



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association UK

www.spanishrefugees-basquechildren.org

No.6

November 2006

News

Funding successes



We are delighted to report that we have obtained funding for some of our projects. First, we have obtained a grant from the Spanish Government through the Consejería de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales to be used for

the publication and distribution of this Newsletter, for the making of a CD, "Songs of the Basque Children", and for various cultural activities. We are most grateful to Señor Bernardo Fernandez (pictured) for his unstinting support.

The second grant is from the Ministerio de la Presidencia to be used to fund a commemorative plaque, a re-edit of the film "The Guernica Children" and the publication of a book of "Recuerdos". The success of our bids certainly makes all the time and effort spent filling in so many forms worthwhile. Expert help was given by Oxford-based lawyer Germán Ferrer, and his wife, former lawyer Laura Román, who have given freely of their time and advice. However, the grants will not cover all the expenses we envisage, and so we will be asking for donations from our members.

Horizon 2007

We are hoping to ascertain what the various organisations in Bilbao will be doing to mark the 70th anniversary next year. The general conclusion of our members is that we should have an event in Southampton, so please keep 26 May 2007 free. Details will be sent to you by post.

Annual reunion lunch

On Sunday 21 May, the annual reunion lunch of the *niños vascos* was held at the Prado Restaurant in Fulham. It was organised as usual by Helvecia Hidalgo and Octavio Casado. People started arriving from 12 pm and had the chance to chat to friends that they hadn't perhaps seen since the previous year. The meal was at 2pm,



Some of the niños, friends and family at the annual reunion lunch in May.

during which Helvecia gave a short speech and afterwards there was dancing on the ground floor of the restaurant.

Jornadas culturales en el Instituto Cañada Blanch

por Jesús Nieto González

Los profesores de historia españoles nos enfrentamos a diario en nuestro contacto con los alumnos con una lamentable falta de sentido histórico general. No me refiero sólo, aunque también, a la falta de conocimientos académicos sino, sobre todo, al desconocimiento general del sentido histórico que ser ciudadano español tiene. Nuestro pasado lejano, el hecho de que seamos el producto de una situación geográfica que ha provocado una enorme (y fructífera) mezcla cultural, el enorme peso del Islam andalusí, los judíos sefarditas con cuya expulsión perdimos

un irremplazable capital humano, las diferencias nacionales y regionales, la misma construcción del estado español a partir del siglo XVIII, son conceptos malentendidos e ignorados porque no están asumidos como parte fundamental de lo que es la España de hoy.

Cuando este déficit lo aplicamos a épocas más recientes y especialmente a la Guerra Civil y la dictadura franquista el problema adquiere dimensiones trágicas. Nuestros alumnos de secundaria ignoran el pasado reciente de sus propias familias, que, sin excepción, tienen muchas historias que contar sobre cómo vivieron los trágicos acontecimientos de la guerra, la posguerra y la dictadura. Es en este contexto en el que toda iniciativa que contribuya a que nuestros jóvenes entren en contacto con ese periodo histórico es no sólo deseable sino una obligación para todos aquellos que tenemos la responsabilidad de dirigir la formación de los alumnos de Enseñanza Secundaria. Y es en ese sentido también en el que Las Cortes han legislado para preservar la memoria histórica e intentar, mientras haya tiempo, dar satisfacción a todos aquellos que de manera injusta han sido olvidados o maltratados en nombre de una más que dudosa política de reconciliación que en buena medida sólo ha contribuido a justificar al vencedor mediante el silencio y maltratar al ya de por sí maltratado vencido a través del olvido.

Con esa idea el Instituto Español Cañada Blanch de Londres abrió sus puertas a los "niños de la guerra". Aquellos que llegaron al Reino Unido "sólo para tres meses" pudieron ser oídos, vistos y sentidos por nuestros alumnos. La exposición de fotos, las



Left: Adrian Bell (centre) with Natalia Benjamin and Jesus Nieto at the Instituto Cañada Blanch, in London.



From the Secretary

The last six months have been busy indeed. Two things in particular were exciting. First, we received charitable status at the end of July, and we are grateful to our Auditor Tom Webb for seeing that through to completion. The second point concerns the grants we have been applying for. We finally heard from the Ministerio de la Presidencia that we had been awarded funding for the three categories, documentary film, book of *recuerdos* and commemorative plaque. We have also received a grant from the Spanish government for the publication and distribution of this Newsletter, the compilation of a CD and for cultural activities. This is really good news as on our modest income we cannot hope to carry out interesting projects.

I am still receiving contributions to the *recuerdos* book, and now have 30 contributions in Spanish and 27 in English. I realised that the book would have to be bilingual, so there is the added task of getting it translated. Because of this, the grant will not be sufficient and will need some donations. If it is to be published in May, then everything has to be ready by December!

During the summer, whilst in Brittany, I was pleased to see two of the *niños*. Teodora Bueno and her son Tubal came to visit for a few days: Dora had been at the Langham colony and known my mother. She had subsequently lost touch with everyone and wanted to find relatives of the family in Dagenham who took her in. Her son found us on the internet, and Dora had been hoping to come to Helvecia's lunch in May 2005, but had fallen ill. It was marvellous to meet them – in fact, her sister Herminia had helped my mother when I was a baby! The other *niño* I saw was Alvaro Velasco from Wales, who was visiting his son not far from where I was staying. I spent a very happy afternoon chatting with him and his family.

