

The ape escape!

Wendy Williams has a tug of war with a monkey on a tour around the Rock



GANGING UP: Trio of monkeys jump on a car before turning their attention on journalist Wendy. (Main pic) View of Africa from the lighthouse

STROLLING into Gibraltar is rather like walking into a dream where everything is strangely familiar, but just a little bit different.

With the red telephone boxes, bobbies on the beat and familiar British brand names, Gibraltar somehow feels almost more British than Britain.

For an English girl who has spent the last few years living in Spain there is a distinct sense of coming home, a reassuring familiarity that made me feel quite nostalgic.

A warm pint of ale, a packet of PG Tips and a visit to the cinema, I was as happy as the monkey I saw swinging just off Main Street.

But it also quickly became clear that Gibraltar – despite its six square kilometre size – has a lot more to offer than Morrisons, a bacon butty and duty free cigarettes.

Certainly there are as many differences as similarities to life back in Britain. And the people of the Rock are as proud to be Gibraltarians, as they are to be part

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From Page 15

of Britain.

Ask anyone what they like about 'Gib' and the sense of pride is clearly obvious as they gush about the weather, the lifestyle, the history and the people.

"When you cross the border you are entering a new world," explains Gail Francis Tiron from the tourist office. "For British expats who live in Spain there is a real safety element; a kind of home abroad."

"But there is also a lot of history and a vibrant mix of culture."

This is perhaps not surprising, Gibraltar being at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, and sitting at a strategic location between Europe and Africa.

In Greek mythology Gibraltar is actually referred to as 'Calpe', one of the fabled Pillars of Hercules, which marked the edge of the Mediterranean and the then known world (the other pillar Jbel Musa lies just across the sea in Africa).

The enclave has long boasted a unique mix of cultures, a veritable melting pot of



TRANQUIL: Gibraltar's stunning landscape

The harmony haven

beliefs and even a language that combines English with Spanish in an unusual hybrid that sounds, well, quite frankly, bizarre.

The bewildering code-switching between English and Spanish is known as *Llanito*, and where the word 'gibberish' almost certainly comes from.

The population is made up of a mix of Italian, Jewish, Maltese, British, Portuguese and Genoese, which has oddly led to an increased sense of community that transcends ethnic and religious divisions.

"We are an example to the world," remarks former mayor Solomon Levy MBE when explaining the harmonious way everyone lives together.

Certainly, I was struck in the few days that I spent on the Rock by the community spirit and just how friendly the people were.

Meanwhile the architecture is almost as eclectic as its people with a fine mix of Georgian and Victorian buildings standing alongside those with a Portuguese, Genoese or Moorish influence.

All this of course feeds out



A HARMONIOUS MIX: Congruous Gibraltar

of a tumultuous history which dates back to Neanderthal times.

According to respected historian Professor Clive Finlayson of the Gibraltar mu-

seum, 'Gibraltar has multiple histories.' And as you wander around the Rock, you will find remains of the legacy of the Phoenicians, Romans and Moors.

The Phoenicians were the first civilisation to build a fortified base here.

Then following the demise of the Roman Empire, the governor of Tangier Tariq ibn Ziyad landed at Gibraltar in 711 to launch the Islamic invasion of the Iberian Peninsula.

The Rock took his name - *Jabal Tariq* (Mountain of Tariq) - which eventually became anglicised to become Gibraltar, as we know it today.

The Arabs went on to rule for seven centuries.

It was only much, much later that it fell into British hands after it was ceded to Britain by Spain in the 1713 Treaty of Utrecht following the War of the Spanish Succession.

The British garrison was formally declared a colony in 1830 and the streets of Gibraltar are still full of reminders of Britain's glorious past.

No visit would be complete without a trip to see the views at the top of the Rock

On Rosia Road stands an enormous 100 ton Victorian gun marking the spot where Nelson's body was brought ashore.

Admiral Horatio Nelson famously died on the deck of HMS Victory in 1805 at Trafalgar, during the famous battle less than 50 miles up the coast near Vejer.

According to legend, during the stopover in Gibraltar Nelson's body was packed in a casket of brandy to preserve it for the long trip back to England and later, during the crossing, thirsty sailors snuck a tippie from the casket.

Nelson experts now consider this to be unlikely. But the rumour has given rise to the phrase 'tapping the admiral' referring to illicit drinking.

On a more serious note, you can also pay a visit to the evocative Trafalgar Cemetery where some of those who died from wounds inflicted in the famous battle were laid to rest.

And of course no trip is complete without a visit to the top of the Rock, far above the hustle and bustle of the city centre.

Visitors can take a cable car

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Did you know...

- The height of the Rock is approximately 426 metres or 1400 feet
- The distance between Gibraltar and the coast of Africa is 24 kilometres or 15 miles
- The Rock was formed approximately 200 million years ago and is composed of Jurassic Limestone
- The UK pound can be used freely in Gibraltar, so there is no need to convert UK notes to Gibraltar ones. However, Gibraltar banknotes are not legal tender in the UK and will not be accepted there
- In recent referendums the nearly 30,000 Gibraltarians who live on the Rock voted overwhelmingly to reject any involvement by Spain in their government
- Queen Elizabeth II last visited Gibraltar in 1954
- The border was closed by Franco in 1969 and was shut for 13 years, only reopened partially for pedestrians in 1982 before being reopened fully in 1985

to the top where they will get unrivalled views.

I, however, was forced to take a bus – a free one, as it turns out (they are all free apart from the border bus) – that took me halfway up as the cable car was closed for maintenance.

The bonus was sitting next to local lad Leo, who pointed out some of the sights as we snaked our way up roads that seemed far narrower than the bus.

He gave me a clear picture of how Gibraltar has changed over the years and after an enjoyable trip down memory lane, I was left to walk the rest of the way, giving me a chance to fully appreciate the nature reserve... and getting a bird's-eye view of a plane taking off from the runway below.

Looking inland from the 1398 foot summit you can also make out the beautiful Serrania de Ronda and out to sea across the Straits lie the Rif Mountains of Morocco.

Of course, what makes the top even more interesting are the Barbary Apes, by far Gibraltar's most famous tourist attraction.

It turns out, Gibraltar is the only place in Europe where monkeys range free and plenty of myths surround the story of how they came to be here... but it is now most commonly accepted that the creatures, native of North Africa, were introduced by the British during the 18th century.

I had of course heard a lot about the apes – which are actually tailless monkeys – but I was still surprised to see how close they really

What a colourful, patriotic bunch



DANGEROUS GAME: A Gibraltarian posing in front of one of the many cannons, Muslim girls collect money for a health charity, one of the more eccentric local characters and an unusual courier stopping the traffic



come up to you. They are quite used to having their photo taken and

even seem to pose for you. However I had made the schoolgirl error of forget-

ting I had a sandwich in the top of my handbag and was caught off guard when

one of the monkeys made a grab for it.

An interesting tug of war ensued, which I luckily won – but only just.

Minutes later, the same monkey jumped on to my back and made another bid for my lunch but this time I was saved by a nice Romanian couple who were visiting for a few days.

With my new entourage for support I continued on my merry way taking heed of the signs telling tourists not to feed them. It is actually illegal (hefty fines are in force) and bad for their health.

The same monkey jumped on to my back and made another bid for my lunch

And it is a risk not worth taking, especially if you are British and believe the myth that as long as monkeys remain on the rock the territory will stay under British rule.

Even Winston Churchill apparently believed it, choosing to bolster the dwindling numbers during World War II.

It was Churchill who also constructed a fortress inside the rock, believing an attack from Hitler was imminent.

He found space to house 16,000 troops who did not see daylight for months at a time. There was even room for General Eisenhower to have an office.

