Spain 1952



My first visit to Spain was in July 1952. Together with three friends I had just graduated and it was time for adventure. And for us, unlike today's young people, <u>any</u> foreign travel would be adventure. Spain had not yet 'opened up' following the Civil War, WW2, and post-war isolation. So we met at Victoria Station and joined the "Golden Arrow" and then the S.S. Invicta to Calais. Terence Cuneo's 1952 painting "Bon Voyage" pictures the scene at Calais.

We crossed Paris from Gare du Nord to Gare de Lyon and took the overnight train to the Spanish border where the different Spanish rail-gauge enforced a change. On to Barcelona.



Spain meant bull fights. I still have "Ferdinand the Bull", a famous childrens' book given to me in 1937. unbelievably banned as pacifist propaganda by Franco – and Hitler.



So we had to see a bull fight at the Plaza del Toros in Barcelona!

(Bull fighting is now banned in Catalonia, and the Plaza del Toros is now a concert venue)

Barcelona's other sights included Gaudi's partly-built cathedral – construction just restarted in 1952 after a 16 year interruption. Now, 74 years later, construction has <u>just</u> been completed!

A day trip to Montserrat was interesting; for 1000 years pilgrims have visited the Benedictine Monastery perched high up a mountainside. Their journey was eased in 1893 by a rack railway with steam locomotives. We used that – just in time. In 1953 there was an accident which led to the railway's permanent closure. But 50 years later a new electric railway was built and this now carries vast numbers of tourists – and perhaps a few pilgrims still.





From Barcelona we took the train, and then a country bus packed with people – and chickens. That took us to La Escala, then a small fishing village close to the ruins of Greek Ampurias which we wandered around free of charge and more or less alone.

Nowadays La Escala is a sprawling Costa Brava tourist resort. The fishing village we remember is now "the old town".



And the organ-grinder is long-forgotten.

By the time we visited Spain again it had become a major low cost tourist destination providing families with guaranteed sunshine. So just once, in the late 1960s, we took our children, towing our caravan over the Pyrenees to the Cala Gogo camp site on the Costa Brava.

But Spain had far more to offer.