I must end this letter hoping that everything will eventually fall into place. At the moment, it seems as if there is so much to do that it can't possibly be done on time. By the time the next Newsletter comes out, it will be the 70th anniversary. We will keep you informed by letter about the ways in which we will be celebrating the event.

iAgur!

Natalia Benjamin

Natalia Benjamin



Tom Buchanan (standing) speaks at the Instituto Cañada Blanch.

conferencias de los expertos, el documental de la BBC y la propia mesa redonda de los “niños” constituyeron el que, sin duda, fue el gran acontecimiento del curso pasado en nuestro centro. Además, por primera vez en la historia del colegio se abrieron las puertas para que los vecinos del barrio pudieran ver la exposición y visitar un edificio en el que la mayoría de los que acudieron jamás había estado.

Las actividades comenzaron el jueves 11 de mayo con la inauguración de la exposición a cargo del Consejero de Educación de la Embajada de España en el Reino Unido. El profesor de la Universidad de Oxford Tom Buchanan habló ese mismo día ante alumnos e invitados sobre el tema “El Reino Unido y la Guerra Civil Española”. El viernes 12, el profesor Adrian Bell, autor del libro “Only for Three Months”, habló sobre la estancia de los niños en el Reino Unido. El lunes 15 se dedicó a la proyección del documental “The Guernica Children” del realizador británico Steve Bowles y a un coloquio posterior con el autor. El martes 16, último día de actos, se celebró una mesa redonda-coloquio con cuatro representantes de los niños: Luis Santamaría, Herminio Martínez, Esperanza Ortiz de Zárate, Helvecia Hidalgo y la Secretaria de la Asociación Natalia Benjamín. Es lo que sin duda constituyó el acto central de estas jornadas y el que levantó un mayor interés y emoción entre los alumnos y, en general, todos los asistentes al acto.

El balance final no puede ser más satisfactorio. La fuerza, la juventud de los “niños”, su entusiasmo envidiable han sido para nosotros un ejemplo y un aliciente para continuar por este camino de organizar actividades que contribuyan a que nuestros alumnos entiendan mejor nuestro pasado para que sean más conscientes de nuestro presente. En definitiva para que se conviertan en seres humanos solidarios, tolerantes y amantes de la libertad.

From a niña of a niña

My name is Susana Sabín Fernández. My mother, Carmen Fernández Learra, her two sisters, Manola and Asun, and their brother Loren arrived on the Habana.

The girls ended up in the Laleham colony in Margate and my uncle went to Scarborough. They all returned to Spain, via

France, at the end of the Spanish Civil War.

I am so passionate about the topic of the *niños*, memory and celebrations in particular, that I have just started a doctorate at the University of Southampton. I understand that many of you are getting a little fed up with so many people asking you about your experiences, but if you still have something, anything, you would like to say, please contact me on tel: 01962-733072 and I will be delighted to talk to you.



Poetry reading

On Sunday 30 April, a select group of twelve participants met for a poetry reading at the Torriano Meeting House in Kentish Town.

The session began with two English poets, Jane Duran and Anthony Edkins, reading some poems from their

published collections. Herminio Martínez (pictured) read poems by Fray Luís de León, Quevedo and Antonio Machado, prefacing the reading with some interesting background information; Carmen Kilner read *Caminante, No Hay Camino*, by Machado; Natalia Benjamin read the *Romance de la Condesita*. But the highlight of the afternoon was Koke Martínez's varied contribution. He read some of Martin Green's seminal poem *Gandesa*, followed by poems of García Lorca; he ended by reading with great passion some of his own poems, including “*Shingle Street*”, dedicated to Chloe Vulliamy who used to run the Culvers colony.

Liberation of the Channel Islands

by Manuel Moreno

Every year people meet in St Helier in Jersey on 9 May to celebrate the liberation of the Channel Islands from the occupying Nazi and German Army during the 2nd World War. Liberation came almost a year after D-Day, on 9 May 1945. Jersey was the only British territory occupied by the fascist forces.

Slave labourers were forced to work by the Germans on the Atlantic Wall and the underground hospital, which is now a museum about the occupation. Some of us go to the crematorium to attend a memorial service to them. A regular party comes from the mainland, including Fernando de la Torre, always standing proudly with his republican flag, Robert Smith and family of the International Brigades and myself, again with a republican flag.

This ceremony has been taking place for over 20 years and has been regularly attended by representatives of various governments whose people were slaves, including the Soviet Union/Russia, Poland, France and several voluntary groups like Amnesty International as well as the Bailiff of Jersey.

The Spanish contingent has always been the largest, with many family members attending, including Gary Font, who has now been organising the event for several years and whose father Francisco Font was a slave labourer. The Spaniards who were slave labourers were Republicans of course, exiled from Spain and after the war unable to return since the Allies refused to liberate Spain, thus abandoning them.

