



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association UK



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May 2010



Some of the participants at the annual general meeting.

News

AGM and members' lunch

The annual general meeting of the Association took place on 6 February, and we are grateful to Rosario Padilla Montoya for kindly making available to us the Committee Room in the Consejería. Twenty people were present and there were three apologies.

The Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, presented her report, saying that the highlight of the year's activities had undoubtedly been the inaugural lecture of the Association, given in London by Dr Tom Buchanan to a packed audience. Carmen Kilner and Manuel Moreno had represented the Association at an event in San Sebastián and valuable contacts had been made in the Basque country which lead to an offer to provide a grant for the reprinting of the book "Recuerdos". A useful adjunct and visual aid for those giving talks has been banner telling the *niños'* story that has been made.

The work done by the Association shows that it is continuing to propagate its aims and objectives.

The Membership Secretary, Gerald Hoare, reported that membership had increased and stood at 240. There had been a problem with over 50 outstanding subscriptions, not only for the current year but also for the previous one, and the decision to send all the offenders a letter informing them that their membership might lapse proved successful. Members should bear in mind that even if they are exempt from dues, they have to re register every year.

The Treasurer's report said that the Association was on solid ground financially, there was a healthy balance which would enable the Association to undertake projects. The meeting closed with the re-election of the officers.

The AGM was followed, as usual, by the annual members' lunch, which this year was held at the Sugo Restaurant in Notting Hill. It was a very pleasant to have the opportunity to talk informally to other members and to get to know them better. Remember that the AGM is open to any member, and the committee would appreciate it if more of our members attended.

Homenaje a Koke

por Lourdes Remón

El sábado 24 de abril nos dimos cita cerca de la tumba de Karl Marx en el cementerio de Highgate un grupo de amigos de Koke. Allí reposan sus cenizas. Para conmemorar la vida polifacética de Koke, su amigo Herminio Martínez diseñó una placa de bronce. La placa, que ostenta la bandera republicana, lleva las palabras: "Koque Martínez, Painter, Poet, Sculptor, Humanist, Idealist, Optimist, Spanish Republican" y termina con la frase: "Like Don Quixote, he strove to improve the world."

Herminio abrió la ceremonia contando la vida y la obra de Koke. Se exhibieron algunos de sus cuadros que impregnan su visión de la humanidad. Después se descubrió la placa. Eddie Linden, poeta, recitó su poema: "I was three, you were eleven". Se leyeron algunas poesías de Koke, escritas en inglés y en español, en las que se reflejan la naturaleza generosa y el trauma sufrido de este niño vasco por los acontecimientos históricos.

Finalmente, Helvecia Hidalgo corroboró las memorias de Herminio en los primeros días y años de exilio y éste reconoció el papel clave de ella como persona que mantiene al grupo unido.

Entre los invitados se encontraba Annette Clapton, cuyo padre, Charles Gildersleve, adoptó a Koke a principios de los años 40.

Al terminar el homenaje, en un bar cercano, siguiendo los deseos de Koke, se ofreció un ágape. Fue un homenaje digno de merecer.

Anniversary lunch

by Cliff Kirkpatrick

The annual *niños* reunion and lunch was held on the 16 May at the Melia White House Hotel, the same venue as last year. It was organised by the co-ordinating committee, Luís Jarero, Amaya López and David Cabrera, who are the children of *niños* and who again did a splendid job.

Seventy six people in total attended and this number included 25 *niños*. It was good to see their delight at seeing old friends again, some of whom had travelled quite a distance. The food, conversation and general ambience all contributed to an unforgettable occasion. At the end of the meal some of the tables were moved away and Olga Osa started off with a lively flamenco dance. Others soon joined in and not long afterwards when the tempo had slowed down a bit, most of the people present were dancing. A great time was had by everyone.



Dancers at the reunion lunch.

La Retirada remembered

The annual commemoration of the Camino de la Retirada took place at Argelès-sur-Mer from 19-21 February 2010. Manuel Moreno was there and sends this report.

It is some years now since I joined a group of people called FFREEE* in Argelès-sur-Mer. We meet every February at this seaside town in southern France near the Spanish frontier. You look one way and beyond modern bungalows there is a beach 200 metres wide and many kilometres long; it is flat and a light cream and then beyond the expanse of the



From the Editor

The Association continues to make great strides in recruiting more members. There are no shortage of research topics concerning the Basque children in Great Britain, demonstrated by the fact that in the last six months five undergraduates have undertaken dissertations in the area. We must continue to encourage this valuable research.

I have found it most exciting to discover four "new" colonies which are not documented in any of the lists found in the standard books about the *niños*. I found them quite by chance, in Minutes of the BCC for example, or in newspaper reports. But these had to be verified, preferably by the *niños* themselves, which I was able to do in all four cases. And conversely, some colonies mentioned both in Minutes and in newspaper reports, never materialised, as is the case for Craigwell House, Bognor Regis and Milton Hall near Cambridge.

