



Newsletter

Basque Children of '37 Association UK



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News

Len Crome Memorial Lecture

by Colin Carritt

Len Crome, who died in 2001, was Chief Medical Officer of the International Brigades in Spain so it was apt that this, the tenth anniversary of the lectures in his memory should be about the medical services in Spain during the Civil War. The lecture was delivered on 5 March by Dr Linda Palfreeman, Professor at the Cardinal Herrera University in Elche, Alicante.

Palfreeman was passionate about her subject, recognising the role played by medical students, doctors, nurses, administrators, ambulance drivers and stretcher bearers, all of whom were essential to the success of the medical services in Republican Spain.

Many pioneering developments were achieved in Spain, including breakthroughs in skull and abdominal injury treatments, the blood transfusion service, the significance of shock to injury treatment and the frequency of psychotic disorders due to prolonged exposure to the violence of active service. Palfreeman also alluded to the importance of the fund-raising by Spanish Medical Aid Committees back home in the UK.

The first medical headquarters was at Granien on the Huesca front where the teams dealt with the effects of the cold and wet winter of 36/37 in the Alcupierre Sierras working 14hr shifts in a hospital with no running water. But as the war moved from Aragon to Madrid, the medical HQ was also moved to Albacete. The key to success in treating severe injuries was found to be immediate treatment rather than transporting patients long distances. The use of front line field hospitals improved treatment success rates for abdominal wounds and fractures from 10% to over 50%. The

surgical success rates of the medical services in Spain, whose humanitarian commitment was exemplary, often exceeded those of the best London teaching hospitals of the day.

Key personnel included the Spanish Republican surgeon, Dr Frederic Duran Jorda, the Canadian blood transfusion expert Norman Bethune, surgeons Douglas Jolley, Reggie Saxton, Alex Tudor Hart and Len Crome who became Chief Medical Officer. Crome was not only a heroic surgeon but also a brilliant strategist and administrator. Archie Cochrane developed the triage system to new levels of sophistication; all was done under the administration of Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit. The Spanish were particularly impressed by the attention to disinfection and cleanliness of Penny Feiwei and the British nurses.

The first forward field hospitals were established at the terrible battle of Brunete. Battlefield injuries were horrifying: ether and disinfectant were in short supply and the medical teams worked round the clock, taking what sleep they could on blood-stained beds. Interruptions to the electricity supply were frequent and some operations were conducted by torchlight. Several of the medical personnel were themselves killed or injured during fascist bombing raids at the Brunete front. As autumn turned to winter and the fighting turned to Teruel, different problems of exposure such as frostbite and gangrenous amputations became more common.

Following the Ebro retreat, Prime Minister Negrin agreed to pull out the International Brigades attempting to reverse the non-intervention policies of the major western powers. The medical services were the very last to leave, tending for the wounded and arranging the safe exile and the health of refugees.

REMEMBERING THE BRIGADERS

by Pauline Fraser

Many members and friends came to the Imperial War Museum on the morning of 5 March, before the annual lecture, to hear tributes to five veterans who had died the previous year. They were Jack Edwards, Penny Feiwei, Joe Kahn, Bernard Knox and Sam Lesser. It was a sad but inspiring occasion; we learnt of their bravery as part of the International Brigade's fight for democracy and against fascism.

At the Battle of Jarama, nurse Penny Feiwei assisted Dr. Jolly in the operating theatre of a makeshift hospital, working non-stop for 48 hours. Sam Lesser fought room by room at Madrid University. Sam Lesser and Bernard Knox, both left for dead on the battlefield, were rescued by heroically loyal friends.

Bernard Knox, the last of the intellectuals who fought for the Republic, joined the US forces in World War II, and helped to organise partisans across Europe. He became a victim of the McCarthy witch-hunt, and acquired the label: "premature anti-fascist", the codename for communist.

Joe Kahn whose fight against fascism had begun, for him, at the Battle of Cable Street, continued on the battlefield at Jarama, where he lost many friends and nearly died himself. He later became Labour Mayor of Hackney.

Jack Edwards' calm personality proved invaluable under fire. Wounded in the foot at Jarama, Jack then served as a truck driver and motor mechanic, remaining with the Republican forces on the Valencia front and returning alone in January 1939.

From the Editor

Time for another Newsletter!

Firstly, a plea for your help. At the moment, I do most of the work preparing the Newsletter, but I would love it if more people were involved. I am sure many of you have stories to tell which would be of interest to the membership. Or you might want to write a letter and start a discussion. I would welcome your participation, so please do give it your serious consideration.

The Association received a blow in the autumn with the resignation of two members of the committee. Jim Jump was appointed Secretary of the International Brigades Memorial Trust as successor to Marlene Sidaway and Alicia Pozo-Gutiérrez unfortunately had to resign as well. Then in the spring, Gerald Hoare stepped down. We wish them all the best and thank them for their valuable contribution to the work of the Association. Their departure leaves the committee very depleted but we hope to recruit new committee members as soon as possible. If you are interested in joining us, please do get in touch.

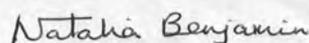
I am pleased to announce that M^a Carmen Coupland has volunteered to take on the task of Membership Secretary. A recently retired GP, M^a Carmen lives in Edinburgh and is the daughter of a *niña vasca*, M^a Angeles Dueñas Montes who lived at Elmtrees, the colony at Sutton-on-Hull. You may remember that it was Ma Carmen who unveiled the blue plaque there in November 2006. While we are on the

subject of membership, please remember that your subs are due this month. I'm sure it would be extremely helpful to M^a Carmen in her new role if the forms were sent to her as soon as possible. Adrian Bell has kindly volunteered to take over Jim's role of formatting the Newsletter and we thank him for offering his help.

Excitingly, the book "Fleeing Franco: how Wales gave shelter to refugee children from the Basque country during the Spanish Civil War" (this must be one of the longest titles for any book!) by Hywel Davies was published by the Welsh University Press in April. The book is very readable and adds considerably to our knowledge of the colonies and to work in progress on the Basque children. The Welsh can be proud of their treatment of the young refugees and we can learn much from their humanitarian and generous response. Members can obtain a discount on the book by ordering it through the press on the order form enclosed with this Newsletter.