What had always been lacking in the past, however, was a representative of the Spanish government. But this year, it was different, since the Spanish Ambassador, Señor Carlos Miranda, was invited to attend and to give the speech. He spoke very well, stressing that the Republicans fought against fascism and that Spain's achievement in forming a democracy is what all Republicans believed in: we must preserve this tragic memory so that it will not happen again.

We all laid our wreaths: some thirty-five were laid, a wonderful collection of colour and brightness in the sun. It was a very moving experience. Flags were lowered and a minute's silence observed to remember all those who suffered.

We will be there next year. ¡No pasarán!

Leah Manning remembered

by Pauline Fraser

On 26 May 2006, Natalia Benjamin and myself joined two *niños* who live in Bilbao in a ceremony to honour the memory of Leah Manning. Rafael de Barrutia and his brother



From left: Wenceslao de Barrutia, Natalia Benjamin and Pauline Fraser in Plaza Leah Manning.



At the homenaje in Vitoria in September, Lehendakari (Basque President) Juan José Ibarretxe (left) beside Natalia Benjamin and (to her left) historian Gregorio Arrién and Enrique Urquijo.

Wenceslao placed a simple spray of red and white carnations in front of one of the plaques in the Plaza Leah Manning in Bilbao. The Barrutia brothers, who were Poppy Vulliamy's "boys" and were at several colonies, returned to Bilbao many years ago, but still retain fond memories of England. Wenceslao attended the Royal Veterinary College and was introduced to the then Princess Elizabeth.

The gardens, which were dedicated to Leah Manning on 13 December 2002, can be found in the Barrio Txurdinaga, a residential area of Bilbao. They are surrounded by several schools, which is most appropriate as Leah Manning worked as a teacher, being headmistress of an open air school (these being special schools for children in delicate health). She then became president of the National Union of Teachers, and subsequently Labour MP for Islington East and later Epping. She was a powerful personality and it was this quality that was used to such effect to persuade the British government to allow the evacuation of Basque children to Britain.

It is very moving to find there are *niños* who returned to Bilbao many years ago who are still prepared to honour the memory of Leah Manning.

Stoneham camp revisited

by Richard Thorpe

Stoneham Camp was recreated, in miniature, this August, at English Heritage's Festival of History at Kelmash Hall, Northamptonshire. La Columna, a group which specialises in Spanish Civil War living history demonstrations, recreated the camp on the day before the *niños* arrived.

Visitors were invited to look around the type of tents that the Basque children slept in, sign a petition to Neville Chamberlain to help the Spanish Republic and find out more about the plight of refugees in 1937, all this to the accompaniment of a radio broadcast which heralded the arrival of the SS Habana. To get children involved with the theme of the display, three of the drawings done by refugee children (from "They Still Draw Pictures") were recreated for them to colour in.

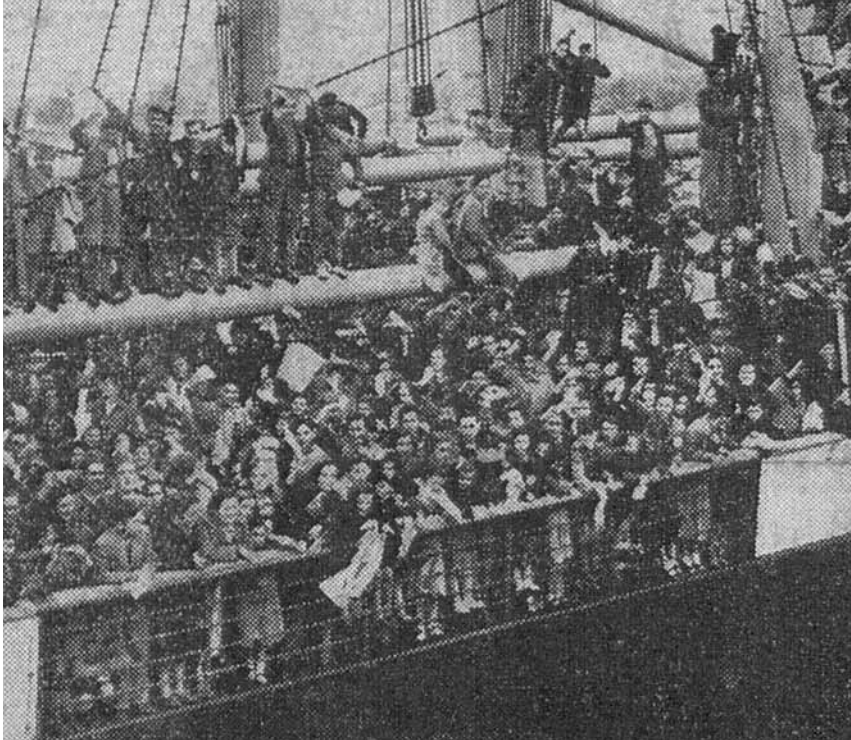
English Heritage's premier event attracts up to 60,000 people. For many, including Spanish visitors, the story of Stoneham camp and the colonies was new. Over 500 children took part in the colouring activity and 1,000 leaflets, which included details of the Basque Children of '37 Association UK website, were given out.