In January I was flattered to be asked by Agustina Cabrera if I would be her "room-mate" on a two week holiday in March in Santa Susana, a purpose-built resort north of Barcelona. I was able to benefit from this holiday because of my newly-acquired Spanish passport. The Spanish government organisation IMSERSO offers heavily subsidised off-peak holidays to Spanish *pensionistas* living abroad, and so I went with a party of nine, six of whom were *niños vascos*. I very much enjoyed getting to know the people in my group better, and was touched to see how they all cared for each other and how they seemed to be part of one large family. I certainly hope to go again,

and recommend it to anyone who now holds a Spanish passport. Details of next year's holidays will be sent to me early next year, so get in touch with me for more information then.

I am sure you will find the report by Olwen Zornosa on *El Parque de la Memoria* at Sartaguda as moving as I did. Such monuments provide a much-needed catharsis. I would like to encourage more of our members to contribute articles for the Newsletter.

The owners of Rowley Lodge have recently been in touch and say they would be happy to show round the house and gardens sometime in June any of the *niños* who were in the Barnet colony, and give them tea! This seems like an opportunity not to be missed. If you were at that colony and would like to revisit it, please get in touch with me and I will coordinate the reunion.

We are now only two years away from the 75th anniversary of the *niños'* arrival in Great Britain which will certainly be a very special occasion. While we cannot expect to emulate the events of the 70th anniversary in 2007, we already have some ideas as to how we can make this anniversary meaningful. Our first meeting is in June; everything needs to be planned carefully many months ahead. If you have any ideas, please get in touch with me. Let us strive to make the event even more memorable than Southampton 2007.

Agur,



Natalia Benjamin

► Mediterranean sea, a grey blue at this time of year. Opposite are the mountains of the Pyrenees with the proud peak of the Canigou capped in white snow and light grey wisps of cloud clinging to its ridges. Beyond is Spain.

We are speaking French. I am trying too, yet quickly and easily find myself flowing in Spanish, shaking hands and embracing friends and comrades of previous years and gaining more each time.

It gathers pace. I am the only English person and they call me *el inglés*, now with warmth. They are French and live in the areas mainly along this coast as far as Nîmes and inland towards Toulouse. They have families, are married or live with other French men and women and their children are French: some join us today. They are railway workers, office workers, mayors and teachers.

Like me, they are the children of Spanish fathers and/or mothers, who crossed into France during the *Retirada* from Spain with the defeat of the Republic. They crossed mainly between January and March 1939. They walked across the frontier as best they could from Catalonia, some at Le Perthus, others by the coast and yet others over the mountains themselves to Vernet-les-Bains, Prats de Mollo, Bourg Madame and so many others.

They came with children and carried a few belongings, most had been left behind them on the roadside.

Men and women walked for miles and miles and many did not make it; they died en route or just gave up and waited for Franco's fascist forces to catch up with them. They did.

Day after day they came in their hundreds, were stopped at the French frontier by the *gendamerie* and after some negotiations let

through. The hundreds became thousands, week after week, month after month. Men and women and children were followed by the Republican military, the defeated army in their uniforms, with rifles, on horses and in trucks, most walking.

They were the first people of any country in Europe to rise and organize a movement against fascism. All tired, exhausted, hungry, sad and miserable; the fear behind them, they had lost their country to fascism after nearly three long years of war defending the Republic and hoping to bring about a new social revolution of social justice, improved economic potential, collectives, distribution of land, many more schools, strong union and community organisations, greater liberty to talk, discuss, argue, organise, print, read, produce painters, writers and poets: a richer society.

Their democratically elected Republic had been abandoned by the British and French governments.

The Spanish military, landowners and bourgeois classes and religious forces had raised their arms in the fascist salute, together to unite against the development of a people's young democracy. They had joined the fascism that was sweeping Europe, spearheaded by Hitler's Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy, who helped Franco win this bitter war.

They had escaped the enemy; they were a lost people, a defeated army, yet now safe, or so they thought.

There were 400 to 500,000 people, Spanish Republicans. Amongst them was a Juan Moreno Linares... my father, aged 19. What was to



Manuel Moreno remembers the Republican refugees who died in France.

become of them... of him? Were they to join Arthur Koestler in France as the "The Scum of the Earth"?

* *Fils et Filles des Républicains Espagnols et Enfants de l'Exode*

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Len Crome Memorial Lecture

by Colin Carritt

This year's Len Crome lecture was given by Richard Baxell. Richard is a historian based in London, writing and lecturing on British involvement in the Spanish Civil War. His reputation as a committed Spanish Republican precedes him so we knew, even before the lecture, that we would be treated to a stirring and properly partisan lecture. We were not disappointed.

Richard illustrated his talk with contemporary film footage of the Jarama campaign and audio interviews with brigaders at the time and after the end of the war.