Today it is possible to visit both the World War II tunnels and the great siege

tunnels which were built in the late 18th century.

It is also worth paying a visit to the 'City under Siege' exhibition which gives you a glimpse of the appalling conditions the soldiers were forced to endure and even includes 200 year old graffiti.

For the record, Gibraltar has survived 14 sieges in its history, giving the residents of the Rock something else to be proud of. "Gibraltar has survived everything," purrs Francis from the tourist office.

"It has got a lot going for it with a lot of history.

"A lot of people think we just have cheap booze and fags," she added.

"But they should come and stay for a day or two and we can show them there is a lot more to see, whether you are interested in diving, botany, caving, archaeology or bird watching."

As I finally enjoyed my sandwich from the safety of the lower rock, I couldn't have agreed more.

Freebies on the Rock

IT is a well known fact that students in most parts of the world live on a tight budget.

But in Gibraltar, the government is so keen to encourage its students to go to university, it actually pays for them.

With no universities, the enclave has devised one of the most generous university grant systems in Europe, guaranteeing fees and maintenance funding for students who secure a university place.

The government even pays for three return flights a year to chosen universities, mostly in the UK.

Another great initiative has been the introduction of free bus services over the last few years. With the exception of the bus to the border, all its five bus routes are free of charge. Aimed at encouraging public transport and therefore a decrease in the use of private motor vehicles, it means an environmental gain, as well as improved traffic circulation.

So now the residents of the Rock can save their pennies and the environment at the same time.

SUNNY GIB: A successful blend of cultures has left attractive architecture, while (left) an underground cave



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IT'S an exciting day for Gibraltar's new leader Fabian Picardo.

Aside from his fast-approaching 40th birthday and forthcoming fatherhood, he has finally managed to work out how to listen to his music library at work.

"I've got iPads and iPods coming out of my ears, but have only now managed to sync all my music on iTunes Match so I can have my collection in the office," explains the keen music fan.

One of Europe's youngest leaders - who only reached four decades at the weekend - he tells me how he likes an even spread of Spanish and British pop and is not adverse to taking a weekend off to watch a band in Barcelona or Madrid.

"I love all sorts of different music, Spanish bands like Mecano and La Oreja de Van Gogh (Van Gogh's Ear), as well as British stuff like Queen and Dire Straits."

Then, when pushed for something a bit more contemporary, he adds: "Oh, and Kings of Leon."

His other big passion, he tells me, is Liverpool football club and this is patently clear from the shiny membership card that sits pride of place on the table in front of him.

"I have actually applied to become a season ticket holder and am currently on the short list," he explains, going on to reminisce about the golden days of the 70s with the likes of Kevin Keegan and Ian Rush.

"It was a fantastic time, but I was never allowed to stay up late to watch extra time and penalty shoot outs. My dad



NEW BROOM: Editor Clarke (top right) met Picardo at the Governor's Palace

actually used to wake me up to tell me who won." We are sitting around a long wooden table in his spacious office in the Governor's Palace.

Clearly highly organised, he has sheaths of papers and documents carefully lined up in front of him and sports a friendly and personable manner.

The new Chief Minister is a true breath of fresh air since ousting the Rock's conservative leader of 14 years Peter Caruana in December.

There is still a long way to go to bring things up to speed and he is hell bent on improving the image of Gibraltar and presenting it as a modern entity.

He might perhaps start with the palace waiting room, where the chintzy sofas are only worsened by one of the driest selections of reading matter imaginable, including a dozen issues of *Jane's Defence Weekly* - the UK's military bible - and a couple of copies of the *Economist* dating back to 2009.

Liverpool FC, Queen and becoming a dad!

Olive Press editor Jon Clarke talks to Fabian Picardo about his new role as Chief Minister and a few other key aspects of life as he turns 40

But once you get into the nerve centre of the operation, it is clear there are plenty of good ideas.

Aside from working to promote the enclave as a superb business location, he is keen to improve the experience for the seven million tourists who visit each year.

"We want to upgrade the tourist product and show it at its best. We don't want loads of traffic jams on the upper Rock and for people to leave feeling disappointed."

One of the key things that needs to improve, he admits, is the poor level of accommodation options available to tourists.

A severe shortage of rooms was highlighted with the recent chess tournament, when there was 'not enough room at the inn' even for the 363 players competing.

"We need more variety," he admits, confirming that they are currently 'looking to finalise' arrangements with a few international chains.

Picardo has worked hard to encourage youngsters to apply to Oxbridge

He is also keen for the Spanish to begin to appreciate its near neighbour.

"We want Spain's institutions to see us as a modern European neighbour and for Spain's politicians to come over and see that we offer a classic travel experience."

"There is so much culture and history here. A lot more than just beaches and sun. Take the discovery of the Neanderthals at Gorham's Cave, there have been a lot of historical developments here."

An intelligent lad, Picardo was the first Gibraltarian to attend Oxford University for 10 years, studying law at Oriel College before getting a job as a solicitor at Hassans, Gibraltar's leading legal firm.

"It was not as if we were not bright enough, we just weren't properly encouraged," he insists. "I was lucky as I had a lawyer at Hassans who took me under his wing and really encouraged me."

Since leaving 15 years ago he has worked hard to encourage youngsters to apply to Oxbridge with a huge amount of success, five students alone having attended Oriel since then.

And he adds proudly that the famous college even flew the Gibraltar flag on the day he got into power in December. There is actually a photo of it on the wall of his office.

So, all in all, Fabian Picardo is flying high this year, despite

the many challenges he will face over the next four years as Chief Minister.

There is one, slightly different challenge however that is going to keep him on his toes in the coming months... for the young leader is soon to become a dad for the first time with his second wife Justine.

The due date is April 10 and he admits it's 'an exciting time'.

As to the suggestion that he has left it a bit late, he is not in the slightest bit fazed. "My dad had me when he was 55, so in my family we all start late," he explains, giving the distinct feeling that he will take it all in his stride...let's hope more like Kenny Dalglish than Andy Carroll.



HAPPY EVENT: And now Picardo and wife Justine are expecting a baby in April

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"There are many things Gibraltar can provide for intelligent investors," explains new Chief Minister Fabian Picardo.

"We are a modern nation and can give quick decisions to the needs of international investors and we can be ambitious in our growth estimates."

He continues: "I think Gibraltar can become a key business hub for Europe, particularly as we are building on our fantastic talents, for example in the software and e-gaming areas."

A number of key factors are helping to attract new investment.

In particular, Gibraltar has an educated and bilingual population making it an attractive location for businesses to locate knowing there is a highly skilled workforce.

The legal system, based on the British system, is well regarded and a wealth of lawyers and accountants are on hand to help businesses.

Infrastructure is improving by the month, with a new airport terminal, in particular, recently being opened.

Gibraltar is now a fully integrated part of the EU and from last year the enclave officially lost its 'tax haven' status, meaning it now embraces the rules of the rest of the continent.

On the so-called OECD 'white list' the Rock has become compliant with EU financial services regulations, in particular concerning money laundering.

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It is not difficult to imagine the tension that must have been felt on the Rock during the early stages of World War II.

Take a half hour stroll around the enclave and you will be confronted with literally dozens of defensive fortifications.

There is the Wellington Front, Casemates Gates and the King's Bastion to name just three. They are enormous in size and make those on the Somme look like a game of soldiers in contrast.

Having lived through 14 sieges during their time as keepers of the Rock, the British were understandably concerned that when Hitler declared war, they would soon be in the frontline again.

Sitting at the entrance to the Med, with wide open views across to Africa, the strategic importance of the Rock was all too plain to see.