Acto de homenaje a los niños de la guerra

by Peter Wood

On Monday 4 September, Mari-Carmen and I flew from Heathrow to Bilbao, and on the next day we made our way to the School of Engineering, where we met up with just over 250 other *niños*. It wasn't long before we boarded one of the 10 coaches waiting on a further corner, and we were off on the hour-long journey to Vitoria. Arriving there after a very scenic ride through the Basque countryside, we walked about half a kilometre to the Consejo de Gobierno. There we stood in line and were all introduced to the Lehendakari and other dignitaries. He even laughed and replied in English to a little joke that we made.

Soon all the *niños* were sitting in front of the Government Palace in hot sunshine. The temperature was 33 C. The Lehendakari, Juan José Ibarretxe, began his speech by welcoming all the *niños* (the youngest was 74). He had words of gratitude for Belgium, France, Britain, Mexico and Russia, countries who had taken in the *niños*. The next person to speak was the historian Gregorio Arrién, who regretted that 70 years had had to pass before the memory of the war was spoken about openly, instead of the fear and silence that had surrounded it before. Then the president of one of the Bilbao associations of Basque children, Enrique Urquijo, spoke, condemning all wars as wicked because of the effects on the weakest members of our society. Lastly it was the turn of Natalia: she told of the need for the creation of the British association and what its achievements had been in so short a time. She reminded the audience that the British government had refused to pay for the upkeep of the refugees,



Arrival of the Habana in Southampton in May 1937.



Basque Children of '37 Association UK

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- Membership Secretary: Carmen Kilner. Tel: 020-8224 7959.

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.

and told them that it was the people of Britain who had looked after them with such dedication. She finished by praising the courage and determination of these children who had been deprived of a normal childhood with their parents. Afterwards, scores of *niños* swarmed around her, wanting to show her their photographs and to tell her about their experiences in Britain. Many promised to send her their story of the years between 1937 and 1946.

Meanwhile, we all repaired to the marquees at the rear of the Palace gardens, where vast quantities of food and drink were set out. In between eating and drinking, we talked with others from the Ukraine who had just returned to Spain to live. They were full of praise for the country that had looked after them since 1937. They spoke in English, French, Russian and of course, Spanish. We met others who had been sent to Mexico and who had only returned to Spain after Franco's death. We also talked to a couple from France and one from Cuba. There was a fantastic atmosphere and everybody kept on talking and laughing. Nobody looked or seemed as old as they must have been, and still the food and drink was being brought round by the staff.

One more surprise was to come when we eventually moved round to the rear exit of the palace gardens. We were all presented with a large blue carrier bag which contained an umbrella and a large print of the Palace. Then it was back to the coaches, and at last Natalia, having been waylaid by a *niña* who had known her parents, and even her as a child, came into sight and we drove back to Bilbao.

70th anniversary of the International Brigades

by Marlene Sidaway

A larger than usual crowd gathered in Jubilee Gardens on 15 July 2006 for the commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. We were honoured that a representative of the Spanish Government, His Excellency the Spanish Ambassador, Carlos Miranda, had accepted our invitation to speak.

Señor Miranda laid a wreath and spoke of his appreciation of all who had fought for a democratic Spain and particularly those who had died, had been wounded or lost their freedom during the fight. He evoked his recent visit to Jersey, to commemorate the liberation of the island from German occupation, and to remember the 1500 Spanish Republican exiles who were among the 5,000 in the forced labour camps on the island. Señor Miranda spoke of the suffering of the Spanish people both during the war and during the years of Franco's dictatorship, but said that since 1975, happily, Spain had started to evolve into a land of liberty and co-

existence and now enjoyed the democracy and freedom that had been fought for all those years ago: the fight had not been in vain.

Rodney Bickerstaffe was the other guest speaker, and he remembered the day in May 2005 when he had been present at the unveiling of the Ebro Memorial on Hill 705. The British Consul General in Barcelona, Geoff Cowling, had been there, and Rodney expressed the hope that for the first time, next years' memorial meeting in London would also have a representative of the British Government.

The IBMT commemorative book of brigaders' poetry, "Poems from Spain", edited by Jim Jump was launched at this meeting. It was very well received, and relatives of some of the poets then gave readings at the Travel Inn during the lunch.

As always, it was good to see so many representatives of the *niños* present; it has been suggested that they play a part in next years' ceremony. The committee will consider this when it plans the event.

The scientific exile

On 16 May 2006 at the Instituto Cervantes, there was a round table discussion about the Scientific Exile from Spain. The three participants were Alicia Alted (UNED), Consuelo Naranjo (CSIC) and Alfredo Baratas (Universidad Complutense). The outbreak and the end of the Civil War in Spain forced many researchers and university professors into exile. Their main destination was Latin America, but many of them made a risky journey first to various European countries. The United Kingdom received a relatively small number of scientists, but all of them were top of their field, such as Professor Arturo Duperier and Doctor Josep Trueta.

Exhibition at Wortley Hall

The South Yorkshire festival was held on Saturday 1 July at Wortley Hall near Sheffield. The theme this year was the Spanish Civil War, and a plaque was unveiled and an olive tree planted to honour the 17 men from South Yorkshire who went to Spain and joined the International Brigades. Amongst the many events was the Association's exhibition of 29 display boards about the exile of the *niños* and the different colonies where they stayed, which were loaned for the occasion and which aroused a great deal of interest.

