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Cover picture: Basque refugee children arriving at Southampton, May 1937, fifty of whom were to stay at Evington Hall, Leicester. (Reproduced by kind permission of the Basque Children of ’37 Association.) See page 3.

Editor: Joyce Lee

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Editorial

This edition of the Leicestershire Historian starts on a very topical theme with Richard Graves continuing his researches into Leicester's response to refugees, as he explores the part that Leicester played in the Expedición a Inglaterra of 1937, an event which remains to this day one of the least-known chapters of the Spanish Civil War. Contemporary images, newspaper reports and personal memoirs illustrate the impact of the arrival of refugee Basque children in Leicester at Evington Hall.

The value of being able to draw on living memory for personal accounts which capture the history of a place and its people is clearly evident in the wealth of material that Cynthia Brown has brought together in a lively account and insight into working class life and the operations of the shops, their shopkeepers and customers of Leicester's Charnwood Street from the 1920s to 1970.

Small businesses also feature prominently on the Leicestershire Business Maps of Stephens & Mackintosh. The production of printed maps is part of Leicester's distinguished publishing history, and map enthusiasts and researchers alike will find Derek Deadman's article of particular interest. Produced over a hundred years ago, these maps are delightfully illustrated, with advertisements for local businesses framing area and town plans.

When cartographic evidence is lacking, and surviving documentary records are sparse, analysis of the modern landscape using detailed ground surveys, air photography, LIDAR surveys, electro-magnetic and resistivity investigations, along with the Heritage and Environmental Record, can prove invaluable. This is the methodology used by Anthony Squires and Chris Peat who draw on the landscape of modern Bosworth as their chief source of information to locate the features of the Medieval Parks of Market Bosworth.

Fieldwork has also played a significant part in a project to rediscover Leicestershire's heritage apples. Nigel Deacon focuses on the research methods used to locate many of the 'missing' varieties using a combination of documentary sources, the internet and work on the ground. The results contribute to the history of apple growing in Leicestershire, and have also led to the establishment of the Leicestershire Heritage Apple Collection.

Food and fuel are the focus of John Martin and Robert King's exploration of why Hinckley was so successful in avoiding the worst of the problems caused by food and fuel rationing during World War I. The response of the town's hosiery and footwear industries to wartime needs, along with regular appeals for agricultural and other workers to be exempt from military call-up, are all part of this interesting story.

A standing stone in a field near Queniborough, known as the Moody Bush Stone, is the lead into Bob Trubshaw's article on the obscure tradition of turf rituals, in particular the taking of turves to sites where 'moots' or meetings once took place, the turves representing units of land.

Unexplained notes in a Lieutenancy Book for 1685 relating to the Duke of Monmouth's Rebellion led Alan Betteridge to the discovery of the arrests of a number of Leicestershire nonconformist rebel suspects, and their little-known legacy to Leicestershire's present-day nonconformist churches.

Local events in Leicestershire hit the national press in 1860 with the trial of 16 year old Hannah Holmes who faced execution for murdering her employer Samuel Wells. Making considerable use of newspaper reports and the National Archives, Brian Cousins unearths contemporary feelings towards the accused and the victim, as well as providing an insight into changing attitudes towards the treatment of women prisoners in the 1860s.

Recently published research, recollections, society journals, guides and histories on topics ranging from Luddite activity, Leicestershire dialect and Conscientious Objectors, to King Richard III, Amazonian explorers and Leicester City Football Club, are just some of the works reviewed in this year's Recent Publications section. Cynthia Brown and her team of reviewers provide this extremely useful and invaluable section of the Leicestershire Historian, giving plenty of inspiration for further reading.

The Leicestershire Historian aims to promote the study of the county's history by providing a platform for established and new authors, and through encouraging the pursuit of research and project work. It also aims to publicise the work of local groups and organisations, and seeks to raise the awareness of research sources.

Contributions for future editions are welcome from individuals, local groups, museums and other organisations and should be sent to the Editor for consideration. Articles can be short items or longer in-depth pieces, and can be submitted at any time. If you would like to discuss an idea in advance, please contact the Editor.

