

**Spanish Boy Refugees
& Adult Exiles
at
Buscot Park.**

**This survey was compiled by Roger Vlitos
Curator and Archivist of the Faringdon Collection
as a presentation in Buscot Park Theatre for the benefit of the local community.**



In April 1937 the Basque town of Guernica was bombed by Fascist warplanes killing 2,000 civilians. At the time the pacifist peer Lord Faringdon was Vice Chairman of the

Commission of Inquiry into Alleged Breaches of the Non-Intervention Agreement in Spain.

This condemned the German and Italian forces supporting General Franco, but European countries chose a path of '***non-invention***' to prevent the war spreading.

Only Russia and Mexico supported Republican Spain.



Southampton May 23rd 1937.

The Basque government asked for safe havens for 150,000 “*Niños de la Guerra*” (*Children of the War*) – but transport could only be found for 33,000.

Britain allowed 4,000 to disembark at Southampton ‘*for 30 days only*’.

Humanitarian groups got permission for them to stay until the end of the conflict.
In 1939 many returned to Spain to face a hostile future.

Then more refugees were flooding in from Nazi-occupied Europe.



In November 1937 Lord Faringdon's neighbor from Filkins, Stafford Cripps M.P. invited him to an **"Aid Spain"** fundraiser at the Royal Albert Hall asking

'for a really big cheque, which could be handed up for the collection'.

A month later he joined Socialists M.P.'s Ellen Williamson, Aneurin Bevan and Jenny Lee as speakers at an ***Aid for Spain*** rally in Trafalgar Sq .

These M.P.'s were expelled from the Labour Party for speaking out against the Labour and Conservative parties' ***"Non- Intervention"*** policies. They became regular visitors to Buscot Park. Nai Bevan was to spend three months recovering from an operation there.

PHS
Lord Faringdon's Ambulance

LORD FARINGDON leaves for Spain to-day with the pale green Rolls-Royce car, converted into an ambulance, which he has presented to the Spanish Government.

The car was once put to less Republican uses. As no other car was available at the moment it was used by King George V. for



LORD FARINGDON with his converted car.

a military inspection in the neighbourhood of Faringdon.

Lord Faringdon is a skilful driver, fond of speed. His enthusiasm for the Spanish Government has been keen since the outbreak of the civil war.

Buscot Park, his home near Faringdon, has recently had a private theatre and a swimming pool added, and is to be made available for members of the Socialist Party seeking rest and relaxation.



This Rolls-Royce ambulance, presented by Lord Faringdon, has done service for nearly a year in Spain. It was riddled with bullet holes and bomb splinters by Fascist airplanes while carrying out its humanitarian duties. It will now go

In December 1937 Lord Faringdon drove his Rolls Royce to the front in Aragon to be converted into a ambulance.

He worked as a stretcher-bearer before returning with the bullet-riddled car, which was then toured to raise funds for **Spanish Medical Relief.**



Many people feared the war would spread and supported '*non-intervention*'. The Duchess of Atholl (left) was the only woman in the Conservative government. She became a firm anti-fascist after visiting the front with the writer Aturo Barea, who was to come to live as an exile on Lord Faringdon's estate. After resigning her party whip the right-wing press called her "*The Red Duchess*". She chaired the *Basque After Children's Committee* and the *National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief*.

Whilst the Duchess of Atholl was never a Socialist, Lord Faringdon and two of his closest friends were: Viscount "*Jack*" Hastings (the 16th Earl of Huntingdon) and his wife Cristina (above) who became joint treasurer of the *Spanish Medical Aid Committee*.

The Press nicknamed him "*The Red Earl*"; Cristina "*the Red Countess*" and Gavin Faringdon

"The Red Peer of Buscot Park".



The author Adrian Bell (left) volunteered to help the child refugees. A book by his namesake entitled **'Only For Three Months'** records that after negative press reports it was nearly impossible to find adoptive or foster parents. Poppy Vulliamy, of the **Basque Children's Committee**, had to take **'60 of the most difficult boys'** under her personal care. After they spent the winter in tents she told Adrian Bell that she had written to Lord Faringdon to say that:

***' as a Socialist he should not be living alone in such a big house...
he should let us all live there with him'.***

Lord Faringdon offered a lodge on his estate, a few hundred yards from a sports ground and only four miles from the towns of Faringdon or Lechlade. Poppy Vulliamy immediately took up his offer.



Poppy and Chloë Vulliamy were humanitarians who worked closely with Quaker groups. The sisters came to Buscot Park and were depicted in frescoes there painted by "Jack" Huntingdon there with a boy giving the *"anti-fascist"* salute .