Whoever controlled Gibraltar controlled the Mediterranean and the authorities were certain that Hitler and his right wing ally Franco were set to invade.

The fear led to a mass evacuation leaving most Gibraltarians without a home, some for as long as 10 years.

Only those with essential jobs remained behind, with the majority packed off to the UK, Northern Ireland, Madeira and even Jamaica.

Meanwhile the Allies stepped up reinforcement and miles



FORTIFICATIONS: Gun emplacements and barrages line the enclave while (left) Franco with Hitler

A siege mentality

'Gibraltar, dear friends, Gibraltar. We should have taken Gibraltar,' were allegedly some of Hitler's last words

of new tunnels and chambers were excavated creating an 'underground city' that could house as many as 16,000 soldiers for up to nine months.

It even contained its own power station, water supply, and hospital. And it was from here that Operation Torch - the Allied invasion of North Africa devised by Roosevelt and Churchill - was coordinated in 1942.

So concerned were they of



invasion that in 1941 the Allies also launched Operation Tracer, a top-secret 'stay-be-

hind mission' that was to be implemented if Gibraltar fell to the Axis Powers.

As part of the scheme, six men - two doctors, three signalmen and their leader - were to be sealed in a cave with enough supplies for a year, from where they could look out over the Straits and wire back all shipping movements.

There was no way out and anyone who died within the chamber was to be embalmed and cemented into the walls.

Fortunately Operation Tracer was never needed as Adolf Hitler, as it turned out, was forced to turn his attention away from Gibraltar, due to General Franco.

Hitler himself had been under no illusion of the importance of the territory and hoped to launch Operation Felix, to seize Gibraltar, driving the British out and closing the Straits to the Allies.

He believed it was one of the keys to winning the war and complex plans had been drawn up in 1940.

But in an ironic twist Franco was reluctant to be dragged into the war so soon after the Civil War had crippled his own nation. And after he backed out at the last minute, the operation was cancelled with Hitler going on to invade the Soviet Union instead.

It turned out to be a disaster and not taking Gibraltar became one of his biggest regrets.

Speaking to friends at his house in Bavaria not long before his death, he reportedly said "Gibraltar, dear friends, Gibraltar. We should have taken Gibraltar."

Had he done so, the whole course of the war could have run very differently and Gibraltar would not be the same as it is now.

'The interminable, almost unendurable wait'

TASKED with running the mission to take North Africa in 1942, General Eisenhower had a lot on his plate.

Incredibly he ran the show from a cold, airy tunnel deep in the Rock. He later wrote in his memoirs: "The subterranean passages provided the sole available office space, and in them was located the signal equipment by which we expected to keep in touch with the commanders of the three assault forces."

"Through the arched ceilings came a constant drip, drip, drip of surface water that faithfully, but drearily, ticked off the seconds of the interminable, almost unendurable wait which always occurs between completion of a military plan and the moment action begins."

On November 8, 1942, the plan was put into action and 466 aircraft from Gibraltar landed on captured North African airfields.

THE last time he was on the Rock was at Christmas 1963 when former Royal Marine musician Gerald Miles should have been having a bit of well earned R&R.

But sadly there was no chance to celebrate that festive day because Gerald, along with his colleagues, had just landed 55 bodies from the fire stricken cruise ship The Laconia.

A total of 128 people died in the fire and the job of picking up the bodies was given to Gerald and his fellow musicians, who were on their way to the Far East on board the aircraft carrier HMS Centaur.

Although 20 merchant ships were at the scene of the disaster they were not allowed to retrieve dead bodies so the Centaur was summoned to carry out the sad task.

Unforgettable

When not playing their instruments, the Royal Marine musicians take on the role of first aiders and on Christmas Eve they pulled the corpses from the icy cold waters of the Atlantic which they duly brought ashore at Gibraltar on Christmas Day.

"It was the one Christmas in the 76 years of my life that I will never forget," ex-

Christmas calamity

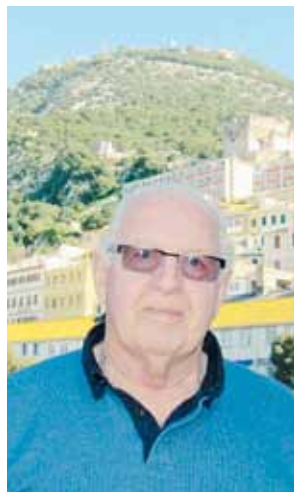
With memories of the Costa Concordia fresh in our memories, Gerald Miles recalls Christmas 1953 when he pulled the bodies of 55 cruise passengers out of the sea near Gibraltar

By Clive Smith

plained Gerald has been visiting Gibraltar for the first time in 49 years.

"We had never been faced with such an horrific task. There were bodies bobbing about everywhere and our job was to recover all of them and take them ashore."

"We were all so upset and we couldn't even speak to our loved ones back home in the UK as ringing home was not so easy in those days, especially from on board ship."



Picture by: GERALD MILES



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As it turns out, the bay is the permanent home of three different species; common, striped and bottlenose, with transient dolphins visiting the bay for food, shelter and to breed in their hundreds.

They are attracted to the area by the clean water coming from the Atlantic which is rich in nutrients and brings lots of smaller fish such as sardines and mackerel that the dolphins feed off.

We had been warned as we set off from Marina Bay that you see fewer dolphins in winter and there was a chance our search would be in vain, but everyone on board remained optimistic as we scanned the waves.

Sure enough minutes later we spotted a pod of around 20 striped dolphins and our captain Angie headed straight for them.

"To be honest we almost always see dolphins and if punters are unlucky we give them a voucher so they can come back another day for free," explains our guide Georgia

There are three types of dolphin swimming around the Bay of Gibraltar, discovers Wendy Williams



HOPEFUL: Scouring the waves for mammals

Pritchard, who has worked for the company for a year.

"There are literally hundreds

of dolphins in the bay. In the winter you see them in pods of between 15 and 50 but in

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the summer they come together and you can see them in their hundreds. "In the wild they live for 35 to 40 years whereas in captivity

the common dolphins live for 15 years," adds Georgia. It was a magical feeling to watch these creatures in their natural habitat, with the com-

mon and striped dolphins playing together. They had soon come right up to the boat, swimming at our feet and playing with us,

seemingly as curious about us as we were of them. You could even hear them breathing as they came up for air - they can hold their breath under water for up to five minutes - and swam around and under the boat.

I was completely mesmerised watching them and time stood still until they vanished just as quickly as they had arrived.

It was clear from the smiles on board, that everyone had enjoyed the experience as much as I had.

"It is the best job in the world," smiled Georgia. You had to agree, it couldn't be far off.

For further information please call (00350) 200 50650 or visit www.dolphin.gi

Winging it across the Straits

GIBRALTAR has long been a key location for spotting migrating birds. The Strait of Gibraltar is the narrowest crossing point for birds migrating to Europe and Africa, resulting in over 200 species of birds regularly being recorded flying overhead.

The vegetation on the Rock provides an inviting temporary home for



INVITING: A temporary home

these species of migratory birds that stop to feed before continuing on to their journey

over desert and sea.

The main bird watching season runs from February to October, but those wanting to see the greatest variety of species should visit during mid-April to mid-June.

During this time, birds such as the Egyptian Vulture and storks are still migrating north and most of the summer visitors have arrived to breed.

