



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

www.spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org

No.3

March 2005

News

AGM and members' lunch

The Association held its second Annual General Meeting and members' lunch on 5 February 2005 in London, at the William IV on the Harrow Road. This year, the AGM was held in a separate room, and this was a great improvement on last year.

There was a long report by the Secretary, which was evidence of the manifold activities and events that the Association had been involved with during the past year. Details of these will be found elsewhere in the Newsletter. She closed her report by countering the somewhat pessimistic attitude adopted by certain members who say that all this comes too late, by the remark that it is always better late than never and if the work of the Association succeeds in bringing *niños* together and providing helpful information to future generations, then it will surely be fulfilling its mission and is a thoroughly worthwhile undertaking.

The AGM was followed by the lunch, which was taken at a leisurely pace, enlivened by renderings of Basque songs sung by the Martínez brothers! It is a pity that more members do not come to the AGM and lunch, as, apart from being a convivial occasion, it gives them the opportunity to participate in the Association by voicing their interests and concerns.

Blue plaque for Caerleon

by Josefina Savery

Sunday 17 October 2004 was a beautiful autumn day in South Wales and the sun shone brightly on Pendragon House, Caerleon, on the gathering of *niños vascos*, their supporters and well-wishers. Some *niños* had stayed and grown up in South Wales, married and brought their own families. They had come together to celebrate Caerleon's welcome to the Basque children in 1937 and to unveil a plaque in commemoration of their stay.

Caerleon was a little bit of heaven after the horrors of the Civil War in Spain. The original house where they had been looked after for



Niños outside Pendragon House, Caerleon, after the unveiling of the blue plaque.

the first two years, Cambria House, had been demolished, and the remaining children were either adopted or moved to 18 Cross Street in November 1939.

The plaque was commissioned by the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK. It acknowledges the help and care of local organisations and volunteers, providing a tangible memorial of a historic event and of the selfless assistance given by these local people. The Caerleon Civic Society and the Caerleon Neighbourhood Fund contributed generously to the cost, as did the publishers Warren and Pell.



Well over 100 people were present, including grandchildren of the *niños* as well as local representatives of the Caerleon Civic Society, Liz Luck and Norman Stevens, the Caerleon History Society, Newport Deputy Mayor Councillor Alan Morris, the former Chairman of Gwent County Council, Jim Kirkwood, Miss Rosemary Butler, Brenda and Alan Horton, the present owners of Pendragon House, Alan Warren, publisher, whose idea it had been to erect a blue plaque in Caerleon, and members of the International Brigade Memorial Trust and the Basque Children of '37 Association: UK.

In his opening speech, the Deputy Mayor said: "The bravery of the parents who had to do what no parent should be asked to do, which is to hand over their children to the care of others, was matched during the years of the Spanish Civil War only by the compassion of Caerleon."

The plaque was unveiled by Councillor Gail Giles, who as a mature student at UWCN had brought to light in her dissertation the history of the Basque children in Caerleon. In her excellent speech, she gave a short history of the Basque children in Caerleon and linked it to the present-day sufferings of children around the world as a result of war and



Pictured on our Christmas card: from left to right Genoveva Gallego, Ma Teresa Cisneros and Ma Luisa Gallego.

From the Secretary

The Association continues to go from strength to strength. Messages are received on a daily basis from relatives of the *niños*, historians, teachers, other interested parties, and we are asked for all sorts of information. This interest has been fuelled by our website and by the various public occasions, such as the unveiling of the blue plaque at Caerleon and the exhibitions we have held at Southampton.

This year, we sent a Christmas card to all our members depicting three little girls in the Cambridge colony, as well as a card listing forthcoming events organised by the Association for the next six months. The programme of activities is varied and there is something on offer each month. In March Paul Preston is giving the annual lecture for the IBMT (International Brigade Memorial Trust) which members of our Association are invited to attend; in April our President has organised a wine-tasting event; in May a blue plaque is being unveiled in Cambridge and there is a showing of Steve Bowles' film "La Generación del Guernica" at the Imperial War Museum and in June Adrian Bell is giving a talk to the Association. Rich pickings indeed!

This, our third Newsletter, contains more material written by the members, which is gratifying. However, we would like to see even more participation. Anything will be considered, from a review to an anecdote of life in the colonies. It would also be worthwhile to get a lively discussion going through a correspondence page. I am sure that there are issues which are of interest to all that could be aired, so do get writing.

We are very aware that the year 2007 representing the 70th anniversary of the *niños'* arrival in Great Britain is on the horizon. We wish to commemorate this in an appropriate way, and have been thinking about ways in which we as an Association can mark this event. If you

have any ideas, please do let us know.

