



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

www.spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org

No.4

October 2005

News

Bradford rediscovered

by Ludi Simpson

A trawl through back copies of the Bradford local newspaper, the Telegraph and Argus, has uncovered information about the local colony for Basque children. The children were housed rent-free in the unused Dr Barnardo's home on Manningham Lane from September 1937 to the summer of 1939. Two of the children were financially adopted by the newspaper's Youth Club: this ensured a positive reporting of the colony's activities and encouraged other local organisations to support all of the children.

The newspaper's coverage probably reflects local experiences elsewhere; it had daily coverage of the civil war during the spring and summer months of 1937, fearful and sensationalised coverage of troubles at some of the early colonies over the summer, and more balanced and interested reporting once a local colony was established. The West Yorkshire Archive turned up other mentions of local support, in school records and Trades Council minutes.

Some of the information was used to add boards to the Basque Children of '37: UK exhibition on both the Bradford and the nearby, larger and better-known colony at Keighley. Bradford Immigration and Asylum Support and Advice Network gave a grant of £150 to help fund the exhibition and book it in Bradford as part of Bradford Refugee Week. Refugee Week is a national annual week of events, on 20-26 June this year, sponsored by the Refugee Council with support from Refugee Action and the UN Refugee Agency UNHCR and others.

This year, Refugee Week happened to coincide with the Bradford Festival: the Library Services invited Adrian Bell to speak on his book "Only Three Months" at a successful meeting in a local library.

The research in Bradford took perhaps 30 hours to complete, spread over three months. It wasn't difficult to gain access to microfilm of the newspaper: the local library and archive services were very helpful. A 4-page summary of the research is available and was widely distributed during the exhibition's stay in



There was a full house for the unveiling of a Blue Plaque in Cambridge. See back page for full story.

Bradford. The exhibition was covered by two feature articles in the Telegraph and Argus, still a daily paper. Unfortunately, the hope of finding further records and memories from the families of those involved is as yet unfulfilled. Those colonies that were not well "archived" at the time are unfortunately difficult to "resurrect" as history. Nevertheless, a trawl of local newspapers and archives could perhaps be repeated in other towns, by people who are interested or by those wanting to do school or university projects.

Reunion at Eastleigh

by Jennifer Gardner

On 5 July, a cold and rainy day, I left Bognor Regis with my father Jack Puntis, bound for Eastleigh Library. I had a powerful inner certainty that in spite of the weather and Jack's frailty, we just had to get to the opening of the photographic exhibition recalling the experiences of the Basque Children. I had grown up with stories of the time my father was a volunteer at Stoneham; how he had been listening to the radio at home in Southampton, hearing the news about the bombing of Guernica and the plight of the Spanish children arriving in England. He had immediately ridden his bicycle to the camp to offer his assistance. He was 17 years old.

Over the following months he helped on a regular basis in the camp, getting to know many

of the children. He was fortunate to have a camera and took many photographs. He has treasured these photographs for 70 years and would get them out from time to time to reminisce, regretting that he did not know what had happened to the children he had spent time with all those years ago. As a family, we often wished we could do something to help him find anyone who had been in the camp; this period of his life had obviously meant so much to him.

Eventually, through the Internet, we found the Basque Children of '37 Association website.

Imagine the tremendous feeling of excitement when a picture of the entrance to the camp appeared on the screen showing a tall young man walking in. Yes! It was Jack!

Thanks to contact with Natalia Benjamin, we were able to find out more, and although illness has prevented Jack from attending other events, I was determined that nothing was going to prevent us from attending when Natalia told us about the photographic exhibition at Eastleigh Library.

I wondered what to expect. Would there be anyone there? Would Jack be disappointed? Would anyone be interested in his memories? I had made a label for his jacket that read "Stoneham camp volunteer" so that people would know what his role had been.

We arrived to a small gathering of people looking at photographs in a book. There were three Spanish people who had been at Stoneham and the daughter of a fourth person. It was hard to manoeuvre Jack's wheelchair near



From the Secretary

Steve Bowles' new film "The Guernica Children", which was broadcast on 24 April to coincide with the date of the bombing of Guernica, was the fulfilment of a dream for me. It is a powerful rendering of the *niños*' story, combining personal reminiscence, film footage from the time and present day representations. It received excellent reviews, being described by "The Times" as "an outstanding film"; it certainly brought the story of the *niños vascos* to a wider audience. A version was made for BBC Wales, and there is a shorter one for BBC South, showing on 26 September. As the film originally came out on BBC4, the digital channel, some of you may not have been able to see it, so we have made some copies on video that you can buy from me.

A blue plaque was unveiled in Cambridge in May, the third plaque that the Association has promoted. The day was hot and sunny and Cambridge was looking at its best. There were about 75 guests, including 16 *niños* and many members of the Association. Yet another blue plaque, you may say. But in fact, the plaques have a far wider social function than merely recording the *niños*' stay in a particular colony. They are also a means of thanking British volunteers for their unswerving dedication in looking after the children. Furthermore, the ceremonies are inevitably happy occasions, bringing together, not only the *niños* themselves, but also the descendants of those who were involved in some way or another in the children's care. For example, in Cambridge, there were representatives from six or seven families who helped and befriended the *niños*. A further function of the blue plaque ceremony is the dissemination of information – through the press coverage we get on these occasions, the story of the *niños* becomes more widely known. So although it can be very hard work preparing for these ceremonies (the Cambridge event took over a year of negotiation and planning), it is very worthwhile.

We are grateful to the Master of Jesus College for letting us use the Upper Room in the college at no charge, and we would also like to express our thanks to the Basque government for funding the plaque and ceremony.