This approach had the advantage of providing first hand personal accounts of life in the trenches and during the always insufficient training at Madrigueras. Many of the volunteers were shocked at the poverty and squalor of village life when they first arrived but they were soon won over by the warmth of support they received there.

Nevertheless, they were not above complaining bitterly about the appalling food and the lack of drinkable water. Working class British beer drinkers soon got used to the cheap local wine as the only alternative.

The volunteers had just five weeks of training with inadequate weapons and a paucity of ammunition, which meant that some infantrymen had fired just five rounds before they were sent to the front to save the main Madrid-Valencia road from being cut by the fascists. When they set off on 8 February the send-off from the locals was emotional. Most brigaders had never experienced life under fire and many were unashamedly terrified of those first days of warfare at Jarama.

The weather was appalling, sanitation was almost non-existent, they soon became infested with lice, the food was inferior and the opportunity for rest and recuperation for those on the front line simply didn't exist. As a result, fatigue, confusion, ill-temper, accidents and demoralisation quickly set in. They were facing the might of a professional army of Moroccan and Spanish regular soldiers armed with sophisticated weaponry and heavy artillery.

The brigaders set up their ancient Russian machine guns only to find they had the wrong ammunition. Small wonder that within the first seven hours of fighting, of the 400 who

started, just 125 remained alive. Finally, they got the correct ammunition for their Maxim guns and under the inspired leadership of Tom Wintringham they began a spirited rally. But it was not until 22 February, some two weeks after the start of hostilities, that both sides settled to a long stalemate that lasted to the very end of the war.

Richard Baxell's lecture pulled no punches about the lack of preparedness of the Republican defence of Jarama. But it was also clear that the battle witnessed a heroic stand against a ruthless and well-armed enemy by a small battalion of committed internationalists determined to stem the advance of fascism not just in Spain but also across Europe and the world.

Conferences

A reassessment of 20th century Spain

by Alicia Pozo-Gutierrez

On 7 and 8 May a symposium was held at St Antony's College, Oxford, to pay homage to Sir Raymond Carr for his seminal work in the field and to celebrate his 91st birthday. It gathered some of the most eminent Hispanists, experts in Spanish history and contemporary political and economic issues, including José Álvarez Junco, Sebastian Balfour, Anne Deighton, Juan Pablo Fusi, Antony Beevor, Frances Lannon, Tom Buchanan and Santos Juliá.

The event provided an excellent opportunity to reassess the role of Spain in the light of the rapid transformations that the country has experienced since the last quarter of the 20th century following the death of Franco and the transition to democracy. Amongst the themes that lead to some of the most engaging discussions were undoubtedly the legacy of Francoism in post-transitional Spain; contested interpretations of the Second Republic and the Civil War in the context of the so-called movement for recuperation of historical memory; the current state of the *Estado de las Autonomías*; the changing position of Spain in the international arena and the challenges the country faces in the 21st century.

The Spanish exile

Natalia Benjamin presented a paper on 11 November entitled "*Setenta Años Despues: los niños vascos recuerdan su exilio en Gran Bretaña*". The conference was held at Exeter University and was on "The Cultural and Literary Meaning of the Spanish Political Exile of 1939" and was sponsored by the Fundación Largo Caballero, the Universidad Complutense of Madrid and the Department of Hispanic Studies at Exeter University.

Talks given

Story of a *maestra*

The following is a summary of a talk given by Carmen Kilner on 16 December 2009 at the Centro Social de Mayores in London as part of a programme of events about *La Escuela de la Segunda República Española*.

My mother Ana María González Gárate was a 22 year old teacher when she came to England on the *Habana* with the *niños vascos* in May 1937.

She never said much about her early life, but after her death in 2006, aged 91, using her documents and letters, together with memories of conversations, I have been trying to recreate this part of her life.

Ana María was born during the reign of Alfonso XIII in October 1914 in San Sebastián, the oldest of three daughters. When she was 10 years old, her father died tragically following an accident. Our grandmother was a strong, independent woman, and rather than return to the family village of Elgoibar in Guipúzcoa, she decided to work to maintain and educate her girls, and to stay in San Sebastián – not an easy task.

In September 1929, my mother applied and was accepted at the *Escuela Normal de Maestros de Guipuzcoa* in San Sebastián. She started her four year training, aged 15, during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, and qualified as *Maestra de Primera Enseñanza Nacional* in July 1933, during the Second Republic.

The Republic was formed in 1931 during the second year of her studies, and had a profound effect at the *Escuela Normal*. The Head and many of the teaching staff were replaced over the next few years by new staff who had studied abroad in Europe and the USA and who brought back with them new ideas and teaching methods. Schools became mixed, subject content and style were altered radically, with the emphasis on understanding, rather than rote learning, on exploring the natural world and experimentation, and on promoting healthy living and exercise. This was the changing and



Ana María González Gárate's passport.



► exciting environment in which my mother completed her studies.

