

"YOU SHOULD LEARN FROM OUR SUCCESS"

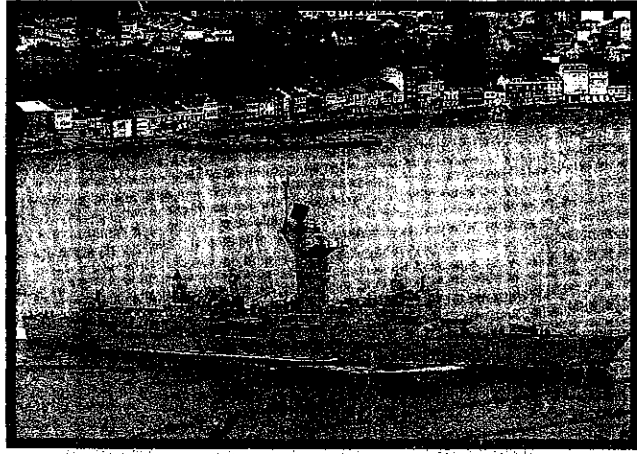
By Ryan Harrison

THE DIRECTOR of Britain's most successful artificial reef has given a ringing endorsement to plans in Majorca for a reef built from a decommissioned navy frigate.

Kelvin Boot, 54, Director of the National Marine Aquarium, helped to oversee the *HMS Scylla* project in Plymouth which saw the frigate sunk for use as a dive site and has reportedly boosted the local economy by one million pounds since it was dropped in March 2004. Kelvin, who often snorkles in Majorca, said: "You need to carry out thorough preparations before you attempt anything like this and the sea bed where you drop the ship has to be relatively barren. It would be really great in Majorca as the Mediterranean is such a fascinating place."

Plans by Calvia Council to transform the frigate *Baleares* into an artificial reef off the islands of Mallorca came under renewed attacks this week from environmental groups. Greenpeace claims the ship would create 4,000 tonnes of scrap and damage the local eco system.

Kelvin is sure that if the right preparation is done and the site carefully chosen, then there would be little doubt of success similar to the Plymouth project. He said: "It cost us 1.2 million pounds to drop the ship in Plymouth, and a large proportion of that went into preparation. You



■ FRIGATE, *Baleares*, to be sunk off Calvia.

can't go around dropping battle frigates anywhere you like."

"The extensive preparation we put into the project alleviated a lot of the concerns of the environmental groups we dealt with. In the end we were proved right as there have been no adverse effects."

"Sinking a ship for this purpose is both financially and biologically beneficial. The ship is like a block of flats on the sea bed. Some species like the pent house suite at the top and others like the basement rooms. There are so many little nooks and crannies for sea life to explore, and having the ship down there has created a really diverse habitat. It really enhances the area and is like placing an oasis in a fairly sterile piece of sea bed."

Financially the area is booming as a result of the increase in diving activity. Kelvin said: "We've just had a report out saying that in the first couple of months after opening there were over 1000 dive boats visiting the site. Although financial benefits should not be a justification for building an artificial reef, it's certainly put Plymouth back on the map."

As part of the process of sinking the ship, explosives are detonated at strategic places. It is estimated that when the ship was downed in 2003 a television audience of over 100 million watched from around the world. Kelvin said that Majorca could not buy that kind of publicity. His message to the members of Greenpeace, who have concerns about the

Majorca project, is this: "Yes, of course you're right to be concerned about the environment, but you're not always right. Provided the preparation is right there will be little doubt it will be a success and it ought to be a benefit rather than a detriment to the island."

Kelvin was involved throughout the *HMS Scylla* project and, as director of the National Marine Aquarium since its opening in 1998, still deals with the reef as a biological site and with the increased public interest surrounding the ship. As a dive site the ship is unique and available to divers of all abilities. Kelvin said: "We placed the ship at a slight angle on the sea bed. The front is deeper so more experienced divers have a chal-



■ THE *Scylla* sunk off Plymouth.

lenge, but at the back, where it is shallower, the beginners can still join in."

"We get divers from across Europe and we now have cameras set up on board the ship, so those

who don't dive can still enjoy what's down there."

"The building of the artificial reef has paid huge dividends to Plymouth, both financially and ecologically."

Another chance to celebrate 4th of July

ANYONE who missed out on celebrations of the 4th of July has another chance to do so, thanks to the *Union Sin Frontiers* group, who will be celebrating it in Calvia on July 22.

Union Sin Frontiers is a non-profit group of multi-nationalities and diverse cultures. It strives to integrate the various nationalities and cultures, and also introduce them to Spanish and Balearic culture. The group organises one or two events each month.

Further details can be obtained from Ken or Fernke Young at 971 675927.