The same social function evinced by the blue plaque ceremony was evident in the short ceremony that opened the exhibition at Eastleigh Library in July, when *niños* were reunited after such a long time with helper Jack Puntis, a schoolboy of 17 in 1937. Both the events had a similar

cathartic effect: you can read the poignant account of the Eastleigh reunion in the Newsletter.

During recent months, a great deal of work has gone into producing more display boards of photographs and newspaper reports, especially in connection with the events at Cambridge and for an exhibition at Bradford during Refugee Week at the end of June. The Association loans out these display boards: several educational establishments have recently approached us with a view of holding an exhibition.

The author Adrian Bell, who is known to many of you, delighted us with his talk in June at the Marx Memorial Library on "The Basque Children and the British Government", a shorter version of which will appear in the next Newsletter. He also gave a talk at Bradford.

We welcome the Spanish government's initiative to pay a decent pension to the *niños* who left Spain during the civil war. Although it will not be applicable to many, if any, of those *niños* who live in the UK, nevertheless, it will make a great deal of difference to those *niños* living in Latin America or Russia who have great difficulty in surviving, as the pensions in some of those countries are totally inadequate.

What is becoming increasingly evident in recent months from emails and phone calls I receive, is that not only do the children and relatives of the *niños* want to know more about their parents'/grandparents' lives, but also members of the general public. This upsurge of interest has been matched by an ever-growing number of researchers in the field. This is just one of the justifications for starting up the Association, especially so that the *niños*' story should not be consigned to oblivion. To this end, we have produced a bibliography of books and articles for family members, potential researchers and other interested parties. It is, however, never very far from my mind that these *niños* were deprived of a normal childhood with their parents and family. Some 4 000 children came to Britain. But in all, some 30 000 children were evacuated from Spain. It is an awesome figure. Their courage and determination are equal to none.

In closing, I want to remind you that in 2007 it will be the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the *niños* in Britain. Let us have some suggestions as how best to mark this event!

iAgur!

Natalia Benjamin

Natalia Benjamin

to the table to join in and I felt anxious.

Steve Bowles, whose excellent and powerful documentary "The Guernica Children" was recently shown on BBC television, indicated that the time had come to begin the opening of the exhibition and gave a short talk. We sat in rows and Dad was in the front. When Steve handed the scissors to Josefina to cut the ribbon, I had expected that she would just declare the exhibition open – but NO! She lay the scissors down on the table behind her. Holding her arms out, she took a few paces towards Jack and said with such feeling: "All of my life I have wanted to meet someone who helped me when I was a child. I want to thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you did for us, as I would like to thank all the English people who were there." She put her arms round him and hugged him and was joined by Carmen and Serafin shaking his hand and thanking him. This was an incredible and magical moment that will remain with me for the rest of my life. All these years I had thought that if only Jack could meet someone from Stoneham Camp, he might have some feeling of resolution and completion. What I had not understood until now was that those who had been children in the camp needed that too! I feel privileged to have witnessed this meeting. I was awed too by the fact that this was a very special opportunity as there will not be too many people left who were camp volunteers, because at 17 Jack was probably one of the youngest volunteers and he is now 86. It was a chance in a lifetime. Thank you Josefina, Carmen and Serafin for remembering even though you were so young at the time and for the loving and gracious way you greeted Jack. Thank goodness we were able to get to Eastleigh on that very special day. Little did we know the opportunity it would provide for this very important and poignant reunion.

So the ribbon was cut and when we could



Josefina Stubbs cutting the ribbon to open the Eastleigh exhibition.

eventually bear to tear ourselves away from wonderful conversations, we walked around and looked at the photographs, which were indeed extremely interesting.

Josefina Stubbs (Antolin) writes...

In July of this year, I went to the exhibition put on by the Association at Eastleigh Library. I met a lady called Carmen Fernández Learra there. She was one of the many children who went to the Salvation Army home in Brixton. I too was one of those children. We started remembering things that happened there. Although she was in the same dormitory, I didn't know Carmen at the time. I asked her if she remembered the girl who used to sleepwalk every night – I used to be so frightened of her. Carmen looked at me as if she had seen a ghost, and could not speak for a while. Then she said: "I am that girl." I just couldn't believe it. How strange after 68 years...

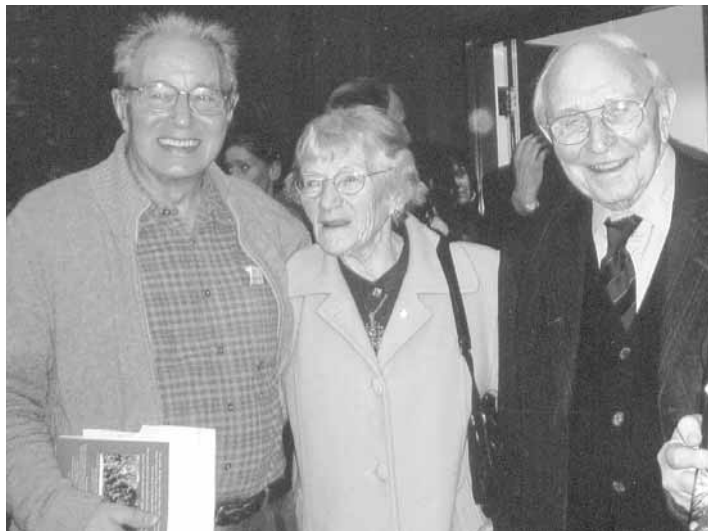
El Exilio de los Niños



After a year and a half travelling to nine Spanish cities (Bilbao, Barcelona, Salamanca, Sevilla, Badajoz, Valencia, Gijón, La Coruña and Zaragoza), this exhibition finally terminated in

Madrid at the Círculo de Bellas Artes. Guest of honour was the Deputy Prime Minister of the Spanish Government, María Teresa Fernández de la Vega. The Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, represented the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK at the inaugural ceremony on 23 May and was interviewed live on Radio España. There were so many guests that it was impossible to see the exhibition properly, so she went back two days later, when there was a steady trickle of visitors, many of whom were visibly moved and were wiping away tears.

