

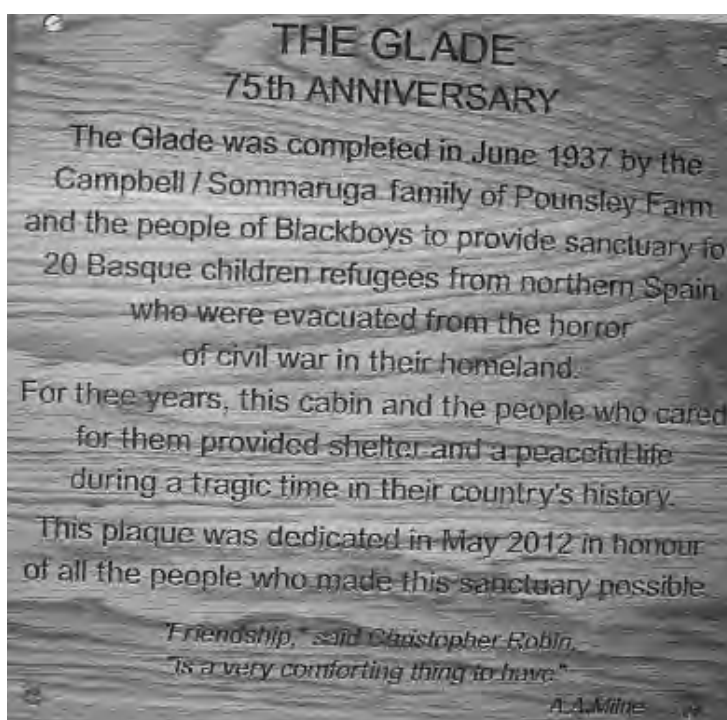
Plaque unveiled at Blackboys

On 16 May 2012, a wooden plaque was unveiled at the Glade, Blackboys, near Uckfield in East Sussex. Blackboys was one of the hundred or so colonies in Britain that housed the Basque children refugees in 1937 and the only one to have been specially built to accommodate them. It was built by the Campbell-Sommaruga family who lived at nearby Pounsley Farm. It is now used as a youth hostel.

The erection of the plaque was organised by Mike Anderson of the IBMT who lives locally and who, realising that two former Basque "children" residents of Blackboys would be in Britain to attend the 75th Anniversary commemorative event at Southampton University in May, thought it appropriate to take advantage of their visit to Britain (their first since leaving Blackboys in the late 1930s) to set up a plaque as he wanted visitors to the youth hostel and the local people "to know about this important piece of history".

Miren and Moisés Alonso had flown in from Michigan the previous week. They first met as children of 10 and 11 when they were both sent to Blackboys. After the war, Miren was repatriated, but Moisés could not go back as his mother had died, and when Blackboys closed he was sent to a Barnardo's home. He was unhappy there and ran away, ending up living on the streets of London. After meeting some Spanish fishermen, he became a seaman and ended up in New York. He started writing to Miren and the couple fell in love. He fetched her from Spain and they married and raised a family in America. They brought their two daughters and a granddaughter to Great Britain for the anniversary events.

Miren unveiled the simple wooden plaque and said of Blackboys: "I felt it was such a happy place. Returning is like a dream come true."



The wooden plaque at the Blackboys colony. 'The Glade' is a modern name; during the time it was a colony it was always called simply 'Blackboys'.



The Glade, Blackboys



Moisés Moragrega Alonso (right) and his wife Miren