The Peace Conference

The elders of Alqueria decided to heal the division within the village. A deep seated and fundamental division. A division which has survived countless attempts at reconciliation. Both parties attended talks at El Perrito Travieso in Mojácar. Not a salubrious venue by any means, but the nearest neutral bar that would accept the booking. Rodriquez led the Recién Llegados delegation and Antonio Poyato the Cerro del Gente. The pacification of Alqueria was the only item on the agenda.

In order to have a successful peace conference, it is necessary to start with at least two belligerents and finish with smiling delegates in broad agreement. The first criteria was certainly satisfied but the second failed to materialise. The initial scowling and bickering set the tone for the whole meeting. During one of the many outbursts during which things more tangible than insults were hurled, it was remarked that the women of Alqueria reflected the historic origins of each group. The attractions of the various feminine traits soon became the next subject for contention. This led naturally to the suggestion that it should be put to the test. Alqueria was to have a beauty pageant.

The elders of the village, in an attempt to bring peace and harmony to Alqueria had decided to stage a beauty contest. The most divisive, bad tempered and catty exercise imaginable. Proving once more that age does not always bring wisdom.

Blythe Gruntmore, resident Englishman and one of the few non-partisan villagers was to be one of the judges. His inability to communicate wasn't thought to be a handicap in this instance. Blythe readily accepted, he always found the effects of massed Spanish womanhood breathtaking. The other jurists would come from outside the village to ensure impartiality. In an attempt to reduce jury tampering women and those men who found it easy to resist feminine wiles would be invited to judge the contest.

While the title of Miss Alqueria may not at first-sight be a desirable one, the first prize was a chance to get away from the village if only for a fortnight. Two weeks cruising the Greek Islands was certainly an incentive for the young ladies of the pueblo. The fact that the 'cruise ship', a near derelict delivered animal feed to the larger islands wasn't widely advertised.

Applications were sent to every household. Amalia de Vega, the town's oldest inhabitant at 102 was flattered but confused. She never liked sea voyages so declined to enter. We wait to see who entered and whether or not the pageant actually takes place.