

Nerja History Group - Historic Sights and Gastronomic Delights!

On Thursday March 16th, we had our annual presentation by Elena Sanchez of Granada University. Elena is a regular contributor to the NHG, her specialism is Roman Water Management. Her talk this time was about the location and urbanism of Roman cities, featuring Baelo Claudia. It was so interesting to see how the cities were carefully planned, the streets, shops, aqueducts, garum pits, etc.

The following day, 34 of us embarked on a long trip to visit the Roman site at Baelo Claudia in Cadiz Province. It was an early start and, as usual, we had breakfast en route. We arrived at Baelo Claudia on time and disembarked, all absolutely wowed by the sight of the long, golden sandy beach of Bolonia. The



visitors centre has made the most of the view with large panoramic miradors and on the way down to the Museum is a huge plate glass window. Many of us felt we could sit there and just gaze. The Museum has some very interesting artefacts and also a large painting, which depicts the City of Baelo Claudia as it may have looked.

We then went outside and commenced our guided visit of the remains. It makes such a difference having a guide along. We saw the only remaining aqueduct and could see where the effect of the earthquake had changed the direction of water flow. Then Elena explained the layout of the city: the main street, side streets, shops and then we looked in more detail at the Garum Pits (fish paste), some of which would have been



owned by commercial enterprises and some in other areas by smaller owners. This was a good source of revenue. We also saw the huge paving slabs which still form the main street – amazing to think of the number of feet which had trodden that road. Also, the all important bath area with separate pools for different temperatures, as we still have today in spas. And also, the forerunner of underfloor heating whereby arches were built to enable hot air to circulate through to different rooms. Then the “square square” as Elena calls it, where there is a statue of Claudius, after whom the site is named and leading on from that is the Forum.



On a higher level, is the theatre which is semi-circular with rows of seating available depending upon your status in society – women were generally in “the Gods” at the very top, with poor visibility! We also learned that men were named but women were usually named titles like “junior” or so and so 2nd or 3rd, etc. Without doubt, the location for this Roman City was well chosen. After an interesting but tiring couple of hours, we adjourned to the lovely little Hotel, El Torre which had prepared a delicious lunch for us. The staff were friendly and efficient and the food was plentiful and excellent, as was the wine and beer.



The following Friday, we had a visit much closer to home - three locations this side of Malaga: the newly opened Villa Antiopa in Rincon de la Victoria, Benaque and Macharaviaya.



First, the remains of the Villa Antiopa in Rincon de la Victoria. We divided into two

groups, in order to be able to see the exhibits clearly. After years of preparation, it is a wonderful display with artefacts in glass cases around the walls before using the walkways to view the floor mosaics. One of the exhibits, is a small head of the Roman God of wine, Bacchus. It had been unearthed, practically intact but with no base. Other artefacts include pieces of terracotta and metal tools and example of the tiny pieces of mosaics. There are videos with English sub-titles at various places within the museum – most helpful. Certainly, a very worthwhile visit.



We then boarded the bus to Benaque and Macharaviaya. The views while travelling inland are amazing. At the junction of the two roads, one to Benaque and one to Macharaviaya, is a monument in praise of the Galvez family, for what they implemented for Macharaviaya: a water system, a school for girls and boys with cash prizes for the best students. And, they created a factory for producing playing cards, which had royal approval.



This was where we were joined by Katie, the former Deputy Mayor of Macharaviaya, who was to be our guide. We went first to the birthplace of Salvador Rueda, a journalist and poet. His family home is small but furnished as it would have been and there is a video about him with English subtitles. We then went to the church, which is very imposing but had been derelict for a long time with no roof. When repairs started, they found that there were frescos around the walls, which had been protected by the cal (lime wash). On one of the frescos, is a date of 1594. The church was built over a Mosque.

We hopped back on the bus for the short trip to Macharaviaya, which is nestled into the Malaga countryside. The air seems so clean and fresh. There is a statue to Bernardo Galvez, founder of Galveston which is close to the local primary school.

We then visited the Galvez Museum which has much information about the history of the family and the village. There was also a temporary exhibition about the connection between Spain and the U.S. Each year, on the Saturday nearest to the 4th July, Macharaviaya celebrates. Unfortunately, the church was closed as was the crypt due to a planned presentation that evening of a book about the Galvez family. This book, together with family documents, had been found in a secondhand book shop in Madrid. It was purchased and the Ayuntamiento was able to acquire it. It will be on display in the Museum – sadly, we couldn't see it on this visit.

We then adjourned for a most enjoyable lunch at the local restaurant, delicious food - we then boarded the bus home to Nerja. Lots of information to absorb but most interesting.



As if that wasn't enough excitement for the month of March, on the following Tuesday, we had our "end of season" annual lunch at Acebuchal, the former abandoned village. This, of course, had to be suspended for three years due to the pandemic so there was an overwhelming response to the event after so long, 44 of us attended.



The first Group were taken so far by bus and then walked down the track with my knowledgeable colleague, Sue Harvey, who knows about plants, flowers and birds. We in the second group, joined them later for the gastronomic delight, prepared by Antonio and his brother Sebastian. We had a wonderful afternoon, we looked at the chapel and strolled in the street, the weather was great and everyone had a relaxed time.

Unfortunately, the last Meeting and guest Speaker for April had to be cancelled, so that was our 2022/23 season finished. However, the programme for next season is underway.

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