If the final paragraph of my last report spoke of my excitement at the discovery of new material, photographs, drawings, films, relating to the *niños*, this time, when I look back on the last six months, my excitement comes from the discovery of new *niños* who had lost contact with their fellow evacuees through the years. The blue plaque ceremony at Caerleon uncovered four *niñas*; the son of an 88-year-old Basque living in deepest Wales rang me to say that his father thought he was the only Basque living in the UK and just recently the son of a *niña* who had been in Caerleon but who now lives in Spain rang me. The three other discoveries centre, coincidentally, around the Langham colony. Through the IBMT ceremony in Cardiff and the one at Caerleon, there emerged a *niña* who had been an active member of the dance troupe at Langham; a *niña* from Langham, whose son had stumbled on our website, rang me from France. She had completely lost touch with all aspects of her life in England, and needed to come to terms with her past. The final discovery was sad – I was informed about the death of a *niña*, who had had no contact with any of the Basques since she had been "adopted". It transpired that she had been the youngest child at Langham, and the one appearing on the stamp that the colony produced. All these people, or their relatives, wanted to know more about their past and they asked for information. I was glad to be able to send them material from our archives.

It is gratifying to be involved in such a worthwhile cause. What has emerged very clearly is that there is a growing public awareness of the *niños'* story and that the first generation are really taking an interest in their parents' experiences. ¡Agur!

Natalia Benjamin

Natalia Benjamin

dictatorship, asking at the end for a minute's silence.

After the ceremony, there were refreshments at the Town Hall provided by the Caerleon Civic Society, which gave an opportunity for all those present, some of whom had not seen each other for decades, to get together. There was also an exhibition on display boards of photographs and newspaper cuttings about the *niños'* arrival in North Stoneham Camp and their stay in Caerleon.

Altogether, it was a truly memorable day! *Josefina Savery (Alvarez)* was one of the *niñas* in Caerleon. She studied at Birmingham University, got married and now lives in a town not far from Caerleon.

El Exilio de los Niños

This exhibition has been touring Spain for over a year now, having been to Bilbao, Barcelona, Salamanca, Seville, Badajoz, Valencia and Gijón. It is currently in La Coruña until 27 February, then it moves to Zaragoza from 7 March to 15 May. It is due to end in Madrid, from 23 May until 15 June, but the organisers hope to get the last phase extended.

Oxford day school

by Colin Carritt

Seven members of the Association attended a day school in Oxford at the end of October entitled "The Spanish Civil War: Atrocities and Propaganda". It was a stimulating day and not uncontroversial, particularly for those so closely related to the horrific events of 1936 and afterwards.

Overwhelmingly, the sympathies of the lecturers and the audience were with the Republican cause and the victims of fascism, but there was heated debate on the degree to which the Republicans exaggerated and manipulated the casualties in Madrid for their own propaganda aims. Many in the audience felt that the historian's focus on absolute objectivity took little account of the emotional realities of life in Madrid and elsewhere during the war. In particular our President, Manuel Moreno, spoke eloquently in defence of the posters and publicity put out by the government to counter the fascist bombing campaign targeted at civilians.

The second lecture produced chilling statistics on the level of Francoist repression in the period from 1936 to 1945. During that reign of terror, Franco executed somewhere between 108,000 and 140,000 citizens, including over 12,000 in Granada. Many of these deaths specifically targeted Freemasons and Communists. Under the Law of Political Responsibilities (February 1939) anyone not actively supporting the Nationalist cause



Steve Bowles with the Antolín sisters at the exhibition at Southampton University.

could be punished by confiscation of property, fines and loss of employment. Some 350,000 people were investigated under these rules. Recent exhumations have drawn attention to the scale of violence perpetrated by Franco in the years immediately following the collapse of the Republican government.

In the afternoon we learned about the complexities and rivalries between the various republican factions in the infamous May Days in Barcelona, so vividly described by Orwell. "Homage to Catalonia" undoubtedly raised the profile of the strife between the anarchists, the socialists and the communists, but the case was made in the lecture that these internecine disputes almost certainly had little effect on the overall outcome of the war. Non-intervention and the massive assistance given to the fascists by Germany and Mussolini were the indisputable causes which led to the Republic being overwhelmed.

The domination of the skies by the fascists led to the final lecture of the day and perhaps the most absorbing, but also, for members of the Basque Children of '37 Association, the most harrowing. It was an analysis by Nicholas Rankin of the bombing of Guernica and the reporting of the events by the *Times* journalist, George Steer. His lecture was unashamedly partisan, but who could not be in the face of

such an immensely inhuman act? He brought out the importance of committed journalism in these situations and told the story of Durango, not far from Guernica, where similar bombing missions by the German air force killed 339 civilians. Yet the events in Durango went almost entirely unreported due to the absence of journalists on the spot. Nearly three quarters of Guernica's homes were flattened in the three-hour bombing raid. The lecture and the day school ended with a rendition of the hymn "The Tree of Guernica".

