

# Three Months in Spain

## With the Fordson "Tractorama"

By C. M. Biddle

SUNNY Spain—the land of fruit and fiestas, of bulls and bull fighting, and where richness and poverty blend starkly together—was recently the scene for a series of demonstrations organised by the Tractor Group of Ford Motor Co., Ltd. These took the form of 10 two-day demonstrations at the principal Fordson main dealerships around the country.

I was one of the party of four that left the Fordson Mechanised Farming Centre, Boreham, Essex, on August 26th, 1962, for Dover. All the equipment was carried in four 7-ton "Thames Traders" and a 15cwt. van. A colleague drove the spare truck down to Barcelona, where it was taken over by a Spaniard for the rest of the tour. The crossing was made to Dunkirk on the following day, and we travelled just 60 miles to Arras that evening. The route then taken passed south through Reims, Dijon, Lyon, Arles, Perpignan, and, finally, to Barcelona, where we arrived on the sweltering afternoon of August 31st.

There we stayed just a couple of days, preparing for the tour, at the factory of Motor Iberica, S.A., where Ford products are made under licence for the Spanish market. We were to be joined by the Motor Iberica demonstration team, which had been operating already for some time and had made a similar tour the previous year. The "caravan" was

custom of at least a three-hour lunch, we were forced to break it at Vinaroz with only half the distance covered. The next day our hopes of a swift journey were soon dashed, when one of our Spanish friends deftly manoeuvred his truck into the rear of a mule and cart travelling at slightly under one mile per hour. I was driving behind him and saw the unfortunate mule driver landing, complete with his charge, in a nearby ditch, his cargo making an effective "stewed fruit salad" on the main Barcelona-Valencia road. As usual, the *Guardia Civil* (police) took their time to sort out the matter!

So we arrived at Albacete, a town which we unanimously voted as Spain's rival to Crewe. It is right in the middle of the "stick" country, miles from anywhere, and certainly has no tourist claims. However, it was *feria* week; a time which everyone regards as an excuse to shut shop and go gay; drinking as much as possible and sleeping as little as possible.

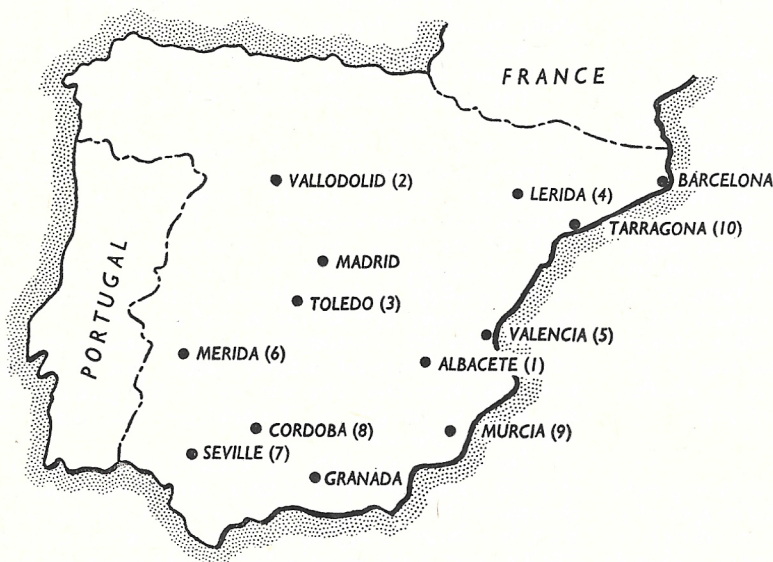
Our demonstration field was a stubble about a mile out of town. The area round Albacete is very fertile and many cereals are grown. At this time the weather decided to perk up a little, and rose to over 100 deg. Fah. Four pale-faced Englishmen probably owe their survival to *Coca-Cola*! The demonstration was set for September 10th and 11th, giving us three days to set up exhibits and prepare the equipment.

For about a week before the event there was a great advertising campaign on the local radio, "Tractorama" being the name given to our series of demonstrations. To say that September 10th dawned bright and clear would be an understatement; it was scorching plus. After demonstrations in the morning, we were all issued with tickets and bundled off to a bull fight in the afternoon.

The evening began with the heats of a tractor-driving contest under the floodlights which were part of our mobile equipment, and every farmer with a Fordson tractor could enter. A course was marked out with bales, and each heat consisted of four tractors weaving in and out, collecting penalties if they touched a bale. It was surprising that, throughout the whole tour, only one person was slightly injured



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now supplemented by 10 of their trucks carrying tractors and implements, so making up a fleet of 15 vehicles.

By September 5th, we were ready to depart for the first demonstration at Albacete, some 300 miles south. We had hoped to make the journey in one day, but, due to a late start and to the Spanish



(when a driver was going too fast and drove into the crowd), for this test certainly looked dangerous when the tractors were in full flight! However, the prizes offered were excellent, and, apart from cups and cash for the first three drivers, the winning owner was awarded a trip to Smithfield.