Thousands of children had to abandon Spain to escape from the bombings, hunger and famine. The war tore their world into 100 pieces, robbing them of their childhood and making them grow up too quickly in an unknown country. Like them, thousands of children nowadays live in refugee camps and call a tent their home. Because of the relevance today of the subject matter and its implicit message, the exhibition sought to evoke the experiences that the children had of the evil wrought by the civil war and the kindness shown to them by the receiving countries. It made one reflect on the whole refugee question and was a means of drawing the attention of the present generation to the plight of the children in exile. It was also a historical recognition to those men and women who lived through the drama of forced expatriation during their childhood and



Among those at the Imperial War Museum, London, for the lecture on Franco's crimes were Jack Jones (right), President of the International Brigade Memorial Trust, with niño Herminio Martínez and Cora Portillo.

adolescence.

You can visit the exhibition on the web at [www.ugt.es/fflc/invitamadrid.htm].

in the afternoon, after which there was music and dancing!

Anniversary lunch

The annual lunch of the *niños*, ably organised by Helvecia Hidalgo and Octavio Casado, took place on 22 May at the Prado Restaurant in Fulham. The Association had brought along some ten display boards showing photos and newspaper articles about various colonies which were the object of great interest.

There were 67 guests and among those present this year were Alfredo Ruiz ("el Chato") and his wife, from Leicester, who had not been to the event for many years, and also Tere Irutia and Joseba Iriondo, who had come from Bilbao. Unfortunately, Teodora Bueno, who was going to have come with her son from south-west France and was so looking forward to seeing the *niños* from Langham, was unable to come as she had fallen ill a few days previously. In her speech, Helvecia recalled the most pleasurable day that many had spent in Cambridge the previous week on the occasion of the unveiling of a blue plaque on one of the houses where the *niños* had stayed. She also told us that Ana María Gonzalez, Carmen Kilner's mother, had celebrated her 90th birthday recently.

The lunch was convivial and went on until late



Niños in fine voice at the lunch.

Franco's crimes

by Colin Carritt

The Basque Children of '37:UK were well represented on Saturday 12th March at the fourth annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture of the International Brigade Memorial Trust in London. The setting was the prestigious Imperial War Museum and the speaker, the equally renowned historian and expert on the Spanish conflict, Professor Paul Preston, who took as his theme "The Crimes of Franco".

As he explained, there is growing concern in Spain, and indeed, internationally, to uncover the truth of the "disappeared" in Spain during the civil war and during Franco's reign of terror afterwards.

The Association for the Recovery of Historic Memory has been the organisation behind the drive to uncover the truth, and it began with the discovery of mass graves in Toledo. 720 or more bodies were found more than sixty years after the disappearance of the people concerned. There followed more grizzly discoveries in Extremadura, Catalonia and across the country.

In Badajoz, 4,000 innocent victims were slaughtered in a week, 2,000 of them having been herded into the bull ring, shot, and their bodies piled into the local cemetery where they were doused in petrol and set on fire.

The cover-up of Franco's crimes has been of immense proportions and painstakingly thorough. The entire history of the period was rewritten by the victors, trade unions were suppressed, and archives plundered and sorted to dispose of anything of an incriminating nature. The state's crackdown on the employment of anyone with Republican sympathies ensured the absolute maintenance of the Nationalist version of events throughout the Franco period.

The infamous Valle de los Caídos is an



TV documentary

'The Guernica Children' shown on BBC4

Some of you may have seen the information on our website and in our Newsletter about the documentary film project, "The Guernica Children".

Steve Bowles – the director/producer – had previously directed a film for Discovery Latin America and Basque Television – which told the more general story of the children who were evacuated from Spain during the civil war. His new project aimed to tell the story of the four thousand Basque children who were brought to Britain.

Steve had been trying to persuade the TV commissioners over the merits of the project for more than four years. After a dozen rejections, BBC4 finally commissioned the film at the beginning of December 2004, with BBC Wales coming on-board on the basis of having a different version of the film for BBC2W.

"One of the greatest challenges was always going to be telling a coherent story," said Steve. "With 4,000 children there were inevitably going to be 4,000 different stories and condensing that to tell one compelling story was always going to be hard."

Adrian Bell – author of "Only for Three Months" – kindly agreed to make his own research on the story available to Steve and provided the expert interview which is the back-bone of the film. Interviews with the "children" were conducted in Spain and in Britain and archive was sourced from both countries.

"We had some tremendous luck with the archive footage" explained Steve. "At the beginning of January a roll of film came to light at the Southampton City archives. A cook at the big hotel adjacent to the docks was, apparently, an amateur cameraman and would regularly wander round the docks taking cine film of the boats coming and going. And guess what...? he was in the docks when *La Habana* docked at Southampton!"

As if one piece of luck wasn't enough, Manuel Moreno, President of the Basque Children of '37 Association, discovered another role of film shot at the Cambridge colony. The film had been

taken by a Mr Brunney – a professional cameraman – who helped at the Cambridge colony. His son, John Brunney, was delighted that the film would be used as a tribute to his father's work.

At the heart of the story is the conflict between the British Government, who did not want the children here, and the remarkable grass-roots movement that cared for them. The "children" who eventually returned to Spain invariably remember their stay in Britain with great fondness.

