

The Basque Children's Colony  
The Old Hospital  
Park Lodge Lane  
Wakefield  
West Yorkshire

Towards the end of December, just before Christmas, I was contacted by Tony Fitzpatrick. Tony told me of Ruth Walton his maternal grandmother and Jack Fitzpatrick his paternal grandfather. Ruth was the matron at the Wakefield Colony and Jack was the handyman. This was an amazing piece of news as the Wakefield Colony was the second largest colony of Basque Children in Yorkshire after Keighley. It had 65 children resident there from the 23 June 1937 and the responsible person was P. Rosenfeld of 16 Cotton Street. I know very little about this colony so close to my home in Sheffield.

I set off to meet Tony a week or so later to receive from him a tour of the area in which the Old Hospital on Park Lodge Lane was and some photos of the children and their supporters in West Yorkshire. Here are the photos and they will appear in our photo gallery on our website. A partial 'window' into the lives of the Basque Children who came to Yorkshire. Thank you Tony for adding to our knowledge of the kindness and solidarity shown to the Basque Children.



Basque Children arriving at Wakefield Westgate Station 23.6.1937



December 1937. Ruth Walton in white overall and hat third from left. Father Christmas far right. Behind the tree and the children can be seen a mural of mountains. The children's artistic talents were used to brighten their surroundings.



Photo taken in the grounds of the Old Hospital. Jack Fitzpatrick is in the centre. The Old Hospital was in spacious grounds and was previously used as an isolation hospital. The site is now occupied by a Mosque. Often one child stands apart from the others.



Photo of the older girls taken in the grounds. The wooden fencing may mark the boundary of current day allotments. Note the brightly patterned frocks they are wearing.



On a trip to Filey or Scarborough



Boys with stout boots.



Ruth Walton and two Maestras / auxiliares

Some of the children in the above photos are named in pencil on the back of them. Pedro, Antonia, Dolores. Not enough to identify them and find out more about them. Press cuttings of June 1937 report that they were quarantined on arrival in Wakefield because of the typhus outbreak at the North Stoneham Camp and then on their release enjoyed trips to the seaside and more locally.

As I was talking with Tony Fitzpatrick the gates of the Mosque opened after their socially distanced 1 o'clock prayers so I chatted to one of their committee. He had no idea of the association of the site of his Mosque with the provision of sanctuary for the 65 Refugee Children over eighty years ago. We reflected on children being the first victims of war then as now.



The Mosque on Park Lodge Lane which stands on the site of the Wakefield Colony.

Simon Martinez  
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