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● CALVIA IS POISED TO REVIVE A ONCE FLOURISHING AREA OF MAJORCA'S COAST

THE BALEARES COULD BE SUNK NEXT AUTUMN

By Humphrey Carter

BY this time next year, the retired Spanish frigate *Baleares* should be nearly ready to be sunk off the coast of Calvia on the edge of the Malgrats marine reserve.

The *Bulletin* has had exclusive access to the final project to create an artificial reef and revive an area of extreme marine importance off the coast of El Toro which is now being studied by the Ministry for Agriculture and Fisheries in Madrid. Calvia Council hope the project will be given the green light before Christ-

mas. Calvia's director general of Strategic Development, Antonio Ramis Alos, the man in charge of the pioneering project, said this week that, despite opposition from Greenpeace and the local ecological group GOB, the project has the full support of OCEANA, the international ocean protection group, as well as the tourism industry and Majorca's diving community.

Ramis said that everything possible has been done to make sure the project not only complies with the very highest international environmental requisites, the sinking of the frigate is being handled by the Canadian company CARC, the Canadian Artificial Reef Company. Only last week CARC

sunk a frigate of Brisbane, Australia, and will carry out exactly the same process in Calvia.

The primary aim of the project is to inject new life into a vast area of sea which is now "dead."

While the Malgrats marine reserve is flourishing, the area off El Toro, once famous for Mero (grouper) fish, has been literally killed by over-fishing.

"What we're going to do is sink the frigate some 200 metres out from the coast, just on the edge of the Malgrats reserve. This is an area of some three square kilometres, and will extend the reserve right along to El Toro creating a protected area of around nine square kilometres," Ramis explained.

The 20 metre high frigate is to be sunk at a depth of 35 metres. That will mean that the top decks will rest at a depth of just 15 metres, ideal for marine life and fauna which need light.

At around 20 to 25 metres, marine life and vegetation which only need a bit of light will be able to flourish. Down at 35 metres, the dark habitat will be ideal for those species more adept to living in the deep.

What is more, very few divers, especially recreational divers, descend deeper than 35 to 40 metres.

"This will be the first artificial reef of this kind especially adapted for divers in the Mediterranean. What we want to do is not only revive this area of sea, but also cre-

ate a unique diving environment for Europe's hundreds of thousands of divers.

"It's a win, win project. Good for the environment and it will be good for tourism and the local economy - there are honestly very few negative points and they have all been dealt with by international experts. CARC is the world's leading company in its field," Ramis said.

Once the council gets the green light and the permits from central government, the 4,177 tonne, 133.6 metre frigate will have to be stripped, cleaned, or rather sterilised or decontaminated, and especially re-designed for divers.

"This will be carried out in the port of Cartagena and will take seven months."

"We will have to strip the paintwork etc. and remove every trace of possible pollutants.

"Extra holes are going to be made to provide maximum security for divers, we have to make sure that a diver can see a point of exit all times and, of course, holes will have to be made in each side of her hull for the sinking.

"However, the final hole will be made in the Port of Palma as the frigate, which the Ministry of Defence could have sold for scrap at a price of around 50 million euros, will have to be towed from the mainland to Majorca and we don't want it sinking on the way." Spec heat explosives will be used when the frigate is eventually