We left in sombre mood, but satisfied to have understood more about the extent of atrocities and the sometimes appropriate and often inappropriate use of propaganda in Spain during those terrible years.

Exhibition at Southampton

by Tom Webb

Whenever I meet any of the *niños vascos* I always start by saying that I may have seen them last 68 years ago, when, as a schoolboy living in Southampton, my parents took me to nearby Stoneham to see the huge tented camp with nearly four thousand child refugees from the bombing in north east Spain.

That vivid memory is still with me, revived after meeting several of the *niños* in October at the unveiling of the blue plaque in Caerleon. Again I met some on 22 November 2004, but this time we were nearer to Stoneham Camp where they had arrived. The occasion was the opening of the exhibition at Southampton University, only two or three miles from Stoneham.

Adding to the twelve existing display boards, three new display panels of photographs, newspaper cuttings and other memorabilia had been made of the four colonies which had been set up in the Southampton area in 1937. The highlight of the evening was a showing of the film "La Generación del Guernica", directed by Steve Bowles, who was present to give a brief introduction and to explain how the film came to be made. His film, made for the Latin-American Discovery Channel, while

focusing in particular on the *niños* who went to Latin America, also covered those who went to England and other countries.

Another welcome visitor was Adrian Bell, author of "Only for Three Months", the story of the Basque children in exile, who was kept busy signing copies of his book. Among the 70 visitors was a good attendance of students and staff from the University who were soon in deep conversation with the four *niñas* and historians present. Official guests were the Vice Chancellor and the Mayor of Eastleigh.

Talk at LSE

On 16 January 2005, some members attended a lecture given at the Cañada Blanch Centre for Contemporary Spanish History at the London School of Economics by Enrique Moriadiellos on "The British Image of Spain in the Civil War". Its basic conclusion was that the British images of Spain corresponded to two large sets of stereotypes bequeathed by history (the Black Legend of the 16th century and the Romantic Myth of the 19th century) and were used as appropriate by both supporters of the Republic and of Franco in their propaganda battles.

'Into the Fire'

by Marlene Sidaway

Julia Newman's fine film about US women in Spain was shown by the London Socialist Film Co-op on 14 November, preceded by Luís Buñuel's film "Las Hurdes" (1933). It is a rivetting film and one that deserves to be shown more widely.

Eighty American women went to the Spanish Civil War; fortunately, they all survived and several were able to take part in this very moving documentary. Their interviews are interspersed with extracts from their letters home; there are reports from some of the more famous women writers who were there, including Dorothy Parker and Martha Gellhorn, who said: "I went to Spain and became a



At the Annual General Meeting and members' lunch: the Martínez brothers and Helvecia García Aldesoro (right) with Secretary Natalia Benjamin.

▶ member of the human race. I met the best people I ever knew.”

There is also much valuable contemporary footage to illustrate the women's testimonies: the horror of the German bombing, the stoicism of the patient women in the food queues in Madrid, the fighting on several of the battle fronts and the setting up of vital hospitals in some extraordinary places.

Those who were nurses were witness to the tremendous bravery of the wounded, and the amazing skill and determination of those caring for them. The work carried out in the makeshift hospitals contributed a great deal to the knowledge of war surgery, and particularly, of course, the importance of blood transfusions. All the volunteers were aware of the satisfaction of using everything they knew to aid those in need and of acquiring new skills and knowledge every day.

The “only representative of the Negro race” to nurse in Spain, Salaria Kea, was prompted to go by the realisation that what fascism was doing to the Jews in Hitler's Germany was exactly the same as the suffering inflicted on her people by the Klu Klux Klan and she felt it her duty to go and help in Spain. The 100 or so Negro men who were fighting alongside their white comrades in Spain rejoiced at her arrival, and she later said: “I could not live with myself today if I had not gone to help those people.”

New film project

If at first you don't succeed try and try again. The idea of producing a documentary film on the story of the Basque refugee children has been on the agenda for some time. Spurred on by the success of “La Generación del Guernica” for Discovery Latin America and Basque Television, Steve Bowles has been quietly lobbying the powers that be for a new project looking specifically at the story of the Basque children in Britain. At the end of last year the BBC finally green-lighted the project.