Jesus Urbina who returned in 1940, touchingly concludes his contribution by saying how grateful he is for the way he was looked after. The children who remained in Britain for a life-time are also grateful for the way they were cared for but, somehow, their experience is tinged with sadness for what was lost.

The 40-minute BBC4 version of the film was finally broadcast on 24 April. The 30-minute BBC Wales version was shown two days later. Both channels had been keen to screen the film to commemorate the bombing of Guernica.

Steve's persistence with the idea has proven to be well-founded. 140,000 people watched the film on BBC4 – a much higher rating than they would normally expect. Perhaps the Spanish Civil War and the Basque children are not so forgotten after all.

● *"The Guernica Children" is sure to be repeated. Try to keep an eye on your TV listings for the next showing. Alternatively we have copies of the film here which you can buy for £15.*

Postscript

What they said about the film: "es muy interesante y merece ser visto"; "a powerful documentary"; "this amazing new story"; "an extraordinary film". The film "The Guernica Children" scored a big hit for the BBC as it was watched by 140,000 people on its first showing, an exceptionally high number for a documentary carried on a digital platform. The Radio Times selected the documentary as one of its "Choices of the Day".

▶ example of Franco's version of history. It is presented as a monument to all who fell in the civil war, and yet it was constructed with the slave labour of Republican prisoners, many of whom died as a result of the dangerous and inhumane conditions. Only a handful of token Republican victims are included in the memorials there.

All in all, it is estimated that over 180,000 non-combatants were murdered by Franco's forces. When trials were held, they were kangaroo courts of the worst kind, with defendants not allowed to hear the charges against them, no consultation with legal counsel permitted, and only junior lawyers allowed to represent the accused. Franco always had the last word when it came to commutation of death sentences. He did not commute a single one, and sometimes specified a particularly barbaric form of execution, such as garroting.

It was an unsettling lecture: the people of Spain need to know the truth in order to come to terms with what happened and to ensure that such events are never repeated.

Republicans remembered

by Manuel Moreno

She waved. I returned the gesture. Thrice she did wave and thrice I replied in similar fashion. She was being driven in a large Bentley, I walking with companions. We were both on the island of Jersey, in St Helier on 9 May, she to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Liberation of the Channel Islands from German occupation and we to remember all those who were there as slave labourers. It was a sunny day and many people attended both functions, more than ever before. Hers was a celebratory occasion, a victory over the oppressor, with thousands turning up, waving union jacks in the centre of the town; ours was a large gathering of people at the cemetery beside the graves above the town.

We were there to not forget all those thousands of foreign slave labourers who were used by the Todt organisation of the German army to construct the Atlantic Wall, the underground hospitals and other sites on the islands, which can still be seen and visited today. They were mainly from the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, Poland, Morocco, Algeria, France and Spain. They worked long hours in appalling conditions, were given little to eat and were badly treated: many died as a result.

Our growing flock of over 100 men, women and children gathered around the particular grave as they had done over the years – to remember them, the suffering they endured, the inhumanity of man and the message that this should not be tolerated, now or ever again. We all from different parts stood together to grow, learn, to educate and to call out.



Memorial in the Channel Islands.

Gary Font, the son of a Spanish Republican worker on the island, organised and lead the proceedings with the laying of over 30 wreaths from Russian, Polish, French and Jersey official government representatives, organisations like Amnesty International and the International Brigade Memorial Trust, religious bodies representing Christians, Jews and, for the first time, a woman from the Muslim community, and then from friends and families. Many countries and bodies still have to a lot to recognise and learn. We will teach them.

The grave was an abundance of colour, of all colours, all bright under the sun. Flags were lowered, a minute's silence respected and Bob Le Seur, from the local A1, gave a moving speech reminding us that every day horrors still persist and we must work to eradicate them. Amongst the flags, amongst the plaques on the graves, the three colours of the Spanish flag shone proudly.

Our little band, our growing band, was there to remember the Spanish Republicans who were amongst those men: Gary and many other Spanish descendants from the islands, Fernando de la Torre, always there with the republican flag, Rob Smith from the IBMT and family, and myself, there again to remember the tragedy of the Republicans and the Republic, the loss of a nation left by the Allies in the hands of a dictatorship under Franco.

We will not forget. More and more are reading about this now and every day, here and in Spain: our children want to know. "¡No pasarán!"

Language taster

by Mirella Santamaria

For the past five years I have been working with the Head of Modern Languages at Haywood School, Nottingham, on various joint projects with the Modern Languages Department at Nottingham Trent University, designed to bring foreign languages to schoolchildren, many of whom come from under-privileged backgrounds.

One project provides children with the opportunity of taking GCSE Spanish at age 14, two years prior to the national norm. Three cohorts have successfully completed the course so far. This is a joint project between inner city schools and the university's Wider Participation Unit, designed to raise awareness of higher education among children who may otherwise

Scouts and the Basque children

Stoneham

Tom Webb writes...

The story of North Stoneham Camp has been told many times and there is usually mention of the fact that the Scouts and Guides were among the countless volunteers who set up and assisted at the camp. I recently met John Guilment, now in his nineties, who was the Rover Scout Leader in Southampton at the time and who organised the work of the Rover Scouts. Rovers were young men aged from 18 to 24, who came from four scout groups in Southampton, which we can now identify.

As was the case for all the volunteers called upon to help set up the camp, everything was done at extremely short notice. Some of the scout groups were just about to depart on their Whitsun Camp, but willingly cancelled these activities in order to work on the preparation of the site at Stoneham. About 80-90 Rovers were involved in the work, generally on a shift system of 10 or 12 at a time.