With her teaching certificate she could only hold an untenured position: to become a tenured state teacher, it was necessary to present for *oposiciones*. Ana María started the process of getting the required good conduct certificates from the mayor and from the Criminal Registry, but whatever the case, whether there were no convocations, or whether she did not present herself for other reasons, she was unsuccessful and did not gain tenure.

When in her eighties and with her speech badly affected by a severe stroke, my mother did tell me that one of her first teaching jobs was in the Alto de Guernica, one of the few buildings to escape bombing in April 1937. She may have taught there, but I don't know for sure.

Following the fall of San Sebastián on 13 September 1936 my mother, her mother and two sisters fled, carrying very little with them. They went first to Elgoibar, the maternal family home, and from there, with their maternal grandmother, the five women fled to Portugalete in Bilbao. I know, alas, that my mother didn't have her teaching certificate with her. I don't know where or when she left it, or how she retrieved it, but I do have it now in my possession.

The Republic needed teachers for the many schools it had created and for the *milicias culturales* formed to counter illiteracy. Amongst many decrees being issued was one saying that those who had finished *bachillerato* or who had started a teaching course could do a special *Cursillo de 1936* to allow them to teach. As my mother wanted to teach, but did not have her certificate, she made legal declarations of her qualifications and named teachers who could testify on her behalf, but none of this helped, so she did the *Cursillo de 1936* and qualified as a teacher, again!

In February, Ana María approached an old colleague from San Sebastián now in Bilbao, Jose María Gonzalez, president of the FUE de Euskadi (*Federación Universitaria Escolar*) a student socialist/communist movement. He wrote a letter of reference declaring her a founder member, who had frequently carried out tasks of responsibility and had always shown complete loyalty to the regime. It appears that this letter was in anticipation of a new decree which came out on 16 February saying that *Cursillistas de 1936* who also had proof of loyalty to the regime could teach as untenured teachers. On 31 March she was offered a post at the *Escuela de Primera Enseñanza* at Galdacano, Vizcaya, with an annual salary of 4,000 pesetas. On 1 April 1937, in Galdacano, she signed her acceptance.

I don't know if after all these difficulties she finally managed to practise her beloved



profession for long, if at all: the front, that had been stopped near Eibar for six months, started to advance towards Bilbao. 31 March saw the bombing of Durango and 26 April that of Guernica, and teaching was suspended in Vizcaya. It appears that Ana María had been working (probably voluntarily) for some months in the *Casa de Huérfanos de Milicianos*, and she continued her work there in the now besieged Bilbao.

The situation in Bilbao was deteriorating daily with severe shortages of food. There were daily bombing raids and my mother spoke of hiding under the desks with children – presumably in the *Casa de Huérfanos*.

By now the evacuation of republican children had started. The British government finally agreed to allow a single boatload of children to enter Britain. The newspapers in Bilbao published requests for teachers to accompany the evacuees. People knew of the barbaric treatment being meted out to teachers: executions, beatings, incarceration – at the very least removal from their posts – so Ana María's decision to travel to England would have been a bittersweet relief to her mother.

By 15 May she had received a letter from the Basque Government appointing her teacher no. 73 for the "expedition" to England. Three days later the Basque Government issued her with a passport and on 21 May, aged 22, she set sail in the *Habana* in charge of 4,000 frightened, seasick and homesick children.

She was a *maestra* at Stoneham for four months and then at The Oaks, Carshalton until 1939. After that she was only allowed to work as a domestic, which she did. When my brothers and I had all started school, in the fifties, she applied to retrain here as a teacher, but she was told that she was not suitable as she had a foreign accent!

From my early memories of her and from

*Giving talks:
Carmen Kilner
(left) and Natalia
Benjamin.*



watching her with my children, it is clear to me that teaching was part of her very essence. I wish I could tell her how much I admire the young Ana María I never knew.

Oxfordshire niños

On 14 January Natalia Benjamin gave a talk in Faringdon on the Basque children in Oxfordshire to the U3A. It had snowed heavily the night before and roads were treacherous, but in spite of this, seventy-five members turned up!

Two from Herminio

On 28 November, 2009, Herminio Martínez gave a talk in Irún on his experiences coming to Britain for the *Asociación Republicana Irunesca* and the *Idi Ezkerra* Foundation. On 28 January he gave a talk in London at the Instituto Cañada Blanch (the Spanish School) in the series *La Escuela de la Segunda República*.

Exhibitions

Sutton Library

From 3-30 November 2009, the London Borough of Sutton Central Library put on an exhibition as a follow up to work being done about the refugee experience with schools in the area. The exhibition, for which the Association loaned nine panels, focussed on the Carshalton colonies.

Winchester

The "*Los Niños*" travelling exhibition from Southampton University will be on show in Winchester at the Hampshire Record Office, Sussex Street, from 10 May until 24 July. It will also be on show at Eastleigh Museum, High Street, from 20 November until 24 December in the gallery. Alicia Pozo-Gutierrez and Padmini Broomfield will give talks about it on 24 June from 1-2pm at the cinema, Winchester, and on 25 November at Eastleigh Museum.