The documentary, called “The Guernica Children”, will be just half an hour and is being made for BBC4 with a different version for BBC Wales. At the heart of the film is the conflict between the British Government and the remarkable rainbow alliance of organisations that cared for the Basque children. Adrian Bell (author of “Only for Three Months”) brings his expertise to the project as a key interviewee.

The film is due to be finished by the end of March. Steve hopes to use the project as a spring-board for making a more comprehensive one-hour film. If you are a *niño vasco* with a particularly strong story to tell or, if you helped in any way with the care of the children, then please get in touch with Steve.

At this stage we don't know for sure when The Guernica Children will be shown. Watch this space (and also information on the website).

Recuerdos de antaño

El sol, los chavales, la guerra

por Luís Santamaría

El Sol, primaveral, imparcial, caldeaba con sus cristalinos y resplandecientes rayos la fecundidad de la campiña lindante con Londres. Animaba a los gérmenes de la vida para que todas las especies hicieran aparición con nuevos brotes de sus frutos.

El Sol cumplía, como si nada extraordinario ocurriera en uno de sus astros satélites, el mandato cíclico de fuerzas superiores, Leyes Naturales engendradas en la extensa grandeza del Cosmos... Mientras tanto, un chiquillo armado con su aparejo de pesca, una red de mentirijillas y un tarro de crystal, escruta el liquido cristalino del estanque local en busca de algún ejemplar para enriquecer su acuario. Ve algo que le atrae e interrumpe la nitidez del agua enturbándola unos momentos al alcanzar con su juguete el fango del fondo, los ‘habitantes’ del charco, impávidos, casi de inmediato prosiguen con su quehaceres... No temen al niño que poco daño puede causarles.

Temporada: último tercio de primavera... año 1941

Lo que no saben, el chiquillo sí, por eso de todos es el único que tiene miedo, es que en cualquier momento, inesperada y ferozmente, pudiera caer del cielo sobre ellos un demonio de pólvora y acero – confección de los hombres – que acabase con su mundo y con ellos... La Vida pretende consolidar su misión natural. Los horrores de la Guerra acechan leves, casi no se notan... Sólo de noche las feroces fauces de la Guerra se dejan ver en la lejanía a la altura de Londres... El fulgor rojizo-púrpura que baña la penumbra nocturna, evidencia que Londres ha caído víctima de demonios cientos, de pólvora y acero... El Sol sigue alentando generoso; sus rayos templados ayudan benévolos a la Vida amenazada, por Él, que no sea... Los chavales y las chicas de ‘Los Calvos’* se entretienen pescando como el niño de la red, o jugando al fútbol, al escondite, a cazadores, o a ‘guerras’... ¡Pobres...! Habitan en un caserón bordeado por el río Wandle, un pequeño tributario del Támesis, gozan además de un magnífico huerto – estilo victoriano – con terrenos de cultivo y muchos árboles frutales incluido una huigera que dado la inclemencia del clima nunca madura su fruta, a pesar de ello lo ponen a buen uso; se acuerdan de que en Bilbao los mayorcillos usaban la savia lechosa del higo verde como vigorizante aplicándola a sus partes pecadoras para hacer

crecer el vello púbico. Los chavales de ‘Los Calvos’ no van a ser menos, si bien las virtudes del ‘elixir crecepelos’ nunca fueron comprobados.

Para los niños de ‘Los Calvos’ el existente peligro es remoto, de momento solo ocupa un rincón en sus mentes. Londres está demasiado lejos para interesar más que a algunos que tienen hermanos mayores trabajando en el Capital, el desinterés solo ocurre durante el día, por la noche es distinto... Ven en el horizonte encima de la gran metropoli, tan remota de día, el crepúsculo bermellón, artificial, colmado de titiladoras luces fugaces, engendros del fulgor infernal, que escapan para esconderse en la estratosfera persiguídas por sonidos rítmicos de percusión que nada tienen en común con los de una orquesta sinfónica; en su paso hacia la estratosfera van trazando piroetas macabras antes de perderse en el espacio cósmico... Quizá son fuegos fatuos librados de los cadáveres de las víctimas destrozadas entre los escombros, que pretenden transportar inútilmente las almas de los muertos a un lugar abstracto que no existía más que en sus mentes cuando vivían. Ven y notan, sobre todo los mayorcitos, que noche a noche la atmósfera acarinada parece acercarse a ‘Los Calvos’ y les vuelven los recuerdos de Bilbao ferozmente bombardeado... Y no sienten culpabilidad al alamar a los más jóvenes contando las barbaridades de las que son víctimas sus atormentados pensamientos... Y se explican expresándose en lógica medio-infantil medio-adolescente que pone los pelos de punta a quienes los escuchan... Y los pequeños lloran sus miedos... Y los otros también asustados ríen lo débil de los pequeños pero lo comprenden y los consuelan... Y no se hace esperar la noche que bajan todos al sótano buscando seguridad y refugio de los demonios de la pólvora y el acero. Y pronto para aplacar su pánico, aprenden a utilizar los sonidos percusores que despiden las baterías antiaéreas para acompañar los pascalles bilbaínos que cantan temblando.