Many volunteers were engaged in putting up bell tents and marquees, but the Scouts, with their camping experience, took the lead and demonstrated how to put up tents that actually stayed up! Before the *niños* arrived, the Scouts dug field latrines, erected hessian screens, and when the children were on site, demonstrated their use. With such basic living conditions as the camp provided, maintenance of a high standard of hygiene was essential.

During the evenings, younger Scouts and Cubs visited the site to hand over treasured toys and to organise games and activities for some of the *niños*. The Girl Guides were active in repairing damaged clothing and running games for the younger children.

When the *niños* dispersed to the various colonies, many local Scout and Guide units held a weekly games evening for the young refugees awaiting placements. We know that some of the *niños* became members of the Scouts and Guides during their time in Britain (see below) and I would be interested to hear from any of the present *niños* about their experiences in the movement. Through my involvement with the Scout movement, I may be able to put them in touch with the unit they joined over sixty years ago. I can be contacted on 01793 782109 or e-mail [tclwebb@btinternet.com].

Margate

"The Basque Children's home at Laleham School, Margate, is just about to make history by producing the first troop of Basque Boy Scouts in England. Mr FW Angell, a member of the Basque Children's Committee, has recently formed a scout movement in the Home, consisting of six patrols, each of six boys. He reports that they are making wonderful progress and that when they have passed their Tenderfoot tests, they will become part of the local body and be known as Margate such-and-such a number, and receive financial assistance for uniforms, etc. Already they have aroused a great deal of local interest, which is all to the good. The boys, too, are very keen and since joining have taken more pride in their persons."

Extract from *Spanish Relief: Bulletin of the National Joint Committee, Bulletin No 16, October 1938.*

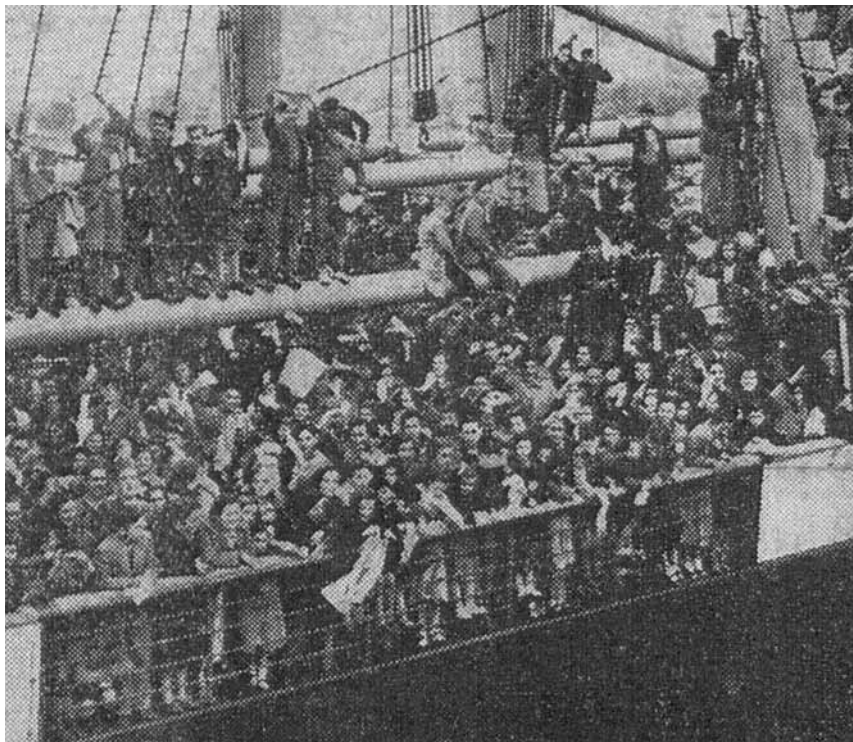


Scouts help out at Stoneham.

never have aspired to go to university.

Recently I was asked to help organise a joint University/Haywood School Spanish taster day for junior children. An exhibition representing the countries of Latin America and Spain was organised, in particular highlighting the existence of the minority languages. The children were given the opportunity to learn some Euskara and Catalan. They were also made aware of the existence of Kechua and Aimara. A small section of the exhibition was dedicated to Euskadi, in particular to the story of the Basque children's

exile to Great Britain in 1937. The children also experienced music, ranging from Carlos Santana to Pantxo eta Peio, and from Cuba, Colombia and Nicaragua. The aim of the day was to demonstrate the globalisation and the inextricably linked nature of culture on a world-wide level. La Tasca, the Spanish chain of restaurants, provided and funded a lunch of tapas for the children. The day culminated with a performance of Mexican folkloric dancing by Tierra Nueva, a group formed by Mexican



Arrival of the Habana in Southampton in May 1937.

Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

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● Membership Secretary: Carmen Kilner. Tel: 020-8224 7959. Email: [membershipsecretary@spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org]

How to support the Association

Niños and their spouses/partners and widow/ers are honorary members. Annual subscriptions (which are renewable in May) for other family members and supporters of the Association's aims are:

● £10 for individuals ● £25 for institutions.

Contact Membership Secretary Carmen Kilner for membership application forms.

Our aims are:

1. To reunite the *niños* of the Spanish Civil War who were exiled in Great Britain in 1937 and who did not return to Spain or who returned later, that is, those who had the common experience of being evacuated.
2. To preserve for descendants and future generations, through the collection of oral and written testimonies, the memory of the *niños*' experience of the period and their subsequent life in Britain.
3. To place the experience of the exile within its rightful historical context, so the *niños* should not be "*los olvidados*".
4. To provide a forum for discussion and to promote dialogue between *niños*, researchers and interested persons.
5. To encourage the collection and preservation of archives (photographs, films, songs, posters, oral testimonies, artwork etc) to be used for educational and historical purposes, eventually to be deposited in a specific library/archive in Britain.
6. To locate commemorative plaques and to ensure their preservation and maintenance; to organise the setting-up of other dedicated plaques to commemorate the experience.
7. To liaise and collaborate with related societies of *niños vascos* in other countries.
8. To facilitate and support research into the history of the evacuation of the *niños vascos* who were sent to Britain.
9. To inform members about new developments in the knowledge of the period through publications, bibliographies, web pages etc.

students at Nottingham University.