The next day began with a grand parade of tractors through the town. Over 80 tractors participated, preceded by the local band blowing their hearts out. Also taking part was our radio-controlled "Super Dexta," which was to prove by far the most popular part of the equipment. This was withdrawn during the parade, however, as it "ran amok"—hardly surprising as the band were marching between the operator and the tractor, so that signals reaching the tractor's aerial from the control box must have been rather confused.

#### SUDDEN END

The parade ended when the Spanish organiser was run in by the police for causing a disturbance and holding a procession without permission!

After the usual long lunch, the demonstrations were resumed and the final of the driving contest held, which entailed backing a 4-wheeled trailer. Evening came, and the event concluded with a monster firework display, consisting of more loud explosions than pretty lights. Our first demonstration was over, everything hauled down, and we set off for Valladolid, 250 miles north-west.

Our route led through Madrid and over the Guadarrama mountain range, climbing to over 6,000ft. Needless to say, keeping a convoy of 15 trucks together over such roads is well-nigh impossible. The Spaniards soon found their older trucks blowing up, while we all arrived at the top together.

Valladolid is a large market town, very pleasant and not so hot as the southern towns. The demonstration was on the Sunday and Monday, and coincided with the local trade and agricultural show.

Our next demonstration site, near Toledo, on September 22nd and 23rd, was about three miles out of town on the Madrid road, and on the edge of a pine forest. I think we were the rather unwelcome guests of the sheep who, every morning and evening, ventured to the well in the middle of the field. The grand parade of 60 tractors was the first item; it included a demonstration of the radio-controlled tractor in the main square, much to the amazement of the onlookers. Tractors and implements were shown in the afternoon. As a complete reversal of farming attitudes in this country, the Spanish farmer is concerned with traction whilst ploughing, and is not at all troubled about working in wet conditions. He assumes that the tractor will cope with mud, etc., but is anxious as to whether it will pull his disc plough in rock-hard soil.

#### QUITE A BARBECUE

On the Saturday afternoon a bull fight was held on the site, in a ring that had been built specially. Everyone stood on tractors round the perimeter to watch—except me. I was up a 40ft. tower taking a film—that's my story! A bull-calf of 5cwt. (usual weight at a bull fight is half a ton) was to be killed and roasted over a spit, to be devoured later.

Our next drive, to Lerida, was to be the longest in one day that we did, and was on the day that the terrible floods occurred in Barcelona. We covered 360 miles, mostly through almost tropical rainstorms. Lerida is a small market town just 80 miles

west of Barcelona. Our stay there was particularly enjoyable because the local dealer owns the best hotel in town! There was some doubt as to whether this demonstration would take place after the recent heavy rain, but it went on as planned.

Next stop was Valencia, the third largest city in Spain, a great fruit-growing area and large port. Here our demonstration site was right in the town on the dried-up bed of the River Turia. Fortunately, this area had not been affected by the recent rain.

So on to our longest journey of all, to Merida, a town near the Portuguese border, about 475 miles from Valencia. Merida is a small town not unlike Toledo, with its maze of small streets. Famous for its architecture, it boasts fine examples of Roman work especially in its bridge and amphitheatre. Once again, rain threatened to ruin the event, but we got through the first day before the heavens opened: the second day's events were cancelled.

We then travelled to our next venue, Seville, one of Spain's most famous cities, and celebrated for its Flamenco singing and dancing, bull fighting, and its Holy Week *feria*. The Hotel Alfonso XIII, or Andalucian Palace, was to be our home for the week—a magnificent establishment having been once a Moorish palace. The demonstration was held in the grounds of the local agricultural college, and we had to use the football pitch as the surrounding ground was too wet.

#### LAST MINUTE "PERFORMANCE"

From Seville, we travelled 80 miles west to Cordoba for the eighth demonstration. The highlight of our stay was a showing of the radio-controlled tractor in the bull ring before a bull fight on the Sunday. After the dealer had arranged the details, there was an objection from the organisers of the bull fight (there is more protocol at a bull fight than there is in the Long Room at Lords). However, they relented at the eleventh hour—we had arrived at the arena minus the tractor—and we "performed" before some 3,000 people, let it be said, much to the amazement and perhaps irritation of the matadors.

The rather uninteresting town of Murica was next on our list. Again, we broke our journey, and stayed at one of the world's most beautiful cities, Granada; a city set at the foot of the Sierra Nevada—Europe's second highest mountain range. At Murica, the demonstration was held on the outskirts of the town and the tractor driving contest in a *cul-de-sac*. As there was no mains electricity, we had to light 16 street lamps from our generator for the evening demonstration and cabaret.

For the final demonstration, we moved north to Tarragona, a popular holiday resort just 80 miles south of Barcelona. The site was in the grounds of the local University of Technology, and only 50 yards from the sea.

On November 12th we packed the equipment into the trucks for the last time, and moved back to Barcelona. In a couple of days, we were on our way back and experiencing heavy snow and ice in central France. Just three months had passed since we left England, when we arrived back at Boreham House; three months and over 5,000 miles.

For myself, now returning to A. Brewer & Co., Ltd., Wilton, it was an unforgettable trip, which, together with the large-scale Fordson demonstrations in which I participated last year, has provided me with valuable experience in many different aspects of mechanised agriculture.