

The Basque children's colony at the Convent of Mercy, Wigton

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In 1937 'colonies' for Basque child refugees were established in Cumbria at Brampton, Carlisle and Wigton, as well as for a few months over the winter of 1937-38 at Ambleside. There is a substantial archive on the colonies at Brampton and Ambleside at Carlisle Archive Centre, but information about the colonies at Carlisle and Wigton has been harder to come by. Both of these colonies were established under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. Some information about the colony at Carlisle exists in the archive of the 'Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth: The Generalate Archive' although what can be made available is heavily redacted. Information about the Wigton colony has emerged following a gift of a photograph of two of the children accommodated there to the Basque Children's Association '37 UK accompanied by testimony from the daughter of one of the children. Consequently, it has been possible to rescue its history from obscurity.

Key words: Basque children – Convent of Mercy - Wigton

In May 1937 some 4000 children from Bilbao, the de facto capital of the Basque region between October 1936 and June 1937, and the surrounding area arrived at Southampton on board SS *Habana* to escape the horrors of the Spanish Civil War in northern Spain. After a few weeks living in a tented camp at North Stoneham (near Eastleigh) the children were dispersed to 'colonies' around the United Kingdom, funded as required by the government by voluntary organisations and contributions from individuals. Three of these 'colonies' were in Cumberland. The first to be opened was the secular 'colony' at Brampton, and a short time later two 'colonies' opened in Catholic institutions. One was at Nazareth House in Carlisle, the other at the Convent of Mercy in Wigton.¹

On 26 June 1937 thirty-five children arrived at Carlisle Citadel Station and were met by Fathers Kerr and Whiteside and three nuns from the Convent of Mercy in Wigton. Although the children had experienced some 'train sickness' on the journey, they 'were looking quite happy on arrival'. This group had been preceded by the 100 children who had arrived at the station on 18 June destined for the 'colony' established in the converted workhouse at Brampton. This second contingent formed part of the 1200 or so children which the Roman Catholic church had agreed to look after, although for logistical reasons that figure was never reached. Initially, it had been intended that all the 35 children would be accommodated at the Convent of Mercy at Wigton, but at the request of the sisters, who were concerned about over-crowding, it was agreed that 25 (14 boys and 11 girls) would go to Nazareth House in Carlisle, one of eight colonies, five of which were in the North West of England, run by the Sisters of Nazareth across the country. The remaining ten children, all girls aged between six and thirteen, would be housed in the Convent of Mercy alongside the 36 orphaned girls (the convent was referred to locally as The Orphanage) already living there.² The Wigton group

was accompanied by a single Spanish adult, an assistant (*auxiliar*), Vicenta Ibarra Castro, but not by a teacher (*maestra*).³

Vicenta, who was aged 27, was older than many assistants and it is likely that her appointment to Wigton was not accidental. Her age was ideal for assuming the expected responsibilities, as she was no longer a young woman and she will have possessed the maturity that the position demanded. As the only Spanish adult living in the community in Wigton she would have acted as the liaison between the Convent of Mercy's management, to whom she was responsible, and the children. It is likely that her earlier career was as a shop assistant in Bilbao given her full membership of the appropriate trades union, a moderate voice in democratic Basque nationalism. In the absence of direct evidence it is reasonable to assume that Vicenta had some prior experience in childcare, as well as a basic level of spoken English that allowed her to communicate with the Sisters and, at the very least, mediate or translate during the girls' lessons. This aligns with the general description for assistants published in *Lan Deya* on May 15, 1937, which emphasized that the assistant's primary duties were the grooming and cleanliness of the minors and the obligation to remain under the orders of the colony's management at all times. Miss Quinlan, the Ministry of Health inspector, referred to Vicenta as a teacher, a mistake that may have arisen from watching her assist in the classes being run by the trained teachers amongst the Sisters of Mercy.⁴

