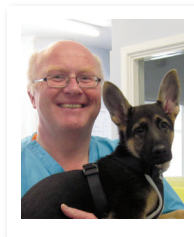


Catatonia in Catalonia

By retired local vet Richard Huddart MRCVS



As the summer months roll by, events of Eastertime seem a distant memory....

"What's going on? How can a whole country have a power cut?" were the questions on our lips one sunny Monday afternoon.

It was our "day off" following the Catalanian International Choir Festival, held in three towns near Barcelona. I was a lucky member of the **Cranmer**

Company of Singers who were providing the British contribution to the festival.

Led by our indefatigable musical director Deborah Davies and with our accompanist, the organist Elizabeth Harwood, about thirty choristers departed the safety of our spiritual home around Whatton. Some were joined by family members as we converged on our hotel in Malgrat de Mar on the Costa Brava. We spent the subsequent few days singing in three different church venues, alongside choirs from France, Hungary and Greece. In addition, some local Catalan ensembles added to the variety of musical styles and languages.

The three-day festival was a great success. What a peculiar spectacle we made as our tribe of purple-robed singers boarded the tourist train to trundle through the towns on our way to perform! Locals were "treated" to some less melodious impromptu singing of Australian and other folk songs as we passed!

Each of the churches was a beautiful venue, notwithstanding the variable acoustics – six choirs performed at each concert and all joined together for an uplifting unrehearsed rendition of a Catalanian "Ave Maria" to conclude the festivities.

As for the Cranmer Singers, we were proud to have been the only choir to perform a completely



different music list on each occasion.

During the festival there was time for us to enjoy excursions to Barcelona, Girona and other local highlights. It was then that I and two other intrepid singers found ourselves stranded about 15 miles from our hotel as the devastating power outage struck, which switched off the electricity for Spain and Portugal. We were stuck outside the Botanical Gardens in

Blanes, but eventually managed to hop onto a tourist train and find a taxi back to the hotel.

Others were not so lucky, some being marooned much further away. We became quickly aware of our reliance on power when the hotel lighting, cooking and refrigeration disappeared, along with the internet.

Most conversations included the following:

"Will the power come back on?"

"What could have caused all this?"

"Will the airport be open tomorrow?"

"Will there be food?"

"Will the beer go warm?"

"I'm down to 5% - any charge left on your phone?"

Some hardy choristers held an impromptu folk night in the darkness, helped along by star ukulele player William. This was probably the trigger for the authorities to restore the power supply, which we welcomed later that night! The Spanish beer did not become warm after all - and our return journeys, broadly speaking, were only minimally delayed.

A wonderful trip, but good to be home.

Are you a singer? See the website www.cranmersingers.co.uk or drop Deborah a line at cranmercompany@googlemail.com