As a result of this taster day, other Inner City Schools have registered a desire to bring the exhibition to their schools. We hope to take this "language taster with a difference" to as many schools as possible. I believe that events of this nature help increase tolerance towards and awareness of the plight of many refugee children attending schools mainly in the inner cities.

Screening at the IWM

On Saturday 21 May, there was a showing of "La Generación del Guernica" (The Guernica Generation) at the Imperial War Museum as part of its summer film programme on Children and War. This was Steve Bowles' first film on the exodus of the children from Spain during the civil war. The film won a bronze medal at the New York Festival and was also nominated for the Spanish equivalent of a BAFTA, but it had never before been shown in the UK.

The film concentrates on the story of children who were evacuated to Mexico and the Soviet Union, although the *niños vascos* in Britain also feature.

Steve introduced the film and also answered questions from the audience at the end. It was tremendous to see the film on the "big screen", which made the experience all the more powerful.

Pensions for niños

The Spanish government recently passed a law (Ley 3/2005 del 18 de Marzo) which will compensate citizens who were forced to flee abroad as children during the civil war, victims of the dictator. Deputy Prime Minister María Teresa Fernández de la Vega said that the move was a way "to recognise Spain's historic debt to her compatriots". The Law is intended to provide a subsistence level of income to those Spaniards who are in serious financial need. This is especially the case of Spaniards in Russia and in Latin American countries, who have been going through difficult times due to the small, and in some cases, inexistent pensions provided by those countries. The Law is not intended to provide a second pension to those who already have one equal to or above the rate of 6090 euros per annum.

Therefore, it is highly unlikely that it should be applicable to those *niños* who live in the UK, where the social security and welfare state guarantee a pension which is well above the 6090 euros threshold stipulated by the above legislation.

However, if there are any prospective beneficiaries living in the UK who for some reason are not in receipt of an adequate pension, they should get in touch with the Cosejería de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, 20

Peel Street, London W8 7PD; tel: 020 722 0088, who have prepared a document about the new law which includes application forms.

Echoes of Spain project

Eddie Adams (Project Coordinator)

This project was started about two years ago, when a group of people got together to create a memorial for the volunteers who went to Spain from Kensington in 1936 to help the Spanish Republic in its fight for democracy, and also to remember the Spanish refugees who came to Britain, some of whom settled permanently in our area.

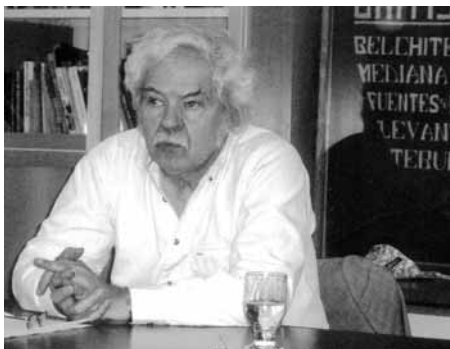
The memorial is in the form of a mosaic which is five metres long and two metres wide. We meet every Thursday afternoon during term time. The mosaic shows episodes about the civil war which have been related to us by participants, friends and relatives, for example, the ship the Habana, crowded with children en route for England, the bombing of Guernica. The mosaic is nearly finished now, and we have a site for it in the Portobello Road.

For further information, telephone 020 894 9531 or email [samstjohn@yahoo.co.uk].

Homage to the volunteers

by Rob Wardle

The International Brigade Memorial Trust's annual commemoration was held on Saturday 16 July at the IB memorial in London's Jubilee Gardens. The event attracts more people every year. The guest speaker was John Pilger, who gave a fine speech. Music was provided by Liz Shirley and guitar with everyone joining in on renditions of "Ay Carmela" and the "Internationale". After the event, a social was held at the Travel Inn nearby, where a paella was available and we had the opportunity to meet and chat to old acquaintances.



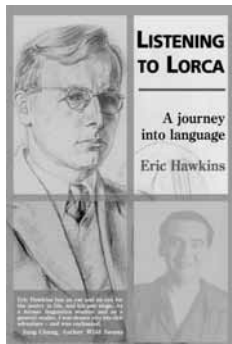
Adrian Bell, author of "Only for Three Months", the story of the Basque refugee children in Britain, delivers a lecture on British Government policy towards the Basque children at the Marx Memorial Library, London, on 22 June. The well-attended event was organised by the Association.

Obituaries

We very much regret to announce the deaths of the following:

- Juan Cantalapiedra
- Gwion Davies
- Antonio García
- Teodoro García Gutierrez
- Rosita Lozano Díaz (Whitaker)
- Juan Moreno Linares

Books



- "Listening to Lorca: A journey into language" by Eric Hawkins. Professor Hawkins, one of the foremost figures in language teaching, describes his "journey into language" through a series of key personal – and

often moving – episodes drawn from the sweep of 20th century European history, encompassing the Spanish Civil War, the rise of Nazism, World War in Europe and North Africa, and the bridge-building that followed. A chapter is devoted to "The Basque children refugees: Innocent victims of appeasement". The author writes in summary: "I meet the homesick, bewildered child refugees, first in their rain-swept tents at Southampton, then as "housefather" in an idyllic community in Cambridge and finally reasoning with 200 lonely, rebellious lads in the moorland camp that they have wrecked near Scarborough." "Listening to Lorca" can be purchased at the special price of £10 – saving £5 (plus 20% postage and packing) from: Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London E9 5LN; tel: 0845 458 9910; fax: 0845 458 9912; offer valid until 31 October 2005, quoting reference NBo805.

