

Presentation to the Basque Children Association of the Archive of Bill Thornycroft

Wickham Market 24 March 2018

A report from Barbara Coombs

Anna Cordon is the niece of Bill Thornycroft whose mother and great aunts played a great part in the Worthing and Lancing Colonies. Anna is seen here on the right of the photo presenting to Simon Martinez, one of the Trustees of the BCA'37UK, a water colour picture. The picture is by an un-named Basque Boy who stayed in the Worthing Colony. Many of the children found relaxation and comfort in drawing, painting and collage. This approach to help the children cope with the trauma they had experienced would be termed Art Therapy now. A number of children went onto to be lifelong professional artists and all of the children who had the opportunity to express their feelings of fright, loss, bereavement, and separation from family, home town, and country would have benefited psychologically and emotionally.



Amongst the Thornycroft archive are photos, handbills for events, and correspondences as well as the painting. One letter is the report to the Basque Children Committee of the return of a group of children to Spain 1938 and the heart breaking way in which the children were met by the stern women from the *Asistencia Social*. This letter appears on our website at:

<http://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/lettersetc/thornycroftletter1>

Another letter outlines the code words that would be included in letters between parents and their children which would be the guarantee that the letter was from who it said it was from, and that it had not been written under duress from the Franco Authorities. On the website at:

<http://www.basquechildren.org/-/docs/lettersetc/thornycroftletter2>

The Association is very grateful to the Thornycrofts who cared for the *Niños Vascos* in Worthing and Lancing, who kept these archives for eighty years which shine a bright light on the experiences of the children, and to Anna Cordon for presenting the archive to us to enable researchers to tell our parents story. They will be become part the Association's Archive at Southampton University.

Barbara Coombs

3 April 2018