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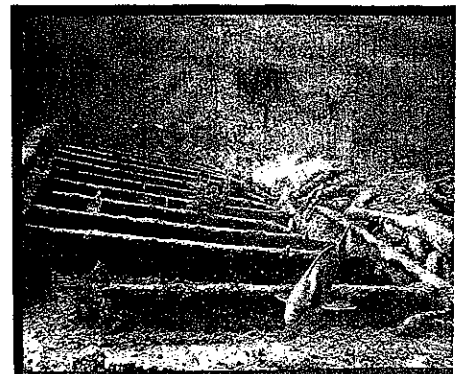
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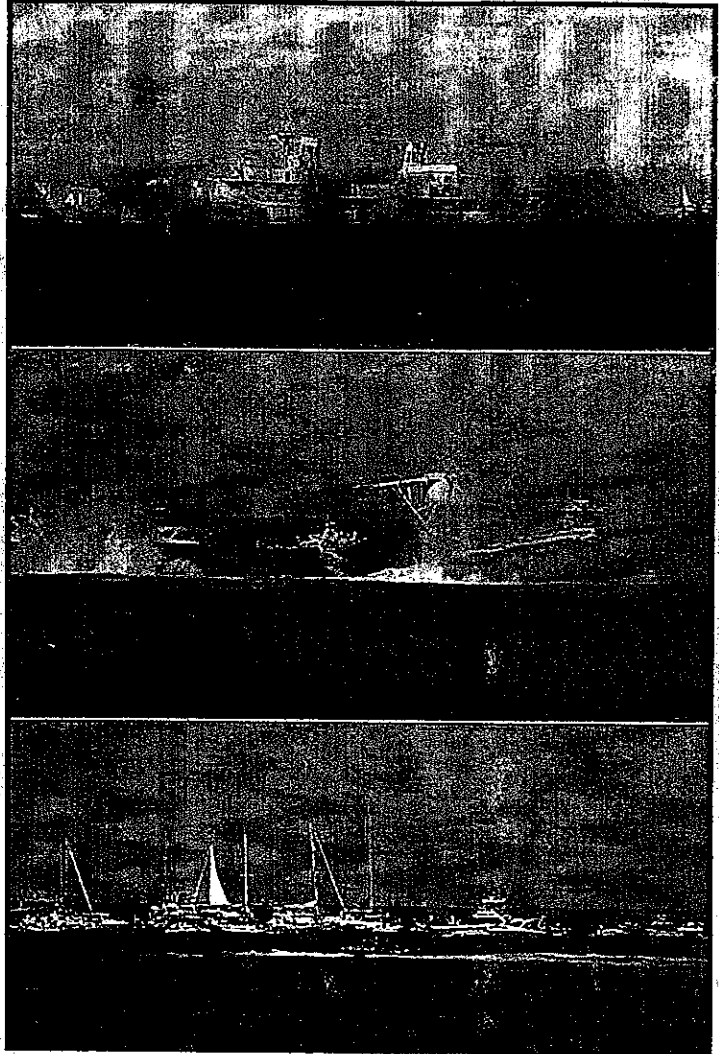
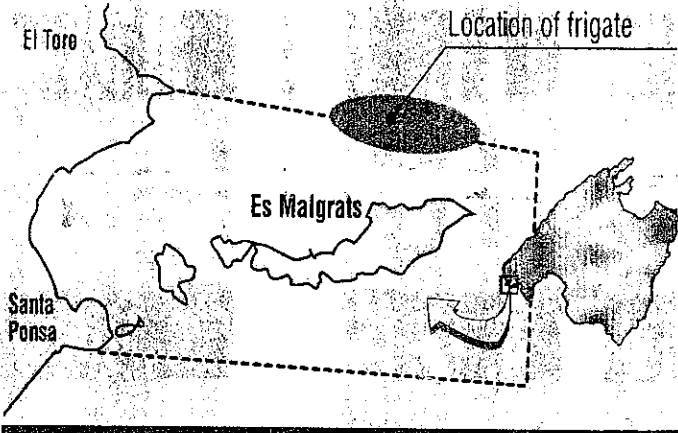


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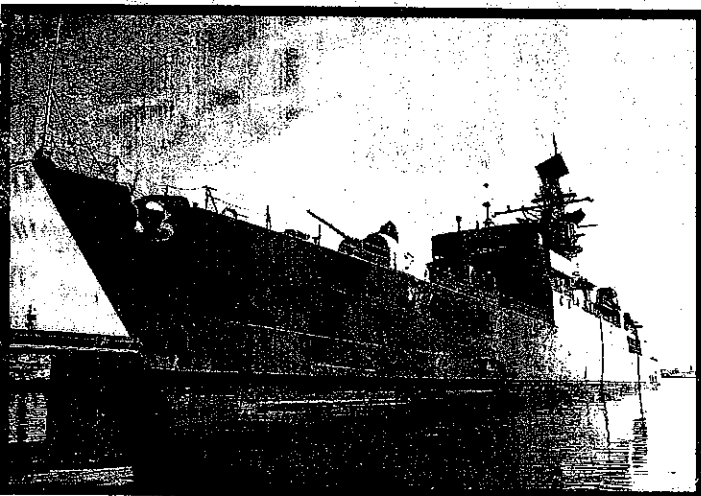


FISH HAS BEEN KILLED BY OVER-FISHING

MALGRATS AND EL TORO MARINE RESERVE



■ A combination photograph of the Australian navy's HMAS Brisbane which was sunk off Brisbane at the start of last week by Canadian company CARC which is taking care of the Calvia project.



■ THE Spanish navy's retired frigate Baleares will be sunk off Calvia.

sunk and Ramis explained that September or October next year do not clash with any of the breeding patterns of the bird life in the Malgrats area.

Prior to the sinking the area will also be checked for any large mammal life and a 200 metres exclusion zone will be set up around the area.

"Although a chain of minor explosives is going to be used to blow the final holes, we are also considering surrounding the sinking with a special curtain of water to prevent the shock waves travelling too far and disturbing existing marine life.