Plans are ongoing for the celebration of the 75th anniversary next year at Southampton University, so please keep the 12 and 13 May free! We are hoping to organise a really memorable event and will send you further details by letter in October.

I wish you all a happy and healthy summer.
¡Agur!



Natalia Benjamin

AGM and Members' Lunch

The Annual General Meeting of the Association took place on Saturday 26 February. Once again, we were fortunate in being able to hold the meeting at the Consejería in London. Eleven people were present and there were 21 apologies.

The Secretary's report highlighted the wide range of activities of the Association during the past year, ranging from the annual lecture given by Paul Preston to the highly successful visit to the former colony, Rowley Lodge, in Barnet. The educational aims of the Association continue to be a priority, with visits to schools in Spain, participation in international conferences and talks given to historical societies and other groups.

The Treasurer's report showed that the Association was in good financial health but needed to consider the commitments to be undertaken in the coming year for the 75th anniversary celebrations.

It was pointed out that the membership and committee is not getting any younger and we shall have to ask ourselves whether the Association can survive in future if people are not willing to take over the reins. The Chairman closed by saying that one of the aims of the Association for the coming year

must be to involve new people and he expressed concern that not enough children or grandchildren of the *niños* were coming forward. Three members did offer to help and we look forward to their collaboration. Hopefully we will be able to recruit some at least on to the committee.

The AGM was followed by the annual Members' Lunch, held again at the "Sugo" restaurant in Notting Hill Gate. It was very pleasant occasion, but, again, it would be better if more members supported this event.

Oxford Day School Spain: Confronting the Legacy of Civil War and Repression

by Cliff Kirkpatrick

70 people attended this day school at Rewley House, University of Oxford, on Saturday 5 March chaired by Dr Tom Buchanan. "The Francoist repression in historical perspective" was the title of the first lecture by Dr Peter Anderson. Around 100,000 people were killed behind the lines during the course of the war and some 50,000 others in

its immediate aftermath. The brutal treatment and extreme violence meted out to their opponents was premeditated, encouraged from above and continued long after the end of the Civil War. The regime itself drew a veil of silence over the extent of the killings. The facts and figures presented during this talk were truly staggering and extremely disturbing. One particularly revealing snippet of information that perhaps sums up the regime was that Hitler thought Franco was too harsh!

The second speaker, Dr Layla Renshaw spoke on "The archaeology of Republican mass graves: memory, materiality and evidence." It is conservatively estimated that up to 40,000 bodies are located in clandestine mass graves throughout Spain. Although unmarked, they are not unknown as local memory attests. Since 2000 when Emilio Silva co-founded *La Asociación para la Recuperación de la Memoria Histórica*, the number of exhumations has risen exponentially. Dr Renshaw went on to describe fieldwork she had undertaken and of both the support and opposition to the projects by local residents. The wishes of the relatives of the murdered were respected, most finding a simple 'presentation' instead of an *homenaje*, mass, funeral service etc more acceptable. The lecture

was extremely thought provoking but emotionally draining!

Dr Tim Rees' lecture was entitled "Forgetting and remembering the Civil War in Spain." The Franco dictatorship left many unresolved and highly contested issues, most of which were pragmatically ignored following the death of Franco in 1975 by successive democratic governments with their *pacto del olvido*. The lecture explored in detail the themes: remembrance and memorialisation under Franco, the transition to democracy, breaking the silence and historical memory.

The final lecture, given by Professor Jeremy Treglown was "Franco and Spanish culture" and looked at ways in which the regime is depicted and the ways that it depicted itself. Censorship was maintained in Spain well after the end of the Civil War but film-makers and novelists looked for ways to overcome the restrictions imposed by the regime. Prof Treglown cited examples of the use of satire and showed film clips which were highly amusing and he certainly succeeded in lightening the mood. The lecture highlighted five specific examples to illustrate the character and legacy of the regime.

Although the above is only a brief resumé of each lecture, the speakers complemented each other and everyone involved is to be congratulated on producing such an interesting, informative and successful course on a difficult and sensitive subject.

Fundraising exhibition in San Sebastián

In October 2010, the Caja de Ahorros de Navarra (CAN) held a fundraising exhibition in Plaza Okendo in San Sebastián. Two of our members, Luis Mari Naya and David Bumstead,

organised and supervised a stall for BC'37A UK. The son of a *niño*, Luis is a lecturer in the History of Education at the University of the Basque Country and has a strong personal and professional interest in the Association. David and his Anglo/Basque family also live in San Sebastián and he teaches history at the Ikastola Zurriola; for several years he has included a course about the evacuation of the Basque children on his programme.

The stall was a great success in terms of informing the public about the association and also for the sale of books, CDs etc. This success was in no small part due to the enthusiasm and attraction provided by the eight young student volunteers from David's class at the Ikastola who distributed leaflets and information to the visiting public.

Two features of this event are noteworthy. First, the debt of gratitude due to those of our members, especially in the Basque country, who contribute so positively to raising funds and our profile; second, how encouraging it is to see young people interested in our bit of history. I especially want to thank the eight volunteers for their involvement. ¡Eskerrik asko!

Visit to Guipuzcoa

by Carmen Kilner

In April 2011 I was delighted to be invited to return to talk in two schools in Guipuzcoa. My first visit was to the Ikastola Zurriola, San Sebastián, where one of our members, David Bumstead, is a teacher. He regularly teaches his class of 16/17 year olds about the Basque children's evacuation to Britain.

I spoke in English about about my mother and the Basque children. The students, who were already well informed, responded with thoughtful

comments and questions. Also present was Javier Lacunza, a *niño* who had come to England with his brother. They were in the Honiton colony in Devon until their return in 1939. He gave invaluable first person experience to the session.