Echoes of Spain mosaic

by Eddie Adams

At 5.30pm on 18 October over 200 people gathered together in the Portobello Road to hear Jack Jones, veteran of the International Brigade which fought in the Spanish Civil War, inaugurate the Echoes of Spain Mosaic memorial.

Eddie Adams in front of the Echoes of Spain mosaic.



The mosaic (5 x 2 metres) tells the story of the volunteers who went from Kensington to join the International Brigade and of the 4000 refugee children from the Basque country who came to England in 1937 on the Habana.

Amanda Hayes, Vice Principal of Kensington and Chelsea College outlined the college's role in promoting community projects. 15-20 volunteers had worked on this mosaic over a three year period.

His Excellency Carlos Miranda, the Spanish Ambassador, was one of the guest speakers. He emphasised that the brigaders' sacrifices were not in vain and that Spain was now a democracy. Jack Jones spoke about how ordinary people had taken the lead in answering the call to defend democracy in Spain and to beat fascism. Manuel Moreno recounted how his mother had come on the Habana with 4000 Basque children, who had subsequently been placed in 98 colonies around Britain, helped by the British people but not by the government.

Among the gathering were many people with strong connections to that time in Spanish history. Felicity Asbee, now 94 years old, showed posters she had designed in the thirties to raise money for Spain. Elvira Medrano and Alfonso Santana told their stories, and the Richardson family closed the meeting with a song about the fight for democracy and against fascism that their mother Hilda had learned in the thirties.

There was an exhibition on the Civil War, and it is hoped to produce a book in the near future telling all the stories.

Meeting with Ministro de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales

On 20 June, the Spanish Minister of Labour, Jesus Caldera, on a flying visit to London, presented the Centro Social de Mayores Miguel de Cervantes in Camden with a medal and unveiled a commemorative plaque.

A meeting had been arranged straight after this with representatives of the committee and some members of the Basque Children of '37

Association. Unfortunately, due to the demands of a live television interview, our time with the Minister was short, ten minutes at most. However, in that time we managed to make him aware of the Association's activities and our plans for the anniversary next year.

When pressed about funding opportunities, he stated that it should be possible to obtain some financial help from the Spanish government.

Forthcoming events

Blue plaque for Hull colony

A blue plaque will be unveiled to commemorate the Basque children refugees in Hull at Sutton Village Care Home (formerly Elm Trees), 30 Church Street, Sutton-on-Hull at 12.30pm on Friday 10 November 2006, followed by light refreshments at the Sutton Exhibition and Resources Centre (directly opposite the home). All are welcome.

There were two colonies in Hull, one in a house in Pearson Park called Hazeldene which was lent by local builder Robert Tarran; the other was a large mansion called Elm Trees in Sutton-on-Hull, owned by the Sewell family, also builders, who generously offered it as a haven for the children. Mr Sewell and his wife subsequently fostered two sisters, María Ángeles and Dolores Dueñas Montes, when the colony closed.

Symposium at the National Library of Scotland

A symposium which commemorates the 70th anniversary of the Spanish Civil War will be held at the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh on Friday 17 November 2006. Presentations will be divided into three sections: Scotland, Britain and the Spanish Civil War, Memories and Exiles and



► Memories and Archives. These will be followed by a showing of Steve Bowles' film "The Guernica Children" in the afternoon. Ten places have been reserved for members of the Association wishing to attend the symposium.

Lectures on Leah Manning

On Friday 9 March 2007 Homerton College Cambridge is hosting afternoon lectures on the life and work of Leah Manning, followed by the formal opening of the Leah Manning Room and tea. Anyone wishing to attend should contact the Association Secretary.

Oxford day school on the Basque refugee children

A day school the "Basque Refugee Children of the Spanish Civil War" is to be held at Rewley House, 1 Wellington Square, Oxford, on Saturday 28 April 2007.

Application Forms can be obtained by telephoning 01865-270368 or by getting in touch with the Association Secretary, Natalia Benjamin. Places on these day schools get filled up very quickly, so we advise you to book as soon as possible.

Because of the relatively high cost of this day school, the Association is able to fund some places, including transport to Oxford. If you would like to receive funding, please get in touch with the Association Secretary.

Personalities

For the next few editions of the Newsletter, we shall be writing short pieces about people who helped the niños vascos in various ways. Dr Ellis is the subject for this number and we turn to Amistad No 7 to an article written by an unknown niño in February 1940. If you would like to contribute, please send your manuscript to the Association Secretary.

Dr Ellis and Dr Russell

As well as working with the Basque children, Dr Ellis also worked for refugees in Hungary and Romania. During World War II, he served as wing commander in North Africa, Italy and Belgium. Soon after the war, he became professor of Child Health at Edinburgh, where he spent the rest of his career. He was described as a man of great intellectual honesty and a sense of humour. In 1964 he retired because of failing health. He died in London two years later.
It was about the middle of May 1937 when lots

of children went to the Asistencia Social building to pass the medical test in view of their evacuation to England. A lady doctor and a doctor sent by the British Health Committee were doing the job of examining them; these two persons were Dr Russell and Dr Ellis, so beloved by us later on.

