The Portuguese side”, he said.

Perhaps he means “pork and cheese”, foods that I am well acquainted with that can be counted amongst my very favorites. But the pork and cheese side of what? It couldn’t be... And what, pray tell, is a fiesta? I am deeply vexed by my uncharacteristic ignorance. Spanish? I dig into the fathomless depths of my brain. Suddenly, a light goes on. I remember a few details. A blurry image of my dear deceased grandmother swims into view. I am whipped away to another time and place, far, far away. She is sitting in her usual spot looking very wise indeed. I am young and impressionable, thirsty for knowledge, absorbent as a sponge. I jump as a human walks by, she merely observes calmly, knowing full well that we are safe from their blind eyes.

“Humans, my child, are strange creature, as we all know”, she begins. *“They sort themselves into groups as if they were different, though it’s clear that they are all the same. Some of them sound like they have a potato in their mouths, some of them sounds like their noses are pinched, some of them sound like they want to chop everything they say into a million pieces, but they’re all the same.*

But somehow, by some magic, they’ve managed to make themselves believe that they are all different, not to be compared. It seems to me that they even go to great lengths not to intermingle. The thing that separates them from one another they call language. I’ve deduced that this has something to do with the colour of their cranial fur. The colour of this fur, minus a few exceptions, seems to influence the sounds they make. Some they call Portugese, some are Spanish and some are English...”

Suddenly I am torn from my reverie to find my comfortable carton being transported down the road. I look up. And enormous human hand has grabbed ahold of my hiding place and is carrying me down to somewhere I’ve never been before and never wanted to go. I’m panic-stricken as I watch my home fade into the darkness...



PLATO by Nela Blinkhorn

9 ARTICLES

The Guadiana Net – Channel 72

By Geoff on *Sours*



This came about as there seemed to be a need to share information that is useful to us all here on boats and in the communities on both sides of the river. A regular time needed to be chosen so this could take place without people having to listen to their vhf all day to catch any information being put out.

Similar information nets can be found throughout the cruising grounds of the Med and Caribbean.

The net operates each day (except Sundays) at 9.30am Portuguese time (10.30am Spanish) as an informal broadcast on **channel 72 VHF**. The broadcast includes a welcome to anyone new to the river and invites them to introduce themselves, this is followed by an opportunity for anyone leaving the river to say goodbye.

Following on from this is a part where future events or things of interest in the area are talked about with times and details. For instance regular walks, talks concerts etc.

The next part of the broadcast is where any other requests such as help wanted or needed is discussed, for example “where can I get this”, “who do I see for help with that”, etc.

And finally we have “treasures of the bilge”, which are items that are to “buy, sell, trade or give away” that other boaters no longer require but that may be of use to others.

The children of the Guadiana (yachties and finca's)

By Esther living in Sanlucar

Whenever one longs to see free-spirited, bright, open-minded children and gain hope for the future generation, one should pack one's bags and head to the Guadiana, because that is one place I know they are to be found, without fail.



As our family arrived here three years ago, my then 9-year-old brother found friends immediately. The children on the banks of the river upstream and downstream of Sanlucar were smiling and beautiful even when they were bogged down with homework or when it was raining cats and dogs. He felt more accepted than he had anywhere else, so much so that he came to live here with his older sister (moi!) for 6 months three years later, this schoolyear 2012-1013. It was no different when we arrived this time, they welcomed us with open arms and were ever so helpful as Yari started in Spanish school, Spanish being at that point a language he hadn't yet mastered.

We had them all over for lunch many times. It became somewhat of a tradition. After school they would stomp through the door, immediately sneaking into the kitchen to see... Well, either me or the food they were longing to scoff, the truth will never be known. The house filled up with laughter and play-fights while pots overflowed with pasta. When ten children are in the house, pasta is without a doubt the best dish to mass-produce, bearing in mind that pre-teens will always eat more than one would expect them to. This lunch happened at least once a week, new games would be played every time and silly chatter never stopped. When other children came up the river on boats, they were just as heartily welcomed, were be invited to the next communal lunch and would immediately be accepted as part of the group. Whispers of confusion were exchanged between the Spanish as to my strange combination of being a "single-mother", so to speak, and a play-mate for the children as we skipped past them on the streets.