After that we had a complete change of scene, meeting with 50 or so excited 9-10 year olds. Although challenging, they were a delight, participating very fully! They had no problem identifying with or understanding the emotions, fears, sorrows and also excitement experienced by the young refugees. They had plenty of questions for Javier and me, both prepared (in English and Spanish) and spontaneous, including, to Javier, "What did you do on birthdays?"

My final talk was to the Instituto de Elgoibar. Here the audience consisted again of older students and was also attended by a good number of staff. They had all just watched the film "The Guernica Children", so my involvement was more one of answering questions and general discussion. With me was Ana Santolaya, the daughter of Luis Santolaya, who was at the Plymouth colony.

Whilst I was in Elgoibar, three other schools contacted me and asked me to talk; and I will do so later in the year.

We know that there are schools in Southampton, Eastleigh, Sutton, Hereford and elsewhere that teach this special period of history that unites our two countries, so it is fitting that their Basque counterparts are also increasingly doing so. Education is one of the prime aims of our Association, and it is a source of satisfaction that it is increasingly being fulfilled.

I can't help thinking that my mother would be laughing (were she alive) to hear that she is being talked about in San Sebastián, where she was born and grew up, and in Elgoibar where her maternal family roots are and where my family and I are regular visitors.

Newsletter in Spanish

We now have brought out an *Edición Especial* of the Newsletter. It contains forty articles from Newsletters 1-14 which have been translated into Spanish and is aimed particularly at those *niños* who went back to live in Spain but who have forgotten their English. As you can imagine, it is a very interesting collection, and if you know of anyone who would like a copy (they cost £5 including p&p), please put them in touch with the Secretary (Tel: 0034 1865 459744)



Carmen and young fund-raisers

The Retirada

by Manuel Moreno

About 600 people attended the annual meeting in February at Argelès-sur-Mer organised by FFREE* (Fils et Filles des Républicains Espagnols et Enfants de l'Exode). CIDER put on an exhibition and a conference commemorating ten years of the Retirada. There are countless photographs of the camps on the beaches of Argelès, Bacarès and Saint Cyprien. They are distressing. Now they are called concentration camps. Thousands died in them for lack of basic conditions. Now there are a great number of books on the issue. The families of the exiles in France feel more comfortable to talk and discuss with others.

The films "L'Exode d'un Peuple" and "Les Enfants Perdus du Franquisme" are shown. The audience is quiet, in thought, in sadness. Then we have a conference on the trauma of the Spanish war. On the Saturday, the traditional short walk is organised from the Col de Banyuls; Republican flags are flying, a few speeches are made at the plaque. Later each representative of organisations says a few words to an open meeting. As *el inglés*, I talk about BC'37A and its many activities, the solidarity and support by the British people, the treacherous British government and the role of the Spanish exiles in Britain with the armed forces. It is well received. We all sign a declaration of "Justice and Memory". We later lay wreaths at the monument to the Spanish near the beach, and this is followed by music and songs from Andalucía by Lucía Socam. On Sunday, some attend the graveside of Antonio Machado in Collioure and his poems are read. I lay some red carnations.

The debate moves on, conversations are more overtly political, there is pride in the air.

*See a previous article in Newsletter No 13, May 2010.



Manuel speaking at the Retirada

80th anniversary of the Spanish Republic

by Manuel Moreno

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Spanish Republic which has been commemorated throughout Spain with great success and interest.

In 1931 a democratic government was elected, the majority composed of socialist and liberal parties. Spain was a poor and backward society in which landowners and bourgeoisie, church and military, held enormous power. The Second Republic's programme instigated improved education for all, health care, rights for women and generally promoted social rights. It was certainly a challenge to the old order yet not revolutionary.

I attended the commemoration with Spanish exiles in France, near the Spanish border in L'Île-sur-Têt, to pay homage to the descendants of Spanish Republicans and their ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. 2,000 people attended, including about 50 men and women who were in the resistance movement. There were speeches on the aims of the Republic, the anti fascist struggle against Franco, the thousand days of fighting in Spain and in Europe. There is a minute's silence to remember the Second Republic. In the afternoon, there is a *Fiesta de la Libertad* with songs and music. It is a warming experience, remembering, meeting friends and continuing the struggle against fascism.



Manuel and his wife singing at the Fiesta

Forthcoming events

IBMT commemoration

The annual ceremony at the International Brigade memorial, Jubilee Gardens, will be held this year on Saturday 2nd July. Assemble at 12.30pm. It will be followed by lunch and a social gathering at the Camel and Artichoke, a pub ten minutes' walk away, where it is hoped that live music will be played.

75th Anniversary Gala

On Saturday 1 October, the International Brigade Memorial Trust is presenting a fund-raising gala to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the International Brigades' formation in October 1936. It will be held in the New Red Lion Theatre Pub, 271 City Road, London EC1V 1LA. The programme mixes film, music, song and photography with food and drink. Tickets are £14.99, or with paella supper at £20.99. Book early to ensure entry. Tel: 0208 802 3499.

Annual Lecture

The third annual lecture of the Association will be given by Nicholas Rankin, author of "Telegram From Guernica", the life of George Steer, on 15 October at 2.30pm at the Kensington and Chelsea Library Lecture Theatre, Phillimore Walk, London W8 7RY. The title of his talk is "G L Steer and the Basque Children". All are warmly invited to attend, but please inform the Secretary if you are coming as we need to know the numbers

Exhibitions

The IBMT's touring exhibition "Antifascistas" can be seen at the following venues:

- 16-28 May Irish Labour History Society Museum, Dublin 4.
- 2-25 June Kidderminster DY10 1AB
- 2 July - 4 September Cannon Hall Museum, Barnsley S75 4AT
- 4-17 July Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Sheffield University S3 7RA
- 18-29 July Reading Museum, Reading RG1 1QH

Talks given

On 17 February, Natalia Benjamin gave a talk on the Basque Children to the Outreach group at the Friends' Meeting House in Cambridge.