Joyce Lee, Editor
Leicester’s refuge for Basque children from the Spanish Civil War (Part 1)

Richard Graves

On Tuesday 6th July 1937 ‘a huge crowd of Leicester people waited outside the Leicester Central Station to welcome the Basque children refugees, who are to stay at Evington Hall’. (1) This was a group of 50 children out of the 3,826 who had arrived at Southampton on board the steamship SS Habana from Bilbao in northern Spain, in the largest single influx of unaccompanied young refugees ever to arrive in Britain. They were refugees of the Spanish Civil War. The Expedición a Inglaterra, as the evacuation was called, remains to this day one of the least-known chapters of the Civil War. Leicester played a part in this story.

Basque refugee children arriving at Leicester Central Station, Leicester Mercury, 7th July 1937.

Civil War in Spain

Although the background and legacy of the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) has been well covered by historians from most political angles, the evacuation of young refugees from Bilbao to Britain and their subsequent lives hardly receives a mention in the literature. Even Professor Hugh Thomas in his seminal history of the conflict, The Spanish Civil War, first published 1961 and revised in 1977, covers the event in just eight lines.

By the spring of 1937, after the first winter of the Civil War, approximately half of Spain was in the hands of the Nationalist rebel forces under General Franco. The industrial and mining belt in northern Spain, including the Asturias and the Basque provinces, was staunchly loyal to the Republican Government, but was now isolated and cut off from the rest of Republican Spain. Franco vowed to terminate the war in the north quickly and by whatever means he had at his disposal. These means included a Luftwaffe detachment of Hitler’s Condor Legion, which was serving with the Nationalist forces. For Hitler, Spain’s internal fratricide presented an opportunity to test his aerial weaponry in support of sympathetic Fascist allies, a rehearsal for the wider European conflict just 30 months later. On 31st March Hitler’s bombers targeted the small town of Durango killing 250 civilians, and then on Monday 26th April fighter planes and bombers attacked the market town of Guernica, the ancient seat of government and therefore of enormous symbolic importance for Basque culture and the aspirations of the nation for independence. The intention of the attack was to undermine morale by using aerial power for the first time to systematically kill and terrorise a civilian population and destroy their homes. After four hours of saturation bombing and aerial machine-gunning the town was razed to the ground, left in flames, and an unknown number of civilians were killed. Britain’s Foreign Secretary at the time, Anthony Eden, later described this as ‘the first blitz of the Second World War’. (2)

A Safe Haven in Britain

As refugees swelled the population of major urban centres such as Bilbao, the autonomous Basque Government appealed for other countries to relieve the pressure by taking in young refugees. In Britain, the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief (NJCSR) had been established at the end
of 1936 to co-ordinate the activities of a multitude of voluntary relief agencies in Spain. The Chair of the Committee, the Conservative M.P. the Duchess of Atholl, and the Independent M.P. Eleanor Rathbone, had visited Madrid in April 1937 and had been deeply affected by the conditions they witnessed. As public pressure to act increased, the NJCSR set up a Basque Children’s Committee. The Duchess eventually managed to persuade a reluctant Prime Minister Baldwin to allow up to 4,000 young refugees into Britain on the strict condition that the Government would not take any financial responsibility for the children. This would be the responsibility of the Basque Children’s Committee, which would have to guarantee at least ten shillings per week for the care and education of each child. As children were signed up for evacuation, the Foreign Office insisted that the parents’ political affiliation be recorded on their application form in an attempt to achieve a ‘balance’ in what has been described as ‘a quixotically English notion of impartial humanitarianism’. (3)

A site for a tented reception camp for the refugees was identified in three fields owned by Mr G. A. Brown at Swaythling Lane Farm, North Stoneham, near Eastleigh, Southampton. A local committee enlisted many volunteers from the community, and the site was prepared in two weeks. The ship, the SS Habana, which normally carried around 800 passengers, left Bilbao on 21st May carrying the 3,826 children, accompanied by 96 maestras (female teachers), 118 señoritas (young women who had volunteered...
to accompany the children), fifteen Catholic priests, two English doctors and five nurses. The SS Habana arrived in Southampton on 23rd May 1937.

