

Postscript of the 85th commemorative events at Caerleon

By Carmen Kilner

Now that the dust has settled after the excitement of the Caerleon events, it is perhaps the time to tie up a few loose ends.

Over 200 people in total attended the events of the three day commemoration, most of whom were new or relatively so to the history of the Basque children in Caerleon, so I think we have contributed significantly to the local knowledge of their own heritage, and made many new friends.

There is a full, illustrated report by Christopher Evans available on the website, but there are a few more things that I would like to add. There is some wonderful video footage that we want to show you all, so Christopher Evans has set up a YouTube Channel for us, where you can see some of the talks, dancing, music and poetry. You can view it here:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UctIAouzUs5LQkpGCnHH9ROw>

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Labour) a long time supporter of ours, had this to say in the House of Lords on July 15th. The transcript is given here:

Baroness Wilcox of Newport (Lab)

My Lords, I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this debate but, before I begin, I beg leave from your Lordships to mention another aspect of heritage that I had the great pleasure of engaging in yesterday evening, back home in Newport—in Caerleon in fact. The organisation BCA'37, run entirely by volunteers, ensures that the history of the Basque child refugees who came to Britain in 1937 during the Spanish Civil War is recorded and preserved. Caerleon has strong links to the organisation, as 30 children were placed in Pendragon House.

We have a series of events this week, with people from the Basque country joining us in south Wales to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the people of the UK, with no British Government support, welcoming 4,000 children—just one boatload—into the country. They were subsequently supported by volunteers and voluntary funds, and I am proudly wearing the badge that all the children wore as they came into the country. This exemplifies how volunteers are so important to our society. I was privileged to be part of that event last night, with colleagues from the Welsh Government and our Westminster representatives.

Extract from: [https://hansard.parliament.uk//Lords/2022-07-15/debates/50EA2614-2E57-40D7-9D97-B5D71275261A/HeritageRailwaysAndTramways\(VoluntaryWork\)Bill\(HL\)#contribution-28A3B08C-1442-4467-8160-169502395D75](https://hansard.parliament.uk//Lords/2022-07-15/debates/50EA2614-2E57-40D7-9D97-B5D71275261A/HeritageRailwaysAndTramways(VoluntaryWork)Bill(HL)#contribution-28A3B08C-1442-4467-8160-169502395D75)

We have had a great feedback at all levels with calls to be involved in future events and projects and even requests to 'do it again next year!'

I am pleased that we now have the notes for the three talks on the history of the Basque children.

First to speak was Adrian Bell covering the situation in Bilbao- and the trip to Southampton, then Hywell Davis spoke about the children in the various colonies in Wales and how they were supported, and thirdly Gail Giles spoke about the amazing Josefina Alvarez, her life and wonderful contribution to the Basque children in Caerleon. The notes are available here:

Adrian Bell: <http://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/abnotes>

Hywel Davies: <http://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/hywelnotes>

Gail Giles: <http://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/josefinasstory>

All those attending were given copies of the programme, leaflets about the UK and Euskadi Associations, a replica of a hexagons and a two-flag pin of Wales and Euskadi.



I haven't mentioned the five new pull-up display banners that were created for this and, hopefully, other Welsh events. They have a dramatic new design by Dolores Phelps, and the beautifully written texts are by Hywel Davies.

Hywel also wrote a piece about the links and similarities between the two nations of Euskadi and Cymru which he read at the inaugural dinner and I am presenting at the end of this article.

One of the five new Welsh banners in the marquee at The Priory Hotel, Caerleon

The event was covered by EITB, Basque television, and can be seen in Basque and Spanish on the twitter link here:

https://twitter.com/basquechildrene/status/1554143649176469504?s=21&t=jPE1OdVKNikMw_3f_JUi-w

Euskadi and Cymru

*Two ancient tribes - the Basques and Welsh
Maybe, it was said, even the same race
Mythical peoples, with remarkable languages
Preserving rich cultures and a passion for music and poetry
Devout and egalitarian
Surviving in the shadow of more populous neighbours
Under banners of red, white and green
Euskadi and Cymru
Places of mountains, green valleys and rugged shorelines
But, also of sweating, sulphurous cities
Bilbao with its twin in Cardiff
Two peoples dependent on a daily exchange
Basque iron ore for Welsh coking coal
In the docks, in the steel town of Dowlais and in the Swansea coalfields
A huddle of Hispanic communities
The orphans of war embraced by brothers of the blood.*

Hywel Davies