Conferences

A paper was given by Padmini Broomfield and Alicia Pozo-Gutiérrez on: "Education, inspiration and determination: life lessons of child exiles of the Spanish Civil War" at the XV1 International Oral History Association Conference held in Prague from 7-11 July 2010.

The annual conference of the Society of Hispanists of Great Britain and Ireland was held from 11-13 April 2011 at Nottingham University. Natalia Benjamin presented a paper based on "Recuerdos", the book of testimonies that she edited, entitled: "70 years on: the Basque children recall their exile in Great Britain".

Materials donated

Member Dionisio Cooper has presented the Association with a set of 21 DVDs about the Civil War, entitled "España en la Memoria". We are grateful for this wonderful resource. Dionisio's mother, María Luisa Encinas Vega, was a *niña* who lived for a long time in the Caerleon colony.

Research

Susana Sabin Fernandez submitted her Ph.D to Southampton University at the beginning of November 2010 and passed the viva on 31 January 2011. The title was: "The Basque Refugee Children of the Spanish Civil War: Memory and Memorialisation."

Charlotte Hopkins gained an MA in history by research from the University of Glamorgan in July 2010. Her thesis subject was "The Basque Experience of Exile 1936-39: the Example of the Cambria House Journal."

There were two undergraduate dissertations:

Sophie Wellington wrote for the University of Newcastle upon Tyne: "How did the Basque children's hostel in Tynemouth attract and maintain support and why did it face opposition?"

Sophie de Menthon of Bristol University was awarded a first class mark for her dissertation: "Forced migration and Social Discipline: Perception and Reaction to the evacuation of the Basque children to Britain."

Thanks to a grant from the Consejería de Trabajo e Inmigración, Manuel

Moreno has been able to pay for a Research Assistant to write up the study of Spanish Republicans who fought with the allies in Britain. Please get in touch with him if you would like a copy.

Book Reviews

Fleeing Franco: How Wales Gave Shelter to Refugee Children from the Basque Country during the Spanish Civil War
by Hywel Davies (University of Wales Press, 2011)

Reviewed by Colin Carritt

In 1936 there existed a remarkable polarisation between the establishment of government and the press, and the ordinary working people of Great Britain. The Press and Stanley Balwin's Tory cabinet were implacably opposed to the Popular Front government in Spain, but the general public were far more sympathetic. A groundswell of support grew in Britain for the Spanish people and in particular for the care of refugee children fleeing the Civil War.

And the region of the UK most outspoken in its support was Wales. The message that comes across time and time again in Hywel Davies' book, "Fleeing Franco", is of the unremitting good will, the solidarity, the generosity and the sheer "love" (there is no other word for it) of the working class people of South Wales. Davies' book is remarkable in being that rare combination of well researched and annotated study and also a series of riveting accounts of the personalities involved, the children (*niños*) and their carers, their joys and their sorrows.

Davies explains that despite the hostile press, there was, in South Wales, a genuine identity with the Basque people. Euskadi is defined by its iron ore and its mining; it is surrounded by towering mountains clothed in green lush vegetation. So are the Welsh valleys. For centuries, both communities have exported the products of their labours far and wide and in the process have become great seafaring nations. Both communities have experienced real and gut-wrenching poverty in the 20th century and have responded by building solidarity amongst their ranks with strong trade unions and social traditions. Thus, both the geography and the economics have resulted in the development of close links between the two peoples, and long before the Spanish conflict, a sizeable immigrant Basque population

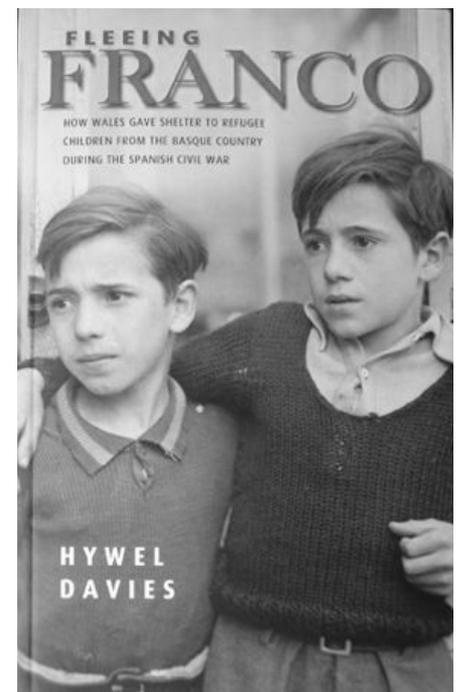
had established itself in South Wales.

When the refugee children arrived at Southampton in the old cruise ship *Habana*, accommodation was secured and arrangements drawn up for the provision of four colonies in Wales. One was to be in Caerleon, near Newport, one at Sketty in Swansea, one in the wilds of Carmarthen, at Brechfa, and the fourth at Old Colwyn in North Wales, not far from Llandudno.

Davies takes each of the colonies in turn and carefully, and with great compassion, tells of the individual strengths and weaknesses of each establishment. He introduces us to the *niños* and their stories and to their supervisors: the teachers, the cooks, the foster parents and the volunteers.

Cambria House at Caerleon was "a place of healing and settling" under the compassionate management of Cyril Cule. As Caerleon was a success, so the colony in the remote countryside at Brechfa was a disaster and it significantly soured relationships between the refugees and public opinion. The press were only too eager to leap upon the apparent disorder at Brechfa to condemn the whole humanitarian enterprise and to regurgitate the demands for early repatriation of the children.

Sketty, a suburb of Swansea, identified more closely with the Basque region of Spain than even other parts of South Wales. Whereas Caerleon and Sketty were well run and successful, Old Colwyn in North Wales, whilst also a well run and happy colony, suffered always from a shortage of funding. It was a



small colony with just 20 *niños* and on their arrival, on each child's bed was a small toy. The local community was quickly won over by the children who were well behaved and presentable.

"Fleeing Franco" is an important and readable account of the humanitarianism of the South Wales people and I commend it to all readers of the Newsletter.