The intention was to disperse the young refugees in smaller groups around the country as soon as practically possible. Local committees were hastily set up all over the country and temporary refuges were identified and prepared to receive the refugees. Practical support by a number of agencies produced a variety of material offers of help, including '1,037 pairs of youths and maids boots and shoes' from the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives, the only major trade union with its national headquarters in Leicester at the time. (4) Guidance was issued to 'local committees desiring to assist the National Committee for the Care of Basque Children'. (5) It was suggested that a minimum of 40-50 children per centre was desirable ‘to avoid a feeling of loneliness on the part of the children; simplifying repatriation when that is possible; preserving their Basque identity and permitting a teacher to be sent with the group in order that Basque education may be continued’. (6) Finance was to be raised locally to support as many of the children as possible. The local group homes and refuges became known as “colonies”, in the sense of the Spanish word colonia, or colonia escolar, a summer camp for schoolchildren. In all around 100 “colonies” were established across the country. In total around 38,000 young people from the Basque region were evacuated abroad, mainly to France, Mexico, Russia and Belgium. This included the 3,800 who came to Britain. The story of the exile to other countries has been recorded in Spanish publications, but the British exile has been ignored until relatively recently. ‘It was as if it hadn’t happened.’ (7)

In 2002 the “Basque Children of ’37 Association UK” was formed by a small group of people, who had direct links to the events of 1937, perhaps as children themselves of the niños vascos or of the teachers and volunteer assistants, who had accompanied the evacuees. There was a realisation that the story of these events in Britain in 1937 was disappearing unrecorded, and there was a determination that those who had arrived on the SS Habana in May 1937, should not become los olvidados, the forgotten ones, of the Spanish Civil War. The aims and objectives of the Association are to support research, to inform and to educate, and to recover the history before it is too late. Although local committees were formed to establish and manage around 100 “colonies”, formal minutes and records of proceedings are largely non-existent, and even the very existence of some of the colonies was not known about, or had been lost in memory, until recent research efforts. Although the Leicester “colony” was known about, the Association had virtually no information about the set-up in Leicester. The aim of this paper is to record what can be found about the colony from available sources.

Establishing the Leicester colony

As there was, initially at least, widespread public interest and sympathy for the young evacuees, there was often lively coverage for a time in local newspapers across the country. This has proved to be the most fruitful source of information regarding the Leicester colony. Media reports acted as a spur for local voluntary groups and committees to form in order to play their own role in ensuring the evacuees were quickly dispersed to smaller “colonies” around the country. Leicester was no exception.

Ten days after the arrival of the SS Habana it was reported that ‘Fifty Spanish refugee children will be arriving in Leicester within a fortnight or three weeks’ time, according to present plans, and the committee responsible for their reception and care has still to settle upon suitable quarters for them. The chairman of the committee is Councillor C. R. Keene and the secretary Mrs Attenborough. Some members of the committee have inspected five or six properties and a recommendation will be made to the main committee very soon’. (8) The afore-mentioned secretary was Mary Attenborough, wife of Fred Attenborough, then Principal of the University College of Leicester, and mother of Richard, David and John.

By 5th June it was confirmed that ‘the 50 Basque children who are coming to Leicester will be housed at Evington Hall. This was settled at a meeting of members of the committee last evening, and the children will arrive by the end of the month. The Hall, which will be rented, is a big brick mansion with considerable park ground, and buildings that can be adapted as play houses’. (9) Evington Hall had been sold in 1930 to Thomas Henry Bowell following the death of the previous owner, local hosiery manufacturer, John Faire. It was a stuccoed mansion built around 1830 for Henry Freeman Coleman. It was described by auctioneers, Warner, Sheppard and Wade and P. L. Kirby, in the sale particulars dated May 1930, as an ‘imposing County Mansion distinguished as Evington Hall, standing in its own spacious grounds adjoining the Spencefield Lane near the village of Evington. A residence of pleasing design and moderate dimension, it is provided with modern comforts and conveniences and commends itself as a Country Home of superior attraction’. (10) In early 1937 however, the Hall had been empty for some time. It had been inspected by members of the committee and found to be in very good structural condition with little overhaul work necessary. The initial expenditure on the Hall for furnishings and rent would be around £1,000.