As the sole Spanish speaker, Vicenta's responsibilities would have been unusually extensive and included entertaining the children, helping with the children's religious instruction, assisting the convent's own trained teachers, and structuring routines and activities. She would also have been responsible for connecting the sisters at the convent with the children – a role probably made more difficult at the beginning because she may have had little knowledge of English. She would no doubt have also found herself responsible for ensuring the emotional well-being of the children – in effect acting as a mother figure replacing the children's own mothers left behind in Spain. Additionally, assistants often found themselves responsible for a range of domestic duties such as laundry, repairs, ironing, supervision during mealtimes, helping out in the kitchen, making beds and scrubbing floors. Many assistants could expect some help from the older girls in the group; however, the young ages of the Wigton children initially limited their ability to support Vicenta.⁵

Living in the Wigton colony

The Roman Catholic church provided for the maintenance of these children, and as they were living in existing accommodation, start-up costs would have been minimal compared, for example, with those at the secular colony at Brampton. Initially the church authorities did not have to call upon the community's help, but by October 1937 this had changed.

When the children arrived in England in the summer of 1937 it had been anticipated that they would be able to return to Spain after about three months. By September the three months period was coming to an end, but many of those responsible for the welfare of the children deemed the situation in Spain too dangerous for them to be repatriated, not least because the civil war had caused the breakup of many of their families with parents and siblings dead, imprisoned or themselves refugees elsewhere in Europe. The National Joint Committee for

Spanish Relief (NJCSR), the Basque Children's Committee (BCC), the Roman Catholic church and the local committees had to respond to a new and unforeseen situation.

There was no question but that the host organisations would continue to look after the children, but the costs of doing so were becoming a challenge. At the beginning of October Bishop Pearson, the Bishop of Lancaster, in which diocese Wigton lay, appealed to the catholic community to give support to the Basque children at the four locations in his diocese, including the Sisters of Mercy Orphanage in Wigton, all of which 'have in the most wonderful manner thrown open their doors to these unfortunate children, the expense to them has been great'. He appealed both to those who had supported the children being brought to Britain and those who had had reservations. 'Whether we wanted them removed from Spain or not, is quite beside the point. We have them and they are God's children'.⁶ It is not known how much this appeal raised for Wigton, but Nazareth House in Carlisle received £300 in December 1937.⁷



Fig. 1: The Convent of Mercy, Wigton with St Cuthbert's church on the right. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of Trevor Grahamslaw)

The identities of the ten children at Wigton are revealed in repatriation files deposited at the Marx Memorial Library.⁸

Identification Number	Surname	Forename	Age	Date Leaving Spain	Destination Leaving UK
Niñas					
210	San Emeterio Alocen	M ^a Esther	7	07.05.40	Bilbao
1186	Elguezabal Legazpia	María Dolores	13	13.09.38	Bilbao
1188	Elguezabal Legazpia	M ^a Mercedes	8	13.09.38	Bilbao
2205	Cortina Modia	Engracia	10	07.01.38	Bilbao
2845	Martínez Loyano	Amelia	9	22.03.38	España
3156	Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga	M ^a Begoña	6		Remained in UK
3668	Ortiz Valencia	Miren	12	07.01.38	Bilbao
3669	Ortiz Valencia	Cita	8	07.01.38	Bilbao
3670	Ortiz Valencia	Besabe	7	07.01.38	Bilbao
3875	Jauregibeitia Rodríguez	Juana María	9	03.02.40	España



Fig. 2: Children from the Convent of Mercy, Wigton. The photograph is accompanied by the information that it includes at least some of the Basque children. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of Trevor Grahamslaw).



Fig. 3: Esther San Emeterio Alocen (210) on the right and Begoña Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga (3196) on the left. This photograph was taken in the studio of J. Wilkinson photographers of Wigton. (Photograph reproduced courtesy of Esther Lopez San Emeterio, the daughter of Esther San Emeterio Alocen).

Esther Lopez San Emeterio, the daughter of one of the children Esther San Emeterio Alocen (on the right in the above photograph) contacted the Basque Children's Association '37 UK in February 2026 and wrote that:

My mother passed away three years ago and vividly remembered boarding the Habana on May 21st. She was very young; she was born in 1931. An uncle, about fourteen years old, accompanied her on that voyage. Upon arrival, he was taken in by a family.⁹ She was transferred to Wigton and always spoke of how grateful she was and how well she was treated. It's a shame her family reclaimed her, because she was sure she would have had a more dignified life there than she did upon her return. The hunger of the post-Civil War era and the lack of education always pained her.

