

The vicarage at Pampisford was roomy and soundly built, but with thirty children eating and sleeping, working and playing in it, the school-master had to look elsewhere for a class-room. He found one to dream of, in the loft over the stables, reached by an outside wooden stairway, whose top landing offered a splendid view over the churchyard and the fields beyond. Under the low rafters two rows of desks ran from end to end of the loft, parting in the middle to skirt an old-fashioned iron stove...

Our time-table began at 9 o'clock, when the two junior classes began lessons, leaving the seniors to an hour's housework before joining in the morning's work in the loft. The mid-morning break for exercise and cold douche was followed by two more lessons before lunch at 1 o'clock. After lunch, and an hour's 'quiet time', the afternoon was usually given up to painting, music or handicrafts, with the help of a patient, devoted band of outside workers.

E.W.Hawkins, "Education at Pampisford", Listening to Lorca, London: CILT Publications, 1999, p.104

They were a homogeneous group from a Hostel in Bilbao, the "Ayuda Social" organised and financed by the Socialist Party. All their fathers were Militiamen who had been killed early in the war. The children had been brought up as "children of heroes" in a very political atmosphere, and inherited their prejudices as a sacred trust. They came to us on condition that they should be under no political or religious influence...

Our group of 29 children was composed of several families of 2, 3 or 4 members, of ages varying from seven to fourteen.... They seem entirely without class consciousness and have a real wish to be educated and become independent. Their morality is exceedingly high and is quite unconscious. They have ability, gaiety and friendliness and should make citizens that any country would be lucky to possess. All who have been connected with these children as individuals will keep a very living and moving memory of their dear qualities. May they remain unmarred by whatever England has in store for them as they were by their experiences of Fascism in Spain.

Jessie Stewart, "Recuerdos" – The Basque Hostel at Cambridge, p.9

The most interesting record of their development in the first six months was the series of paintings. In the early days few of these were without an aeroplane, a burning house or a battleship belching fire – but after a few weeks village and farm scenes and strange flower pictures appeared more and more frequently and it became rare to see any reminder of the war.

Jessie Stewart, "Recuerdos" – The Basque Hostel at Cambridge, p.8

When Pampisford Vicarage was repossessed, The Bursar of Jesus College offered the Cambridge Committee for Basque Children a lease on 1 Salisbury Villas, Station Road, Cambridge. Thither on 1st January, 1938, the little community was transferred. Though the circumscribed living accommodation and narrow town lawn, which in wet weather became a slough, were a sad contrast to the spacious rooms, offices and lofts and especially the gardens of the vicarage, I do not think the children regretted the change....Contact with friends was easier, visits to the cinema more frequent.

Jessie Stewart, "Recuerdos" – The Basque Hostel at Cambridge, p.23

The Oaks, Carshalton

Oaks Park was first mentioned in the Domesday Book where it is referred to as Lamberts Oaks. There has been a house at the Oaks since at least the 16th century. It was rebuilt in the mid-18th century as an Italianate 'villa' probably for the banker Thomas Gosling. The architect was most likely Sir Robert Taylor (1741-1788). The house was later occupied by the 12th Earl of Derby, who employed Robert Adam to rebuild it. However, the work was never completed, so that sections of Adams' castle-like design were left co-existing with Taylor's work. The estate gave its name to the famous horse races at Epsom, the Oaks in 1779 and the Derby in 1780. The house was demolished between 1956 and 1960, leaving only the bakehouse and a few outbuildings.

The Culvers

"What!" you say, "Are they still here?" Yes, we are still here.

Little did we think twelve months ago that in August 1946 we should still be living in England. Nine years away from home is a long time. We wonder what our parents look like. They wonder what we look like. Alas, some of us will not have the joy of a reunion, for during our sojourn in this country some parents have been taken from us....

Please do not think we are a doleful set of human beings down at The Culvers. We are not. We are not. We make our life as happy as possible and many a time if you were a passer-by, you would hear laughter and singing, and shouts of merriment, for sad though our hearts may be, we do not wear them on our sleeve.

Much of our happiness is due to you, dear reader, and to the efforts which you have made on our behalf during the past nine years. Now it is a fact that we are no longer little children. We are all in our teens, and most of us have found a job of work, maybe in an office, or on a farm, or in hospitals, or nursery schools. We subscribe all we can for our maintenance and upkeep, in proportion to our earnings, but we cannot be entirely self-supporting. We honestly wish we could. We dislike having to appeal for funds.

Basque News, August 1946, Carshalton Basque Children's Association

A Day in the Culvers

The Culvers is a large building standing almost on the bank of a little river, which skirts an ill-kempt lawn whose condition bears witness to hard wear by many pairs of feet... Here is the hall. A somewhat pretentious staircase rises from its centre, and on our left is a vast dilapidated room with an ancient piano in one corner showing its yellow fangs. Beyond this, through a glass door, we find ourselves in an attractive room with big windows on three sides furnished with tables and benches and decorated with a frieze of dancing figures which are evidently the children's handiwork. (This is no doubt the schoolroom.)... Following a small passage, we come to the dining room. There are

six tables..., the walls are hung with photographs of the children, and on one, making a big slash of garish colour, is their newspaper *Our Life*... Around the next corner we discover the Administration, and are surprised to find it comfortable, and indeed, almost elegant. Next to that is the kitchen, a large room redolent of coffee.

Carshalton Basque Home News, Commemorative Number, 1942.

Message from the President:

To be keeping the work of the Carshalton Basque Children's Home after five years of other wars and claims on the funds of human interest and generosity, is an unspoken tribute to three things. First, to our undiminished admiration of those who fought the first round of *our* war. Second, to the tremendous generosity and sense of obligation to the innocent victims of a Fascist tyranny, that animates every one of those who have contributed. Third, to the charm and character of the children themselves who have won our hearts and convinced us that they are among those who will build the new Spain when the people of that unhappy country have a chance to rule it again. With these thoughts of gratitude and hope, I sincerely trust that the Home will soon outlive its usefulness, because peace and freedom have returned.

George W. Cadbury

(Carshalton Basque Home News, Commemorative Number, 1942)

ST.HELIER IS KINDEST TO BASQUE CHILDREN

Of all the districts that help to support the Basque children at The Oaks, St. Helier is the most generous, stated Mr Charles West on Friday, when the children gave their first public concert at the St. Helier Community Hall.

It costs ten shillings a week to maintain a child at The Oaks. When the children arrived in this country a year ago last month, it was a condition that no cost should fall on the Government or local authorities, and they have been fed and clothed entirely by voluntary effort...

Those who saw the Basques when they arrived at The Oaks last August and noticed their pathetic timidity and nervousness could scarcely believe that these were the same children. Then the horror of war was reflected in their eyes, and the sorrow of broken families in their faces: they had hardly a friendly word to say.

Now they are laughing happy children again – as happy as children can be who have no parents and who, except in a few cases, are in touch with no relatives at all.

Local newspaper 17th June 1938