For Christmas, an amazing play was prepared by artistic finca parents coming together to create a show of a quality far superior than what one would expect from a conventional school play. It was a modified version of Roald Dahl's "The Giraffe, the Pelly and Me", complete with a huge giraffe costume!

We were lucky enough to be able to go on two camping trips with exclusively children (so long as I don't count as an adult, that is), and lots of them! We always had a minimum of ten of us in total, a number that made the fleet of dinghies rowing upriver quite impressive really. The first and warmer of the two trips was for two nights up at the Vascao in October 2012, the second one being on a finca just opposite Puerto de Lalaja in February 2013.



These trips are always very special to us because of the magic bubble we enter, a world full of children where we play all day and worry only about food and sleep (well, I seem to be the only one who actually worries about these trivial details, whereas the children are the ones more likely to actually suffer lack thereof). On the first trip, we spent most of our time in the water and often without very many clothes at the coldest of times. The nature was brown and scratchy but the weather was wonderfully warm! On the next trip, we paid for the beautiful, lush, green nature by being relatively cold and not being able to swim, not that that was a huge damper to spirits, that usually flew high except when a large group of adults accidentally popped our bubble, at which point we were all momentarily reduced to floods tears. Jokes were told around campfires, songs were sung and not a day would go by without at least one good game of werewolves. We hope to have many more of these camping trips through the years, every time I come back. We have now been on four and loved and appreciated every moment (except the organisation, I will be the first to admit it) of each one of them.

The smaller details such as the afternoons spent playing football or lounging on fincas, pushing each other off pontoons or enjoying long walks together are difficult to capture in text as there are simply too many of them. The children are growing and are different yet equally beautiful every time I see them again, may this magic continue forever!

The Sky at Night –*Astronomy, Astrology & Mythology*

By Hugh on *Eagle Ray*



With only 2 days notice, Irish Paul “*Sea Warrior*” and Hugh explored a hillock hidden from direct view of the 2 villages and then sat down at the Kiosk and simply set up the show. Leaflets were printed and the chosen night came up trumps with a crystal clear sky, albeit a few degrees above zero. The venue was behind the ruined windmill near the restored windmills of Sanlucar, far enough away from the village light pollution, yet only a short walk from a suitable meeting point.

The former headed the Advance Party which also comprised Tom “*El Viento*”, Frédéric “*Riveo*” and Konstantin “*OB6JUN*” to set up a number of contained bbqs and to heat Tom’s homemade soup and alleviate the chill factor a little.

The latter gathered the other participants (50 in all, including 6 kids) at the Pozo Bar and led them up the hill.

Around the camp fires, the near freezing wintry conditions were compensated and blessed with the brilliant Winter Hexagon, based on the constellation Orion the hunter and his 2 dogs, especially Sirius the brightest star in the sky. With his magic wand, Hugh then traced out the 6 major points of this part of sky show which filled the entire southern heavens. Indeed, Orion can be used to find the South, something you won’t find in text books.

The ISS (International Space Station) showed up on time at 20.20, fizzling out as it crossed Orion, when it entered the Earth’s shadow.

To break the monotony and add a touch of amusement especially for the kids, Pete and Amanda launched into their beautiful rendition of “The Galaxy Song” (originally by Monte Python) which described in great detail the composition of The Milky Way. We were then shown how to find the centre of our own galaxy.

From the autumn square of Pegasus, the flying horse, we travelled along Andromeda, the Queen of Ethiopia until we just discerned the Andromeda Galaxy or M31 (1), a sister galaxy of ours visible to the naked eye 2.4 million light years away.

Other constellations, asterisms and myths were brought to light as we also found the Ecliptic path, which contains the zodiac signs and all 8 major planets. Jupiter outshone everything else at a brilliant –2 apparent magnitude.

A brief history of the heliocentric theory was described, from its concept by Aristarchus (2) before 200 B.C., seconded only by Seleucus (3), and largely ridiculed right up to the brink of Modern History when the likes of Copernicus (4), Galilei (5), Kepler (6) and Newton (7) managed to convince the powers that be and especially the Church to acknowledge that the Earth did indeed revolve around the Sun, and not vice versa.