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24 **Gibraltar special**



RECORD CROP: Beauty contestants entering the 50th competition

WHAT A LOVELY LOT

Miss Gibraltar celebrates its half century this year

THE rock is set to crown its 50th Miss Gibraltar this year. The contest, which has grown over the years, has now become one of the social highlights of the year, particularly after the 2009 winner Kaiane Aldorino went on to win Miss World. The very first Miss Gibraltar pageant was

actually held in 1959, and was won by Viola Abudarham. However, the competition did not resume until 1964. This year, nine contestants will be competing for the title and will take over the reign from the 2011 winner Michelle Gillingwater Pedersen, whose mother Louise was coincidentally Miss Gibraltar

in 1982. In a special anniversary show, being held at St Michael's Cave in April, the Ministry of Culture is organising an appearance of past Miss Gibralters. "It will be a very special night," said a spokesman. Meanwhile Gail Francis Tiron, Miss Gibraltar in 1985, has written a book about her experience to raise money for local charity Calpe House. She said: "Miss Gibraltar is important here. And it was one of the greatest moments of my life."



BEAUTY: The bilingual Aldorino

World leader, but down-to-earth

THE world looked on with amazement when the tiny enclave of Gibraltar produced a Miss World in 2009. And the truth is you could not expect to find a more down-to-earth, well adjusted girl than Kaiane Aldorino, 24. Now back in Gibraltar after her year travelling the globe, she told *the Olive Press* how happy she is to be home. The hospital administrator said: "I love coming back to live a normal life again." The bilingual beauty spent the whole of 2010 travelling around the world in the role, visiting countries including Korea, Japan and Brunei. She is still amazed at the 15,000 people who turned up to her victory parade in December. "There were more people on the streets than even National Day. It really took me by surprise," she said.



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26

Gibraltar special

I only married because Franco shut the border

Wendy Williams meets Solomon Levy, one of the Rock's most colourful figures

HIS office is literally teeming with soldiers, caricatures and models, the fruits of 52 years of collecting.

But what really catches the eye are the photographs, in particular him with the Queen ('a lovely lady' who he has met three times) and Margaret Thatcher ('another lovely lady') to name but a few.

Solomon Levy MBE - more commonly known as 'Momy' - was Gibraltar's first civic mayor; and is a successful estate agent, the only auctioneer on the Rock and a die hard Arsenal fan.

The 75-year-old is also a staunch royalist, a fact quickly gleaned from the enormous poster perched on top of his office celebrating the Queen's

Diamond Jubilee this year. "My idols though are Winston Churchill, and Nelson," explains Momy, a dapper gentleman, who today sports a pin-striped suit with a red waistcoat and colourful bow-tie.

"Nelson had one eye and one arm and look what he did. Imagine if he had had two eyes and two arms! He would have conquered the world."

"And Churchill saved the world from tyranny. If it was not for him, as a Jew I might not be alive," he adds, pointing to a photo of him in a sports car from his 'bachelor days'.

"I call it my 'password,' I was the king of the road in that car



DISTINGUISHED: Levy today and (below) in 'bachelor days'

and used to go from here to Marbella meeting girls. I used to joke that I only got married because Franco closed the border!"

The lucky woman was Sarah, with whom he has been married for 43 years. Between them they have five children and 23 grandchildren.

But while clearly Jewish, he is fiercely proud of his Gibraltarian roots. "I am 100 per cent Gibraltarian. My family has been here for 250 years," he explains.

In fact his late uncle was Sir Joshua Hassan, the first Chief Minister, who ruled for nearly two decades.

"I am very proud to live here. We get the best of all worlds here. We are British and also Gibraltarian. I was only the mayor for one year, but it is the greatest honour of my life."



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Dragon Tattoo girl chooses Gib

IT has become a hit film starring Daniel Craig and Rooney Mara (above) and has even been nominated for five Academy Awards.

So it bodes well for Gibraltar that the so-called 'Girl With the Dragon Tattoo' chooses the Rock as her ideal escape at the end of the massive selling *Millennium* trilogy by Stieg Larsson.

In the final part of the trilogy Lisbeth Salander jumps on an early morning flight to Malaga before taking a taxi straight to the enclave, 'a place that is not like anywhere else'. While there she meets a *Financial Times*-reading German businessman at the Rock hotel and spends time with her secretly gay lawyer Jeremy Stuart MacMillan, who is administering her huge multi-million euro fortune from his small back street office. She even manages to feed the Barbary apes and go on an all-day bender starting at Harry's Bar.

An extremely positive end to the third of the trilogy of books *The Girl Who Kicked the Hornet's Nest*, the book paints a strong and vivid picture of the place.

And, as there are already plans to turn the remaining two books into films then the Rock can be expecting some high profile visitors at some point soon.

THE company has produced glasses for clients as diverse as Rolls Royce, the British Royal Family and Henry Kissinger. So it came as a real honour when Gibraltar Crystal was commissioned to make a presentation piece for Princess Anne when she visited in 2004.

The company, based in Casemates Square, began by recruiting glass blowers in 1995, including renowned Paul Alexander who had worked at Dartington Crystal. Due to health concerns for

Life of glass

Princess Anne and Henry Kissinger have both been clients of Gibraltar Crystal, a fascinating museum in Casemates Square

glass makers when blowing lead crystal the company took an alternative route and used barium oxide, while a supplier of silica sand – a key ingredient – was found in Germany. The company's aim is to manufacture locally-made

crystal of the highest quality and allow visitors to view the glass-making process at close quarters. It is able to undertake commissions and orders can be shipped worldwide. Best of all, the free museum

in Casemates Square, gives a great presentation of the age old skills and techniques of glass blowing and there is normally a pro on hand to show you how it is done. Visit www.gibraltarcystal.com for more information



CRYSTAL CLEAR: The glass making process and (inset) the finished product

Cave's Rock of Gibraltar

HOPEFULLY a few Gibraltarians will know the words to veteran rock star Nick Cave's 2003 hit *Rock of Gibraltar* – but for those who don't, below is a reminder.

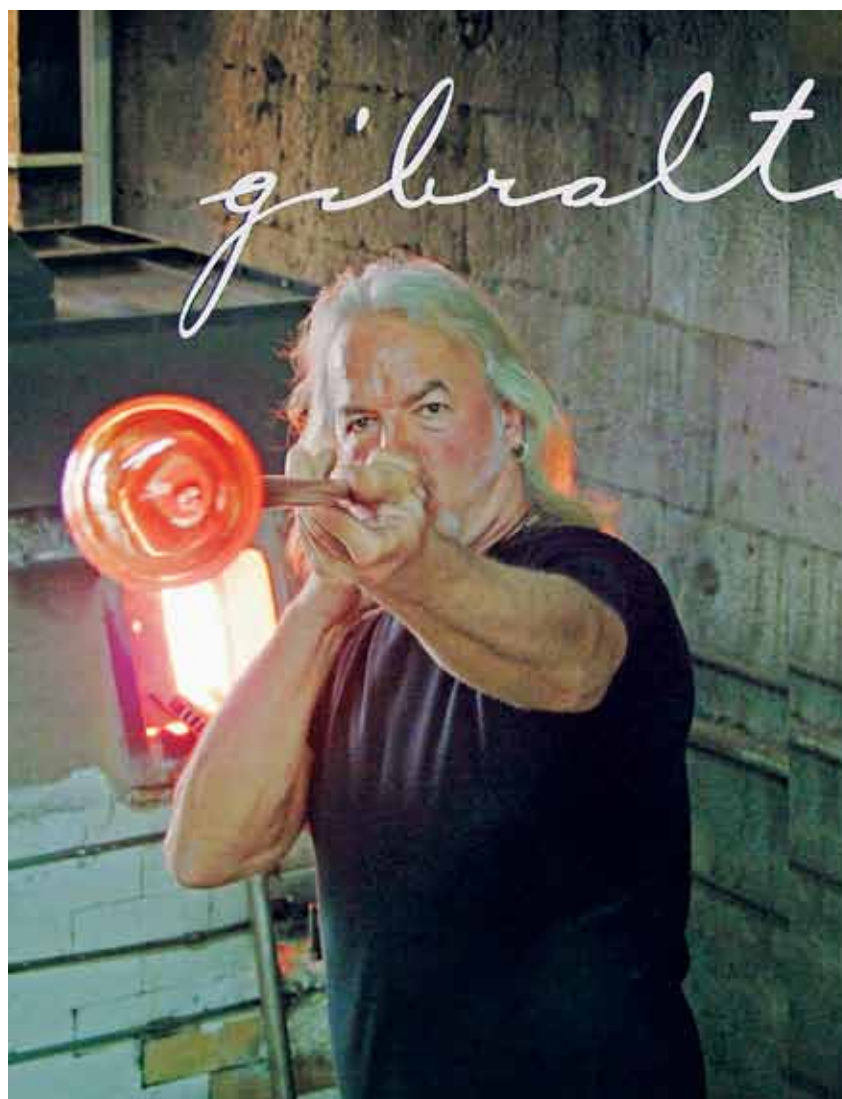
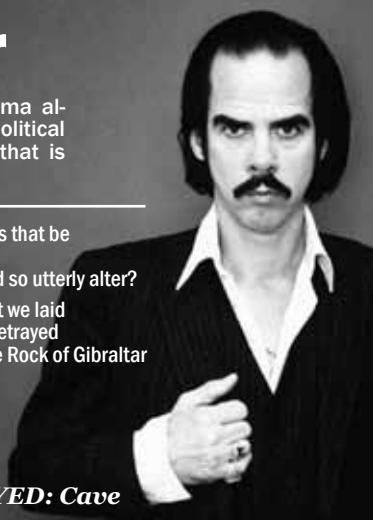
The song from the artist's *Nocturama* album uses the metaphor of Gib's political situation to describe a love affair that is 'betrayed like the rock of Gibraltar'.