"The Maze of Cadiz" by Ali Monroe (John Murray, 2008)

Reviewed by Tom Webb

Spain in September 1944 is the setting for this novel. Following the Civil War, the book well describes the degrading conditions under which the great majority of the people are suffering. The rest of Europe is still fighting to end the Second World War, while Spain remains nominally neutral.

It is against this background that Peter Cotton, a newly recruited agent, is sent from London to Cadiz to investigate apparent discrepancies in the expense accounts of May, a low level resident agent in the port. On arrival, Cotton finds that May has died in suspicious circumstances a few days beforehand.

Cotton's investigations bring him into contact with all levels of society, including well-to-do German and American couples, demonstrating the enormous differences between the living standards of the local population.

Throughout the story, Cotton is continuously exchanging information with Ramirez, a police informer, who is the "Mr Fixit" of Cadiz. He also has, although with different motives, his own reasons for finding an explanation for May's death which will not embarrass the Spanish Government.

To support the title of the book "The Maze of Cadiz", the author provides excellent descriptions of the countless narrow back streets and alleyways where much of the action takes place. More significantly, it is the numerous interconnections of relationships and motives of the other characters which justifies the use of the title "Maze".

It is a well-told story of a week just before a visit by Franco with the possibility of an assassination plot. Be prepared for an unexpected ending!

Features

A Typical Colonia

The following description appeared in July 1937 in Bulletin No 8 of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief.

A large empty rambling country house has been turned into a Hostel for Basque children. Here there are 30 little refugees, with them two war widows from Bilbao. A Spanish matron, a Basque nurse, a cook who has lived in Spain, a teacher who speaks Spanish as well as he does English and an odd-job-man – all have volunteered to look after the children as long as they are our guests. A doctor comes over three times a week but has little to do – a cut now and then, indigestion, one child must do exercises for flat feet, and many need their teeth attending to.

The day is divided between work and play, the routine is regularised. The children are given occupation and responsibility so that they have no occasion to get into mischief or to answer the village boys and girls who seek to entice them over the wall with sweets and cigarettes. The girls take it in turn to help with the housework, the boys with the pumping, woodcutting and gardening.

For nearly a year the children have had no proper schooling and it is essential that they should not miss this vital period of their education. Lessons in Spanish grammar, composition and literature are provided, together with mathematics, history, geography, English (which they are quick to pick up), music, drawing, carpentry for the boys, sewing for the girls. A weekly magazine is being started. Breakfast is at 8.30 (cereals, bread and butter and jam, milk). Lessons from 9.30 to 1, with a break for recreation and gymnastics. Lunch at 1 consists of meat or fish, vegetables, pudding or fruit. A short *siesta* is followed by football and other games, or walks. Then lessons again, lighter work such as music and drawing. High tea at 7, with eggs, salad, bread and butter, and milk. Bed begins at 8 and by 9.30 or 10, the place is quiet and the staff may breathe for the first time in the day.

Reports from other Homes indicate that the children are settling down happily and that the more regular occupation is provided the better. Naturally amongst four thousand children difficulties must arise. There are mischievous children

and there are perhaps more subtle and tragic mental difficulties, but on the whole the experience is everywhere that the children respond to sympathy and are really anxious to make the difficult task of looking after them as easy as possible for all those concerned.

From every home we get the same requests – Books, above all Spanish books, educational material, music, sewing and knitting material, toys,

Why Did The Hexham Colony Fail?

by Natalia Benjamin

About four hundred Basque children were accommodated in the North East and Cumbria. At the beginning of September 1937, it was announced that "The Larches", a large imposing Victorian house in Hexham had been approved as a hostel for Basque refugees. But the Basque refugees were not universally welcomed. The Mayor of Newcastle had publicly stated in August: "We must look after our own first". A more compassionate view was taken by Canon J J Davies, Rector of Morpeth: "However poor our own poor are, you all know that they are comparatively rich when you compare them with the Basque children, who have been living in terror and poverty... Let us not fail to do what we can to make the Basque children's stay in this country as happy as possible, so that they may learn something of the spirit of England, something of its great freedom and liberty, something of its righteousness and compassion".

The Matron engaged to run the home was Mrs Alison Richley de Suarez. She had local connections and had married a Spaniard from a distinguished family of ship-owners in Bilbao. She had lived for eleven years in Spain. She had appealed for furniture and was disappointed by the low response locally. Ernesto Leon, who had served as Assistant Cook at the North Stoneham camp, was Cook. He intended to provide a Spanish diet and to obtain garlic and olive oil locally. Furthermore, being Spanish, he said that he would be very useful as an interpreter. The Warden appointed was a Captain T P Wilson.

On 13 September 36 children, mainly boys aged between 5 and 16, arrived from Southampton to take up residence at "The Larches".



Within days, complaints against them were being voiced. Most of these were because of the noise the children made. In the local paper the complainants were encouraged to be "good Samaritans". But opposition to the home continued, some locals believing that the children's arrival there was the result of a political stunt.. Although there were two classrooms with desks, there was a great shortage of materials and equipment and the children were largely left to their own devices. There was little or no formal structure to their day and they were accused of running wild.

On 2 December 1937 a fundraising meeting was held. The keynote speaker, the Duchess of Atholl, evoked the terrible conditions under which the children had been living in Spain and said that it should not be forgotten that they had been nerve shattered on arrival. Indeed, one of the boys who had given the most trouble had seen his parents killed by machine gun. And many of the children had never heard from their parents since coming to Britain because they had been massacred or had died of starvation. She appealed to the citizens of Hexham: "We need all the help we can get and there must be no slackening of effort. It would be absolutely lamentable if for lack of support we had to abandon the work we have undertaken".

However, just over four days later, it was announced that "The Larches" was to close and that the 30 children would be dispersed to other centres. The Warden, now one Captain S C Pratt, said the decision had come as a complete surprise and that the children had only learned about it at the last possible moment to prevent rioting. Already, 17 had gone to Keighley and others to London or Ambleside. Five of the boys were being repatriated.