Available from Natalia Benjamin (Secretary):

- "Only for Three Months" by Adrian Bell, £8.50 including p&p.
- "Leah Manning" by Ron Bill & Stan Newens, £4.50 including p&p.

Forthcoming events

Radio programme: Recent research for his MA thesis by a University of Sussex student, Sam Bishop, has shed new light on some of the

internal political tensions that existed in connection with the evacuation of the *niños* to the UK in 1937. Extracts from this research together with first-hand accounts from children who remained in the UK as well as from those who were repatriated form the basis of a programme to be broadcast on BBC Radio 4 on Monday 14 November at 8pm. The programme will explore how the children became pawns in a game of national and international politics. In the UK Herminio Martínez, Koke Martínez and Mari Sanz were interviewed. The programme is produced by Simon Evans and narrated by Michael Portillo.

TV programme: Steve Bowles has produced another piece for the BBC, this time for BBC South's regional news magazine programme Inside Out. The film concentrates on the story of the Antolín sisters Carmen and Josefina, who live in the BBC South region, and who had no contact with the other Basque children until very recently. In fact they attended the annual reunion lunch for the first time in May 2003. The film will go out on Monday 26 September at 67.30 on BBC 1 (South).

Exhibitions: The Instituto Español Cañada Blanch in Portobello Road, London, would like to collaborate with us and have an exhibition of our display panels in December. The languages department at Nottingham Trent University also wishes to borrow our exhibition panels for March 2006.

Horizon 2007

● **Day School in Oxford:** To commemorate the 70th anniversary of the arrival in 1937 of some 4,000 Basque children in Great Britain, the Association, together with Oxford University Department of Continuing Education, will be holding a Day School at Rewley House, Oxford, on 28 April 2007 on the theme of the exile of the *niños*. The speakers have not been finalised, but it is hoped that there will be a question and answer session with a panel composed of some of the *niños*.

● **Eastleigh events:** To mark the 70th anniversary in 2007, Eastleigh Borough Council arts team plan to manage a series of events, performances and screenings. Crispian Cook, Arts Development Manager with EBC, will be working in collaboration with Basque and English dance, theatre and music companies to produce new works that will inform, involve and educate a new generation of people about the events of 1937. If you would like any more information about this project, please contact Crispian Cook on 023 8062 7819 or e-mail [crispian.cook@eastleigh.gov.uk].

● **Let us know:** Contact the Basque Children of '37 Association Secretary (see details in the panel on the left) with any suggestions about how the 70th anniversary should be marked.



Professor Eric Hawkins with niña María Luisa Toole.



Some of the niños at the unveiling ceremony.

Unveiling of a Blue Plaque at Cambridge



On 15 May 2005, 12 niños vascos, their relatives, former volunteers and friends gathered in Jesus College, Cambridge. They came from around

the country to celebrate the unveiling of a blue plaque to commemorate the 29 Basque children who stayed at 1 Salisbury Villas on Station Road between January 1938 and November 1939.

Niña, María Luisa Martínez (Toole) writes:

I travelled down to Cambridge from Bolton the day before with two of my daughters. We spent Saturday looking round the city, which brought back many happy memories of the time I spent there. By Sunday, I was really looking forward to the ceremony and meeting up with old friends again. As people started to gather at Jesus College, I was overwhelmed as I had just expected there to be *niños vascos* who had been in the Cambridge colony. But there were many who had made the trip from London, also representatives of the Basque government, the Spanish Embassy, Basque television, the local newspaper and the Mayor of Cambridge! For me, it was very emotional to see two people who'd been at the colony with me and whom I hadn't seen for 50 years, María Luisa Gallego and Primitiva Rojas. Some of the others, like Antonio Gallego, I'd seen since at one of the London lunches.

There were several speakers, after which I was honoured to help Professor Hawkins unveil the plaque. He used to come to the colony at Pampisford to give us lessons. Finally, there was the showing of a long lost short film showing various facets of our daily life in the colony, at mealtimes, sitting in the classroom, on holiday

in Norfolk and dancing the jota. I can't remember this, but I saw myself there, wearing a big sun hat!

Altogether it was a lovely day. We were sad to leave and the goodbyes went on for quite a while! I would really like to thank all the people who'd organised it for all their hard work, especially Natalia Benjamin and Manuel Moreno.

Her daughters, Ana and Marisita, write:

For us, too, it was a very emotional day. It was the first time we'd been to Cambridge as adults with our mum, and it made a lot of things clearer. Cambridge was where our parents met, so visiting all these places that reminded her of dad brought tears to our eyes. As only our mum can, she sweetly talked the porter of Gonville and Caius College, where dad went, so we could look around, although it was shut to the public as exams were on.

Sunday was like fitting another piece of the jigsaw into place. We were really moved to finally meet all these people who were such an important part of her life, and who shared what can only have been quite difficult times with her. We'd heard so many tales about them all as we were growing up that it was great to put a face to these stories! Talking to other sons and daughters of *niños vascos* felt like coming home, here were others who seemed to know instinctively why we hold our mum so dear after what she went through such a young age.

We'd like to end this piece with her words as we drove home. They summed it all up perfectly: "I wouldn't have missed it for the world!"

Teacher, Professor Eric Hawkins writes:

So what message will your blue plaque send to those who hurry down Station Road on their way to their train or queue for their bus? It will be a quiet message, not a loud or strident call. I

think it was well summed up by Adrian Bell in Steve Bowles' timely BBC4 documentary. Adrian brought out clearly that it was the British people, not their government, who spoke for Britain in 1937.