Let me say this to you
I'll be steadfast and true
And my love will never falter
The sea would crash about us
The waves would lash about us
I'll be your Rock of Gibraltar
Sometimes it's hard
And we're both caught off guard
But there's nothing I would ever alter
The wind could howl round our ears
For the next thousand years
I'd still be your Rock of Gibraltar

The best thing I done
Was to make you the one
Who I'd walk with down to the altar
You'd stand by me
And together we'd be
That great, steady Rock of Gibraltar
Under the big yellow moon
On our honeymoon
I took you on a trip to Malta
And all through the night
You held me so tight
Your great, steady Rock of Gibraltar

Could the powers that be
Ever foresee
That things could so utterly alter?
All the plans that we laid
Could soon be betrayed
Betrayed like the Rock of Gibraltar

BETRAYED: Cave



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Heading for the heights!

A new walking book Coastal Walks of Andalucía charts 50 great walks along the Costa del Sol, the Costa de la Luz and Gibraltar. Here, Guy Hunter-Watts offers a fabulous alternative look around the Rock

FIRST associations of the southern European coastline are all too often of crowded beaches, busy coastal roads and blocks of holiday apartments. Few conjure up visions of the wilder beaches of the Costa de la Luz or the tail end of the Sierra Subbética, the mighty chain of mountains which rises up a few kilometres inland from the Costa del Sol, of the wilder beaches of the Costa de la Luz. One of the best

though is a walk braltar Circuit - w fabulous three to the enclave. I was bowled over this mesmerising friend Freddie V firm Triay & Triay. The highlight of as you have a h the footpath that southern face of known as Medite This giddy path h stored by the Bo be marvelling a those who b There are



BEAUTY: Pathway (left) takes you up past the best scenery Gibraltar has to offer



k - known as the Gi-
which offers walkers a
four hour trip around
er when I discovered
g trail thanks to my
squez of local legal
the walk – so long
head for heights - is
t leads up the sheer
the Rock, popularly
rranean Steps.
as recently been re-
nito Trust and you'll
at the derring-do of
uilt it.
many more treats in

store. After negotiating the steps
next comes Douglas' Path which cuts
along Gibraltar's rugged spine with
huge views both east and west.
The next challenge comes in the form
of Charles V's Wall which you descend
via a series of steep flights of steps.
And to end an already magnificent cir-
cuit up pops Ingliss Way leading back
towards the start point of the walk
through a thick stand of Mediterranean
scrub. It beggars belief to think that
the cut-and-thrust of Main Street is just
a few hundred metres away.
It is a wonderful stroll and well with-
in the capabilities of anyone in good
health who walks on a regular basis,
provided, as I have said, that you have
a good head for heights.

THE walk begins in front of
Landport Gate just beyond
the drawbridge. From here
cut through two tunnels to
reach Casemate Square.
Head along the square's left
side then continue to the far
end of Main Street passing
John Macintosh Square then
The Convent. At the far end
of the street pass beneath
an arch then cut right across
a pedestrian crossing. Bear
left, traverse a second cross-
ing and head on past Queen's Hotel.
Angling left you reach the hotel's en-
trance. Here cross the road, pass right
of a restaurant to the lower station of
the cable car then angle left across a
car park to the gateway to the Gibraltar
Botanic Gardens. **(20 mins)**

Beyond the gate climb two flights of
steps, pass a statue of Elliott (com-
mander of the Rock during the Siege of
1779-83) then after 15m bear left up
a narrow path. Climb another flight of
steps then continue up Olive Tree Climb
which merges with a broader path
which leads to a red post box. Here cut
left at a sign Exit Upper Rock and climb

past The Rock Hotel's swimming pool.
Passing through the gate to the gardens
continue parallel to Europa Road to a
footbridge, cross the road then head up
Engineer Road. The road climbs steeply
to the gates of the Nature Reserve of
The Upper Rock. Continuing to climb
the road leads to another set of gates
and a ticket box **(40 mins)** (it's worth
50 pence and a short detour to visit one
of the hypothetical sites of the *The Pil-
lars of Hercules, Mons Calpe*).

Angling left beyond the ticket box to a
barrier you reach the beginning of Medi-
terranean Steps. Passing a metal gate
you follow the steps along the near
sheer face of Gibraltar's southern flank.
Passing a signboard detailing the fauna
of the Upper Rock the path cuts left and
climbs steeply: ropes help your upward-
ly mobile course. Reaching a bricked
up building **(1 hr)** angle right through a
tunnel beyond which you pass two bun-
kers: the views from the platform just
beyond the second one are breathtak-
ing. Angling left the path zigzags up to a
signboard describing the Rock's unique
flora. Passing a group of antennae you
reach the highest point of the walk as
vistas open out to the west. Angling left
and descending you reach the entrance
gate to the World War II Tunnels. Here
cut right down a narrow road for 400m
to a junction and sign 1789-1897. **(1
hr 25 mins)** Here cut right past a bar-
rier: you're now on Douglas' Path which
angles up to the ridgetop through thick
Mediterranean scrub where it reaches
O'Hara's Battery.