El Sol primaveral, imparcial, caldeaba con sus cristalinos y resplandecientes rayos la... * ‘Los Calvos’: *El gracioso apodo con que bautizaron los niños vascos refugiados – hoy día algunos de ellos somos socios del ‘Club de Jubilados Españoles de Londres’ – al caserón fue debido a la notable similitud del sonido fonético de su verdadero nombre ‘The Culvers’. El caserón se hallaba sito al límite sur de Londres, en el condado de Surrey.*



Left: Dora at the Langham colony.
Right: Dora today with her son Tubal.



My life

My name is Teodora (Dora) Bueno. I was on the Habana that day in 1937 when we arrived in Southampton. A little girl of six uprooted from her parents, I was sent to the colony at Langham near Colchester with my two brothers Cesareo and Carlos and my older sister Herminia.

Time slowly erased the memory of those years. In 1940 I was "adopted" by an English family who lived in Dagenham. They were very kind to me and I loved them very much.

It is during these years that my heart transferred to England. In spite of the fact that it was the war, I remember those years as the best ones in my life. But at the end of the war a new and terrible test awaited me: I was claimed by my Spanish family who were exiled in France and was once again uprooted. I had forgotten my mother, didn't speak Spanish or French, only English. It was very difficult for me.

The years passed. The birth of my mentally handicapped son and the economically precarious living conditions cut me off from my English connections. In spite of many attempts, I never succeeded in finding traces of my past. Last summer I went with my eldest son to Dagenham to try

to find members of the Ransom family, and an article was published in the local newspaper "The Post" but brought no response. Then by chance, my son found the website of your Association and we got in touch with Natalia. Such a coincidence – her mother had been at Langham, and my sister Herminia helped look after Natalia when she was a baby! Natalia sent me many photographs and newspaper articles about the colony and little by little I started to reconstitute the puzzle of these years. But I am still looking for the Ransom family – my family... Perhaps one day I will be lucky again...

I sincerely hope to meet some of you *niños de Langham* at the meal in May 2005.

'Help the Basque Children' stamps



by Natalia Benjamin

In 1938, the Basque Children's Committee brought out a series of stamps labelled "Help the Basque Children". Such stamps are known as "Cinderellas", a term used in philately for anything that may look like a postage stamp but is either not valid to carry any mail or not issued by an official postal authority. They include charity stamps, Christmas seals and advertisements.

Three vignettes were printed. The first one, in blue, showing a picture of a young boy, came out in September 1938. The boy was Jose María

Puertas from the colony in Street. The other two stamps, in green and red, bearing the picture of a young girl, came out in December 1938. Sold as part of the BCC fundraising campaign, they were accompanied by the following explanatory leaflet: "1,000 Basque children refugees are still enjoying the quiet peace and security that Great Britain has afforded them. They want to go on living here till the Spanish War is over and they can once more be united with their mothers and fathers, nearly all of whom are at present either political prisoners or refugees themselves. But it costs money to keep them and so they are asking you to help by buying

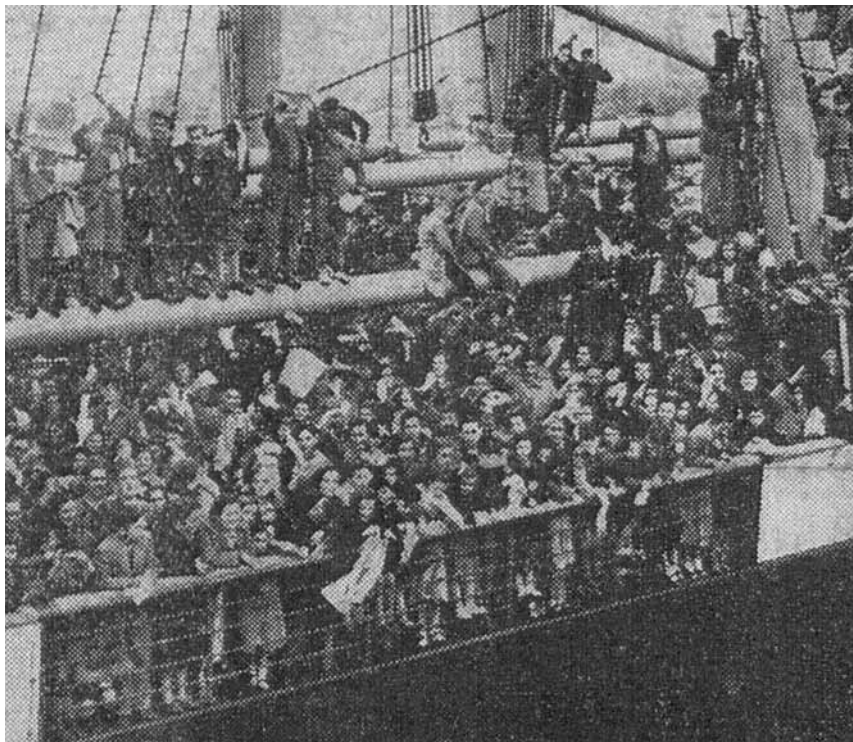
some of these stamps to stick on your correspondence.