[Mi madre falleció hace tres años y recordaba con nitidez el embarque en el Habana, un 21 de Mayo. Era muy pequeña, ella había nacido en 1931. En ese viaje le acompañaba un tío, que ya tenía unos catorce años que al llegar allí, fue recogido por una familia. A ella la trasladaron a Wigton y siempre comentó, lo agradecida que estaba y lo bien que la trataban. Lástima que la reclamara su familia, porque estaba segura, que allí hubiera tenido una vida más digna de lo que fue la vuelta. El hambre de la post guerra civil y la falta de educación, eso le dolió siempre.]

She said that the girl on the left of the photograph was her mother's friend, Begoña (Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga). Begoña had arrived in the United Kingdom on board SS *Habana* along with an elder sister Maria Luisa and younger brother Juan Luis.¹⁰ Esther's daughter also sent a copy of the certificate given to her mother at the time of her first communion which took place at Wigton on 17 November 1937. It is clear, and not surprising, that the Roman Catholic church ensured that its rites and beliefs remained central to the girls' upbringing while they lived at the convent.



Fig. 4: The first communion certificate for Esther San Emeterio Alocen. (Image reproduced courtesy of Esther Lopez San Emeterio, the daughter of Esther San Emeterio Alocen).

It is difficult to discover very much about what life was like for the children, or how the children's presence in Wigton impacted on the town community. On the 15 January 1938, some seven months after the children's arrival, the *Wigton Advertiser* explained that the paper had 'refrained from drawing undue attention to the Basque children who have been

maintained at the Wigton Orphanage for some time, but they have been well looked after by the good Sisters of Mercy'.¹¹ Presumably this was part of the newspaper's policy to allow the children to continue with their lives without being pestered by the press. Consequently, the newspaper is a limited source of information. Judging by the lack of further reports after January 1938, the policy was maintained.

The most substantial evidence for the children's lives at the Convent of Mercy dates from about a fortnight after their arrival. On 5 August 1937, Miss M.A. Quinlan, a Ministry of Health inspector, visited Wigton as part of a tour of Cumberland during which she also visited the Basque children in Brampton and in Carlisle. She reported that there were 46 girls in residence, ten of whom were the Basque children who were accompanied by a Spanish 'teacher'. She observed that the buildings were spacious and clean and that they had been recently redecorated with new baths and washbasins installed, so that 'there are good facilities for bathing and sanitary arrangements are satisfactory'. She went on to say that the Basque children had been provided with a separate dormitory where the Spanish 'teacher' also sleeps, and with a small schoolroom which allows them to be taught together.¹² All the children share the dining facility and the kitchen was judged to be clean and food storage satisfactory, but judging by the menu for the dinner on the day Miss Quinlan was present the food was very English, no account being taken of the Spanish diet which would have been more familiar to the children. She commented that there was plenty of open space for recreation (the buildings were surrounded by fields) and 'all the children play together and appeared happy and friendly'. Miss Quinlan concluded by writing that 'the health of the children is excellent and there has been no outbreak of disease since their admission' and 'the sisters had no complaints to make and they consider the Basque children well behaved'.¹³

Valuable information can also be gleaned from the correspondence between the assistant Vicenta Ibarra Castro and Father Pedro Atucha.¹⁴ Father Atucha was the Superior of the priests who were sent to England by the Basque government and was based in the south of England. He was clearly a person who made himself available to support the children as well as the *maestras* and *auxiliares* scattered across the country. In May 1939 he was appointed Representative of the Department of Culture in England and in that capacity he fought for the Catholic and Basque identity of the children, managed the salaries and transfers of the *maestras* and *auxiliares*, acted as an employment office for unemployed exiles, a moral protector for the "older girls" working in domestic service in London, and was always aware of which family in France was desperately searching for their children. He was the point of liaison between the government, the children and their parents over the programme of repatriations and remained in Britain until 1945 to continue to look after the interests of the Basque children unable to return to Spain.

