The Night of San Paco, El Loco

The second of July is 'La Noche de San Paco, El Loco' in Alqueria. Just why one of Loco Paco's ancestors was canonised is an unanswered question. According to the High Church of Alqueria of which there are but three members, a potential saint must perform at least two miracles. Knowing the date is a marvel for anyone of Paco's bloodline, tying shoelaces unaided falls into the miracle category while walking and talking simultaneously is something they can only aspire to.

Whatever the reasons, which are now shrouded in the mists of time the celebration was to take place as usual beginning with the setting of the sun. The evening starts with the veneration of Paco who is carried shoulder high to the Bar La Casa Devante. Paco is then plied with free beer and treated to a lap-dance performed by Dolores Plumpthigh. At this point Paco usually passes out, partly due to his intolerance to alcohol and partly from the effects of Dolores's weight upon his lower abdomen. The sight of the inert Paco raises a cheer among onlookers and signals the start of the serious festivities.

Music is supplied by Alfonso Largepart playing the 'Malruido', a traditional Alquerian instrument. Looking suspiciously like a Scottish bagpipe the sound is said to resemble the laughter of angels. While this cannot be disputed due to lack of witnesses others say it is more reminiscent of the sound made by an Alquerian Kunekune Pig undergoing castration. Three-toed Río Verde Newts are fried over charcoal and consumed with gusto. It is only during July that the Newt is edible at other times they cause blindness, foot-rot and autonomy of the bowels.

Girls of marriageable age or those just looking for a good time place a sprig of Remitroot in their cleavage, Manuela uses the whole branch. Remitroot based alcohol is traditionally drunk in all its various forms from a vessel called a 'Grogenswallow'. This singular and convoluted piece of glassware resembles the large intestine of the

yak and doubles as an effective weapon for use in fist fights which traditionally beak out at the end of the evening.

Large exaggerated, bulbous and hideous statues are constructed by the opposing barrios and paraded through the streets of Alqueria. As the church clock strikes twelve these obscene and monstrous effigies are burnt, at last year's event someone tried to set fire to Rodriquez by mistake.

The streets of Alqueria are packed for this celebration so be warned, arrive early and bring your own Grogenswallow.