"Antifascistas"

The IBMT inaugurated its travelling exhibition "*Antifascistas*" about the British and Irish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War on 5 May at the 12 Star Gallery, 8 Storey's Gate, London SW1. It will be there until 14 May. It will subsequently go to Newcastle Central Library from 22 May to 7 June, then to Nottingham from 19 July to 3 August, to The People's

History Museum at Manchester from 6-21 August and to Rotherham from 6-18 September. Don't miss the chance of seeing this fascinating exhibition.

Hiring charges

- Hire of the Association's exhibition boards: £40

- Hire of exhibition material – laminated artefacts: £30

- Hire of exhibition material – laminated photographs: £30

- Hire of exhibition boards: £50

- Cost of reproducing photographs: £20 per photograph

Please note: if materials for exhibition purposes are required for more than two weeks, the cost will be greater.

In brief

The plaque at Montrose

The Secretary, Natalia Benjamin, was notified from different sources that the plaque that had been unveiled by Tom Borland at Mall Park House in Montrose was simply not there. It had vanished! After several months, it was finally found by the rubbish bins of the flats in Mall Park House and has now been firmly fixed to the wall by a friend of Tom's.

Wanted

- We have a nearly complete set of "Amistad" – the paper produced by the Basque Boys' Training Committee, but two numbers are missing: No.3 September/October 1940 and No.13 September 1941, as well as several covers. If anyone has these or knows where to find them, please contact the Secretary Natalia Benjamin on 01865 459744.

- Can anyone remember anything about Consuelito Carmona? She helped the *niños* learn the dances for their shows, especially in the north, and appeared herself in many of them. Again, if you have information, contact the Secretary.

Research

Five students, undergraduates from Bristol University, Newcastle University, the LSE and Sheffield University are currently working on aspects of the Spanish Civil War and the *niños*

for their final year dissertation. They have been helped by the Secretary in finding materials and have consulted the archives.

Erratum

Nobody noticed, but in Newsletter No.12, the picture we claimed to be Shornells (page 8) was in fact Hutton Hall! Below is a photograph of Shornells.

Tres poemas

Adiós

by Ramonchu, Amistad No 19, May/June 1942

Despedíanse los vascos
para irse en el *Habana*
hacia Inglaterra con rumbo
niños y niñas marchaban.

Despedíanse de sus padres
que muy tristes se quedaban
los suspiros les salían
y los ojos le lloraban.

Adiós decían los padres.
Adiós también al *Habana*.
Adiós dicen los amigos
Para los niños que marchan.

Pasan los Años

by Luisito, Amistad No 19, May/June 1942

Pasan los años
Cual ojas de un libro,
tristes por la guerra
que ellos han traído.
No son de verano,
ni de primavera,
ni de inviernos fríos,
que son todo uno
de sangre y de fuego,
cadáveres yertos
y de cementerios.
Esto trajo Franco
con brutal intento:
un segundo Hitler!
Pronto caerá muerto.
Pues los niños crecen
Para vengar esto.
Pasan los años

De sangre y de fuego.

Recuerdo

by Antonio Amistad No 9 April 1941

Cuando yo era pequeño
tuve amor de hogar,
pero no por mucho tiempo
pues lo tuve que dejar.

Por librarme de amargaduras
de lloros y descontentos,
tuve yo que refugiarme
en este país extranjero.

Dejé yo mi amado hogar,
dejé el amor maternal;
por librar mi triste vida
perdí la felicidad.

Un día, yo bien recuerdo
la despedida final:
padre, madre y los hermanos
todos querían llorar
pero por darme alegría
tuvieron que disimular
el llanto que les salía.

Por darme, pues, alegría,
sacrificáronse ellos;
por darme, pues, alegría,
la felicidad ha muerto.

Did you know?

Footballers

Two *niños vascos* Raimundo Pérez Lezana and Emilio Aldecoa Gómez each played football professionally in Britain for local clubs and league clubs (Coventry and Wolverhampton). They each played, at different times, for Athletic Bilbao and each represented Spain once in their careers. Lezana was a legendary Spanish goalkeeper and is considered a "revolutionary" player in that he introduced to Spanish football new techniques that he had picked up while he lived and played in England, techniques that included throwing the ball into play and moving out of your area to meet an aerial ball. Emilio Aldecoa went on to become coach and manager to Gerona and Real Valladolid.