Sue in Sanlucar even came along to celebrate her birthday but her zodiac sign Aquarius is today alas not in the direction of the sun as initially selected, due to the phenomena of precession which the ancient Babylonians foresaw when they first depicted the Astrological birth signs circa 600 BC.

We could have stayed for ages wondering at the magnificence of the heavens above, but took one last trip along the road map before heading home, much the wiser. (1) Charles Messier 1730-1817

(2) Aristarchus of Samos 310-230 B.C.

(3) Seleucus of Seleucia circa 190 B.C. - ?

(4) Nicolaos Copernicus 1473-1543

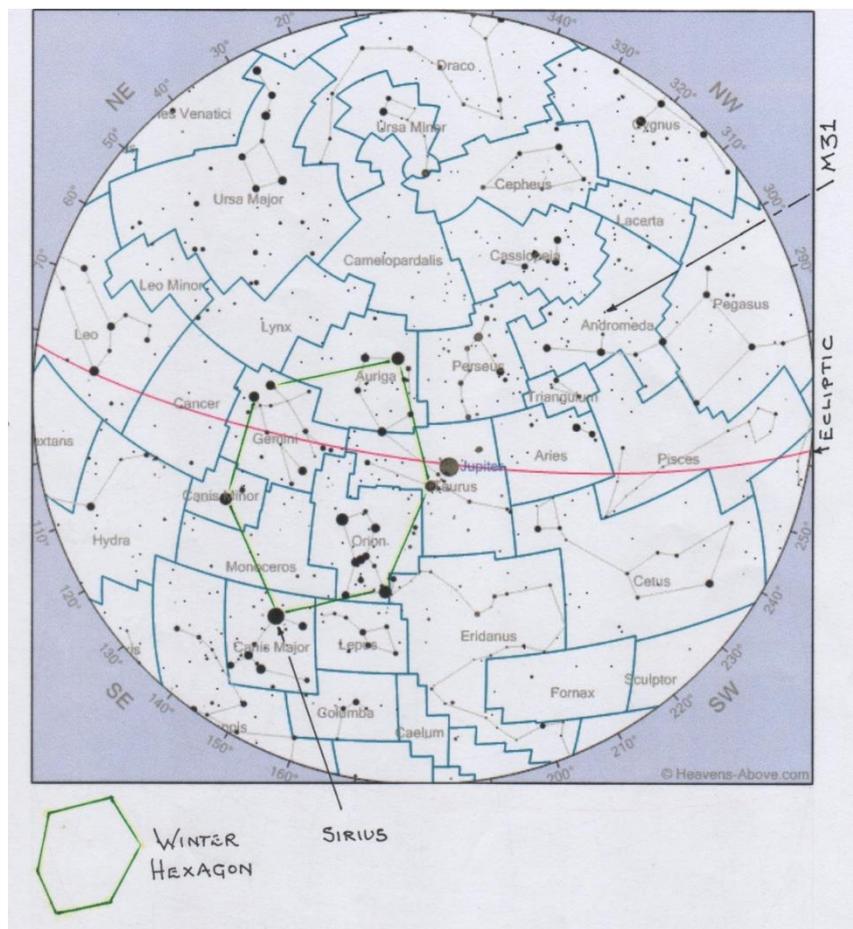
(5) Galileo Galilei 1564-1642

(6) Johannes Kepler 1571-1630

(7) Isaac Newton 1643-1727

Sky Chart - 7.2.2013 at 19.00

37.5N, 7.5°W



¿Habla español? / Fale português?

By Ellie on *EOS*

Living quite literally on the border between Spain and Portugal, life can be rather confusing. When the churchbells strike three times on one side, you will hear – about a minute later – four chimes on the other side, and the latter is done twice. And how to make appointments? Was it half past three Spanish or Portuguese? For some nationalities it's even more disorientating; for example in Dutch “half vier” means half past three.

And how often did you tell Bella “gracias” and say “obrigada” to Reme? That is if you got this far in learning the languages. In Alcoutim there has been the occasional attempt to start Portuguese lessons, but the Escuela de Adultos in Sanlúcar has been providing Spanish for foreigners for several years. A different teacher every school year and all maestros or maestras have been intrigued to hear from those foreigners about their life on the water. Usually there are classes twice weekly in the evenings and for different levels. Some teachers might give you homework, but generally it's a nice social happening during which you might pick up some of the language. At least the teachers use an easier to understand Spanish than the villagers. For non-British students it's an advantage when the teacher doesn't know any English, so you don't have to do English translations as well. In the beginning of the school year there are hardly enough chairs for all the participants, but as time progresses, there gets to be more room on the table to spread your papers. If you are lucky there will be a Christmas diner and the real die-hards may be rewarded with a school trip in spring. There have been excursions to the Rio Tinto mines and Seville for example.