In the letters written by Vicenta to Father Atucha, she comments on what is clearly a strong relationship between her and the children and the sisters at the convent. 'The Reverend Mother, who is a beautiful person, appreciated us very much and the sisters love us extremely, so both the girls and I are delighted'. However, Vicenta also suggests that she feels quite isolated as for news she is dependent upon Father Atucha and Father Antonio Renteria, the priest who accompanied the children from Bilbao and who lived at the

presbytery at Warwick Bridge to the east of Carlisle. Like other *auxiliares* and *maestras* she asked for help from the priests when her salary, which were being paid by the Basque government, stopped after the fall of Bilbao to the insurgents. It seems that Vicenta was supported financially by both Father Atucha and Father Renteria.

In these letters Vicenta pointed out that both she and the girls were discouraged by the Reverend Mother from going beyond the grounds of the convent. Consequently, they had little relationship with the Wigton community, and there was little entertainment for Vicenta or the girls. A lack of welcome to others is also exemplified by the refusal to allow one of the girls at Brampton, Carmen Cid Santibañez, to visit a girl at Wigton who needed support, perhaps because Carmen was not a practicing Roman Catholic.¹⁵ There is for example no evidence that the Wigton girls participated in the singing and dancing concerts around the villages that the children at other colonies enjoyed. This lack of contact worked both ways. It is clear that the plight of the Basque children generally was well known locally, even if the community had little or no contact with those that lived in their town. As in other towns in Cumberland such as Carlisle, Workington, Cockermouth and Brampton, a local refugee committee had been established by the autumn of 1937, but there are no records of the committee's activities.¹⁶ A number of fund raising events in support of the Basque children took place in Wigton, but it seems that none were specifically targeted at the children at the Convent of Mercy. A garden fete had been held in the Thomlinson School grounds in July in aid of the Basque Children's Fund, which probably meant that the money raised was sent to headquarters in London, and at the Speech Day of the Thomlinson Girls Grammar School, the Headmistress thanked the school community for its support of the Basque children over the summer; but which group of Basque children is not stated.¹⁷ The Girls Grammar School pupils also supported the children at Brampton with a financial donation and with a gift of three pairs of pyjamas during 1938, but not it seems the Basque children at the Wigton Orphanage.¹⁸ At the end of 1938, those attending Thomlinson School Speech Day were told that 'the school had shown its interest in and sympathy with world affairs by contributing generously through corporate effort to the Basque children and Czech Relief Funds'.¹⁹ 'The Super Talking Film Show' in the Parish Rooms, Wigton in mid-January 1938 was introduced by the local Member of Parliament and supporter of republican Spain, Wilfrid Roberts, and included a film on the Basque children in England, and in September 1938 a group of Basque children from the colony at Hutton Hall, near Middlesbrough, performed songs and dances at the same venue, but they were raising money for those children still remaining in Britain, rather than for Wigton specifically.²⁰ The lack of Wigton names on the various lists of adopters of children at Brampton suggests that members of the community were not supporting, or not in a position to support, the Basque children on a regular basis.²¹

Repatriation and the closure of the Wigton colony.

The Basque Children's Committee organised its first repatriation of 160 children on 12 November 1937 but this group did not include any from the colony at Wigton. Another group was scheduled for repatriation in December. Their departure which had to be delayed from 16 December 'owing to the closure of the Spanish Frontier and other difficulties with Consular Authorities and the Railway Authorities in France', reflects the difficulties inherent

in the repatriation process.²² Any delay was unwelcome news for the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief who issued a press release explaining that the postponement was the result of events beyond their control.²³ The transport was initially rescheduled for 20 December but it had to be further delayed until 7 January 1938 when all these children finally departed from Carlisle Citadel Station for Bilbao, 'all wearing new clothes and with 'tears glistening in their eyes'. This group included four from Wigton, 13 from Nazareth House in Carlisle, and nine children from the Brampton satellite hostel in Ambleside.²⁴