"The whole operation will take just three minutes and, unlike in Britain where a pyrotechnical display was organised to make the sinking of the HMS Scylla off Plymouth more spectacular for the crowds, we are unlikely to do that," Ramis said.

However, the council is expecting massive local and international media and tv coverage - images and reports

of the sinking last week in Australia were distributed world wide.

The Canadian technicians and engineers in charge of the operation will also have to be careful that the frigate sinks correctly and comes to rest on the sea bed the right way up.

However, out of the 20 ships the company has sunk around the world, only one tilted on to its side.

Ramis also said that it should only take two to three years to revive the new marine reserve. The whole project will cost 1.617.420 euros and Ramis is hoping to cover that with private funds raised from local businesses and sections of the tourist industry.

"The money generated by the growth in the diving sector will eventually help cover the cost of patrolling and protecting the reserve," Ramis said. "At the moment the number of divers who come to Majorca is similar to the 150,000 cycle-tourists, but once the marine reserve is operational, we hope to see

a huge growth in the diving sector.

"Divers have a high spending power and, like golfers, have to buy expensive and specialised equipment.

"What is more, they understand and respect the need to protect the marine environment, so they are very compatible to our project," Ramis added.

"The Australian Environment minister said last week that the diving industry generates an extra 20 million AUS dollars, around 12.5

million euros, per year. In Plymouth, the Scylla is attracting some 300 divers a day and generating nearly two million pounds per year for the local economy. We are expecting to see the same kind of return within a few years," he said.

Ramis said that the most recent studies claim that 200,000 Europeans take up diving every year and that there are over 1,000 diving clubs in Spain and 3,500 instructors.

Here in Majorca, the diving sector employs 300 people and operates all year

round. Expanding the island's diving facilities will help to boost Calvia's low-season tourism industry.

"We will also be setting up a marine reserve education centre for local schools and children so that the reserve becomes an integral part of the community."

As a parting shot, Ramis pointed out that Greenpeace's *Rainbow Warrior* which was sunk in New Zealand in 1986, was salvaged and reconditioned to be transformed into an artificial reef in 1987.

Since then it has helped breed new marine life in the area and become a huge attraction for divers - just like Calvia wants to do with the *Baleares*.

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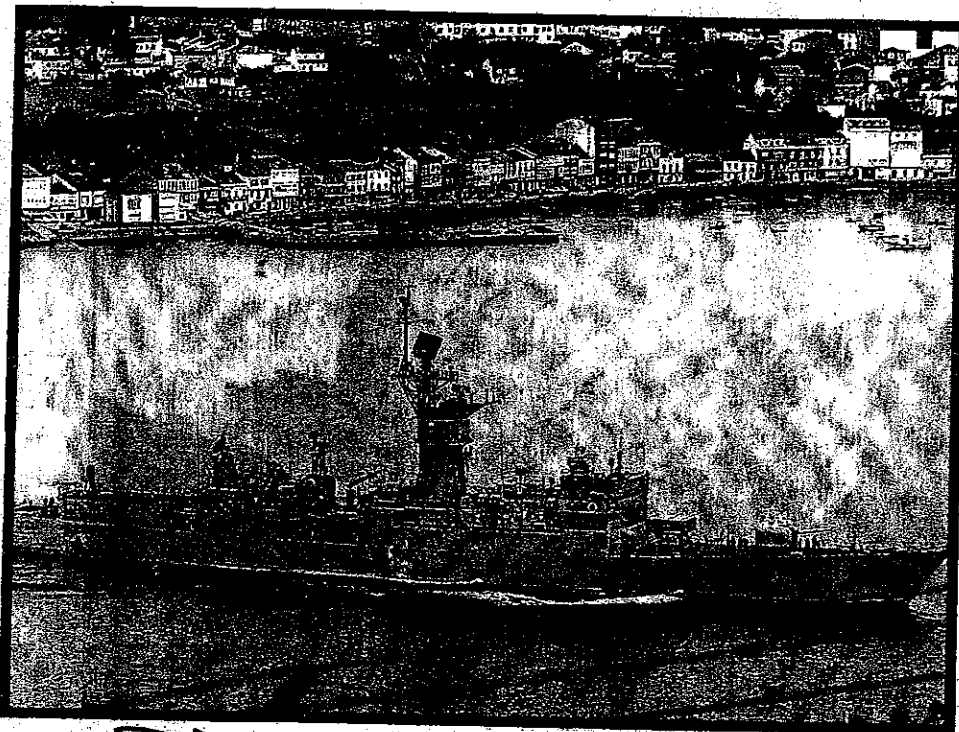
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PLANS to sink the frigate *Baleares* off Calvia coast.