Forthcoming events

IBMT commemoration

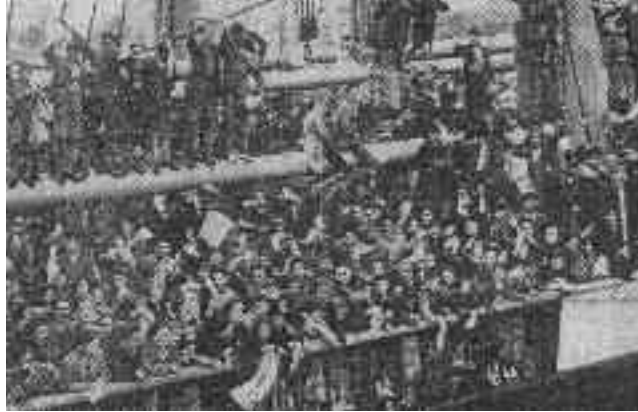
The annual IBMT ceremony at Jubilee Gardens will be held this year on 3 July. It honours the British and Irish International Brigaders and starts at 1pm. Tube: Waterloo.

Lecture

The second annual lecture of the Association will be given by Professor Paul Preston on Saturday



The Montrose plaque being reinstalled (left) and Shornells (right). See "In brief".



Basque Children of '37 Association UK

- Honorary President: Helvecia García Aldasoro ● Chair: Manuel Moreno
- Secretary: Natalia Benjamin, 8 Hernes Road, Oxford OX2 7PU; tel: 01865-459 744; email: secretary@basquechildren.org
- Membership Secretary: Gerald Hoare; tel: 01282-770 655; email: membership@basquechildren.org
- Treasurer: Carmen Kilner; email: carmen@basquechildren.org
- Other committee members: Jim Jump, John Kilner, Herminio Martínez and Alicia Pozo-Gutiérrez

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 Gerald Hoare for membership application forms. These may also be found on the website.

Our aims

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, letters, documents, films, songs, posters, oral testimonies, artwork etc) to be used for educational and historical purposes, eventually to be deposited in the Special Collections Division of the Hartley Library at the University of Southampton.
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.
10. To advance the education of the public, students and academics in the subject of the exile of 1937.

Newsletter

- The BC'37AUK Newsletter is published twice a year and is sent free to all members. Back numbers can be downloaded from the BC'37AUK website: www.basquechildren.org. The deadline for the next issue is 28 October 2009.
- Editor: Natalia Benjamin (see details above for BC'37AUK Secretary).

▶ 9 October at 2.30pm in the Kensington and Chelsea Library Lecture Theatre. All are warmly invited, tea will be available at the end.

"One Show"

On 15 July, the BBC, "One Show" will present a very short film on the *niños*' experience.

Accounts

Abridged version of accounts for the year ended 30 November 2009 and adopted at the Annual General Meeting on 6 February 2010

	2009 £	2008 £
Income		
Subscriptions and donations	2431	2506
Grants	3942	521
Sale of books and DVDs	2171	4529
Other income	496	1058
Total	9040	8614
Expenditure		
Film: bilingual version	–	4450
Cost of books and DVDs	2691	1453
Newsletter, postage and other costs	3396	1878
Total	6087	7781
Surplus for the year	2953	833
Bank balance	10407	9454

Copies of the audited detailed accounts with the Trustees' Report may be obtained from the Treasurer. Tel: 020-8224 7959.

Membership renewal

Time to pay 2010/11 subs

Subscriptions for 21 May 2010 until 20 May 2011 are now due. Please fill in the membership renewal form inserted in this Newsletter and send it, with your subscriptions, as soon as possible to the Membership Secretary, Gerald Hoare, at the address on the form.

Most members prefer to pay their subscriptions by cheque but we do encourage you to pay by standing order. We would also encourage you to sign gift aid forms if you haven't done so already. This gives us the opportunity to recover tax paid on the amount of subscription and any donation you may wish to give.

For those familiar with our website – www.basquechildren.org – you will be able to find membership renewal, gift aid and standing order forms. Also any prospective

new member can find a new membership form on this website. The forms can be found under the heading "Membership" in the main menu.

For sale

All goods are available from Tony Armolea: 85 Summerleaze Road, Maidenhead, Berks SL6 8ER; tel: 01628 781525; email: [sales@basquechildren.org]. Please note that we have opened a branch of the shop in Spain, and if you live there, you can order more easily from: [tienda@basquechildren.org]. Prices include p&p.

Commemorative envelope

● Franked envelope with special stamps marking the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque children, £6.

Books

- "Recuerdos" edited by Natalia Benjamin, £16.10.
- "Only for Three Months" by Adrian Bell, £11.10.
- "Leah Manning" by Ron Bill & Stan Newens, £5.

The following book can be ordered via the IBMT: [www.international-brigades.org.uk].

- "Poems of War and Peace/Poemas de Guerra y de Paz", by James R Jump (International Brigader who married one of the *señoritas* on the *Habana*), edited by Jim Jump, £12.

CDs & DVDs

- "The Guernica Children", Steve Bowles' documentary film, now available in a bilingual English/Spanish edition, £15.
- "Songs of the Basque Children", songs from the book used by the *niños* when performing, plus the reissue of the original 1938 Parlophone recording, £9.50.
- Southampton anniversary event, £4.50.
- Danzaris at Southampton, £4.
- Montrose blue plaque, £6.50.
- CD-EP "Solo Por Tres Meses", written and performed by Na-Mara, a duo composed of musician Roberto García (son of *niño* Fausto García) and Paul McNamara, £6.

