

The lease of Baydon Hole farm, near Lambourne, was secured in early May for five months. A Berkshire Committee, with Mr. McIlroy as chairman, had already been formed. Major Tomkins was appointed Superintendent and, thanks to his military knowledge and energy, three large huts and several smaller buildings were erected with such speed, that it was possible to receive 25 children on June 7<sup>th</sup> and a further 75 five days later, a total of 100, in the first voluntary home in the country. During a glorious summer these children regained their physical and mental health, but the site was not suitable for winter quarters. After great difficulty, Bray Court, near Maidenhead, was found, and a lease was signed for a year.

On October 16<sup>th</sup> a foggy day, the children were moved by coach, a distance of fifty miles, to their new home. Just in time, for the weather broke the next day. They soon settled down under Miss Burke's care, and although about forty of the original number have returned to Spain, their places have been more than filled by children who have come from other homes, which have been closed. During the twelve months at Baydon and Bray Court, there has been very little illness. No cases of infectious disease have arisen, notwithstanding the prevalence of Measles, Mumps and Chicken Pox in the neighbouring towns. The conduct of the children has been exceptionally good, and they have endeared themselves to all who have come into contact with them.

Dr R.S. Gilford, "Story of the Children", Recuerdo de los Niños Españoles

The days of Bray Court, the rambling Victorian mansion on the Windsor Road at Bray, are numbered. When the house and its 1 ½ acres of land come under the auctioneer's hammer next month, it will be demolished to make way for a new development.

Bray Court dates back to the late 1800s when John Haig, a member of the Scotch whisky family, built it as his family home. It is said it took four years to put up. The house, which has 365 windows – one for each day of the year – stood in several acres of beautifully tailored gardens. Hansom carriages brought the rich and famous from London to its balls and garden parties.

It remained private until after the first World War, when its fine rooms were converted into hospital wards and its elegant occupiers replaced by shell-shocked war victims. From then on, the mansion changed hands many times. In 1928 it became Bray Court School for Boys, a select boarding establishment. But in the 1930s it regained some of its former glory when it was turned into a hotel and country club.

Evening Mail, 27.11.71