Dolores's find

Only three properties stand on the western side of the Calle Mirador, Poyato's smallholding, the junior school and a small run-down dwelling boasting no electricity, piped water or mains drainage. This is the home of Dolores Basco or La Mojigata as she is known throughout Alqueria. Her simple lifestyle is an echo of her beliefs. She eats only home-grown vegetables, attends church regularly, takes plenty of exercise and washes in ice cold water. She has kept herself pure and chaste in thought and deed, no mean feat in hedonistic Alqueria.

The day started like all that went before, there was no warning that it could be any different. Dolores was tending her vegetable patch at the rear of her garden when she came across some very strange objects. Some were leather, some metal and others wooden. They were definitely very old but the preservative quality of Alquerian soil is renown. The bad drainage is believed to be mainly responsible. They were in the region of two hundred millimetres or so in length, tube-like with fixing points for buckles or thongs at one end and enclosed at the other.

Taking one of the objects in her purist of hands she carried it carefully to Sacerdote del Semblante Lánguido the Village Priest for identification. The good Priest was quick to enlighten Dolores. They were in fact fifteenth century codpieces. Now Dolores didn't know what a codpiece was yet alone what was kept inside one. On hearing exactly what the objects were and their function she stood horrified staring at her now not so pure hands.

The Priest explained. In 1492 the Christian Reconquest bypassed Alqueria because it was such an obnoxious place full of offensive dysfunctional people. It was never absorbed into Spain. In order for Isabella and Ferdinand to pay for their Reconquest, expensive things reconquests they imposed a very hefty tax on codpieces. A smugglers' trail was soon set-up into Alqueria via what is now Dolores's back garden. Making codpieces became the main industry of Alqueria during this period.

Men would cross into Alqueria wearing their old or unwanted codpieces, buy a new one, minus the 'Reconquest Tax' then return via the smugglers' route. Just before crossing back into Spain they would jettison the old codpiece and don the new. Using this strategy they couldn't be charged duty if stopped at the border. The jettison zone was Dolores's back yard.

The mental images conjured up by untold numbers of men exposing their manhood where she had just planted her onions was too much for poor Dolores. She went into a dead faint but with the strangest of smiles on her usually solemn countenance.