



u3a Vall del Pop

News4u

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Raisins for U3A-Vall del Pop

For each monthly meeting of U3A-Vall del Pop we invite a guest speaker. For the meeting in January 2010 we had as our distinguished guest Prof Dr. José Costa who holds the chair of human geography at the university of Alicante. He was the fourth Spanish speaker we invited. This poses no linguistic problems as there are several U3A members who can translate from Spanish to English.

Professor Costa spoke about the rise and the decline of the 'pasas', the raisins that were once cultivated in the Marina and exported all over the world, mainly through the harbour of Dénia.

Since Roman times most of the inhabitants of the Marina (roughly the area between Oliva and Benidorm) had been living in poverty. That changed for the good in the beginning of the 19th century because an ever growing demand for raisins originated in the Northern European industrialized countries. The United Kingdom was the cradle of the industrial revolution and very quickly became the most important customer of the 'Valencia raisin'. The dominance of the British traders was such that they built their own warehouse in Dénia and companies like Swan, Rowley, Cosmelly and MacAndrews established branches in that city. The importance of Dénia as a commercial centre became so impressive that countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Sweden and several others opened consulates in the town.

Why did Dénia become so important?

Simply because its harbour was easily reachable for the British sailing ships that started bringing an ever growing amount of raisins to the U.K. But then something changed that had a negative influence on the raisin trade between Dénia and the UK. Around 1870 steamships had replaced most of the sailing ships in the industrialized world. It was now more profitable for British vessels to steam to Greece and Turkey, both countries where raisins without stones were being cultivated. As the British market did not expand anymore, business men from Dénia went to the United States where they successfully introduced their 'pasas' in a huge new market. The turnover of the Valencia raisin kept on increasing until 1890 when the decline came abruptly. There were several causes for this sudden decline. The United Kingdom imposed import duties on the Valencia raisins, making them suddenly much more expensive than the Greek or Turkish ones. The United States also closed its borders for the Spanish 'pasas' by means of the bill MacKinley that protected the raisins from California. Last but not least there was the phylloxera that destroyed all the vines. Because of the sudden shock of the economical crisis all the foreign consulates in Dénia closed around 1915. Thousands of people living in the Marina had to emigrate to Algeria and Argentina in order to make a living.

Today only one or two farmers are still making raisins, but we can still admire the heritage of the once world famous 'pasas' of Dénia. Although many vines have been replaced by orange groves we can still admire thousands of 'bancales' or terraces on the hillsides of our mountains and the many Riurau as the silent witnesses of the 19th century raisin industry. Nowhere else in Spain nor in any other country can a building like a Riurau from the Marina be found. And what does the name Riurau mean? There are dozens of theories but the funniest explanation is the following. When the first English trader arrived in the early 19th century he visited a farmer in the marina and saw his Riurau. He asked him, pointing to the building with the lean-to roof, 'Raisin house'? The farmer who did not understand English saw the finger pointing at the building, nodded and said 'Si si Riurau'.



EDITORIAL - by Byron Dawson

A Happy New Year to all our readers

Apologies for the brevity of this Newsletter. At least Colin will be happy as people will be able to download this edition with dial-up. Things should return to normal next month as more U3A members return back to Spain from their Christmas break in the UK.

The committee wish all our readers a happy and a prosperous New Year.

A Happy New Year From TCP !

TCP ? Yup, that's us ... The newly-formed **T**ravel and **C**ulture **P**eople !

We are an enthusiastic group and will be providing many exciting and varied activities for the U3 A Vall del Pop's expanding membership during the next twelve months.

We recently met at Terry and Irene Turvey's house for a brainstorming session (and lunch !) which proved most productive. Plenty of ideas are in the pipeline and already there has been an excellent response to our trips and activities for the next couple of months.

10 Pin Bowling with optional meal, Wine Tasting, a trip to IKEA, a Quiz Evening with a meal and a visit to see the Fallas in Valencia have all been met with smiles, approval, signatures and deposits !

Come and see us at our desk each general meeting. We will always have something new to offer and you will receive a warm welcome on any of the activities.

TRAVEL.....rely on us !

CULTURE....look no further !

ENTERTAINMENT.....it's here for you !

Dates for your diary



Bowling Trip on 28th January in Ondara.

Quiz night at Bar Nou on 19th February- including a 'Fish Supper'.

Trip to Ikea on the 25th February.

See website for more detail

Details of next meeting

**The next meeting will be
Thursday 4th Feb.**

Xalo Town Hall

10.15am for new members.

10.30am for 11.00am start

**Guest speakers
Byron Dawson**

**A Post Card from Outer Space!
or
are we alone in the universe?**