At this point we learn more about the Leicester committee: ‘The local committee, which has been in existence for some weeks, is representative of all religions and social activities.
in the city. The Lord Mayor (Councillor A. H. Swain) is president, the Bishop of Leicester chairman, and Mrs Attenborough of University College House, the secretary. The Rev Glan Morgan is the chairman of the executive committee, and there is an appeals committee, of which the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Richard Hallam, is chairman and Councillor Charles Keene secretary.’ (11) On Tuesday 8th May 1937 the *Leicester Mercury* published a letter from the Lord Mayor, Councillor A. H. Swain, and the Bishop of Leicester, Dr Bardsley:

We would commend to the people of Leicester the following appeal from the Leicester Committee for Basque Children. This committee is fully representative of all the interests and life of the city, and it confidently appeals for the help and support of Leicester citizens. The committee has undertaken to house and maintain 50 of the Basque refugee children, and Evington Hall has been taken for this purpose. A sum of £1,000 is needed immediately to meet the initial outlay for repairs and equipment, and then there is the provision for the maintenance of the children. Help may be offered in these ways: 1. Donations can be sent to the Treasurer, Mr G. C. Turner, 15, Churchgate, Leicester. 2. Individual firms or groups of people can provide for one child by subscribing 10s. a week. 3. Gifts may be offered in kind, e.g. bedding, furniture, linen etc. 4. Volunteers can help (a) to clean and prepare the house (b) to act as interpreters of the Basque language. Offers of help other than donations should be sent to the Hon. Sec. Mrs F. L. Attenborough, University College House, Leicester.

David Attenborough recalls his mother’s involvement in preparing Evington Hall: ‘My clearest memories of this are of seeing my mother on her hands and knees scrubbing the floors of this disused house to make it ready for them’. (13)

### Settling in at Evington Hall

As the 50 young refugees arrived at Leicester’s Central Station on Tuesday 6th July 1937, ‘members of the committee, including Mrs F. Attenborough, and members of the Leicestershire A.A. waited for them and took them to Evington in their cars. Dr R. Ellis, who has been to Bilbao and also to the camp where the children have been staying, was on the platform. As soon as the train stopped one small child jumped out and into his arms with a very happy smile of recognition. With another small boy she clung to his hand and refused to leave him. The children were accompanied by several helpers, some of whom could not speak a word of English.’ (14)

![Arrival at Evington Hall, Leicester Mercury, 7th July 1937.](image)

David Attenborough recalls: ‘The children, when they eventually arrived, seemed very exotic to my eyes with their black hair and dark complexions, and did not of course speak much English. I accompanied my mother on some of her regular visits and got to know some of the children slightly as their English improved.’ (15)

During the summer of 1937, after the arrival of the refugees, the *Leicester Mercury* followed events at Evington Hall closely, eager to provide news and information to its readership and to local people, who responded in various ways to the appeal for assistance. On the day after their arrival, the *Leicester Mercury* explained how ‘the children are being kept together in families as much as possible, and about seven families have come to Leicester. Dr Richard Ellis, who was on the platform to meet them, was..."
immediately in great demand by the children. He came over from Spain with them, and has often stayed at the camp (nr. Southampton) since. The English helpers were rather handicapped by their lack of Spanish when they started to show the children to their rooms, and of the three assistants who travelled with them, one teacher and two pupil teachers, only the teacher speaks English. This difficulty was quickly overcome when Miss McPhee, the matron, came on the scene. She has had a great deal of experience in Spanish Morocco and speaks Spanish fluently.

new surroundings ... Yesterday a contingent of 50 desks arrived, and the books and pencils are expected within a day or two. Although there is no definite routine in operation as yet, all the children do their share of the work in the home and the grounds. Boys peel the potatoes and help in the kitchen, girls tidy the rooms and scrub the floors. Some of the boys were busy cutting the long grass with sickles to make a football pitch ... One room in the house is being used as a church. Father Dunstan Sargent of Leicester is on the committee and will celebrate Mass every Sunday. (17)

By the middle of the second week formal education was underway at Evington Hall:

Three hours classroom lessons in the morning. In the afternoons girls will do domestic science or some other practical subject while the boys are busy in the carpenter’s shop. Several offers have been received from people eager to help in giving lessons or lending equipment and a course in English lessons started today. ‘It is a great relief to have them out of the way for a few hours during the day as 50 children all over the house are rather apt to upset household arrangements’, said Miss McPhee. (18)

On the following day, Thursday, 15th July 1937, came another stark reminder of how the civil war in Spain was having a direct impact on communities in Britain. News had been received that Fred Sykes (35 and single), a member of the Leicester Communist Party, and a well-known speaker in the Market Place, had been killed while fighting with the International Brigade on the Guadarama front near Madrid in February. There was no news of his friend, Jack Watson, but it was feared that he had also been killed. Mr James Hand of Gopsall Street, Leicester, with whom Sykes lived, said: ‘He was an ardent worker for the Spanish people, and was the first person to work for them in Leicester’. (19) He had left for Spain with Watson on 20th December 1936.