Anyway, the school offers you a relaxed way of getting to learn some Spanish and for yachties of course the good thing is that it is Gratuito!

Men sana in corpore sano!

By Scot on *Sea Warrior*

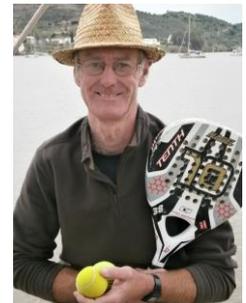
In the area such as this there are limited sporting opportunities but this year we seem to have taken on the ones that we can.

Padel.

This game which is really a mixture of tennis and squash is played mainly in Spain although is also played in Portugal. There is a court in Sanlucar which is rarely used particularly during the week. For the last few years at least there have been a small number of yachties playing along side some of the non-Spanish residents in Sanlucar. Some of the British and Dutch people there play with the local young folk on occasion and there is normally a **yearly tournament** in which some take part in.



This winter there has been a constant flow of people playing. Numbers have generally grown as time as gone on although with people coming and going it has been a bit sporadic. An **open day** was held for all to come and have a go and this brought in a few who had not played before. What perhaps has been most interesting is that quite a number of people have played who have had very little experience before seem to have enjoyed it. It is normally a doubles game and with the smaller court, shorter bat and the ability to hit the ball as it bounces back to you off the wall it means that fitness levels do not have to be very high to enjoy the game so more people can take part. We even managed to intice a spanish person to play in the rain..... a sight to be proud off!



Times of playing varied but people settled down to a timetable of playing on a Monday a Wednesday and a Friday. Sometimes it was played as early as 8.00am portuguese which was a test to some of the players especially those on Portuguses time! On occasion we would see the local young folk playing and it definitely seemed like a different game when they played.

A feature which has repeated itself this year are **lessons** that are organised by the non Spanish or Portuguese sailors and residents for the local children. This again has been proved to be popular.

A regular part of the Padel sessions was a break for coffee. Some people perhaps preferred that part more than the Padel!

Biking

This is an extraordinary place for biking and some folk who had their own bikes on their boats used them to have a different look at the local area and to get fit. Both road bikes and mountain bikes were used over the winter. A few trips were organised in the local area. It was amazing to cycle on such quiet roads and such open trails. There seems no limit to where you could go with very few fences and gates evident. Trips simply in the hills and valleys or to specific places like Pomarosa, El Granado and Cortes Pereiras were organised as well as one to the mines at Santo Domingo which may happen in the near future.

One interesting thing that happened whilst out on one of the trips was that the group was stopped by the police because helmets were not being worn. It was in Spain and apparently it is requirement to wear one legally. On further investigation it seems to be the case that it is required to wear one except for the following reasons:

- if you are cycling within the boundaries of the town or city.!
- If you are going up hill!
- If you are excessively hot!

Interesting....



Finca teenager on the Guadiana

By Nela finca teenager in Sanlucar

How my life changed last winter

-Cold morning, December 2012.



Beepbeep, beepbeep, beepbeepbeep,beepbeepbeep...

My alarm went off at 6:15, freezing cold and still dark. I walked across the yard from my bedroom to the house and then slowly, very slowly, for I felt as though I should be in hibernation, I had breakfast and got ready for school.

We left the house at 7:30, it was still pretty dark, we walked carefully (but still managed to slip) down the hill to the pontoon. The fog was so thick, you couldn't even see the boats anchored in the middle of the river, let alone Portugal on the other side. Sometimes we rowed to Sanlucar but today Daddy took me in the fast dinghy.

We got there at about 7:50 and I walked to 'Bar el Pozo', where the bus would pick up me and three other children and take us to school. The mist would only just be lifting as we drove over the hills.