A sheet of 24 stamps costs only 6d. It is very little, but if 100,000 people join together to help in this way, just think of what it will mean."

We have some indication of how they sold from a note in the September 1939 issue of *Spanish Relief* (bulletin no. 15 of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief): "The Basque Children's Stamp continues to enjoy a steady sale. To date it has brought us in a profit of more than a hundred pounds."

At the beginning of 1939, the Peace Pledge Union, who sponsored The Oaks, a colony in Langham (Colchester), brought out its own stamp, again with the object of raising funds and labelled "In England Still". The stamps were distributed free, but with an appeal for donations. We know from an article in *Peace News* (30 June, 1939) that the child pictured was six years old, the youngest in the colony, and that her name was Esperanza Careaga.

● A stamp dealer in New Zealand whom I contacted on the internet has kindly donated originals of the Help the Basque Children stamps. If anyone has any of the "In England Still" stamps, or knows of their whereabouts, we would be very grateful for them for our archives.



Arrival of the Habana in Southampton in May 1937.

Basque Children of '37 Association: UK

● Secretary: Natalia Benjamin, 8 Hernes Road, Oxford OX2 7PU. Tel: 01865-459 744. Email: [n.benjamin@ntlworld.com]

● Membership Secretary: Carmen Kilner. Tel: 020-8224 7959. Email: [membership.secretary@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.



Guernica Revisited

Poem by Martin Green

On the walls of the United Nations building in the city of New York
They have a mural of Pablo Picasso's "Guernica"
A painting that commemorated the first aerial bombardment of a civilian population
An early experiment in what the Nazis were later to call "total war".

Around the world, night after night, people were able to witness in their homes
Delegates of the United Nations running to and fro
In front of Picasso's "Guernica", a scream of pain upon the wall.
Meanwhile, American and British airplanes were bombing the city of Baghdad
With hundreds and thousands of tons of explosives.

The delegates of the United Nations were unconcerned as to the defenceless citizens
They were hurrying to and fro in the corridors
While Picasso's "Guernica" was screaming silently on the wall.

The dead citizens of the capital of the Basque country, Guernica
Are commemorated in the hall of the building of the United Nations in New York
The dead citizens of the capital of Irak, Baghdad, were commemorated fleetingly in images round the world.

On the road from Kuwait to Basra, a retreating army was mercilessly massacred.
The delegates of the United Nations were meanwhile running to and fro beneath the mural of Pablo Picasso's "Guernica".

October 2004

Help the committee

by Herminio Martinez

The committee of the Association has already done a lot of work for us and planned more for the future. They do need help and participation.

The events in which we were involved need to be known by new generations after so many years of silence and censorship in Spain. The efforts for reconciliation now should not be based on *la memoria perdida* and the ignorance of the repression that so many suffered under Franco and fascism.

Obituaries

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

- Esperanza Careaga Galinda (James)
- Jesus Alcón
- Fermín Magdalena
- Ma Angeles Dueñas Montes (Coupland)

Noticeboard

Books

● "The Forging of a Rebel" (all three volumes) by Arturo Barea; £5.95 (+p&p £3.95) from Academic Book Collection, Freepost SWB 21201, Poole BH12 322.



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.

Can you help?

Where did he go? Vicente Alti Carro, who came on the Habana to Great Britain when he was 8 with his sister Ana María, aged 7, and was repatriated to Chile in 1939, would like to



Vicente with his sister Ana María.

know the name of the colony where he was sent as he cannot remember it. His official record card is missing, but his sister went to Evington Hall in Leicester. He would like to know more about those two years in his life. If anyone knew him, please get in touch with Natalia Benjamin.

Wanted: Copies of Amistad: No 3 (1940), No 13 (1941) and No 25 (April 1943) onwards.