At the end of July, ten of the boys from Evington Hall had been invited to be guests for two weeks of the St James the Greater (Leicester) Scouts at their summer camp at Salcombe, Devon. ‘District Commissioner Pank said he expected no language difficulties. Some have been Scouts and can speak French. He can speak French and Spanish so they should cope.’ (20) The report regarding the summer camp in Devon prompted a letter to the Leicester Mercury asking at whose expense the boys were enjoying the holiday and a subsequent response from Commissioner Pank himself: ‘… the major part of the money consisted of the

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 Sharing in the work, Leicester Mercury, 7th July 1937.

‘The children are being quartered in several bedrooms, all containing three or four single beds. They will use one of the larger rooms in the house for the classroom, and lessons will begin almost at once.’ (16) By Friday 9th July local interest and curiosity apparently reached a point where police had to be called to control crowds at Evington Hall, and the Leicester Mercury reported that:

According to the matron, Miss McPhee, visitors sat on the railings surrounding the grounds after they were kept out by the police and plied the children with cigarettes. ‘It is most undesirable that the children should be spoiled like this’, said Miss McPhee. ‘Of course we know that some of the older boys like to smoke occasionally, but we do not want them smoking a lot.’ All the children are very well, but it is felt that the children must have some time to settle into their
usual weekly amounts set aside for their keep, and the balance was donated by people interested in the welfare of these boys. It is a pity that Mr W.’s sense of humanity is so small that he apparently resents an inexpensive holiday for boys who have lost mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters, and who spent last year, underfed, in towns subjected to daily bombarding ...
(21)

At the end of July, after almost a month at Evington, the Leicester Mercury gave a brief update:

Business as usual at Evington Hall although 14 older boys are away, 10 with the Scouts, 4 more with Dr Ellis in Devon. Miss McPhee said she was rather glad on the whole that so many boys are to be away for a fortnight. ‘It will give me a chance to get the house cleaned up. There isn’t much hope with 14 nearly grown-up boys all over the place.’ The children enjoy going to Leicester to the shops. They do not like walking much. Most are town-bred and are much more at home in the busy streets of the city than on a country walk. Some have received letters from their mothers, who had fled to France.

Here for the long haul

As the internecine warfare in Spain entered its second year and the Basque country eventually fell to Franco’s Nationalist rebels, initial thoughts of a temporary stay in England for the young refugees turned into the realisation of a much longer stay, particularly for many who did not know the whereabouts or fate of their own family members. Efforts were made to live alongside the local community and retain some semblance of ‘normality’. In early September 1937, the Leicester Mercury reported how a team of Leicester Boys beat the Basques at football:

At Evington Playing Fields last night ten English boys and one Italian boy from Melbourne Road School Senior Boys Team played the Basques from Evington Hall. Leicester won 4-2 in a closely-fought game. Practically all the Basques played without proper boots and some had only tennis shoes to wear. Their lack of equipment was a cause of two slight accidents. Francisco Cabrera, captain and centre-half, and Francisco Perez, goalkeeper, were both slightly injured by the other boys’ boots ... Mr K. L. McKinnon, who is coaching their football. It is hoped to hold a bazaar and exhibition soon of the work done by the children. Some of the work is in London where it was sent to the national exhibition of work done in all the camps in England. They have been very successful with football, having won six out of seven games, and are hoping for fixtures with other Leicester schools. The happy atmosphere has been greatly helped by news from parents and relations. Most receive letters regularly from their relations. One family, who had not heard anything since they left Bilbao, had a letter from their grandmother last week. None of the letters has asked the children to return home. Relatives are happy to feel the children are in safety. (25)

Almost six months after their arrival at Evington Hall we hear of the first departures. On 14th December 1937 the Leicester Mercury reported that: ‘Some of the Basque children living in Leicester for a few months are set to return to parents in Bilbao in the next few days. Three of the fifty children from Evington are all prepared to leave England, Anastasio Badiola, 13, Jose Luis Alonso, 10, and Rosalia Palacios, 7 years old’.