Continue along the spine of the Rock,
now descending, to St Michael's Road.
Angling right here you pass a signboard

telling of a Spanish attack on
the Rock in 1704. Continue
along the road then pass be-
neath an arch where Gib's resi-
dent apes often gather to look
at tourists. Beyond the arch you
reach the top of Charles V's wall.
Continue up St Michael's Road,
angle right at the first fork then
climb to the top station of the
cable car where there's a café
and a viewing platform up to
the right: close encounters of
the ape kind are guaranteed as well as
mesmerising views of Africa and the
western end of the Costa del Sol. **(1 hr
40 mins)**

Retrace your footsteps to the top of
Charles V's Wall (WP19) then cut right
and make your way down the first sec-
tion of wall. Cutting right then left, drop
down its second section. Cut right at a
brick building then left through a gate
and continue down the third section of
wall to a picnic area. Exit onto Queen's
Road where, just opposite, you'll see a
sign for Ingliss Way. Follow the path up
past an old bunker. 15m before reach-
ing a tarmac road the path cuts left and
threads its way through thick Mediter-
ranean scrub. Crossing a plastic pipe
you reach a fence. Cutting right the
path climbs then arcs left, parallel to
a low wall. Angling left and descending
across two metal pipes you come to a
road. **(2 hrs 15 mins)**

Cut left for 50m then angle right along
Queen's Road. Reaching a Give Way
sign continue straight on towards the
entrance to The Great Seige Tunnels,
angle left down Willis road for 200m
then loop hard right. After 150m an-
gling once more left past The Moorish
Castle you reach twin Give Way signs.
Here angle right and drop down to a
crenellated tower then follow the road
as it angles left. Just as it arcs once
more right past two huge palms cut
left along a One Way street. Reaching
a sign for Castle Steps turn right down
a flight of steps which angle right then
left to a junction. Turning right along En-
gineer's Lane you return to Main Street.
From here retrace your steps to the
start point of the walk. **(2 hrs 50 mins)**

So much more on the coasts

WHEN Guy Hunter-Watts, author of *Walking in Andalucía* and the *Andalucían Coast to Coast Walk*, set out to research a new book of walks just back from the beach he was surprised at how beautiful they turned out to be.
“Not to walk out and discover these paths, gorges, high passes and peaks would be to miss out on one of the best experiences that this multifaceted region of Iberia has to offer,” he says.
The book describes walking trails in seven protected areas from Vejer on the Costa de la Luz to Almunecar on the Costa Tropical. There are oceanside rambles close to Bolonia, trails through the Sierra de Ojen above Marbella and newly marked trails around Manilva, Mijas, Nerja and Frigiliana.
Most walks described are circular while linear walks come with advice on how best to return to your point of departure.
The format of the book sticks to that of Hunter-Watts' other guides with highlighted maps, GPS references and detailed walking notes.
Over the next few issues *the Olive Press* will be serialising some of the best of the walks.

Coastal Walks in Andalucía (ISBN 9-788489-954939) by Guy Hunter-Watts is published by Santana Books (www.santanabooks.com).

A picture paints a thousand words...



unnels

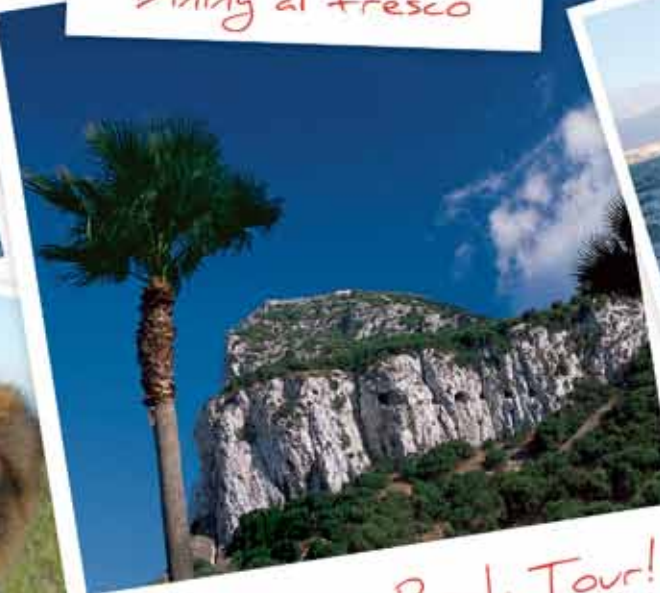
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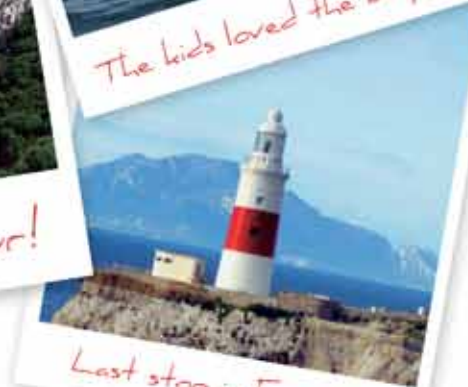
The kids loved the dolphins



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Gibraltar special

WATCH out chaps, for next Wednesday you could be in for a big shock.

As far as romantic folklore goes, February 29 is the only day of the year – or actually four years – when women can pop the question.

And, as that date only comes around on a leap year there will be plenty of women who have been planning the proposal with a fine tooth comb. The tradition is said to herald from Irish saint St Bridget, who complained to St Patrick about women having to wait for so long for a man to propose.

So, being a generous man and lover of romance, it is said that he agreed to give her the one day for women to propose.

However, when she actually proposed to him on that fated day the following year he turned her down, instead offering to give her a present of her choosing (she opted for a silk gown) and ruling that that would be the forfeit for any other men going forward.

So it will either be a very romantic - or expensive day - for anyone deciding to turn down their lover on that day. Should you end up being one of the romantic pairs, then the next question will be where to tie the knot.

Well Gibraltar is, without a doubt, the Las Vegas of southern Europe and thousands of romantics have made the trip south to tie the knot there over the years.

Quite a number of them are famous, few more so than the man behind romantic ballads *She Loves You* and *I Want to Hold Your Hand*.

John Lennon and Japanese wife Yoko Ono both said "I do" on the Rock in 1969, before famously spending a week in bed in Canada. The couple managed to tie the knot in secret. Since then there has been a steady stream of lovebirds taking advantage of the years of history, siege and intrigue, which has given Gibraltar its passionate spirit.



Time to take the leap

The Rock is the perfect venue to take advantage of the leap year, writes Wendy Williams

Each year hundreds of couples fly in from all over the world to get married or simply renew their vows.

But Gibraltar's appeal as a romantic sojourn is not new. During the 1950s Hollywood stars Lawrence Harvey and Margaret Leighton were one of the first high profile couples to marry on the rock.

The wedding photos and almost certainly the weather will be perfect

Many other celebrities, including Sean Connery (twice) and Sir John Mills, followed in their footsteps and most recently Status Quo rocker Rick Parfitt married his missus on the Rock. But there are a few things

that need sorting out in advance, if you wish to get married in Gib.

You will need, perhaps obviously, your passport, as well as your birth certificate, a document of non impediment, proving you are free to marry. Due to popularity it is also advisable to apply early for a suitable date at the Register Office in Gibraltar.

A number of experienced wedding planners can be found to help you through the tricky procedure.

One of the best is Sam Dimond, 28, from All Things Nice, who has her own shop selling all range of wedding dresses, suits and paraphernalia in Ocean Village.

Her company works closely with the register office and other venues around the enclave, including Mons Calpe, one of the most amazing places to get married in Europe, sitting at the top of the rock at 412 metres.

You can also now get married at the Alameda Botanical Gardens, with the Rock as a backdrop, or in Ocean Village.

"There are a number of good places to get married now and the wedding photos and almost certainly the weather will be perfect," says Dimond, whose shop also rents out suits for other occasions.

"We get quite a lot of last minute weddings and June is the busiest month, although May and July are pretty busy too and September is a lovely time."

www.allthingsnicegibraltar.com
www.monscalpesuite.com



HONEYMOON: Rick Parfitt and Lyndsay soon after their marriage in Gib (while above) Lennon and Yoko and the amazing Mons Calpe venue



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'It's all about the people'

JOBSEEKERS have a great new opportunity in Gibraltar with the opening of Zestrill, which specialises in the local market as well as jobs in the UK and other parts of Europe.