STANDING shoulder to shoulder with people of London.

owner of popular restaurants spoke of an increase of 40 per cent in profits on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

THERE were only 4.65 weddings per 1,000 inhabitants of the Balearics in 2004, the lowest figure since 1975 and the fourth smallest in Spain.

The statistics did not, of course, include same-sex marriages permitted under recent Spanish legislation. However, these were the subject of some lengthy pro and con correspondence in the Letters to the Editor column of the *Bulletin* and the newspaper also reported that fourteen same-sex couples in the Balearics had already said that they intended to take advantage of the change in the law.

WIDESPREAD no-smoking regulations were introduced in the Balearics with bans on smoking in many public buildings, shopping centres and banks. Restaurants and bars were also affected and have to provide separate areas for smokers and non-smokers. The Balearic government spokesman, Joan Flaquer, insisted that the new law was "not restrictive" and would not affect the tourist trade. The president of the Council of Majorca, Maria Antonia Munar, said she was against an outright ban and would be providing a place in her offices for her staff to smoke if they wished to; later it was discovered that such an

ALMOST half of Balearic homes keep at least one pet, according to a survey by an animal rights group. In Spain as a whole, dogs are the most popular domestic animal and are the choice in 35 per cent of homes while cats are chosen only by eight per cent of pet owners. A related report in the *Bulletin* said that adoptions from Palma's Son Reus municipal animal pound had increased by 30 per cent since the centre started a website showing the animals looking for a good home.

CLAUDIA Schiffer sold her newly-constructed Camp de Mar property for 11 million euros to a multi-millionaire Russian businessman. The news caused some surprise because the supermodel and film actress is involved in Germany and elsewhere in promoting tourism to the Balearics. In *Another View Monitor* asked why personalities such as Ms Schiffer, Michael Douglas and others "love us and then leave us".

THE price of petrol rose through the month to reach a minimum of 1.003 euros a litre for leadfree 95 and 1.008 for super 97. These prices represented an increase of almost 20 per cent since the beginning of the year.

EUGEN Prokop who had guided the fortunes of the Pollensa Music Festival for almost forty years died in Brussels at the age of 73 on the eve of the 44th Festival. Prokop, a brilliant violinist, played at the very first Festival in 1962 when the event was founded by the Englishman Philip Newman and returned to become its artistic director after Newman's premature death. During his incumbency Prokop brought many of the world's greatest musical artists to Pollensa. In his tribute, Ray Fleming wrote: Eugen Prokop's memorial will be the Pollensa Festival itself, a wonderful, enriching element in Majorca's cultural life for which all who love good music will be everlastingly grateful."

THE Balearic Symphony Orchestra announced the appointment of Philippe Bender as its principal conductor in succession to Edmon Colomer. Maestro Bender, who was in charge of the orchestra from 1995-97 will take up his appointment in September; the 2005/06 season at the Palma Auditorium will include eight Beethoven symphonies.

WELCOME To Palma Airport..." was the *Bulletin's* justifiably sarcastic headline towards the end of the month; it was accompanied by a picture of children playing among the rubbish that had been scattered all over the airport by cleaning staff on strike for better pay and conditions. More pictures on inside pages told a story of deliberately trashed areas, including toilets, and of luggage trolleys stacked in such a way as to prevent their use. The strike was called off after three days but with the threat that it would be resumed if the workers' demands were not met.

Earlier in the month, in his regular *Bulletin* column, the Revd Robert Ellis, Anglican Chaplain of Majorca, had complained in considerable detail about the filthy and chaotic conditions in the food service areas at Nottingham East Midlands Airport and about the overpriced and poor quality food and surly staff; he said that the next time he used the airport he would take his own flask of tea and homemade egg sandwiches. His remarks led to an apologetic reply from the Commercial Director of the airport who detailed all the improvements already made and pending, including a new catering company, in order to give a better service to the airport's annual 4.4 million passengers. The letter concluded with an offer to treat the Revd Ellis "to more than homemade egg sandwiches and a flask of tea" when next he uses the airport.

This a real dive, Rick!

Jon Alexander explores hidden depths in Majorca

ICK the scuba-diving instructor didn't attempt to disguise the next element of the water torture to which I was willingly submitting myself.

"You won't like this bit too much, but it's vital you master it," he says.

After a few minutes of practice, I was sitting on the bottom with three metres of blue water between you and your next gulp of air.

It's the one procedure most likely to induce a panic attack in his scuba schoolkids - ages range from 15 years to 75, but we're nonetheless his 'kids' sometimes: it takes up to half-a-dozen attempts to master it.