We'd get to school at 8:30 and spend six and a half hours there, listening to boring teachers, listening to children talking, watching everything but I hardly ever spoke. I'd get back to the village at about 3:30, get home at nearly 4:00 then I would have about three hours of spare time and loads of homework to fill it up. I never had time for anything I wanted to do; depressing.

-Frosty morning, february 2013.

Nye's alarm goes off at 7:00 (usually) and we walk into the house at 7:30. We have breakfast and stuff then Nye and Daddy walk to school at 8:30.

It was cold but light and I took the dog for a quick walk over the hills and photographed her in the frost covered flowers. When I got back I defrosted my fingers and did some algebra with Daddy, then I went into the cabin and started a still life painting that Mummy had set up for me. When I got back into the house, Daddy was having a late fried breakfast so I had a fried elevenes and then a cup of tea. After that, me and Daddy did some chemistry, including some experiments.

I walked to the village to Esther's house for lunch and later that day we had a music practice, then, that evening I went to Alcoutim to the little writing club.

I now have time. Time to practice music for Tuesday nights, time to do photography, time to do art...

Home-schooling has given me time to get involved with what other people are doing. My life is full again, but in a more fun and interesting way.

New Year's Celebration 2012/13

By Scot on Sea Warrior

To find a boat big enough to host a large celebration for New Year was never going to be easy but the answer this year was fairly obvious. Peter and Brenda are living on a very large metal boat which could easily cater for fifty people. They were kind enough to open their doors on the 31st to anyone who would care to come. Unfortunately Peter could not be there at that time but Brenda was brave enough to take it on.



It was always going to be hard to beat the Christmas day bash but we definitely gave it a good go. It was great to see that number of people attending such an evening which depending on which country you came from can have more or less importance.

As usual people pulled together to organise things which seems to have been a big feature of the 2012/2013 time up the river.

People were asked to bring a little something to eat and Brenda also put on a spread to keep us going.



For once music was not a major feature on this particular evening but in some small way dancing took its place. An initial suggestion by an Englishman who apparently pretends to be half Scottish to have Scottish dancing as part of the celebration led to the formation of a small practise group prior to the evening. This group then managed to lead the way in some sort of haphazard

fashion during the evening and we managed to get through two or three dances before having to stop unusually for rust reasons! We had to laugh when pieces of rust started to fall from the ceiling of *"Marlin"* as we jigged away above.

For those sitting below it was probably not a particularly pleasant experience and although there was no danger to the structure of the boat it was suggested that it might be better to curtail these activities.....just in case!

It was great to see so many different nationalities enjoying other folks traditions.



When the bells came, again we all managed to come together for a rendition of Auld Lang Syne with words printed out for all to be able to take part.

The sight of round about 20 dinghies hanging off the back of *"Marlin"* really was a thing to behold. It would have been an even bigger sight to behold had a stray cigarette which was



reportedly thrown over the side caught light in one of the dinghies which had a petrol leak at the time! We didn't have any fireworks and perhaps we didn't need them!

Unfortunately we believe that Peter and Brenda are not going to be here next year for New Year (although don't hold your breath on that one as they have been trying to leave for years!) so a new venue will probably have to be found. As far as boats are concerned this will be hard to match.

So New Year was deemed to be a great success. No one got too drunk, no one fell overboard through over excessive dancing, we didn't fall through the roof and we didn't have a towering inferno at the back due to burning dinghies so.....no probs. Roll on next year.



THE PARKING ON NEW YEAR'S EVE!

Music, Maestro, please!

By Tom on *"El Viento"*

Some things acquire a life of their own, and it would seem that music night has been one of them...

Starting as a series of impromptu "a capella" singalongs in the Riverside Tavern, it has developed, and is still developing.

Back in July 2012, a birthday bash was held on a finca to celebrate three persons' birthdays and live music was the order of the day. Following on from this, we started to have singalongs on the usual Friday night get together

The real catalyst, however, was the arrival of *"Happy Hour"* with Hilde, who played keyboard, accordion, and sang, accompanied by Fred of *"Dream On"* on guitar, and Mike on *"Seawinds"* who loved to sing rousing sea shanties in which everyone could join. Usually, we sang on the quayside or the pontoon, but as the summer wore on, we gravitated to the Riverside Tavern, where Rogerio was happy to let us sing till the wee small hours, as long as we kept buying beer!



