

**'Happy and Safe':  
The Basque Child Refugees  
in Cumberland and Westmorland  
1937-1939**

*Rob David*



In May 1937 nearly 4000 children from the Basque region of Spain came as refugees to Britain fleeing the Spanish Civil War. Over 100 came to Cumbria and were accommodated in 'colonies' in Ambleside, Brampton, Carlisle and Wigton. In the last few years a significant number of documents associated with the Brampton and Ambleside homes have been deposited at Cumbria Archive Centre in Carlisle and these have allowed the story of the Basque children in Cumbria and the county's response to these refugees to be written. This new history reveals that in the 1930s, as now, the people of Cumbria welcomed refugees into their communities and provided sustained financial support which allowed the homes to remain open.

Dr Rob David has been studying, writing about, and lecturing on the experience of refugees in Cumbria for a number of years. He has previously written *A County of Refuge: Refugees in Cumbria 1933-1941* (Kendal, 2020). He was President of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society from 2017 to 2020.

*Front cover design:* The identity tags the children wore when they departed from Bilbao were in the shape of a hexagon. With the Basque children at Brampton. Some of the girls enjoying their leisure time by dancing: Cumbria Archive Centre, Carlisle: DROB Accn: H16127.

*Back cover design:* On 18 June 2023 the Brampton community with the Basque Childrens Association '37 UK placed a plaque commemorating the arrival of the Basque children on the building in Union Lane that has replaced the Brampton workhouse.



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