Dr Ellis was in Bilbao twice while the town suffered the most terrible raids from Franco's bombers, to finish up the necessary requirements for our landing in Southampton; on one of these trips the plane in which he travelled was pursued by a rebel fighter, but a bit of luck saved him from being brought down.

Since our arrival at North Stoneham camp he has been doing his best for our welfare. Many boys have been at his house. Many have been at the pictures and other amusement places thanks to his kindness, and he took a lot too to several of London's baths. Friend of everyone without any favourite, he knew how to place his name in the heart of us all; he knew how to make himself understand in our own language, one of his great ambitions; he keeps many memories from his visits to Bilbao during the terrible days that preceded to the march of the mercenary troops into the town, memories of scenes that our minds will never forget, and when he speaks about them talks with great admiration towards the people who resist the constant attacks of Hitler's "ironbirds" with so much courage; he gave all his knowledge of the medical science towards anyone who was ill, and never stopped in his task till the lad, or lassie, was on the right path of health.

Everyone of us, those who have been so unfortunate by going back to Franco's hell, as those who remain in England, will never forget his fair complexion, with a permanent smile over his lips and a cheerful spirit.

Since the day of that first meeting of Dr Russell and Dr Ellis in the rooms of the Asistencia Social at Bilbao, in the middle of children who were waiting their turn to pass the medical test, their relations have been better every day, and as in the fairytales, well, or whatever it is, they have let us know that they get married on the 18 January.

We are quite sure that the boys and girls, as for today we are more than children, that read these lines will be very glad on getting such a good news from these beloved friends.

In these lines we express our most warm congratulations for the new life they have started, and we express these congratulations not only in name of the 420 of us who remain in England at the moment, but in name of the 4,152 who landed at Southampton on that sunny day several years ago.

Did you know?

● that *niño* Raimundo Pérez Lezama, who was 14 when he came on the Habana, and was sent to Nazareth House in Southampton, was spotted while playing football for his colony by

Southampton FC? He made his debut for the club as goalkeeper on 1 June 1940 in a game against Arsenal. Raimundo only played two more games before going back to Bilbao, where he played professionally for Las Arenas Club de Gexto, Atlético Bilbao, SD Indautxu and Sestao. He also played once for Spain in 1947.

● that one of the *sacerdotes* who accompanied the *niños* to England, Bedita Larrakoetxea, and who spent two years on the Isle of Wight, was the first to translate the works of Shakespeare into Basque? From England, he went to Uruguay and Argentina, where he taught mathematics, English and physics. In 1954, he returned to his home country and seeing the dire situation of Basque as a result of the post-war cultural oppression, he resolved to immerse himself in the Basque cultural movement, and among other things, to translate the plays of William Shakespeare into the language of his ancestors.

Do you remember?



Miss Picken, Secretary of the Basque Children's Committee

Calling all 'Banana Boys'

I have just read a small paperback by Frank Norman, written in 1969, about his time in three Dr Barnardo's Homes from April 1937 until October 1946. He was born illegitimate in June 1930 and entered Cardington Abbey, Bedford in April 1937.

Throughout his years in Barnardo's Homes, he admits he was educationally backward and extremely rebellious to any form of authority. In each home there was harsh discipline, beatings and a complete absence of any affection from the staff. In August 1941 he was transferred to a home for 200 boys in Kingston-upon-Thames. Soon afterwards, he says that six Spanish boys arrived and Frank, known as "John", befriended one of them, Pedro (not his real name) Pedro was born in Santa María de Corco, near Gerona. In July 1944 they both transferred to Barnardo's Technical School in Hertfordshire, leaving to start work in October 1946

If anyone knows more about this story, please contact Tom Webb on 01973 782109

Time and skills needed

Do you have IT skills? Can you type and use Word? Are you free during the day?

If you have these skills and have TIME, then we can use you. The Secretary needs help for various projects, so please get in touch. Contact Natalia Benjamin on 01865-459744

Noticeboard

Books

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.

Film

"The Guernica Children", Steve Bowles' documentary film is available on VHS and DVD for £15 + £2 p&p from the Secretary.

Archive material received

- Photographs from Gerald Hoare, Mari Sanz, Pilar Cowan, Koke Martinez, Alegria Gunner
- Gail Giles, "From Bilbao to Carleon: the Basque Child Refugees of 1937", Gwent Local History, No 99, Autumn 2005
- Minutes of the BCC and other committees; also articles from Michael Alpert
- "The Basque children in Oxfordshire during the Spanish Civil War: politically charged project or humanitarian endeavour?" undergraduate dissertation by Meirian Jump, St Anne's College, Oxford.
- Photo album of Hutton Hall and other memorabilia donated by Doris Himsforth (née Oates).

Research

- We are pleased to report that Meirian Jump submitted her dissertation on the Basque refugees and Oxfordshire in May (see above), and was subsequently awarded a first class BA degree in Modern History at Oxford University.
- Several *niños vascos*, including Josefina Stubbs (Antolín) and Herminio Martinez have been interviewed at various times in the last six months, mostly by undergraduates, for the purposes of their dissertations.
- A novelist, Victoria Hislop, who wishes to set her next book in war-torn Spain, has also been given precious background information.
- Meridian TV has interviewed one of the *niñas* for a short feature in November.