The four children from Wigton were three siblings Miren, Cita, and Besabe Ortiz Valencia and Engracia Cortina Modia. On 22 March 1938 Amelia Martinez Loyano was repatriated to Spain. On 25 March Vicenta refers to four children remaining at the convent, although there may still have been five. There is no evidence that other girls were being sent to Wigton to replace those who had departed. Now that there were fewer girls the Reverend Mother also seemed to relax the rules about Vicenta and the girls leaving the convent. She did not mind Vicenta visiting the house of a Spanish family in Wigton and taking one of the girls with her, and some arrangement seemed to be made between a Father in Wigton who spoke Spanish who occasionally took Vicenta and the remaining girls out. On 13 September 1938 Maria Dolores and Maria Mercedes Elguezabal Legazpia were repatriated to Bilbao.²⁵ This left three girls, two of whom were not repatriated until after the outbreak of the Second World War: Juana María Jauregibeitia Rodríguez on 3 February 1940 and Esther San Emeterio Alocen on 7 May 1940. M^a Begoña Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga was the only one of the Wigton children who remained in the United Kingdom, living in Leicester with a foster family from 1941 and at various addresses in London between 1948 and 1953.

The issue of repatriation was complex. Prior to Franco's declaration of victory in 1939, the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief and the Basque Children's Committee were concerned over the children's safety if repatriated and before authorising the children's return to Spain sought to ensure that there were family members ready to receive them. Concern over repatriation increased after the passing of the Law of Political Responsibilities in 1939 by which both the adults and children (many of whom had become young adults) were liable on their return to Spain to prosecution for rebellion and sedition, as well as the requirement that boys perform military service. Despite homesickness and missing family being a strong pull to return, uncertainty over the whereabouts of the parents of the Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga siblings may have been a factor in the decision to keep Maria Luisa, Begoña and Juan Luis in Britain, but the possible danger to them of returning to Spain may have influenced their decisions as they grew older. The latter factor almost certainly will have influenced the decision of the *auxiliar* Vicenta Ibarra to remain in the United Kingdom after the outbreak of the Second World War.

The story of the Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga family is a sad one which may both reflect these issues of repatriation as well as revealing many of the problems that could develop for refugee children despite the best efforts of those caring for them. Because of their ages and sex, Maria Luisa, Begoña and Juan Luis were separated from each other as soon as they left North Stoneham in the summer of 1937. The separation of siblings caused much concern, especially for the eldest, who had often been charged with looking after the younger ones by

their parents, and it was one of their most frequently expressed grievances of the evacuees in later life – half of the children at Wigton, not just Begoña, experienced such separation. In the case of the Sanchez de Leon Luzuriaga family the three siblings appear to have virtually lost contact with each other and with their parents for many years. In March 1943 Begoña referred to having regained some contact with her brother and sister but it seems too have been short-lived as in January 1944 Maria Luisa wrote to the Basque Women's Association seeking information about her siblings and asking whether the authorities had heard anything from her parents. To help reunite the family the authorities, at various times, suggested that they go on a holiday together, but such an event did not seem to take place. In January 1948 Begoña was asking whether her brother and sister remained in the United Kingdom. Of the three of them Begoña was the most settled living with a caring foster family in Leicester. In a letter written in early 1943 she referred to having had 'a nice Christmas' and being taken to the theatre and to a party at her neighbours. In January 1948 she wrote 'I am very happy here, and the people are all very kind and care for me a lot'. The eldest Maria Luisa was both seriously ill and emotionally traumatised by her experiences as she was moved between institutions which struggled to cope with her needs. Perhaps this was in part the result of being separated from her siblings, but in 1943 as the eldest she was ticked off by Miren de Irujo of the Basque Women's Association for not attempting to keep in better contact with them. Juan Luis despite saying in 1944 how happy he was with his foster parents and how much he was enjoying working as an apprentice butcher, later for reasons that are unknown spent time in a remand home from which he constantly tried to escape. Begoña and Maria Luisa decided against repatriation, married in Britain and became British citizens, while Juan Luis chose to return to Spain in 1947.²⁶

The last months of the Wigton colony might best be described as a progressive closure. The number of girls living there, as with all the colonies, declined during 1938 and 1939 as children were repatriated. This led in February 1938 to a plan to move all the remaining children in England to France although that did not take place. The newspapers make no reference to the children at the Convent of Mercy after the repatriation of the first four girls in early January 1938, but as we have seen, the editorial policy of the *Wigton Advertiser* seemed to involve little or no reporting relating to events at the convent. Despite the small number living in the convent during 1939 the colony remained open and Vicenta continued as the *auxiliar*.²⁷