Boss Karen Lomas has been recruiting here and on the Costa del Sol for nearly a decade, while the rest of the team are young and dynamic.

Meanwhile First Choice Recruitment has already established itself as a major resource for jobseekers and employers alike in just one year.

Its success is based upon the simple premise that there is more to a person than their CV and more to an employer than their job specification.

"By effectively matching people to a corporate culture, staff retention is increased and employee satisfaction rises - everyone benefits," explains Manager Russell Hood. "Ultimately it's all about people".

World renowned since

By Wendy Williams

Global real estate provider Savills opens a new branch in Gibraltar

IT is one of the most exciting companies to arrive on the Rock in years, and so it is not surprising perhaps

that Gibraltar's First Minister Fabian Picardo is due to appear in person to celebrate the launch.

Savills - with over 200 offices worldwide and a mailing list that includes some of the world's wealthiest

people - has opened the latest addition to its network, Savills Gibraltar at Icom House in Irish Town.

"It is a very exciting addition to Gibraltar's business community," explained Di-

rector Sammy Armstrong. "Some people have suggested that we must have been mad to start another agency here. But the way I look at it, if Gibraltar continues to progress as it has been as a

Low tax is working, it seems

THAT'S the opinion of Mike Nicholls, the chartered accountant plying his trade as managing director of Chesterton in Gibraltar.

"Our clients are initially attracted to Gibraltar either for personal tax reasons or because their employer is in Gibraltar for corporation tax reasons," he explains.

"Indeed, our next client is today probably sitting in the UK, or elsewhere in Europe, looking at where best to base their individual or corporate residency during these turbulent economic times.

"Recently we have dealt with ex-

pats coming into Gibraltar not only from the UK, but Switzerland, Portugal and Mallorca."

Chesterton was established in London in 1805, the same year Nelson was fighting the Battle of Trafalgar just off the coast of Gibraltar.

So it was probably fate that the company opened in Gibraltar at some stage. After four years of trading it is now firmly established as one of the leading agents on the Rock. And it is the tax angle that is driving the Chesterton business.

"Our residential lettings are 30 per cent up on last year, mainly

because the incoming companies are attracting staff from overseas" adds Nicholls. "Currently we have six companies looking for office space of various sizes. We find them an office, look after their staff and hand hold the entire relocation process from tax advice to water connections."

And the migration into the enclave is not just benefiting Gibraltar. "Absolutely not," says Nicholls. "Many clients will choose to live in Spain and we can help to ensure proper compliance with tax laws in both jurisdictions."

Low tax is working, it seems.



UPBEAT: Mike Nicholls of Chesterton



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finance centre, then it is absolutely the right time and I am sure that it will be a success."

She continued: "While there are already over 30 estate agents in Gibraltar, there are only three who really concentrate on the top end of the market."

Savills, originally established in London in 1855, offers a broad range of specialist advisory, management and transactional services. Savills Gibraltar has a large portfolio of properties to purchase or rent and already includes a marina townhouse priced at a cool £4.2 million and a Penthouse currently available for £1.5 million.

Armstrong, who previously managed the office of another agent in Gibraltar, has also identified an exciting new trend in relation to a certain age group who have been snapping up property in Gibraltar.

"Right now we get quite a lot of English people in their late 50s and early 60s moving here, many of whom have sold companies for instance, and are looking for a place in the sun" she said.

"People come to Gibraltar for the tax breaks and the lifestyle. The climate is also great, the language makes it easy to settle in and it is just a two hour flight from home!"



IN SAFE HANDS: Savills' new Gibraltar team

savills.gi

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The Island is undoubtedly Gibraltar's premier address. The Town House that we are offering for sale offers 500m2 of sumptuously appointed accommodation that includes 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, a private pool, internal lift a basement converted into TV/Games room a double garage, air-conditioning. The owner's will enjoy a 20 metre berth and 24 hr security. **£4,200,000**



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Roof for all seasons

By Andrew Forbes

THE long summer days and balmy evenings of summer make outdoor living a pleasure; yet with winter most of us 'batten down the hatches' in preparation for unpredictable or severe weather that can destroy fragile awnings and terrace roofs.

Sadly this means that often we don't enjoy our roof terraces, balconies and outdoor spaces as much as we could at this time of year.

With Vergola, however, it is different. Designed for the harsh weather conditions of Australia, outdoor terraces here in Gibraltar can be useable all year round.

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One Vergola system has been installed with great success on the waterfront at Darwin in the tropical far north of Australia, often the location of severe cyclonic storms.

So here in the Mediterranean, the sturdy construction means that it can easily resist winds year after year without ripping, tearing or flapping, unlike a canvas, fabric or vinyl cover. They are simple to maintain. It is recommended to regularly wash down the roof with a fresh water hose, at least once every month.

As an interesting illustration, The Royal Davui Resort on one of the smaller Fijian islands installed Vergolas to create an indoor-outdoor bathroom experience; and after more than seven years of use the hotel has not experienced any problems due to the marine environment.

If you would like a free onsite consultation, or simply have a question, Vivia Bremer-Goldie is available in Gibraltar and the western Costa del Sol at gibraltar@vergola.es. Also visit www.vergola.es

Vergola opening roofs are designed not just for summer, but also to withstand the storms that batter Gibraltar at this time of year



TOUGH: But Vergola roofs are also stylish

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WHERE TO EAT

A true Melting Pot

OH what a glorious location for lunch! Down on 'undiscovered' Queensway Quay, this is one of the true dining secrets of Gibraltar. A privileged world away from the deluge of tourists on Main Street, The Landings is an elegant and relaxed place to have lunch or supper. You sit at a clean raffia table, stylishly set, overlooking some of the Rock's most up-market yachts, including one - Maghreb V owned by Russia's fifth richest man. Said to be a regular - as is Gibraltar's new Chief Minister Fabian Picardo - he no doubt enjoys the Russian salad, served with a salmonette roulade with pearl caviar. I certainly did. The menu is also appropriately grand, with a superb mix of exciting dishes and plenty of adventurous cuisine. The homemade terrine of duck and foie with pistachio nuts and bacon particularly grabbed me, as did the fresh sushi of the day for just £8.95. But I was most surprised to

Jon Clarke locates the most exciting places to eat on the Rock



ENTICING: Russian salad starter by Rogers (inset)

see a few Jamaican chesnuts making an appearance, including Jerk pork and chicken with Jamaican 'herb festival' cake. It all made perfect sense when chef Patrick Rogers sat down. The friendly Jamaican, who trained for five years under Anton Edelman at

London's Savoy, has cooked around the world and most recently at the Secrets Resort and Spa in Jamaica. He turned up here completely by accident and offered his services to the owner Ann Hudson, who luckily gave him a go. And what a result she has had.

"We make all our food from scratch and I am building up a good team here," he explains.

Another excellent waterfront venue is Ipanema, a Brazilian-style eatery, run by amiable owners Danny Breeze from Kent and wife Marianna from Slovakia.

A great place to order a classic Caipirinha cocktail, it is also extremely popular for its Brazilian style of serving meat via the 'pasador'.

A fun way to be served, the pasadors come around to your table with swords laden



ELEGANT: Fifty-five

WHERE TO STAY

Exciting times at San Roque

IT is definitely the season for massive changes at San Roque Suites hotel. Aside from a massive 'five-star' upgrade of all the hotel's suites, the popular golf hotel, near Sotogrande, has a fabulous new reception area, with a new restaurant and top-of-the-range gym.

Tony Jacklin House, which overlooks the new golf course, is a stunning addition to the plush hotel, where the world's top golfers, including Tiger Woods, Colin Montgomerie and Ernie Els stayed when the Ryder Cup took place at nearby Valderamma.