Talks

Secretary Natalia Benjamin gave a talk about the Basque children in Great Britain to the Thame Historical Society on 9 May, and to the Woodstock Society on 16 October. She will be giving another talk to the Farringdon History Society on 15 November 2006.

Thanks

This Newsletter was printed and distributed thanks to a grant from the Consejería de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales of the Spanish Government. We are grateful for its support.

Book reviews

The Royal Navy and the Siege of Bilbao; by James Cable (Cambridge University Press, 1979)

Reviewed by Tom Webb

I have always been interested in the part played by the Royal Navy and this account covers a short period in a small area off the northern coast of Spain from March to June 1937. It concentrates on two events in May, off the coast near Bilbao. The merit of this book is that it links the naval actions with the simultaneous preparations being made for the refugees in Bilbao.

The Royal Navy, represented by a major warship (HMS Hood or HMS Royal Oak) accompanied by two "F" Class destroyers, was employed in protecting shipping carrying humanitarian supplies and refugees. On 23 April the Nationalist cruiser Almirante Cervera stopped three British cargo ships from entering Bilbao. Signalling delays were engineered to give time for HMS Hood to arrive and train its 15 inch guns on the Almirante Cervera which, having only 6 inch guns, withdrew from the scene.

This action was repeated on 6 May by HMS Royal Oak which intervened so that the refugee ship the Habana could leave Bilbao with refugees for France. Better known, of course, is the participation of HMS Royal Oak and the destroyer HMS Fearless in escorting the Habana to Southampton on 21 and 22 May 1937 with 4,000 *niños vascos* on board.

The Royal Navy continued to escort other refugee ships from other northern Spanish ports to France until the end of September.

The book is useful, but the inclusion of a coastal map with one or two diagrams would have made the movements of the warships easier to follow.

Poems from Spain: British and Irish International Brigaders on the Spanish Civil War; edited by Jim Jump (Lawrence and Wishart, 2006, £10.99)

Reviewed by Andy Croft

"Poems from Spain", published in association with the International Brigades Memorial Trust to mark the seventieth anniversary of the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, is the first anthology solely devoted to poems written by British International Brigaders.

And what a wonderful book it is! The editor,

Jim Jump, is the son of a British International Brigader and a Spanish Republican refugee. He has organised the poems according to the chronology of the conflict rather than by the dates of their composition. It is a very effective way of telling the story of the war and of the involvement of the British volunteers. The book also includes a useful summary history of the war, notes to the poems and brief biographies of the poets.

The introduction is a model of diplomacy, scholarly but committed, insisting on the value of the poems as poems: "Works of great introspection and depth mingle with others that have come straight from the barrack room.

There are agonisingly personal poems, songs of hope, laments for the dead, fist-clenching anthems and powerful political statements... What they all share is the authenticity which first-hand experience brings to the poetic response to great historical events."

The real value of this book lies in the inclusion of a great many poems which have been out of print for decades or have never previously been published. The anthology contains 85 poems, written by 33 volunteers, six of whom did not return from Spain. There are some wonderful poems here by Bill Feeley, Tony MacLean, Bill Harrington, Eric Edney, John Dunlop, Aileen Palmer and the editor's father Jimmy Jump – variously rhetorical, bitter, documentary, prophetic, lyrical, satirical, warm and heroic.

Although the number of already published writers who volunteered to fight in Spain was clearly significant, more remarkable still is the number of ordinary volunteers who wrote poetry about their experiences, mostly for the first time. And these poets did not spring from the ground fully armed. They were mostly working-class intellectuals, whose "university" was the labour movement – especially the Communist Party. The culture of the Popular Front included magazines like Left Review, New Writing, later Poetry and the People, which explicitly sought to publish "non-professional" poets and which encouraged certain kinds of poetry, both free-verse and popular forms, documentary poems rooted in direct experience. The Spanish Civil War was not "a poet's war". But it produced some unforgettable poetry, and some poets whose work deserves to be better known.

This is an edited version of a review published in the Morning Star on 22 August 2006.

Obituaries

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

- Pirmín Treco
- Enriqueta Frankfort
- José Gallego
- Jack Puntis

Maestras y auxiliares

Feliz centenario Purificación

por Espe López

El día 12 de septiembre es una fecha señalada en mi agenda. Durante muchos años, ese día, Helvecia, Bautista y yo hemos visitado a Purificación Vela de Basarte en su residencia para felicitarle su cumpleaños. Puri es una de las “señoritas” que nos acompañó en nuestro inolvidable viaje a Inglaterra hace ya casi 70 años.