Then, I thought I'd done pretty famously in the final stages of my PADI diving course. I'd achieved how to put on my indelible jacket in the correct buoyancy levels and kneeling sideways, breathe via the aqualung and get tangled up in my outsize flippers.

My instructor, who specialises in one-to-one diving tuition, told me as if I've impugned his professionalism as a member of the elite.

When he has his PADI instructor's licence, he'll open the door to the world of wonders of scuba-diving, scuba-diving, scuba-diving.

climbing. At whatever the sport, they have a posse of professional coaches - plus the climate and facilities - who guarantee to make beginners instantly better, intermediates more fussed and experts... er, well more expert.

Calvia, I know, like me, you've probably never heard of the place. But in all likelihood you've been there, because it's the most visited and diverse corner of Majorca, embracing the resorts of Magaluf, Palma Nova and Santa Ponce. Puerto Portals, Bendinat and D'Alghes.

It's an exotic med of jet-set sophistication, down-to-earth fun, stunning beaches, scenic grandeur, glittery nightclubs and dreamy mountain villages.

And now Calvia is aiming to emphasise its place on the holiday map as a destination for sporty types, keen to polish up their acts under expert guidance or - like me - just jet going at something exciting and challenging.

Lynn Tupper-Jones, Atrichman-born but a Majorca resident for 30-plus years, helped me take the plunge into scuba-diving in her capacity as manager of Calvia council's five tourist information offices.

I contacted her department via email - hypercalvia.com or telephone (0034 971 131 126 - and she immediately sent me details of Calvia's 14 diving schools, plus a wealth of info on hotels, clubs and places of interest.

"We're seeing more and more people arriving under their own steam, rather than on packages holidays," explains Lynn. "And we can help them in the right direction when they get here."

So, I took up with her to visit the club's back and forth, including water- and hotel reservations that provided me with a three-star comfort for 48 euros

(about £22) a night B&B. I'd joined the swelling throng of DIY tourists bound for Majorca and Calvia in particular.

And, since nearly half are Brits, there's all manner of reminders of home, from fish and chips - to litres of Boddies and items filling the nearby supermarket shelves that are so familiar you'd

swear you were shopping at Tesco. Of course, there's Magaluf's famous - or is it infamous? - nightlife and an array of restaurants to fit any budget. But for anyone wanting to indulge on special night out, the place to see and be seen is undoubtedly Puerto Portals marina.

Lined with sleek super-yachts, this unmarked parking lot for millionaires toys is also the location

of some of Calvia's finest eateries, like Bismark or Tyrians, where - for about £60 per couple - you can eat at a table where King Juan Carlos himself probably dined and sample some of Majorca's finest wines. I particularly appreciated the spicy, Marica Battle red, which is effortless quaffable (but can produce a mule-kick of a hangover the following morning. If drunk too copiously.)

But, like thousands of others each year, I came to Calvia for an action holiday which is where Rick came in. For £300, he promised to make me a qualified scuba-diver in a week and, for four hours a day he tolled manfully in the hot sun - and a rather snazzy wet-suit - into proving his point.

After two outings in the pool, I was ready for the sea and, under his patient guidance, by day three I was walking backwards off Cala Fornells beach to my future as an underwater explorer.

I lay walking backward into the water, because that's how us pros do it - it means you don't trip, head over heels, over your this (don't ever mention this!).

For the next couple of days we explored the sub-aqua paradise around the Magaluf Islands off Santa Ponce, where Calvia council is planning to create a submarine park by sinking the hull of an old Spanish navy cruiser.

My final session was a written test. It was a tad trickier than I imagined, but the certification as a PADI-qualified diver was well worth the head-scratching.

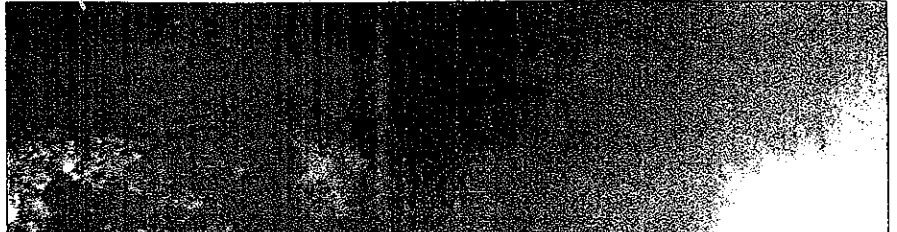
So, for an outlay of around £575, which is what some goldfish pay for a bag of chips, I've had the holiday of a lifetime and come home with the key to a whole new world, even if it is underwater.

Thanks for that, Calvia.



factfile
Jon travelled with Monarch Airlines, who run regular flights from Manchester Airport to Palma, the most convenient airport for Calvia (www.flymonarch.com or tel: 08700 40 33 00).