The arrival of *"Pax Nostrum"* with amplifiers and microphones marked another change; this saw us deviating from the playlist to include "blues" and other forms of music. Gradually it became accepted that we would play in the bar on Sunday evenings, and after playing at a finca party, where we were joined by semi-professional shorebased musicians, we found ourselves being joined by more shore dwellers who came to play, sing or listen.

Every boat that arrived on the river seemed to have at least one musician on board, and of course they gave renditions of their favourite music.



As younger people got involved, so the music has evolved to include more up-to-date pieces, jazz, samba and sometimes classical music too. We have also had the pleasure of hearing Frederic of *"Riveo"* sing songs in French in his powerful voice. We've had others sing Swedish songs and Dutch songs. People who had not played for years took up their instruments once more, and often surprised us (and themselves!) with how competent they were.

It is now quite normal to have up to five guitarists, a bass guitar, two harmonicas, saxophones (both tenor and alto) violin, viola, penny whistle, alto whistle, keyboard, ukelele, mandolin,

maraccas, cahon, bodran, and various vocalists who CAN sing!

During the year, Kate and Bob, classically trained musicians of note, gave a concert in the library which was filled to capacity by an appreciative audience.

As a result of the sheer number of musicians willing (and eager) to take part, it is becoming the norm for small groups to form in order to practise particular songs to be played at the next music night, and I think as a direct result of this, we now are starting to attract young Portuguese people to perform, like Ricardo, or just listen.

Spin-offs from all this were a guitar workshop held by Pete at which our “floating population” of guitar players learned a lot. All of them were already competent, in my view, with some being outstanding. Bob also contributed with a talk on the theory of music, which I have to say I enjoyed immensely, as I know did the others who attended.

It will be interesting to see how things evolve between now and the end of the year, when I hope there will be a repeat of the resoundingly successful carol concert which was held in the Library in Alcoutim (courtesy of the librarian, Cristina, and organised by Hilly of “*Catar*”) and which also resulted in two of our number giving a one – hour harmonica recital at the local care centre, on 28th February, to celebrate the birthdays of several residents. In this also Bob and Kate had led the way along, having previously given a recital there.



It would be nice if this became a regular feature involving different musicians each time.

Other events in brief

By Valerie on *RIVEO*

So many things went on during this winter...

On Dec 23rd there was some X-mas song singing in the street of Sanlucar.



A big party was held on Dec 25th, organised by a bunch of yachties, on FincaPaul's finca. **Noble or IrishPaul** was a real motor to that organisation.

We were about 50 people gathered around music and a delicious roasted pig! Santa Claus was also there to distribute the presents.



Noble Paul also organised walking parties which are still going on, on both sides of the Rio! Of course it was always a good pretext to have a drink afterwards! Usually at the kiosk in Alcoutim or on the pier in Sanlucar.





King's night on Jan. 5th in Sanlúcar was a great event in the village.



We had the great chance to assist to a Flamenco show given in Sanlúcar. If you ever have a chance to see Rocio Marquez singing GO FOR IT! She is exceptional (isn't it Roy?)



Carnaval of the children in Sanlúcar wasn't such a big deal but nice to see if you had a kid in the group...

Thank you to Finca-Paul, Gill and Mick, Jean and David who opened their houses to us for parties at X-Mas and King's night.



And don't forget the Friday night "meet-and-greet" at the RIVERSIDE!

Some tips

By Valerie on *RIVEO*

Push the door of the “**Casa de Condes**”!

You can use the public computer and check your mails, rent movies, exchange books, see nice exhibitions, hold meetings... always a lot of things to do! Thanks to Cristina and Carlos for their support!



Don't miss the **market on Saturday mornings**. On the other side of the town, across the bridge.

It's not big but you find all you'll need. Vegetables, good fresh cheese, fish and meat (be patient with the butcher, his meat is excellent, it's worth waiting!).

And during the week listen to the horns going on in the village. It's always a mobile merchant selling some good stuff! Don't hesitate to get clams if you see someone selling them, wandering with a bucket full of them.

Don't miss the **after-market coffee drink** at the Kiosk.

If you don't have a dinghy, use the **ferry** to cross to Spain. You can sometimes book it for special event on the evening.