Whereas the other colonies in the north-east were flourishing, this was not the case in Hexham where funds had not been coming in regularly. "Since the Basque children came to "The Larches" some months ago," reported the *Hexham Courant*, they have been given very poor financial support and the hostel can no longer be maintained". The residents of Hexham could not, or perhaps would not, raise the money necessary to run the colony. Hexham had proved a failure due to the lack of good will from the local community to support it. Or so it seemed. But that is not the whole story.

On 9 December, the headlines of the *Evening Chronicle* screamed "Basque boys' reign of terror". The former Warden of "The Larches", Captain Wilson, gave a press conference, blaming the boys for the closure, and described the serious damage and wanton destruction that had occurred since the colony had opened.. Boys had stolen knives, attacked the assistant Warden, hacked walls and electric light fittings, set fire to beds, broken every pane of glass and crockery, smashed the gas stove, broken fences and uprooted plants and shrubs. The ringleaders had been sent back to Spain. Things had got so bad that in the middle of November he had been obliged to resign as he was unable to look after "an unruly set of incorrigibles". The decision to close the hostel had not come as a surprise to him, as it was "like sitting on a volcano the whole time." That same evening, Mr Gordon Evans, Secretary of the Newcastle BCC, accused Wilson of exaggerating and of blaming the children unfairly. The hostel, he alleged,

had been shut down in accordance with the BCC's policy of gradually closing the smaller hostels and concentrating the children in larger groups.

However, what is not generally known is that "The Larches" had twice been inspected for the NJCSR by Frida Stewart. Her first report of 25 October emphasised how bare and cold the house was and asked headquarters to supply basics such as carpets, curtains, sheets and blankets. It recommended a greater involvement by local people and a more regular source of income. A week later she had attended a meeting of the house committee where the lack of discipline and general disorder had been blamed on the incompetence of the Warden. Her second report stated that it had been decided to put him on trial: he was to have complete control for the following fortnight. If in that time there was no improvement in the discipline and routine, someone else would take his place.

There was evidently no improvement. Captain Wilson was asked to leave in the middle of November. So he did not resign as he had stated to the press..

In conclusion, the closure of "The Larches" was not due to the lack of local funding, nor to the misbehaviour of the Basque children, nor to the BCC's policy, but to bad management. Frida Stewart reported that "the house is in a worse way than most, still lacking in basic equipment; the staff are unsatisfactory, the Warden quite incompetent," It was this damning report that sounded the death knell for "The Larches."

Interview with Roberto García:



"The Larches", Hexham

Interview with Roberto García: the *niños*' story in song

by Pilar Pousada Soliño

The duo na-mara, Roberto García and Paul McNamara, have just released their third album which pays special tribute to the *niños*, keeping their memory alive with the song "Only for Three Months". Roberto García, a professional musician, is the son of *niño* Fausto García Gutiérrez, who arrived aged 9 in Southampton on the *Habana* together with his older brother Teodoro. Roberto's memories of his childhood are marked by the *niños*. He grew up knowing the story of his family and the Basque *niños*.

Can you tell us the story of your father? How did he get to be on the Habana?

My grandparents were living in Bilbao at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. My grandfather was a Republican and my father, Fausto, and his brother Teodoro were sent to Britain on the *Habana* to be safe. My father was looked after in various colonies in the UK and by a guardian, Harry Livingstone. He learned his trade as a cobbler and later worked in a factory. At the end of the Second World War, my father and his brother were reunited with their parents who came to the UK, having themselves been refugees in North Africa.

*What was it like growing up in the UK as the son of a *niño*?*

I grew up knowing about the Civil War, and how my family came to be living in the UK. I was brought up speaking Spanish and my parents taught me and my brother about their Spanish roots. I was born in the UK so I'm also British and went to school in London.

*Did you know any other *niños* and their families?*

Yes, there was a circle of families of other *niños* my parents were close to.

The other half of na-mara is Paul McNamara. How was na-mara formed and what are your influences?

I've been playing the guitar since I was 14 and studied at the Guildhall School of Music. Paul McNamara has been interested in the folk music tradition all his life. He's the one who researched the French canon and translates songs into English. We've known each other for 20 years but we only formed na-mara in 2006. I also play mandolin, mandola and bandurria and my son Dan, who is also a musician, plays percussion on the new album with us.

Your new album "The Bite" contains the song "Only for Three Months". How did you come to write this song?

Paul was interested in my father's story and the evacuation of the *niños* from Bilbao in 1937. He was inspired by it, as well as by Adrian Bell's book "Only for

Three Months", and he set the words to a very beautiful tune by the Asturian musician Javier Tejedor.

*The song is part of your live repertoire. How do people react to the story? I guess that this must often be the first time the audience learn about the Basque *niños*...*

We've been playing the song as part of our set at gigs and people are fascinated to hear the story, many of them have no idea this evacuation took place. Some have reacted very emotionally to the song. When I introduce it, I tell my father's story, and also mention that it resonates with what's happening today; child refugees are a reality in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya...

What about your title song "The Bite"?

It's a song about the International Brigades. We wrote it after Paul had read the story of the British International Brigader, George Wheeler. We wanted to write and perform a song to keep alive the memories of those men and women who volunteered to fight for the Spanish Republic during the Civil War.

*I understand that you're preparing a second song about the *niños*. What's the song about?*

This is a song that Paul has written inspired by the story in Adrian Bell's book about one of the *niños* who kept a silver *duro* that her father had given her on parting. When they met again after the war, she still had the *duro* as a keepsake and memento. This song is about the reuniting of families, while our first song tells the story of the separation.

Niños and their families will be able to listen to the songs of Roberto and Paul in May next year since they will be taking part in the celebrations in Southampton for the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the *Habana*.