SCUBA DOOBIE, DO!
Jon Alexander plunges into the Mediterranean depths, below left, the gorgeous coastline around Calvia



KNOW it was going to be a great party when I checked into my hotel room and found a girl lying on my bed. A large silver plate with a record to hang round my neck. Like some alcoholic Mayor's clash of titles. There was also a lot of useful Spanish phrases. Ora come, por favor. "Another drink, please?". Quiero hablar? "Do you want to dance?" and finally, cansado ("I'm tired"). Estoy cansado. It turned out, would be the most useful phrases of the lot.

With so many cheap flights from the UK, Malaga, capital of the Costa del Sol, is now being rapidly up the league table for 25th visitations seeking a change of pace for a few days. Booked almost year-round sun, an eight-mile beach, more than 1,000 bars and restaurants, designer-label shopping, a fascinating historic quarter, a 16th-century cathedral, a Roman theatre, a Moorish fortress, horse-drawn carriages clip-clopping through tropical parkland and a new Picasso Museum, Malaga has enough to keep anyone busy for a full fortnight.

But I didn't see any of that. Unwittingly, I had hit the beginning of the annual August Feria. Or rather, it hit me for nine spaced-out days. I floated on a sea of wine, music, life, love and laughter, among some of the most

Make merry in

It's fiesta time every day during the re-born city's Feria, discovers Perrott Phillips

with 200 wine tents among the rides and attractions - I spotted hardly a single carousing Briton, Swede or German.

At 8am, shurle buses were still arriving at the monumental entrance, a 20m-high tower illuminated by 450,000 light bulbs, with the Spanish still yearning to go. I stood in the Plaza Urchagay near the Picasso Museum, one

temporary restaurants spread their tables on the flagstones and serve robust, local food and heartyegas. Flavours sell whiffs of north Africa for a Euro.

At 7.30pm, the bulls thunder into the ring, to face some of Spain's finest matadors. Before the fiesta is over 96 bulls will be killed. On in the harbour, the graceful fabeas

Alh - Javi af keces

Another View...

By Monitor

by MONITOR

NOBODY wants to be a spoil sport, even if he knows nothing about the sport in question, especially when those who are in the know seem to be so enthusiastic about a new project, for instance the projected diving reef to be formed by sinking the old frigate *Baleares* off the Malgrats near Paguera. There is obviously a lot of support for this project, some of it no doubt from people who believe that Majorca must develop new tourist attractions or die a slow death at the hands of other equally attractive, but less expensive, sun-and-sand locations. Even so, given the reputation of Majorca for launching bright new tourist attractions in haste, only to repent in leisure when they don't live up to their promise, shouldn't we know a little more about the diving reef proposal than we do?

Assuming that the otherwise superannuated ship is going for free, the cost of preparing it for its new submerged lease of life, sinking and settling it in place is said to be 2.5 million euros. Whether there will be on-going maintenance costs is not clear, nor do we know from the published information how many divers are likely to be attracted to the Malgrats. In other words how cost-effective will this project be in bringing new visitors to the island over and above those who come here already for recreational diving? Are there other ways in which the money could be better spent?

Then there are the environmental objections. Greenpeace has a reputation, justified or not, for "crying wolf" and the validity of its opposition to the reef can easily be discounted for that reason.

Even so, the site of the reef is quite close to one of Majorca's finest beaches and anything which might affect the flow of the tides and movement of the seabed should be carefully considered. Have the local fishermen been consulted? Support for the Malgrats project has come from those who have created a similar project at Plymouth in the UK and their experience should obviously be drawn on.

However, to claim that no environmental damage has been observed there, at an underwater site that is only a year or two old, is not really conclusive evidence. Nature takes longer to strike back.

Viewpoint GAZA CRISIS LOOMING

by RAY FLEMING

WE are less than three weeks away from the mid-August date set by Ariel Sharon to remove the remaining Israelis from their settlements in the Gaza strip. Until now most attention has focussed on the difficulties facing the Israeli government in persuading or forcing angry settlers to move from homes they have occupied for more than thirty years. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that another, and possibly greater, problem is whether Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian Authority will be able to keep order in the territory suddenly returned to them. There is a real danger that Palestinian militant groups such as Hamas or Islamic Jihad will try to harass the departing Israelis and even to challenge the internal powers of the Palestinian Authority's own security forces. A report published yesterday by Strategic Assessments Initiative, an independent Washington-based group, says that the Authority's security forces are "divided, weak, overstuffed, badly motivated and underarmed". For starters! The ratio of personnel to