Este año, el 12 de septiembre fue especial. Puri cumplía 100 años! La encargada de la residencia nos invitó a la fiesta que iban a organizar para celebrar su aniversario. A las tres de la tarde estábamos ya en la residencia. La sala estaba adornada con globos de colores y había muchas flores y tarjetas, y una hermosa tarta que decía en español: “Feliz cumpleaños Purificación”. Ví una tarjeta con la fotografía de la Reina Isabel II en la que le felicitaba su centenario. Me extrañó ver la tarjeta porque sabía que la Reina solo felicita a los centenarios británicos. Al hablar más tarde con la

directora, nos informó que habían tenido que insistir firmemente con el Palacio y convencerles que una persona que había vivido 70 años en Inglaterra se merecía ser considerada por tal honor.

Entre los ancianos residentes estaba Puri, muy guapa y elegante, con traje de vestido y chaqueta, bolso y pendientes nuevos, regalo de la residencia. Se puso muy contenta al vernos, estaba asombrada que tal evento fue en su honor. Varias personas me dijeron que era la favorita de la casa, lo que no me extrañó, ya que siempre está risueña y jamás se queja.

Poco a poco iban llegando las visitas – la alcaldesa de Ealing, que dijo unas cariñosas palabras; el Consejero de Economía Español, que leyó una simpática carta de felicitación que el Embajador Español de Londres, Don Carlos Miranda, quien estaba representando, le había dedicado; el representante de la residencia dió un breve relato de la vida de Puri en Inglaterra. No mencionó las circunstancias por las que, a sus 30 años, en 1937, había abandonado su querido Bilbao para ayudar en la evacuación de niños a Inglaterra. Al parecer desconocía su historia que más tarde le contamos. Entre los amigos estuvimos presentes cuatro niños vascos. También presentes estaban Sor Teresa, directora del programa “Ayuda a Domicilio” que visita Puri con regularidad, y su colega Sor Lourdes, que después de una espléndida

merienda, nos acompañó a cantar las canciones bilbainas que tanto le gustan a Puri y que aún recuerda perfectamente. Es increíble el recuerdo tan vivo que conserva de su Bilbao.

Creo que Puri pasó unas horas felices en compañía de todos, gracias a la hospitalidad de la directora y su personal, así como a las visitas que tan cariñosamente le rindieron tan magnífico homenaje. Para nosotros fue una tarde inolvidable.

Margarita Lavín

Below we reproduce part of a letter written to *niña Pili Vidal* by one of the *maestras*, Margarita Lavín:

Representasteis todas vosotras mucho en mi vida, tengo un recuerdo imborrable de mi época en Inglaterra y a todas os tengo siempre presentes en mi deseo de que la vida os proporcione la mayor dicha posible.

Tal vez alguna vez obré en forma que pudo no complaceros. Tened la seguridad de que lo hice siempre pensando en formar vuestro carácter, para que supierais luchar en un futuro que no se presentaba muy promisorio. Os pido que recordeis siempre que contribuisteis con vuestra alegría y cariño a hacernos la vida más llevadera en aquellos tristes momentos. Gracias por ello.

Buenos Aires, 6 de enero 1952

The future of the past: memories – where to keep them

by Carmen Kilner

About half the membership of our association are *niños*, the rest consist not only of family members of *niños*, helpers, *maestras* or other associated people, but also a growing number of academics and members of the general public, young and old, English and Spanish, who are interested in the history, sociology or other aspects of the children's exile.

What archive material are we talking about? Well anything really that is related to this period – photographs, either personal or of groups or camps, letters, drawings, songs, little notes, leaflets, books, personal bits and pieces – nothing is too insignificant! The important thing is to keep them, and to keep them together as each person's personal collection. Many of you have already given us material, or lent it to us for photocopying. Natalia now has a large collection of material, but we would love to have more! We realise, nevertheless, that looking after these records is a specialised job, and requires more space than Natalia's office.

It is clear that this material should eventually be placed in a central archive in Britain. The ideal archive would make sure

that all materials were preserved in optimal conditions. They would be readily available to be seen by anybody, could be copied or reproduced, used for academic research and for exhibitions.

Next year being the 70th anniversary of this event has sharpened our minds as to where would be a suitable venue to keep these archives. We have visited and considered several very fine institutions, and the committee has decided that the facilities offered by Southampton University will fulfill all the aims mentioned and will provide the best home for these precious memories. The Basque Children's Archive would be housed in the Special Collections Division of the Hartley Library which reflects the latest standards in archival accommodation, having in 2004 undergone a major programme of refurbishment. The reading room now seats 32 people, there is a seminar room, an exhibition gallery, a new strong room, enough archival accommodation for the next 20 years, enhanced space for conservation work, a new store for photographic and volatile material, a photographic studio and dark room and a new workroom for archival staff. The Newsletter of the Special Collections will advertise the

collection to other archives and academics, which we hope will stimulate interest and research.

Here is part of the letter I received from the Head of the Special Collections Division: “I was delighted to learn that at its last meeting the committee decided that you would like to house the archives with us at an appropriate time. We very much look forward to working with the Association. I know that the archives will be of great interest to many researchers and students from a range of disciplines, and the link to the Association, the *niños* and their descendants is one we shall value greatly.”

Southampton was at the start of the story of the *niños* in this country, how fitting then that it should also be the place that we find most suitable for preserving our records.

“...photographs, either personal or of groups or camps, letters, drawings, songs, little notes, leaflets, books, personal bits and pieces – nothing is too insignificant!”