For more information on na-mara, including live dates, please visit:

www.na-mara.com



Roberto García

Paul McNamara

Accounts

Abridged version of accounts for the year ended 30 November 2010 and adopted at the Annual General Meeting on 26 February 2011

	2009 £	2010 £
Income		
Subscriptions and Donations	2431	3269
Grants	3942	-
Sale of books and DVDs	2171	1423
Other income	496	363
Total	9040	5055
Expenditure		
Translation-Only for 3 months	-	3000
Cost of books and DVDs	2681	702
Newsletters, postage and other costs	3396	3704
Total	6087	7406
Surplus/deficit for year	2953	(2351)
Bank balance	10407	12081

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 2011-2012 subs

Subscriptions for 21 May 2011 until 20 May 2012 are now due. You should have received a letter, together with the relevant forms. Please fill them in as appropriate and return as soon as possible to M^a Carmen Coupland at the address on the form.

It really helps us if you to pay by Standing Order and sign the Gift Aid Form. If you already pay by Standing Order or have signed a Gift Aid Form, the irrelevant form will have been crossed out in the letter you were sent. Gift Aid allows us to claim back 28p/£ on all subscriptions and donations.

All the forms can also be found at our website www.basquechildren.org under the heading "Membership" in the main menu.

Los Niños de la Guerra

Mi nombre es Francisco Javier Lacunza Azcárate (Javier). Nací en San Sebastián el 2 de noviembre de 1928, y fui el más pequeño de cuatro hermanos. Yo era uno de los niños que fueron a Inglaterra en el vapor *Habana* para huir de la guerra. Tenía 8 años y viajaba con mi hermano José, que tenía 14. De la solapa de mi abrigo colgaba una etiqueta de identificación con el número 2834.

A principios de este mes, mayo 2011, colaboré con Carmen Kilner en una presentación sobre "Los niños de la guerra" ante alumnos de la Ikastola Zurriola de San Sebastián.

Me sorprendió la gran curiosidad mostrada por los alumnos por enterarse y conocer más sobre la historia de aquellos niños de hace 74 años. Lo cierto es que casi todos habían oído hablar del tema, e incluso varios de ellos tenían, o habían tenido, abuelos o abuelas que estuvieron en Inglaterra durante la guerra.

Mi mayor contribución a esta sesión de divulgación creo que fue el hecho de mi edad. Ante sí tenían estos jóvenes a un hombre ya muy viejo que había participado personalmente en los hechos que se relataban; de tal manera que esas ideas abstractas y huidizas de la edad, la historia y el paso del tiempo se veían materializadas ante sus ojos.

En los días sucesivos analicé más a fondo la información contenida en el Apéndice I del libro de Gregorio Arrien

"Niños Vascos evacuados a Gran Bretaña". He aquí los resultados:.

Los niños fueron acompañados por 96 maestras, más otros 118 asistentes y personal auxiliar. (Apéndice 2.Arrien)

Número de inscripciones para ir a G.B

TOTAL	4,157
Niños	2,334 (56%)
Niñas	1.823 (44%)
Diferencia	511 (12.3%)

Número de bajas y renunciaciones

TOTAL	240
Niños	134
Niñas	106
Diferencia	28

Número de niños que viajaron a GB

TOTAL	3.917
Niños	2,200 (56%)
Niñas	1,717 (44%)
Diferencia	483 (12.3%)

De todos los niños que viajaron a G.B., únicamente 1 de cada 5 (el 21%) fueron solos. El 79% restante, 4 de cada 5, iban con otros hermanos o hermanas, formando parejas, o trios, o grupos de cuatro, cinco y hasta seis.

Viajeros individuales

Niños solos	499
Niñas solas	314
TOTAL	813 (20.7%)

Parejas

291 parejas de 2 niños	562
161 parejas de 2 niñas	322
380 parejas mixtas	760
832 TOTAL	1,664 (42.5%)

Trios

59 grupos de 3 niños	177
49 grupos de 3 niñas	147
215 grupos mixtos	645
323 TOTAL	969 (24.8%)

Cuatro hermanos

12 grupos de 4 niños	48
4 grupos de 4 niñas	16
82 grupos mixtos	328
98 TOTAL	392 (10%)

Cinco hermanos

11 grupos de 5 niños/as 48

Seis hermanos

4 grupos de 6 niños/as 16
15 grupos mixtos TOTAL 79 (2%)

1,268 grupos 3,917 (100%)

Mucho se ha contado sobre las vicisitudes de los niños, sobre sus destinos y aventuras, y también sobre su soledad y su tristeza al verse alejados de sus padres. Pero apenas se ha mencionado la amargura, el sacrificio y la generosidad de los padres al hacer entrega de sus hijos a un destino incierto, con el fin de protegerlos de la única manera que veían posible.

Es difícil imaginar la angustia de despedir a un hijo. Pero ¿quién puede imaginar el decir adiós a cuatro, cinco o seis?



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: M^a Carmen Coupland; tel: 0131 2266078;
email: membership@basquechildren.org
- Treasurer: Carmen Kilner; email: treasurer@basquechildren.org
- Other committee members: John Kilner and Herminio Martínez

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 M^a Carmen Coupland for membership application form. 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 '37A UK Newsletter is published twice a year and is sent free to all members. Back numbers can be downloaded from BC '37A UK website: www.basquechildren.org. The deadline for the next issue is 31 October 2011.
- Editor: Natalia Benjamin (see details above for BC '37A UK Secretary).

For Sale

All goods are available from Tony Armolea:
85 Summerlease Road, Maidenhead, Berks,
SL6 8ER. Tel: 01628 781525; email: sales@basquechildren.org. 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.



Books

- "Recuerdos" edited by Natalia Benjamin, £16.10
- "Only for Three Months" by Adrian Bell, £11.10
- "Leah Manning" by Ron Bill & Stan Newens, £5.00

CDs & DVDs



- "The Guernica Children", Steve Bowles' documentary film, now available in a bilingual English/Spanish edition, £15.
- 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.



- "Songs of the Basque Children", songs from the book used when the *niños* were performing, plus the reissue of the original 1938 Parlophone recording, £9.50.



- *Los Niños: Education Pack*
The pack is free, but p&p will be £3 (See p12 for a description of the contents).