Obituaries

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

- Luís Arroyo
- Palmiro Ruíz
- Marguerite Bates
- José Bartolomé
- Rafaela Murga Munilla

The forgotten colonies

by Natalia Benjamin

There were over one hundred colonies lived in by the Basque children. The "official" lists and names of the colonies and their location in Gregorio Arrien's book, "*Niños Vascos en Gran Bretaña*", and in Dorothy Legarretta's "The Guernica Generation" are woefully incomplete and, in some cases, wrong. Difficulties arise when the colony is called after either the name of the house, if it has one, or the name of a town, which may not be that near (as in the case of Elford Hall near Lichfield and Avoncroft Agricultural College in Evesham which are usually just called "Birmingham"). There is no consistency. So I have been trying to establish a more definitive list, and at the same time find a photograph of each colony with the proper house name and its address.

In the course of my investigations, I have "discovered" four colonies that are not mentioned in the published lists, although from minutes of the Basque Children's Committee meetings, from newspaper reports and from testimonies of surviving *niños* themselves, there is clear evidence that they did indeed exist and were lived in by *niños*.

From late June until 13 October, 170-172 West Hill, Putney, was home to 40 Basque children, prior to their relocation three and a half miles away to more permanent accommodation at The Grange, 121 Kingston Hill. This discovery was made as a result of copies of documents given to the Association by Luís Calvete, whose parents had come to Britain in 1917 and who were both very active in helping with the Basque children who had arrived in 1937. His father helped organise and even took part on the guitar, in several of the concerts put on by the *niños*. His diary recorded visits to the children in Putney before they moved to Kingston Hill. One of the *niños* who now lives in San Sebastián remembers that his sisters were in Putney before going to Kingston Hill.

Then an additional colony in Wales came to light when I read the proof of Hywell Davies' book on the *niños* in Wales. The colony at Brechfa had not been very successful and some boys had rioted; they were due to move to Margate in October. But they weather became cold and the boys could not continue to live in huts and so they spent the month of September 1937 in Bronwydd, a sham castle built round an earlier house in the gothic revival style. It was not far from Brechfa, near the village of Newcastle Emlyn. José Armolea, one of the *niños* who was there, recalls that it was dark and gloomy, with crows flying around day and night.

Another "new" colony was at Ambleside in the Lake District. It was reported in the local paper, the "Westmorland Gazette" of 23

October 1937 that 25 children were being transferred to Fairfield Guest House in Ambleside from Brampton, accompanied by their teacher, Virginia Martínez del Castillo. The house had been acquired for the purpose by the Cumberland and Westmorland branch of the BCC. *Niña* Agustina Cabrera today recalls going to Ambleside to a house near a bridge that is a famous landmark. The house was part of Charlotte Mason Training College and the Basque children were in an annexe. Later it became part of the campus of the Universities of Lancaster and Cumbria.

The final "new" colony for me was a house in the village of Newton Green, near Sudbury, Suffolk. A local doctor, Grace Griffiths had offered it to vacate Bray Court, they were allotted to other colonies, and there was a list of these attached to one of the minutes of the BCC. The names of all the colonies the children were relocating to were familiar to me, except for one, which said "c/o Dr Grace Griffiths, Newton Green, Sudbury, Suffolk". I was intrigued, so I rang up a local historian who was able to verify that there had indeed been children staying at Dr Griffiths' house, Brooke House. I subsequently verified this information not only by reading about it in the Minutes of the Basque Children's Committee Sub Committee but also by talking to José Osa and Iñigo Segurola who had been there. I also corresponded with Dr Griffiths' daughter who sent me a photograph of the boys who had stayed there.

There were about 10 boys in Dr Griffiths' colony and they were employed at a nearby farm, Rogers Farm, first painting beehives and then picking mushrooms. They stayed for just over a year. Marcelo Segurola had come over on the *Habana* and had been at Bray Court. He was sent to Newton Green. His parents came over to England to fetch him at the end of July 1939 to take him with the family to Argentina. But they were trapped in Britain as all civilian shipping had been stopped. As Dr Griffiths was very busy, the Segurolas acted as house parents to the children that were there. Dr Griffiths had come originally to the area to be a locum for two weeks at the local TB hospital in Nayland, and ended up staying for 50 years! She went twice to Spain during the war to help in the hospitals there. She is described as being far from pretty, with "bottle specs and protruding teeth", but as one of the most beautiful people the writer had ever known, exuding love and care, so it would have been typical of her to want to help the Basques. She and her family lived in a small cottage at Arger Fen, Assington, while their larger house, Brooke House, in Newton Green was used by *niños*.

● I would be pleased to hear from anyone who was at the above-mentioned colonies.