What your blue plaque will say, quietly but patiently and importantly, amid the bustle and preoccupations of Station Road, may simply be that when the Basque people, and especially their children, were being given a cruel time by a dictator, the people of Cambridge joined with their famous old university in the national effort to help them. And that when the *niños* grew up, they and their children and their supporters came back to Cambridge to ensure that a good deed should not be forgotten and to say thank you.

Son of a volunteer, Dr Colin Leakey writes:

The Cambridge event was one of the encouraging things of the present year. There are not too many of these around. Compared with the "celebrity-driven" attempts to deal with today's problems, the quiet efficiency and efforts of a relatively small and unheralded group of people proved very effective in addressing a difficulty from the late 1930s. I think that at least one important message is that good will is better harnessed in many small initiatives than by vast programmes that tend to become impersonal.

I suppose that volunteerism is still just about compatible with the free market economy but needs defending. I hope that the present and future generation of Basque friends will carry that flag. It was a pleasure to be invited to be a part of that gathering and I hope to keep up with you. The frightening poverty is not that measurable in dollars but of spirit of human goodwill. However, on those terms I think, and hope, the third world may be less poor than the money men suppose.

The niños in the North East and Cumbria

Below is a summary of a talk given by Don Watson at the AGM of the North East Labour History Society, Newcastle upon Tyne, on 25 May 2005

Around 400 Basque children were looked after in the North East of England and Cumbria, most

of them for up to two years. Some stayed at Brampton near Carlisle, in "The Larches" on the Allendale Road in Hexham, Northumberland, and at 40 Percy Park in Tynemouth. Another colony was at Hutton Hall near Guisborough in Cleveland. About half of them were taken care of by the Catholic Church in children's homes and convents in Newcastle-on-Tyne, Carlisle, Spennymoor and Darlington.

The biggest single colony was at Brampton, within the constituency of Wilfred Roberts M.P. – a prominent member of the Basque Children's Committee and committed supporter of the Spanish Republic. The children were put up in an old workhouse converted by local trades unions and church members. It accommodated up to 60 children, who must have had an impact on the small town. Elsewhere sympathisers let out properties to the local Basque Children's Committees: large houses in residential areas in Hexham and Tynemouth, and Hutton Hall was a small stately home in its own grounds.

The hostel at Hexham had to close after a few months due to lack of local financial support: there was some political opposition to the Basque evacuation in the town, which was prosperous and with little labour movement influence. This was in marked contrast to the hostel at Percy Park Tynemouth. Here Nell Badsey, the hostel manager, cleverly countered initial opposition by some local residents by using the local press to describe what the children had gone through at home and the amount of local support she was getting for them. The boys here took a full part in local football and sports events through the Scouts and the YMCA, so that after a year a newspaper described them as having settled in so well they were "as much a part of the area as Percy Park itself".

Len Edmondson, a member of the Independent Labour Party in 1937 and involved with the hostel in Tynemouth, recalls that the Basque children's supporters often had a hard job to convince the public that the children were not getting a penny from the British Government. Just the opposite: all the money for food, coal, clothing, and everything else had to be raised through the efforts of the local volunteers. Apart from Hexham these efforts were successful, because the sources



of financial and other support for the colonies were many and varied. In North Shields for example, the Methodist Ladies Sisterhood performed plays to raise funds, and Nell Badsey, manager of the hostel in Tynemouth, was always full of praise for the consistent funding she received from the Northumberland and Durham miners' lodges. Supporters in the local committees included local clergy, trades unionists, and political activists from the Liberals to the Communists, frequently people involved in other areas of Republican solidarity work. They also included humanitarian people with no background in any political causes.

The colony committees encouraged the children to exhibit their traditional music, song and dance, frequently in national costume, at fund raising concerts and meetings or simply at village occasions and other local events. Some of the children were present at political meetings too: they were on the platform at the Newcastle May Day rally in 1938, supporting Labour and Communist speakers at an International Brigade memorial meeting in Blyth Miners Welfare Hall, and on the platform in Bedlington, where Labour M.P.s attacked the British Government for supporting non-intervention. In this way, true to the trades union and Republican sympathies of their parents, the presence of the children was part of the political campaign for the Republic and against Franco's war on the civilian population.

In the North East, as in the rest of the country, joint work with the Catholic Church did not last long. The refugee children were a propaganda setback for Franco's supporters and, through the Vatican Secretariat, pressure was exerted to repatriate them as soon as possible. In the North East the children from the Catholic colonies had returned to Spain by May 1938 but most of those looked after by the local Basque Children's Committee remained. The North East committees were intent on ensuring that when children were repatriated, it would be to conditions of safety and at the genuine request of their families. Some harsh exchanges between Catholic spokesmen and Basque Children's Committee members took place in the local newspapers,

and showed in fact that they represented the two sides in the civil war.

At the start of the Second World War most of the ninos in the North East had been repatriated to Spain, but a few remained here permanently. They included a señorita at Percy Park, Carmen Gil, who married one of the Labour Party activists on the hostel committee. Carmen now lives with her family in Salford and has featured in this Newsletter. Nell Badsey adopted one of the boys from Percy Park, Angel Perez Martinez, and as Angel Badsey, he worked until his retirement in the Sunderland shipyards. Just two examples, as Adrian Bell puts it, of those for whom "three months" meant their adult lives.

I would be delighted to hear from former refugees who were looked after in any of these "colonies", or from their own children and families. You can reach me at [donwatson@btinternet.com] or through the Basque Children of '37 Association:UK.