

# TRAVELLERS' CLUB MEETING 21<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2010

## IBERIA (Spain & Portugal) Speaker COLIN SALE

Colin's audience of 43 included people from far and wide, i.e. the Gold Coast, Quarry Hill Victoria and the Blue Mountains as well as a few members of his Study Tour "Highlights of Spain and Portugal" last year. We got his excellent photography from that tour as expected as well as some unexpected frills (microphone and captions) that added our enjoyment.

### SPAIN

Our talk followed the clockwise route of the tour commencing in Madrid – tree-lined wide boulevards with pedestrian paths in their centre, heritage buildings and plazas (Royal Palace/gardens, Opera, Railway Station, Museo del Prado, Cathedrals), famous Botanical Gardens, monuments e.g. Don Quixote and his author Cervantes. The architectural beauty of this city is enhanced by greenery – Madrid has more trees per person than any other city in the world!

Nearby Segovia features Roman ruins (35m high granite aqueduct), a Moorish sector and castle, huge square with cathedral built after expulsion of the Moors, an 18th and 19th century sector with typical boulevards and buildings.

After looking at two medieval walled cities – Caceres with a stork's nest on the top of the cathedral tower and Bajados with the former palace of Spain's Moorish kings we proceeded into

### PORTUGAL

Evora, "the most beautifully preserved city in our nation" where we saw Roman temple and baths, a fortress style cathedral, houses built into the arches of its aqueduct.

Onwards to Lisbon – harbour city, one of Europe's oldest capitals dating from 1256 – built over several hills/levels with a castle on one – the city centre was destroyed in the earthquake of 1755 and rebuilt to the specifications of Marquis de Pombal (plaza/boulevard style). We saw the public lift/funicular constructed by the Eiffel company, Belem tower at Harbour entrance, monument to Prince Henry, Vasco da Gama and 22 other famous navigators, charming trams and houses with tiled walls, traditional Portuguese two-color paving underfoot everywhere.

Northwards through a green and pleasant land we enjoyed many photos and tales from four walled towns each with its own history and character. Obidos – the castle is used as a hotel; Alcobaca – Portugal's largest church and finest monastery; Bathala a war memorial town - its huge monastery commemorates

the 1385 victory over invading Spaniards; Aveiro – a canal town (watch out Venice and St Petersburg) whose cathedral contains a roofless chapel.

Then we looked around stunning Porto, the nation's 2nd largest city (population 1.4 million), where Port Wine originated and was exported over the centuries, generating substantial wealth; 425 steps to top of church tower for a view:-

- of the surrounding countryside –fertile vineyards, numerous wineries
- of the historical port inside the gorge/cliffs of the Douro River mouth
- of narrow streets, many churches and a double deck steel bridge.

On to Guimaeres, the first capital of Portugal after the Moors were defeated in 1143. Thence to Braga the Rome of Portugal, centre of Christianity, 12th century cathedral, the local Visigoths were converted to Christianity and built the nation's first church in 45AD (your reporter thinks that date needs confirming as Braga is so far away from Jerusalem/Rome in 33AD and would like hear more details).

Via another port city Viana do Castelo we crossed back into

## SPAIN

This north-west section is the autonomous region of Galicia with its own language (like Sicily) and is highly industrialised. At the region's centre is Portugal's most visited city – the famous historical pilgrimage destination Compostela . The Cathedral houses the body of St James the Apostle (Santiago) brought here from Jerusalem in 833AD and is the destination of the 783km westwards pilgrimage route, Camino de Santiago. Another city in the region of Galicia is the port of A Coruna – we looked at its Roman lighthouse and heard that in 1588 the Spanish Armada of 130 ships (30,000) set sail from here to connect with Francis Drake and Co. We were being shown some shots of the Asturias region (capital Oviedo) and the Camino when your reporter rudely interrupted and terminated Colin's address – please forgive me but we had run out of time. However Colin's marvelous photos of the rest of Spain are promised for his next talk and future meetings will commence at 2pm (half an hour earlier). We do relish the historical anecdotes that Colin provides with his photos! It was obvious that a great deal of thought/preparation had gone into this presentation, Colin, and we sincerely thank you.

'Ela Taranto