In November 1939 Father Renteria informed the church authorities that two girls were still at Wigton along with Vicenta (it is unclear what had happened to Juana María Jauregibeitia Rodríguez who did not return to Spain until February 1940), and that as Vicenta was due to leave for London to take on the job of a 'housekeeper', these girls would be left on their own. He requested that contact be made with their parents so that they could be returned to their families. At that time Esther's mother was thought to be in Santander and Begoña's in Cuenca.²⁸ Esther was finally repatriated in May 1940, but as we have seen Begoña remained in the United Kingdom, marrying after the war. As has been suggested previously, the options for Vicenta were also limited. Many of the *maestras* and *auxiliares* chose not to return to Spain as their involvement in the evacuation of the children marked them out as

being potentially hostile to the new government, and they would inevitably fall foul of the Law of Political Responsibilities. In October 1938 the Home Office had agreed to allow these Spanish women to take up domestic posts in the UK if they wished. It is possible that this ruling informed Vicenta's decision to seek a housekeeping job in London. Her experience at Wigton will have provided her with the skills to make a success of such a role. However it is unclear whether she went to London, as by April 1942 she was on the staff at Houghton Hall near Carlisle, the home of Roland and Kathleen Saint who at the time of the September 1939 National Registration had employed five servants.²⁹ Whilst there she met with Carmen Cid Santibañez, one of the children who had been placed at the Brampton colony, and was now living with the Alford's, her foster family in Carlisle.³⁰ The Wigton colony seems to have petered out rather than officially closed on a specific day.

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¹ The colony at the Convent of Mercy, Wigton has been mentioned in passing in: R. David, "Let politics and differences be forgotten": "The Little Basque in Cumbria" 1937-39, *CW3*, Vol.19 (2019), 231-250; R. David, *A County of Refuge: Refugees in Cumbria 1933-1941*, Kendal, 2020; 'Happy and Safe': *The Basque Child Refugees in Cumberland and Westmorland 1937-1939*, Carlisle, 2025 (Revised edition).

² *Carlisle Journal*, 2 July 1937. *Wigton Advertiser*, 3 July 1937.

³ There is an undated document in a list of teachers in the Archive of the Basque Country (Archivo Histórico de Euskadi), specifically within the records of the Presidency Department of the Basque Government, which lists the teachers sent to England. Maria Soledad Gorriño Echebarria is listed under Wigton. However she is known to have been assigned to the colony at Almondbury, near Huddersfield, on 23 July 1937. She is not referred to in any other document as being sent to Wigton even for a few weeks, so the accuracy of this reference is uncertain.

⁴ TNA: MH57/323: Miss Quinlan's Ministry of Health report on the Convent of Mercy of 5 August 1937.

⁵ For an account of the role played by *auxiliaries* see: Nerea Wachter Galando, 'No praise can be too high': *The forgotten labour of the Basque señoritas*, University of Edinburgh, School of History, Classics and Archaeology dissertation, April 2022.

⁶ *Lancashire Evening Post*, 5 October 1937.

⁷ Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth: The Generalate Archive, FZC/1/3 (p 93).

⁸ Marx Memorial Library: files SC/ORG/BCC/1. There are 59 files with the first 57 listing children due for repatriation, giving dates and sometimes with the names of *maestras* and/or *auxiliaries* who accompanied the children. Also, some give the name of the colony they come from, but not all. Number 58 records those children who were under 14 and remained in the UK. Number 59 records those children who left the UK up to the early 1950s. Marx Memorial Library: files SC/ORG/BCC/1/ Add the last two numbers for the document for each child: ID No. 210 56; 1186 34; 1188 34; 2205 14; 2845 24; 3156 58; 3668 14; 3669 14; 3670 14; 3875 54.

