The Plaza

Alqueria's Plaza to the north of the village lays in the shadow of the Sierra Alhamilla. Access is via the Calle Generalissimo to the south, while to the west is the castle and east id the Bar La Casa Devante. The Bar is the haunt of the Hill People, El Gente del Cerro although the Plaza itself is neutral territory, a space for all.

It is here that at eight o'clock every evening the men of the village gather. With the womenfolk safely behind the solid oak doors of the church, they relax. Some engage in political discussions, putting the nation to rights without bearing any responsibility or having to stand for election. Some discuss the weekend football, bemoaning referees' decisions and paying homage to their side's skill and prowess with the ball. Other just sit lost in thought. Remembering someone long gone but still remembered. Recalling the touch of a hand or a gentle smile still vivid through the mists of time. Some, if they have the means will drink a cold beer in the evening's shade but it is the interaction which is important. They bonding old friendships and establish new, share memories and modify opinions.

The gentle evening breeze carries the scent of bougainvillea and wild honeysuckle heady and familiar. This brief period of freedom is interrupted when the religious needs of their women have been sated. Like shepherds herding itinerant sheep they drive the men to their respective homes in preparation for the evening meal.

The Plaza then becomes the domain of the young men and girls of Alqueria. The young bucks perform feats of agility on the castle walls trying hard to impress. The young ladies try self-consciously to judge the correct amount of reticence while deploying their well made-up eyes and scented hair to good effect. The whole display taking place in a mix of beer and heightened hormone levels.

The plaza can then sleep as if renewing itself, gaining strength ready for the morning

invasion of the village's children. The castle, fountain and the bar's patio furniture become pirate ships and moon rockets, wild west towns and racing cars. All the rip-roaring adventures created by developing minds are acted out. That freedom that only a Spanish child knows allows unrestrained play and its subconscious preparation for later life.

Alqueria'a Plaza may not be the geographical centre of the village but it certainly is the spiritual. Always fondly remembered by ex-patriots and actively utilised by the incumbents of the pueblo.