weapons is 4:1 and Hamas and Islamic Jihad are better armed; ammunition is in short supply and unreliable and there is no coherent communications network. The report attributes these deficiencies to the destruction of the Palestinian police infrastructure by the Israelis in military action since 2000. Even with the Gaza withdrawal imminent, the Israelis continue to be unhelpful: when the American General William Ward, who is co-ordinating the effort to improve the Palestinian security forces, asked the Israelis to allow the Palestinians to import new armoured vehicles and fresh supplies of arms, he was turned down. There are three possible doom scenarios for mid-August: there could be intensified rocket and mortar attacks on Israel from Gaza; the Gaza settlers could seek to provoke a violent Palestinian reaction in order to divert the Israeli army from removing them; there could be considerable unrest in Gaza, providing the Israeli government with an opportunity to return to the territory to keep order. This problem has been looming for well over a year. Proposals for a UN presence for an interim period were dismissed by Israel and the United States. Now we shall have to rely on keeping our fingers crossed.

UNIONS IN DECLINE

by MONITOR

THE British trade union movement is a shadow of its former self, largely because of Margaret Thatcher's relentless assault on it and the subsequent changes in the British economy. Although Tony Blair has, just kept the unions on side there have been none of the beer-and-sandwiches negotiating sessions at No 10 so common in Harold Wilson's days. It no longer matters greatly to the Labour Party what the TUC thinks provided, of course, the funds keep flowing to Labour's coffers. Yesterday's news of a major split in American trade unionism shows that in the United States also the power of old-style unionism is declining rapidly. It, as seems likely, the split takes place the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (truckers) and the Service Employees International Union will leave the AFL-CIO organisation which is the US equivalent of the British TUC. That would take roughly one quarter of the AFL-CIO membership away at a time that the membership has dropped alarmingly with only

eight per cent of workers in private industry belonging to a union. Ineffective efforts to reverse that decline are at the heart of the dissatisfaction of the two departing unions which feel that the leadership of the AFL-CIO, while acknowledging the problem, have failed to address it with sufficient vigour. As in Britain, there is a political dimension to the dispute. The AFL-CIO has traditionally supported the Democratic Party, generating large sums at election times and getting out the voters on polling day. Although no one supposes that any union would go over to the Republicans in the future, a divided labour representation would be good news for President Bush and the Republican Party. The irony of the whole business is that this year the annual gathering of the AFL-CIO in Chicago was due to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the re-merging of the American Federation of Labour and the Congress of Industrial Organisation in 1955 after a previous split kept them apart for twenty-five years.

Brussels defence against terror

By Bart Crols

BRUSSELS, the capital of the European Union, would struggle to cope with a terrorist attack, the city's governor acknowledged yesterday as Europe remained on high alert after the London bombings.

The city with a population of one million plays host to key institutions of the 25-nation EU and the headquarters of the NATO military alliance as well as being capital of Belgium. Major cities across Europe have been on high alert since July 7 when a wave of attacks killed 52 people on London's underground train network and a bus. Brussels regional governor Veronique Paulus de Chatelet said that only 83 of the 714 public places in Brussels - hospitals, shopping malls, train and subway stations - had drawn up emergency plans for use by the fire department in case of a major incident. "The starting point of everything is a map, that is, where are the entry and exit points, where are there water supplies which the fire services can use," she told Belgian VRT radio. In the case of the underground system, "Out of 68 subway stations only 22 of these plans have been drawn up," she said.

THE GOVERNOR'S DUTY

A senior interior ministry official said Chatelet was responsible for the city's security. "It is the duty of the governor to ensure that the disaster plans of Brussels are coordinated," said Hans Bracquene, chief of staff for Interior Minister Patrick Dewael.

The European Commission, which employs thousands of staff in buildings dotted around Brussels, said it expected the city to have all necessary security arrangements in place. A NATO spokesman said the alliance collaborated with Belgian authorities to help ensure the security of its HQ. After the London attacks, the bloc asked its top terrorism official Gijs de Vries to assess the emergency response plans of all EU states before the end of the year.

Iraq al Qaeda posts video of Algerian diplomats

IRAQ's al Qaeda group posted a video of two kidnapped Algerian diplomats yesterday, after it vowed to kill them, according to an Internet posting.

The video showed two blindfolded men. One of them identified himself as Ali Belaroussi, the chief of the Algerian mission. "I live in the capital Algiers," he said.

The other man said he was Azzedine Belkadi.

A statement from Al Qaeda in Iraq accompanying the video, which showed no militants, said their "confessions" would be posted soon. Al Qaeda, led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, has said it would kill the two diplomats. Algerian minister of state without portfolio Bou-

guerra Soltani said the government was hopeful of a positive outcome.

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