Restoring Arturo Barea's Headstone

by Adrian Bell

On the morning of 4 December 20 or so people assembled in the churchyard of All Saints in the Oxfordshire village of Faringdon. All were admirers of the Spanish writer Arturo Barea who died after 18 years of exile in England, and in the tradition of visiting the grave of relatives on All Saints' Day they gathered around the headstone that commemorates his life and work.

This simple, granite headstone had been placed in the churchyard by Olive Renier – a friend of Arturo and his Austrian wife since the darkest days of WWII when they found themselves working together for the BBC's radio monitoring service. She arranged for it to be located next to the graves of Ilsa's parents who had accompanied their daughter and her Spanish husband into exile.

Arturo Barea is best known for his magnificent trilogy of autobiographical novels that go under the collective title of "The Forging of a Rebel", all written in England in the first years of his exile, and first published in English, translated by Ilsa (it was not published in Spain until three years after Franco's death). He also had a coincidental relationship with the Basque children: during the last ten years of his life he rented a cottage on the estate of Lord Faringdon, just half a mile down the road from another estate cottage which the English aristocrat with Spanish Republican sympathies and who had worked in a field hospital on the Aragón front, had made available as a home for Poppy Vulliamy's colony of Basque boys.

Readers of the Newsletter may recall that when Natalia and I made a visit

there some years ago (Newsletter No. 6) we had some difficulty locating the headstone, not least because the vicar was quite unaware that such an internationally distinguished Spanish writer was remembered in his little churchyard in the depths of Oxfordshire. Another admirer who encountered similar problems was William Chislett, an English journalist living in Madrid. Only at the fourth attempt, and only after being given directions from Natalia, was he able to locate it last year. His pleasure was mixed with some sadness: the years had taken their inevitable toll and the headstone was in a somewhat dilapidated state. It was, he thought, as if Barea had been doubly forgotten.

On his return to Spain he determined to have the headstone restored. He enlisted the support of his friend and a fellow admirer of Barea, the contemporary novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina. They both wrote articles in (respectively) *El Imparcial* and *El País*, and then came up with the idea of inviting a number of Spanish and British writers and historians to contribute to the cost of having the headstone refurbished. Natalia put them in touch with Martin Murphy, a retired historian in Oxford, who for years has been tending the graves of Ilsa's parents, and it was he who arranged for the stone to be cleaned and the engraving restored. Meanwhile William was busy securing the funds from some twenty-odd contributors, and together they arranged the simple and moving ceremony to mark the results of the work on the headstone.

On a bright but cold winter's morning in this most tranquil of settings, William Chislett read a section from Michael Eade's biography of Barea ("Triunfo en la Medianoche del Siglo"); Sebastian Balfour of LSE read a piece from "The

Forge", the first book in the trilogy, which tells of Barea's early life in Madrid at the beginning of the twentieth century; and Martin Murphy read the lines from Olive Renier's memoir in which she explained how she came to be moved to have the stone placed there: "I put up a stone but could find no words to express my feelings for those four people, whose fate (though they could be said to be among the fortunate ones) was symbolic of the giant lost cause of our generation – the fate of Spain, the fate of the Jews, the fate of social democracy in Germany, in Italy, in Europe as a whole."

The process of restoring the headstone has had a couple of quite unexpected consequences.

The first was that an English teacher in Spain, after reading Antonio Muñoz Molina's article in *El País*, wrote, offering him the typewriter on which Arturo had written his novels and the 800-odd scripts which he broadcast for the BBC's Latin American Service. She had been given it by a friend whose family had lived near, and become friends with the exiled writer. The story of the typewriter solved a minor curiosity for me: a while ago, in the BBC's archives, I came across some of his letters and was struck by the fact that all the accents were put in by hand. Of course they were: the typewriter was an English Underwood.

The second was that the Instituto Cervantes put on a short series of meetings reflecting on the experience of Spanish exiles in England. The first of these, at the end of last January, was about Barea, with William, Paul Preston and Michael Eade as its principle speakers. The lecture room was full and the talks provoked a lively question/answer session. Clearly, Arturo Barea has not been forgotten.



Before



After



William Chislett and Antonio Muñoz Molina
with Arturo Barea's typewriter



In the churchyard of All Saints, Faringdon,
4 December 2010

Education Pack for Schools

David Bond of the Hampshire Record Office has produced an attractive learning pack with a booklet and DVD about the evacuation and resettlement of the *niños vascos* in colonies across Britain. The stories of the refugees will resonate with today's schoolchildren as many will have come to Britain as migrants and refugees themselves. Schools will be able to use the learning packs as a case study for the wider study of refugees which is on the curriculum on various levels.

Obituaries

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

- Raimundo Revuelta
- Eugenia Oribe Llorente
- Eric Hawkins

El Niño Vasco (from "Lecturas Vascongadas" by Alejandro Manzanares, Barcelona 1935)

Niños de pelo rubio como las candelas, generalmente; de ojos claros, azules, por lo común; de rostro coloradote, sano, macizo, de mirada ingenua y de andar lento y pacífico. Nada se observa en ellos de esa peculiar inquietud y traversura que caracteriza a los niños de la ciudad o de los pueblos producto de la invasión de otras gentes del interior. El niño vasco tiene un sello inconfundible; su timidez. Es manso y confiado en su medio, en su lugar, si se ve rodeado de personas familiares o conocidas; cuando no, se manifiesta receloso, desconfiado y huye al cobijo de su próximo caserío apenas divisa viajeros extraños. Si le habláis en vuestra lengua os mirará algo huraño, reservado, con cierto sobresalto, e instintivamente dirigirá sus ojos hacia los suyos, asegurándose que están cerca para protegerle de sus presuntos temores. Pero ¡ah! Que si, en vez de eso, os dirigís a él en su lengua nativa y saludáis en su idioma, entonces le veréis que se os entrega sonriente, os cobra afecto, conversa con

vosotros y responde con naturalidad y soltura a cuanto le preguntáis. Y es que el idioma es el instrumento más eficaz de penetración y la llave mágica y maravillosa que nos abre siempre de par en par las puertas misteriosas del corazón de la infancia..