⁹ The uncle was: 265 Frias San Emeterio, Luis; Age 14; arr Brampton 18/6/37; returned to Bilbao 22/3/38. Luis was accompanied by his younger brother 266 Emilio Frias San Emeterio; Age 12 arr Brampton 18/6/37; returned to Bilbao 22/3/38. See Marx Memorial Library SC/ORG/BCC/1/24. It is interesting that the two relations were sent to the nearby colony at Brampton.

¹⁰ Madrid, Fundacion Universitario de España archive: fichas. On a document from Marx Memorial Library Juan Luis was born in 1931 (day and month not given (which meant that he would only have been 5 at the time of the evacuation from Spain. (MML: SC/ORG/BCC/1/58).

¹¹ *Wigton Advertiser*, 15 January 1938.

¹² It would seem that Miss Quinlan was incorrect with regard to where the children were taught. It seems more likely that they were taught with the other children by the trained teachers amongst the Sisters of Mercy. This would have ensured that they received the spiritual teaching which the church demanded.

¹³ TNA: MH57/323

¹⁴ Bilbao, Archivo Histórico de Euskadi (Historical Archive of the Basque Country): Historical Archive of the Basque Government Presidency Department, File Number: 01, bundle 287, section 'delegations' (Basque Delegation in London), Series: Lizaso.

¹⁵ Personal communication from Carmen Eckersley and Luis Eckersley, 9 April 2026.

¹⁶ *Carlisle Journal*, 30 October 1937

¹⁷ *Wigton Advertiser*, 17 July 1937; 9 October 1937.

¹⁸ CAC: DROB Accn 15548, Box 15 letter from Thomlinson Girls GS to CH Roberts 6 Oct 1938; and letter of 10 December (no year given).

¹⁹ *Wigton Advertiser*, 22 October 1938.

²⁰ *Wigton Advertiser*, 22 January 1938 and 17 September 1938.

²¹ There are a number of adoption lists amongst the records held at CAC: DROB boxes.

²² CAC(C): DROB Accn: H15988. Letter from Betty Arne, Secretary, London HQ to colonies, 13/12/37.

²³ CAC(C): DROB Accn: H15988. NJCSR press release, 17 December 1937.

²⁴ *Wigton Advertiser*, 15 January 1938. Amongst the January group were 13 from Nazareth House in Carlisle and four from Wigton. The first time repatriation was discussed by the BCC was on 5 July 1937: Manchester People's History Museum: SCW/14/3i; but the issue did not begin to dominate NJCSR agendas until the end of 1937: Warwick: 292/946/38/155, Basque Children's Committee Correspondence, Minutes of Joint Executive Committee, 14 Dec. 1937.

²⁵ MML: SC/ORG/BCC/1/34 - 13.09.1938 repatriations were to France and Spain.

²⁶ Bilbao, Archivo Histórico de Euskadi (Historical Archive of the Basque Country): Archive of the Basque Government. Presidency Department, Delegations, in London, Lizaso, Bundle 273, File number: 05, letters 159, 168, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 181; Madrid, Fundacion Universitario de España archive: fichas; MML: SC/ORG/BCC/1/58 which is headed 'Basque Children under 14 as at June 1941.

²⁷ Vicenta Ibarra is listed as 'in charge Spanish children' in the September 1939 National Registration entry for the Convent of Mercy in Wigton.

²⁸ Bilbao, Archivo Histórico de Euskadi (Historical Archive of the Basque Country): Historical Archive of the Basque Government Presidency Department, Reference Number: 217.1 (258), File Number: 15934, section 'delegations' (Basque Delegation in London). Also Reference Number: 218.1 (2), File Number: 15954, section 'delegations' (Basque Delegation in London). Correspondence from Antonio de Renteria in Warwick Bridge to Angel de Gondra y Garro in London (12 May 1939?) and Cirilo Arzubiaga in Hove to Angel Gondra y Garro in London, 16 November 1939.

²⁹ Bilbao, Archivo Histórico de Euskadi (Historical Archive of the Basque Country): Archive of the Basque Government. Presidency Department, Delegations, in London, Lizaso, Bundle 273, File number: 05, letters 019, 040; Madrid, Fundacion Universitario de España archive: ficha

³⁰ Personal communication from Carmen Eckersley and Luis Eckersley, 9 April 2026.