What happened to the *Habana*?

by Natalia Benjamin

The *Habana* remained at Southampton until 29 May when she left for the return passage to Bilbao, once again escorted by the destroyer *Fearless*. It was proposed that the *Habana* might take back with her on the voyage much-needed medical supplies but this was not permitted by the British government who felt it might be perceived as a breach of the non-intervention agreement. This trip by the *Habana* to England was, in fact, to be a one-off event. Shortly afterwards, when the fall of Santander appeared imminent, fresh approaches were made to the British government for permission for Spanish refugees to be allowed entry into Britain but the proposal was unequivocally rejected.

So that is the end of the association of the *Habana* with the Basque children. But what happened to the ship after that? She had an eventful life. She was moored at Bordeaux until the end of the war as a hospital ship and returned to Bilbao in 1939. There was a fire on board that destroyed much of the accommodation, and the *Habana* was remodelled to take both passengers and cargo. In 1942, she sailed to Latin America with 12 passengers and 518 cubic metres of cargo. At the end of the war, she was refitted as a passenger ship, burning only fuel, and spent many years going from Spain to America until she moored in Vigo in 1960.

Then Pescanova bought it. It was a company founded that same year by José Fernández López, who set out to solve the age-old problem in the Spanish fishing industry, namely how to preserve fish caught away from Spain's ports – in the South Atlantic for example – so that the fish did not spoil during transport times of as much as three weeks. Fernandez recognised that the development of refrigeration and freezing technologies offered a new possibility for transporting fish. In 1960 he began outfitting his first freezer vessel, the *Lemos*. It was successful off the coast of Argentina, and then went to South Africa, returning with more than 250 tons of hake. Encouraged by this success, the company then acquired its second vessel, "a retired cruise ship called the *Habana*". Pescanova converted it into a giant floating factory, renaming it the *Galicia*. In its new capacity, the boat set sail for South Africa in 1964, supported by its own fleet of fishing boats. While the *Galicia* served as a production vessel, including freezing but also breeding and frying facilities, transport back to Spain was provided by a fleet of dedicated freezer vessels.

In 1975, she laid anchor at Vigo and what we learn about the fate of the *Habana/Galicia* is that in 1978 she was sold for scrap and broken up at Vigo. Later, the anchor of the *Habana* was donated in 1990 to the Philippe Cousteau Anchor Museum by the



Ayuntamiento of San Sebastián: it is considered to be one of the treasures of the museum. The open air museum is situated on La Peñon peninsula in Salinas, a town within the Castillón municipality in Asturias.

As a footnote, in 1980, Ricardo Fernández, the former master of the *Habana*, saw an announcement in the press that the Basque children from England were planning a reunion in Bilbao, and so he wrote to the mayor asking whether he could go to the reunion and meet some of those *niños* whom he had ferried those many years ago. His letter was passed on to Helvecia Hidalgo, the organiser. She replied to him, saying that unfortunately the meeting had to be postponed, but she hoped he would be able to come the following year and that the *niños* had been very touched to see that after such a long time he still remembered them. Ricardo Fernández replied that as he was 76 years old, he wasn't sure of being there and her letter had moved him to tears.

What an interesting history the ship has, although its role in evacuating the Basque children is for me the highlight of its eventful operational service.

El Parque de la Memoria, Sartaguda

by Olwen Zornosa

Navarra now has a memorial to the province's victims of Nationalist troops during the years of the Civil War and after. *El Parque de la Memoria*, standing just outside Sartaguda, a village some 40km south of Estella, was officially opened in May 2008 and Venancio (a *niño*) and I were taken there by family when we were visiting his home town of Alsasua in June that year. Sartaguda has long been known as "el pueblo de las viudas", because of the high proportion of its men taken away and not seen again, so it was an appropriate place to choose, if in no way unique.

The site is high and open, the day we visited a bit stark under the burning sun, but trees have been planted and in time it will become more like a garden. It is dominated by a gigantic metal sculpture, 8m high, of three standing figures, heads bent together, linked by their arms on one another's

shoulders. There is another two dimensional sculpture, a sheet of rusted metal with the cut-out figure of a bound man, riddled with bullet holes. And there are standing tablets on which poems have been inscribed, in both Castilian and Basque.

The site was chosen by the sculptor, Joxe



The memorial park features the names of 3,420 civilians murdered by the Francoists.

Ulibarrena, with the original intention of erecting a single sculpture but the project was expanded by the wishes of local people and the necessary funds were contributed by provincial government, by many local municipalities and by national government.

Central to all is a wall with the name of every man, 3,420 in all, whose death researchers have been able to verify by searching records, often hidden or obscured, and disinterring and identifying bones from unmarked graves, work which has taken many years and which still continues. Listed alphabetically, town by town and village by village and, again alphabetically, name by name, it did not take long for Venancio to find his father's name among the 86 listed for Alsasua.

I am sure his gratitude for this belated recognition was shared by all the relatives of the identified victims, who have waited so many years for some kind of memorial to their dead.