Best of all, is its new restaurant La Zingara, which opens on March 1, with a prestigious Malaga chef Biaggio Carroccio.

The owner of Malaga's highly rated Reina Zingara restaurant, he will be combining his celebrated fusion cuisine, with a drive to use only the best local products.

"We are positive this will be a huge success," explains manager Conor Collery. "We are spending a lot of money getting the place up to a top standard and this restaurant, in particular, will be a spectacular attraction to the Sotogrande area."

As well as private dining rooms, the new restaurant will be catering for all kinds of celebrations and corporate events and there will be live entertainment.

The new addition has come hand-in-hand with a major

ON THE UP: Conor Collery outside exciting new reception



upgrade of all the hotel's suites, much using celebrated designer Mark Wilman.

"In the past year we have renovated them to a five-star standard, with plasma screens and WiFi," adds Collery, who has worked in the hotel business for many years.

He is also now busy organising a series of sports tours from football and rugby clubs from around the world, including London Irish and the current Hungarian football champions.

It comes after the resort also installed a FIFA-approved football pitch and fabulous new gym and other training

facilities.

"We want this to become a well known sports resort around the world, and with the fantastic two golf courses and facilities we reckon this is one of the best around," he estimates.

"But at the same time this is the perfect place for expats from Marbella to Gibraltar to come and relax in stunning five-star surroundings.

"We have some terrific golf deals at the moment and the suites are some of the best value on the whole coast," he adds.

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MEAT FEAST: A 'pasador' at work and (right) bustling Café Solo

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with tasty dishes. For just £10.95 you have a choice of nine different meats, as much salad as you can eat, pastas and even stroganoff and various vegetarian dishes.

"We get packed at weekends and evenings and best of all around 90 per cent of our business is local," explains Danny, who is a livewire, full of ideas.

"We get a lot of weddings and somehow manage to pack in around 180 people in here... There is certainly no shortage of atmosphere."

Stylemeisters need to head to Fifty-five, which sits in a terrific position at the top of Main Street, near Marks & Spencer.

This beautiful restaurant is easily the most elegant in Gibraltar, with real panache and swagger.

You walk into the restaurant via a copper tunnel and are then struck with a captivating image of Botticelli's Venus at the far end.

Fortunately the food is as interesting as the design with

a menu that changes every month, chosen by Australian chef, Scott Casey.

The set lunch included a very generous portion of chicken liver pate, roasted baby carrot and coriander soup or grilled mushrooms to start.

For main I opted for the delicious baked salmon in a tangy lemon butter served with crushed new potatoes with bacon bits.

There was also an impressive wine list on offer including a fabulous Nuit St George, a Gigondas from the Cote de Rhone and for those that want to splash out Cristal champagne for a cool £300 a bottle.

If it is light bites you are after, or by far the best coffee and cakes, look out for Sacarellos. This charming, former coffee warehouse, has been going since 1817, and is famous for roasting and blending its own coffees.

"I grew into the business," says current manager Patrick Sacarello, whose great-grandfather Bartholomew founded the business in 1888.

"Although I studied in London, I ended up coming back to coffee because it's such a beautiful business," says the 61-year-old.

And with nine nieces and nephews, Patrick is hopeful the Sacarello heredity will

continue going strong. Also extremely popular is the superb located Café Solo on Casemates Square, which has a terrace, almost always full at lunchtimes.

You sit with wonderful views of the Rock and watch the world go by as you eat a great range of dishes and specials of the day.

Italian in style, you will find a mix of salads, pastas and pizzas and all at terrific value.

Finally it is worth checking out Verdi Verdi for healthy home-produced dishes, including fefafel and hummus.

Run by friendly Israeli Idan you can't fail to find what you are after and he serves a mean coffee, in his worlds 'by far the best in Gibraltar'.

Finally, a special mention must certainly go to fantastic Waterfront restaurant, which under the stewardship of Tim Turner has been going for 15 years and is popular with the locals.



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Sweetcorn and Chive Fritters
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Renowned chef of "La Reina Zingara" Biaggio Carrocia will be opening his next restaurant at San Roque Club, on the 1st of March. Open for lunch and dinners offering a Bar and Tapas menu with the distinct twist an a la cart menu with specially created dishes such as: Pan fried artichokes with foie and spicy malaga goat cheese. Lamb Seffradí, a Jewish recipe cooked on a low temperature for 25 hours with a coriander sponge and tomato water tabulé. Pannacotta with white chocolate sauce, vanilla ice-cream and caramelized macadamia nuts.

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Gibraltar special

There is a lot more than just duty free and electrical shops on offer, writes Jon Clarke



VARIETY: Market and (inset) Main St

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HAVE you ever regretted buying a laptop in Spain? Found the operating system impossible to understand and the keys in all the wrong places?

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What's more they are VAT-free

(although there is a small import duty) which makes them cheaper than in Spain. Whether you are looking for a laptop, an iPad or a mobile phone, it's perfect.

Gibraltar has been home to these computer and electronic stores for more than 50 years, and was originally completely duty free when shopping there.

Now only cameras are completely duty free. Laptops and computers pay a small import duty.

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WHEN it comes to shopping, there is an awful lot more to Gibraltar than cheap cigarettes and booze.

Over the last decade there has been a real revolution in the quality of shops to open here.

As well as Marks & Spencer you will find all the best UK high street shops, like Top Shop, Next and Oasis.

There is also a BHS, a Monsoon and even an Early Learning Centre.

You will find the latest Apple products at Newton store, as well as the celebrated Morrison's supermarket that is said to be the most lucrative for the whole chain.



HIGH STREET: A British affair

On top of that there are many luxury brands represented in the enclave, including a Rolex, a Swarovski, as well as a couple of brilliant wine shops, such as Anglo Wine.

Ocularly speaking, Gache Opticians, which celebrated its 180th anniversary last year, offers a fantastic choice and an impeccable, friendly service in a stylishly remodeled shop in Cathedral Square on Main Street.

You will also find a Land Rover dealership, a Mercedes garage and you can even pick up a Lamborghini if you have a few spare pennies.

"It used to be a nightmare doing any shopping here," says Jane Pizarro, an account handler at marketing company Copywrite.

"But slowly things have changed and now you can find many of the top global brands here.

"In the run up to Christmas it is packed with Spanish and expats from all over southern Spain.

"In fact, if you don't go to M&S before the Immaculada holiday on December 8 there is practically nothing left on the shelves."



HANDY: Netgear owner Amit

Town you will find a mix of independent retailers, including the Newton Store, one of only a handful of official Apple stores in the region. Set up by enterprising Frenchman Ludo, who arrived in Gibraltar at the age of 16 on a yacht, it is an excellent place to buy everything

from an iPad to an iMac and the team of English-speaking technicians is second to none.

For all sorts of other laptops make sure to visit Netgear, a large computer store just behind Marks & Spencer.

It always has loads of excellent offers on laptops, which can be picked up from as little as £300.

Owner Amit, an enterprising Indian, educated in the UK, is a friendly fellow, always happy to give some independent advice.

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Part of their training has included having to attend a minimum of 40 hours of therapy themselves.

Contact CCSA on 00350 54030748 for more info

Treading the boards again

THE Gibraltar Drama Festival has been resurrected after a number of years in the doldrums.

The festival, which celebrates its Diamond Jubilee this year, is taking place from March 14 to 17 at Ince's Hall.

A number of companies have been invited to put on productions from around Spain.

These include the International Theatre Studio (I.T.S), which in previous years won awards in numerous categories, including best actor.

This year the Estepona based company will be performing its one act comedy Happy Birthday Me by Simon Williams and directed by Diana King, as well as another short play Getting Along by Charles Mander.

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