Año Nuevo

According to Alquerian legend, 2014 is the tenth year of the eighth cycle of the ancient calendar of Mustapher-Fag. To be precise it is the year of the Horned Saliva Beetle. This has come to symbolise the stupidity of all those who believe such puerile superstitious claptrap. Even Loco Paco isn't fully convinced.

But the New Year did bring the possibility of the dawn of a new age. An age of understanding, tolerance and peace in the Republic of Alqueria. Of course this is only a possibility. With the New Year's Bacchanalian delights over, the people of Alqueria turn a collective and bleary eye towards the future. How the dysfunctional village survived long enough to welcome in 2014 is not only remarkable but an aberration on the normal course of human experience.

While most people wish for a peaceful and prosperous year ahead the people of Alqueria have different priorities. Getting to the big pointy rocks first during the many inter-barrio riots is high on their list as is the hope of procuring Manuela's favours.

The Hill People who reside in the western barrio rely on their Remitroot crop for income. This wonderful plant has a multitude of uses, not least are the potent wines and spirits which are produced from it. The Hill People are the original inhabitants of Alqueria who occupied the Village before its relocation in AD932. The eastern barrio is populated by the affluent Newcomers who arrived after this time. The only other industry in the Pueblo is the olive mill of the Newcomers, dilapidated and run-down it is owned and mismanaged by the obnoxious Rodriquez.

What occurred during the fateful year of AD932 is not on record. Compelling archaeological evidence suggests that the village underwent a complete but precise dissection and a later reconstruction in the valley below the Sierra Alhamilla. Local legend suggests that the Caliph Abd-ar-Rahman III ordered the village moved after

one of the inhabitants upset the venerable gentleman. A sheep’s bladder, an amphora of olive oil and one of the Caliph’s wives formed the basis of the tale.

Barrio rivalry and undeclared war have raged ever since as both factions try to gain the upper hand. Every available weapon is used from sarcasm to explosive devices. Rioting has long been known as the 'Alquerian Pastime'. The cobblestones in the streets have two numbers carved on them. One is for its position in the road and the other for its position in the barricade.

With the coming of a new year a real hope for peace does exist. The chance to forgive and forget only has to be grasped by willing hands. A strange tide of optimism runs through Alqueria, it is the sea of hope and it is on the flood.

That night the Bar La Golondrina Verde was fire-bombed.