History project: In 2003, pupils of North Axholme School researched and wrote a booklet to commemorate the Battle of the Ebro. We now want to take this further. Over the next 10 years we want to record those who have been affected by the events of the Spanish Civil War, be it directly or indirectly, including the refugees of that conflict and their families. We hope to record the stories of anyone who would be willing to help us. Because of the difficulty of taking children out of school, we would be looking to exchange letters or use email, but we would also like to do some live interviews. We are hoping to produce our first booklet this summer. Contact: Richard Thorpe, History Coordinator, North Axholme School, Wharf Road, North Lincs, DN17 4HU [rthorpe@northaxholme.ngfl.myschools.net].

Accounts

Here is an abridged version of the accounts for the year ended 30 November 2004 adopted at the Annual General Meeting on 5 February 2005:

	2004	2003
<i>Receipts from subscriptions, donations and book sales:</i>	£1,765	£669
<i>Payments:</i>		
Blue plaques:	£222	£258
Display boards:	£294	-
Newsletter:	£80	£90
Postage, photocopying:	£496	£225
Totals:	£1092	£603
<i>Surplus for the year:</i>	£673	£66
<i>Bank balance:</i>	£739	£66

Copies of the audited details may be obtained from the Secretary.

Renewal of annual subs

Just a reminder that your annual subscription is due on 23 May. You will be sent a written reminder, please remember to fill it in and send by the due date. Note: *niños* and their spouses pay no membership fee, but still need to subscribe so that they can receive the

Newsletter and details of the Association's activities during the year.

Forthcoming events

Blue plaques

- Cambridge: a commemorative blue plaque will be unveiled by Professor Eric Hawkins on Sunday 15 May at Jesus College. The ceremony is at the college because the Cambridge Blue Plaque Society does not unveil the plaques in situ, since quite often there is so much traffic noise that speeches cannot be heard and the weather is sometimes unsuitable.
- Hull: Rob Wardle is looking into the possibility of having a blue plaque erected at Elmtrees, one of the two Hull colonies.

For your diary...

Talk on Saturday 12 March at 2.30pm by Professor Paul Preston, entitled "The Crimes of Franco", for the International Brigade Memorial Trust at the Imperial War Museum, London.

Wine tasting on Tuesday 19 April, presented by Manuel Moreno (our President) at the William IV, upstairs, from 6.30-9.30pm. Tickets: members £15, non-members £18, obtainable from the Secretary. (The William IV is at 786 Harrow Road, London NW10 5JX. Tube: Kensall Green (Bakerloo) and a 5-minute walk.)

Film: on Saturday 21 May there will be a screening at 2pm of Steve Bowles' film "La Generación del Guernica" at the Imperial War Museum, London.

Lecture on Sunday 11 June by Adrian Bell: "The Basque Children and the British Government", at Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU, 2-5pm. Tickets for non-members £3.

Exhibition of display boards and talk by Adrian Bell in Bradford Library as part of Refugee Week, 20-24 June.

Commemoration ceremony on Saturday 16 July at 1pm at Jubilee Gardens, London. The ceremony will honour the British International Brigaders and will be followed by a social.

Exhibition: The Instituto Cervantes in London is going to put on an event based on the Spanish Republican exile in October, and would like to focus on the *niños vascos*. There will be talks and discussions on three successive Thursdays, with an exhibition, using our display boards and other artefacts.

Book reviews



Los Niños Perdidos del Franquismo, by Ricard Vinyes, Montse Armengou, Ricard Belis; Plaza Janés, Barcelona, 2002

Reviewed by Natalia Benjamin

This new book reveals one of the darkest moments in Spain's recent history, providing evidence that Franco's henchmen stole children from the families of his left-wing opponents. It is harrowing reading, and I was often on the verge of tears. But such atrocities need to be uncovered, and it is a credit to the investigative prowess of the three authors that Spaniards are finally learning about this unsavoury chapter in their history.

As Franco's troops began gaining ground, the prisons started to fill up with those whose only crime had been to support the Republic. Convents, factories and schools were converted into concentration camps or prisons to house the opponents of the new regime. Amongst the prisoners were thousands of women, many pregnant, who were sometimes simply the wife, mother or sister of a republican. Their children went with them to prison, thus spending the first years of their lives deprived of freedom because they were children of "reds". Many died of hunger and illness there.

This book reveals the shameful secret of how

the women's children were forcibly taken from them. At the age of three, they had to leave the prison and since there were often no relatives or friends that could look after them, the children were sent either to the *Auxilio Social* or to a religious institution. Here they were brainwashed into hating their parents' ideals or joining the religious life. Some were given up for adoption by families sympathetic to Franco and had to take on new identities. Their parents, if they were alive, were never able to find them again. Victims of what now appears to have been a systematic campaign to eradicate future opposition to Franco by ensuring that children were not "polluted" by exposure to left-wing ideas, some of these unfortunate children, now in their 60s, are finally beginning to learn about their true identities.