Timetables for the **buses** are available at the bus stop. A bus runs from Alcoutim to Vila Real and Mertola (one day a week). Another bus runs from Sanlucar to Huelva.

Laundry can be done at the youth hostel if open (might close a few weeks in the winter). Big blankets can be washed at the care home.

Try the **local restaurants**! They are all very good. And if you want to try tapas, juts cross to “El Pozo” next to the school, they are excellent!

Personally I had a wonderful time crossing the river each morning to bring my 4 years old daughter to **school** and that's something I'll never forget! If you are “glued” for some months on the Rio with kids, just do it!

A dentist and optician are present in Alcoutim every Friday.

By the way, have you paid your **light dues**????!!

**AND LAST BUT NOT LEAST ...
if you are in an hurry don't stop on the GUADIANA, you'll get
“GLUED!!!**

Otherwise bring your guitar along...

5 POEMS

De Klokken van de Guadiana

By Elly on *EOS*

Als in Alcoutim de klokken drie keer klinken
is de siesta voorbij en is men weer aan het werk gegaan
In Sanlúcar lijkt het met vier slagen veel later
maar in Spanje is dat vroeg genoeg om weer op te staan

Door velen verguisd, maar sommigen weten nog wel
hoe ze verdwenen, jaren geleden alweer
Hun brons versmolten tot bulderende kanonnen
Dat soort gegalm klinkt hier hopelijk nooit meer

Welnu, niet klagen over klinkende klokken
Komaan, laten we ze weer laten slaan
Denk nog maar hoe toen geen klokken meer klonken
Dus laat die klepels maar kleppen voortaan



Different yet the same.

By Scott on *Sea Warrior*

Hello said the Portuguese man to the other,
The other a Spaniard, felt like a brother,
Hello to you to you timely old man,
Let's keep those folk right with our old metal cans.

Do you think folk are listening at early dawn?
Shall we ring together on misty morn?
Or should we split up our sign of their time?
So folk get two chances to find the right sign.

At seven you ring six said the spanish man,
You mean I'll ring six when seven you will bang?
No at seven you ring six the spaniard replied,
No when I ring six you ring seven he sighed.

Let's not argue my friend we both do a job,
Let's prey that they need us and they don't try to rob,
Our metal to shoot across this divide,
We should always conspire to work side by side.



The Guardian Bells

By Barry on *Belleza*

It was a wet dark evening as the Mime wandered into Alcoutim
Just as bells began their hourly doleful peal
He shuddered and gazed upwards towards that sound
and viewed those makers of noise with disdain

Those brazen makers of noise did not sit well in his world,
His world of stillness and of silence
They had no place in his life,
With their very sounding, a cry of his pain

The bells viewed his arrival with bemusement
For they were older by far, steeped in fervour and in blood
The Bells, re-made many times
Knew well the ring of battle as well the celebratory chime

The hour was struck and then, yet again,
For as if in answer to a call to arms
The bells of San Lucar took up the peal
The mime stood in mute wonder, he truly had arrived in hell

This was no place for such a man
His troubles he could not inflict on people here
And the bells smiling to themselves
Continued to ring their joyous round.



THE BELLS, THE BELLS!!

(with apologies to Quasi-modò!)

By Tom on *El Viento*



How we have bells in Alcoutim,
They shatter the peace on the hour!
They ring and ring with never a thought,
For me, asleep in my bower!

You'd think in this sleepy siesta town,
That afternoon peace would reign,
But no! THE BELLS WILL BE HEARD!!
and they ring out again and again!

But it's not so bad that they ring in the day
To tell you the where and the when,
But why the hell do they ring at night?
Do foxes have need of the time?

Well maybe they do – and maybe they don't,
The ringing just goes on and on,
And maybe they do need reminding,
That it's time to return to their home..

So pity the lot of the local fox,
Who's told not once, but twice,
That it's time to return to its lair mongst the rocks.
For the hunt will be near in a trice!

For the Spanish bells in San Lucar,
Well, they sing out a different song.
They sing in a different time zone,
And they sing out loud and long!

But wait ! in the annals of warfare,
The bells were oft recast
To appear as a fearsome cannon,
That shattered the peace with a blast!

When peace came, again the change
happened,
The smelting took place once again,
And the peace of the Rio was broken,
By those pestilent bells once again!!!

