

## BENIDORM REVISITED

**A Wimp's Report..... by Bill Whitworth**

An early evening call from Mick Jones asks me the question "Fancy a trip to Spain? I can get my 98<sup>th</sup> Marathon done and then my 99<sup>th</sup> in Gran Canaria in January, making London 2011 number 100. One week in a Four Star Hotel, scheduled Monarch Flight, Airport transfers for only £244.00, you can do the 'wimp's' half marathon on Saturday Evening."

Sounded good to me - apart from the 4.00am departure from Stafford!

No delays in check-in, just a computer swipe of your passport and we are on our way and an early arrival into Alicante sunshine by 11:00am. A 45 minute coach transfer to the Hotel Marina and a walk to *'John & Joseph's'* with a surprise that all venues are offering a pint of beer for just 1Euro! An afternoon run for about an hour which ended with us unable to find our way back to the hotel despite having been on TEN Harrier trips to Benidorm, resorting finally to asking a Cafe Owner who informs us we are only 100 yards away!

After a three year gap since our last trip here, Benidorm seems a little 'tired' and bars like *'Steptoos'*, *'Sinatras'* and *'Crazy Colin'* all closed and several others either renamed and/or revamped. Evening entertainment, however, at both our hotel and in particular at *'Morgan's Tavern'* was excellent with a Tribute Band to 'Queen' from the West End Show *'We Will Rock You'* and – Yes! "She" is still providing her late night "Sexy Magic Show"!!

At last, the main reason for our visit! Saturday evening's Half Marathon and I line up with 3,500 maximum race entrants on the starting line in torrential rain – now those of you that know me know I DO NOT LIKE rain or mud and here I was faced with both! – and after a firework display we are on our way in the dark on a three lap, figure of eight course. "Oh no you're not!" as we suddenly stop to decide how we get through a flooded area of road. Despite the rain, which continued through the race, and the flooded roads the crowds in the town were absolutely fantastic and vocal. A lot of friendship and encouragement during the race get me to the finish in 2hrs 12min 14secs.

Thankfully wrapped in a foil blanket complete with goodie bag, food and water, I headed back to the Hotel.... no point getting changed as I had to negotiate the floods to get there! A hot bath and then off to the bar to meet up with Mick. A race, under street lights, 3 laps of the town would have been excellent apart from the rain! The goodie bag? Good quality racing top, racing hat, racing gloves, zip up shoe bag, commemorative mug, food and drink...Entry fee – 15Euros!

Sunday Morning – Marathon Day. 8.30am start and a chance to see the runners on the first of 2 large laps – the extended figure of eight again – NOT A CLOUD IN THE SKY – and with the hotel only 100yards away, back for a traditional breakfast and a sunny spot on the balcony watching the runners go by. Judge it right then walk back to see the race after 15miles...Jonesie looks good but beginning to ache particularly a foot problem which necessitates him to walk for a spell around the 20 mile mark and the much hoped for good time slipping away and a recorded finishing time of 4hrs 29mins 39secs.

Back at the Hotel for the last of the day's sunshine, settle on a sunbed and – sod's law – the clouds come over, but never mind it's Happy Hour at the Hotel at 6.30pm - 2 for the price of 1 - and then with the promise of good entertainment and further price reductions at 8.30pm it's an incentive to keep you in the hotel which, of course, we appreciated! Let's have another good day tomorrow – it's our last day before we leave on Tuesday,

Monday Morning what's the weather like? Rain and looking awful so a planned trip up the mountain to The Cross was cancelled and replaced by light lunch in '*John & Joseph's*' leaving enough time to purchase the usual bottles of Brandy to take home... (purely medicinal of course).

Taking advantage of Happy Hour and a good evening meal, it's off again to '*Morgan's*' for an evening of entertainment. Firstly with "*One Vision*" – the Queen tribute act, followed by '*Abbalicious*' and '*Sister Act*'. A short walk back to the hotel and all requests to see the 'late night magical act' were declined!

A sunny start to Tuesday and an on time flight home to snowy Birmingham. Train back to Stafford Station whereupon it took longer to get home through the traffic than it took to get from Benidorm to Alicante!

Many thanks to Mick Jones for his organisation and YES, he has promised to do it all over again in NOVEMBER 2011. Watch the website and/or read the Harrier to keep up to date with Mick's arrangements.