El Exilio Español (1936-1978), by Julio Martín Casas and Pedro Carvajal Urquijo; Editorial Planeta, Barcelona 2003

Reviewed by Jim Jump

As any visit to a Spanish bookshop will confirm, there is an apparently insatiable appetite for books about the Republic, the civil war and the grim years of postwar Francoist repression. Recent years have seen particular interest in the Republican diaspora and this paperback version of a book published in 2002 is a fine example.

Here is a comprehensive account of the four

decades of exile which followed Franco's victory. Much of it comes from the mouths of the refugees themselves, with often painful personal tales mixed with accounts of the machinations of governments and political parties in exile.

The story of the Basque children – in Belgium, France, Mexico and Russia as well as Britain – features strongly. Among those quoted are our own *niños* Luís Satamaría, Helvecia García Aldesoro and Esperanza Ortiz de Zárate, along with Cora Blyth (Portillo), a helper at the Oxford colony, and son Michael.

The book recalls many amazing historical events, for example how a corps of Republican Spaniards in the Red Army fought the Falangists of Franco's Blue Division at the Battle of Stalingrad (including the son of *La Pasionaria*, Rubén, who was killed in action).

We are told of how José Antonio Aguirre, the Basque Lehendakari (prime minister), escaped from German-occupied Paris via Belgium, where the Panamanian consulate gave him false papers, and how he hid for months in Nazi Germany until fleeing to neutral Sweden.

There are horror stories too – of the Republican Spaniards sent to Nazi concentration camps, especially Mauthausen where they died in their thousands. When liberation came in May 1945, US troops were surprised to be greeted by a large banner proclaiming: "Spanish anti-fascists salute the free forces". And there are tales of heroism, involving exiled Republicans in the French Resistance and clandestine help for the guerrilla campaigns inside Spain itself.

El Centro Social de Mayores "Miguel de Cervantes"

by Espe Lopez

The *Centro Social* started in 1978 and was originally called the *Club de Jubilados Españoles de Londres*. The founders, most of them veterans of the Spanish Civil War, felt the need to create a club for Spanish pensioners in London, the majority of whom had not integrated into British society because of their lack of spoken English, having worked mostly with foreigners like themselves. The idea was warmly welcomed by the then Director of the Casa de España in Portobello, who offered them a room in the building where they could meet.

Unfortunately their stay at the Casa de España was short-lived, and so began the errant life of the Club. In 1994, thanks to a subsidy from the Spanish Administration in Madrid, it hired a church hall in Notting Hill Gate. Membership was growing rapidly and

included a few Basque *señoritas*. By 1997, when the Club was again on the move because of the sale of the hall, it had reached 500. By then, a group of Basque *niños* had become members of the Club and Helvecia and I were elected to the committee. The next move was to the present premises in the Irish Centre, Camden Square.

In 2002, the Club received a grant from the Spanish Government which made it possible to refurbish the premises in Camden Square and the name changed in January 2004 to *Centro Social de Mayores "Miguel de Cervantes"*.

Our aim is to continue with the excellent work of the *Club de Jubilados* and, given our new, improved facilities, to extend our services and activities. For example, in primary health care we organise talks for our members on health matters, as well as offering a nail cutting service, reflexology and blood pressure monitoring. We also have talks ranging from financial counselling to cultural topics, as well as classes of flamenco, line dancing and drama, and we are hoping to start a choir. Other activities include visits to museums, historic houses, the theatre and trips to the seaside. We also

hold *meriendas* on Spanish national days and the traditional Christmas Dinner/Dance is the highlight of the year. A cine-projector has just been acquired and we are looking forward to starting a Cine Club in the very near future. In addition to the above, table games such as dominos and cards are always popular. The *Centro* is open on Tuesday to Saturday from 2-7pm.

The *Centro Social de Mayores "Miguel de Cervantes"* is a popular meeting place for all Spanish pensioners in London and everyone is welcome. It gives me particular pleasure to see among our members a group of Basque *niños* who visit the centre regularly to reminisce about old times and to partake in the life of the *Centro*. The *Centro Social* was born of very sturdy roots planted over 25 years ago by a small group of dedicated men and women who voluntarily gave up their time to help maintain the community spirit of Spanish pensioners in London, many of whom live on their own and can still feel isolated in a great city like London. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

Espe is the Chair of the Committee of the *Centro Social*.