But which would YOU rather suffer?
The dissonant peal of the bell?

Or the fearsome roar of the cannon
Sending some to the fires of hell?

So RING OUT, you bells, 'cross the river,
Ring out till our time is gone,
Ring out a song of peace to all men, and I'll
never complain again!!

Ding dang dong!

(That's how they sound in French!)

By Valerie on *RIVEO*

Dong ding dong ding
We are in Alcoutim
Dong ding dong ding
We all arrived sailing

Dong ding dong ding
We are all living
Dong ding dong ding
Wonderful thing

Dong ding dong ding
On his dinghy where is Tom going?
Dong ding dong ding
Looks like he's horse riding

Dong ding dong ding
And what is Scot doing?
Dong ding dong ding
Playing music or padeling

Dong ding dong ding
Esther soon leaving
Dong ding dong ding
Loved to do "kidsitting"

Dong ding dong ding
Elly is sure learning
Dong ding dong ding
Some Spanish speaking

Dong ding dong ding
Is that Barry we are hearing?
Dong ding dong ding
Playing music on his boat swinging

Dong ding dong ding
Will Nicki stop flying?
Dong ding dong ding
Once she's done with moving

Dong ding dong ding
Nela has done great drawing
Dong ding dong ding
And plays so great the violin

Dong ding dong ding
What about Hilly waiting
Dong ding dong ding
For Adrian who's to be coming

Dong ding dong ding
Valerie is a bit crying
Dong ding dong ding
She didn't want to be leaving

Ding dong ding dong
This s the end of the song!

2 SONGS

The Guadiana Song

By Glyn Hughes on *Morvargh* Tune: Big Rock Candy Mountain

C F C F
On a sunny day in the month of May

G7 C
A yottie came a-sailing

C F C F
Up the river wide on a flooding tide

G7 C
We heard a voice a-wailing

G7 C G7 C
For as he sailed along he sang a song of a many-splendour river

C F C F G7 C
Where you can stay for many a day tho' it aint much good for your liver

Chorus

C
Oh the buzzing of the bees in the orange trees

F C
My heart is all a-quiver

G7 C G7 C
I plan to stay for many a day on the Guadiana River

C F C
On the Guadiana River the sun shines every day

G7 C F C
Except in a flood, then look out bud cos the pontoons wash away

G7 C G7 C
The orange trees are full of fruit, the bars are full of liquor

C F C F
Just a dinghy ride from side to side

C F C F
In an hour and a half you could get pi-eyed

G7 C
Or maybe even quicker

Chorus



C F C

On the Guadiana River your anchor never drags

G7 C F C

And the little sheep come floating by all wrapped up in paper bags

G7 C G7 C

All the ducks are potty-trained, the rats run round the quay

C F C F

I'd walk a mile for Bella's smile

C F C F

If you don't have the cash just wait a while

G7 C

She may give it to you free

Chorus

C F C F

Oh I'm bound to stay for many a day

C F C F

Where you party all night and sleep all day

C F C F C F C F

Live the life of perfect ease, come when you like and go when you please

C F C F

Where the yotties gather as thick as flees

G7 C

On the Guadiana River

RAIN----AGAIN!

By Tom on *El Viento* (by a very rainy morning!)

Chorus

Do-tee-do-tee-do-tee-do-tee-do-tee-do,
Do-tee-do-tee-do-tee-do-tee-do-tee.

I'm singing in the rain,
Feet are wet through again
I must look like a freak,
Because my deckshoes leak,
But I dance down the street,
With the world at my feet,
'Cause it's all been washed downstream--
AGAIN.

Chorus

Well my boat is afloat,
But I ain't going to gloat,
For the old Guadiana
Is flooding again!
If they open the dam,
It'll be "Goodbye ,Tam!"
I'll be rushing downriver
In the rain.

Chorus

I have heard,once before,
That in days of yore,
Alcoutim nearly washed down
To Vila Real.
Don't know if that's true,
But between me and you,
It's looks like the same thing
AGAIN!

Chorus

I'm sure you all know,
The refrain from the show,
Says the rain,
When in Spain,
Falls mainly on the plain.
While this may be true
I'm still wet through and through ,
But I'm singin' ,I'm singin',
In the rain!

Chorus(fading away)