Interviewed in 1986, Leicester man, Ernest Hunt, recalled Basque boys at his school in Mantle Road when he was about 15. He remembered them ‘having no shoes and playing football barefoot’. (23) Another interviewee, Ms D. M. Adams, a former teacher, recalled pupils at Wyggeston Girls School who mended shoes for the Basque children. (24) In late October 1937, the Leicester Mercury again conveyed a sense of long-term normality at Evington Hall with another update:

The 50 Basque refugees, who are living at Evington Hall, have settled into a very normal existence with lessons and games just like any ordinary boarding school. When I visited the Hall today I found a large class of children carrying on with their ordinary lessons in the schoolroom. There was none of the restlessness, which characterised them when they first arrived. They all looked extremely healthy and happy. Their English had improved enormously. In addition to their normal lessons, which they are given by their Spanish teachers, a number of English people are helping. Miss Catherine Peach visits the Hall twice a week to teach girls embroidery and handicrafts. While the girls are busy learning the gentler arts the boys have been working in the garden with Mr D. Lake, who has been living at the Hall for seven weeks teaching them woodwork, gardening, English and coaching their football. It is hoped to hold a bazaar and exhibition soon of the work done by the children. The happy atmosphere has been greatly helped by news from parents and relations. Most receive letters regularly from their relations. One family, who had not heard anything since they left Bilbao, had a letter from their grandmother last week. None of the letters has asked the children to return home. Relatives are happy to feel the children are in safety. (25)

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The children will sail to Bilbao on a Franco ship. Conditions in Bilbao, according to letters received, are quiet so far as fighting is concerned, but there is a lack of work, money and food. The other children are not envious.’ One of the volunteers, Señorita Margarita Indart, told the reporter that her parents and sister were living in Bilbao, but both her brothers were prisoners of Franco. ‘I don’t want to go back to Spain yet. I have been as happy as the children in England’. (27)

We learn that seven children have gone back to Spain, but others will not return until their parents are living in better conditions. Mary Attenborough, author of the report, writes: ‘Either both parents are refugees, living in appalling conditions, or the mother is a refugee and the father a prisoner in Franco territory. We cannot send these children back yet, and undo all that we did when they were rescued from Bilbao.’ (30) We also learn from a letter written by Mary Attenborough to Father Pedro Atucha that the repatriated children were replaced by children whose parents were refugees. (31)

David Attenborough recalls: ‘The organisers, including my mother, were of course anxious to engage local people in helping and making the children feel at home. One of the ways of doing that was to arrange parties at the Hall during which the Basque children dressed in an approximation of their traditional costumes, performed regional dances and sang Basque folk-songs.’ (32)

Into 1938

In early 1938, the Leicester Committee published a report on its first six months’ work with the refugees. The report was summarised in the Leicester Mercury on 2nd February 1938 under the headline: ‘50 Basques kept on £25 a week’. According to the newspaper, the Basque children had:

... found many friends among Leicester people, who go to the Hall regularly at weekends and take them out. These friends, and the regular football matches, have done a great deal towards helping the children to feel at home. The 30 boys and 20 girls, whose ages range from 7 to 15, live in rather a Spartan atmosphere, but with limited resources it has been found impossible to do otherwise. The hall is run by the matron with a daily cook, and all the domestic work is done by the four Spanish señoritas and a few older girls. Owing to the differences in age the Spanish teacher who came over with the children found it difficult to teach the older boys, who disliked taking lessons with younger children. To overcome this difficulty 12 senior boys were placed in schools in Leicester. These boys are learning English from their school mates, while the English boys are picking up some Spanish. Six of the older girls come into Leicester during the week for lessons in English and typing, while Mrs Collinson and Miss C Peach teach all kinds of handicrafts at the hall once a week. (28)

The £25 weekly for our 50 children provides for their food, and that of the six adults on the staff, for the matron’s salary, the wages of the cook and part-time man, for heat and light, postage on the children’s letters to Spain, some clothes and incidental expenses, and bus fares (which, now that the boys go to school, cost at least £1 a week). Many of those who have adopted a child by promising to subscribe 10s. weekly, have chosen a special child, and have taken a personal interest in him. Such a relationship is particularly valuable to these children, who have been suddenly cut off from their family and country; it gives them back confidence in themselves, and we should be glad if more of our subscribers would come to Evington to choose a child. (29)

We learn that seven children have gone back to Spain, but others will not return until their parents are living in better conditions. Mary Attenborough, author of the report, writes: ‘Either both parents are refugees, living in appalling conditions, or the mother is a refugee and the father a prisoner in Franco territory. We cannot send these children back yet, and undo all that we did when they were rescued from Bilbao.’ (30) We also learn from a letter written by Mary Attenborough to Father Pedro Atucha that the repatriated children were replaced by children whose parents were refugees. (31)
Road, Leicester. It was hoped to attract an audience of around 500. (33) Sourcing appropriate music proved difficult and unable to get any music ‘... all accompaniment of the dancing has to be voices only, which is a great shame for the singers’. (34) Eventually copies of some Basque songs were borrowed from Father Atucha. (35) The children made the costumes themselves with the help of their Spanish voluntary assistants. The concert was attended by the Duchess of Atholl, M.P. for Kinross, who was chairman of the national Committee for Basque Children, and who delivered an appeal to the audience. She explained the background to the Basques’ presence and ‘claimed that those who said that the children were rescued from imaginary dangers, either did not know the facts, or did not want to know them’. (36) We learn that ‘adoption’ of children by individuals or organisations raising and contributing 10s. per week (the weekly cost of keeping one child) was popular in Leicester and elsewhere. Subscribers to the ‘adoption’ scheme in Leicester included Wyggeston Boys School and Wyggeston Girls School, with two children each, the Newarke, Alderman Newton and Collegiate Girls Schools, the Western Park Open Air School (staff and friends), the Domestic Science College, the nursing staff at the Leicester Royal Infirmary, the Church of Christ (Evington Road) and the Society of Friends. (37) Also at this event were the two doctors, who had flown to Bilbao to make the necessary arrangements for the evacuation on the SS Habana, Dr Richard Ellis and Dr Audrey Russell. Councillor Richard Hallam proposed a vote of thanks to the Duchess of Atholl, and, referring to Dr Ellis, he said they felt proud of him as a Leicester man, who had worthily upheld the traditions of his family. (38)

The following month saw a significant group of the young refugees depart from Leicester London Road station on the first stage of the journey back to Spain. On 22nd March the Leicester Mercury reported how: ‘22 small travellers’ set off, ‘only those who will have parents or friends with homes in comparative safe parts are being sent back, although ‘Mrs F. L. Attenborough, who saw them off, told a reporter that many of them wept because they hardly knew what they were returning to’. (39)

In May 1938, the “Mr Leicester” page of the Leicester Mercury referred to the impending first anniversary of the arrival of the Basque refugees in England. Mary Attenborough explained that there were now 45 children left at Evington Hall, who would remain there until the end of the Civil War. Their parents were either not traced or were prisoners, or were themselves refugees. ‘She has heard from most of the children who recently went back to Spain in Franco territory. The reports are not encouraging, for many of the boys who were here doing so well in school are now running the streets, there being no school for them to attend. This is a real shock to those who, in Leicester, had put such hard work into making these children happy here and their days useful ... . (40)

References:
6. ibid.
9. ibid., 5th June 1937.
11. Leicester Mercury, 5th June 1937.
12. ibid., 8th June 1937.
17. ibid., 9th July 1937, p.25.
18. ibid., 14th July 1937.
19. ibid., 15th July 1937.
20. ibid., 30th July 1937.
22. ibid., 3rd September 1937.
24. ibid., ROLLR: LO/171/122.
25. Leicester Mercury, 27th October 1937.
26. ibid., 14th December 1937.
27. ibid., 15th December 1937.
28. ibid., 2nd February 1938, p.3.
29. ibid.
30. ibid.
31. Letter from Mary Attenborough, 10th January 1938.
33. Letter from Mary Attenborough, 10th January 1938.
34. ibid.
35. ibid., 26th January 1938.
36. Leicester Mercury, 12th February 1938, p.11.
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38. ibid., p.3.
40. ibid., 18th May 1938, p.13.

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