The lakeside lodge in Buscot Park was named "***Basque House***" and two pre-fabricated annexes were added to the grounds as dormitories. The boys came from many regions of Spain but the word *Basque* was used as the Refugee Committee thought "*Spaniards*" revived old prejudices.



The boys were aged 9-18 and proudly gave anti-fascist salutes and sang Republican marching songs.



An early 1930's *Ford Tourer* belonging to a teacher had a Republican flag attached to the back.

Soon after the colony arrived a 14 year old boy
fell ill and had to be taken to hospital.

Luis Cernuda, a poet who had worked at the
same field hospital in Aragon as Lord Faringdon,
had come to the colony to teach. He witnessed
the boy's death was moved to write this:

Elegy for a Basque Boy, dead in England.

***You drank down your death,
The death they had in store for you,
In one long single draught,
Without for an instant looking back,
Just like a man in close combat.
A vast indifference came upon you
Before the earth could close over you.***




Buy These Milk-Tokens
from your
Co-operative
Store

They cost sixpence each. Your
Co-operative Society will pass on the
sixpences to the Co-operative Union. They will be
used to send milk powder and condensed milk at
cost price to Democratic Spain.

If you have not the good fortune to be near
a Co-operative Store, send a contribution to the
Spain Campaign Committee, Transport House, Smith
Square, London, S.W. 1.

**Help Feed the Children
Refugees & Brave Defenders
of Spanish Democracy**

P.T.O.



MYSTERY OF GUNS
OFF GIB.

A415



LORD FARINGDON'S
NEW EVIDENCE

BY H. R. S. PHILLPOTT

THE mystery of the guns alleged to menace
Gibraltar deepened in the House of Lords, last
night, when Lord Faringdon challenged the
Government to say what steps it was proposing to
take with regard to the "recent" fortifications on
both sides of the Straits.

Lord Strathcona, Under-
Secretary to the War Office

HELP

WORLD

SPAN

1935

HELP TO SEND MEDICAL AID TO
SPAIN



Fascist blockades were close to starving the populations into submission. Lord Faringdon joined a commission of inquiry and on his return reported that the straits of Gibraltar were threatened. Then he organised a **"Milk for Spain"** to ship cans of condensed milk to the Republicans.

On the first anniversary of the bombing of Guernica 120,000 people gathered in Hyde Park for a **"Save Spain, Save Britain, Save Peace"** rally. Speeches were delivered by the Duchess of Atholl, Harold Nicolson (a retired diplomat and newspaper columnist), Lady Violet Bonham-Carter (the Liberal M.P) Eleanor Rathbone (an S.M.A. committee member and Independent M.P.), Victor Gallancz (the left-wing publisher) and the Marist scientist JBS Haldane.

Lord Faringdon raised cheers when he called the Government's policy
' Distinctly Fascist'.



In May 1938 Poppy Vulliamy asked Walter Leonard (left), a German- Jewish hotel manager she had met in Spain, to take charge of the colony at Eaton Hastings. In an interview published by the *Basque Children of 1937* he recalled that Lord Faringdon had provided:

'free accommodation, and supplied eggs, milk and other food free of charge.'

Lord Faringdon also supplied cleaners, a laundry service, a Morris delivery van, as well as use of a schoolhouse and sports ground on the Buscot Park estate.



Boys posing beside the lake on the road leading to the sports ground at Buscot Park.

Walter Leonard recalled:

'Lord Faringdon was very ecology conscious and didn't allow hunting on his estate, so he was none too pleased when the boys raided birds' nests for the eggs'.



Walter Leonard recalled:

'the children were allowed to use it when there were no house guests...'



One of the staff boys reading the Anarchist newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera* (*Worker's Solidarity*).



Some got jobs on the estate to earn pocket money, but quit after the anarchist cook told them:

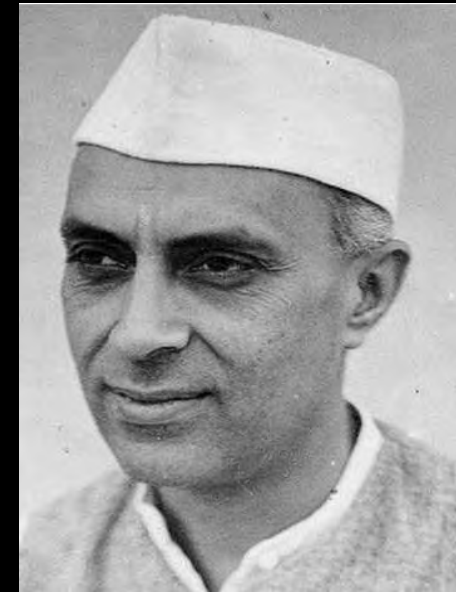
***“Lord Faringdon had plenty of money without having to make them work on the farm...
I had to make peace with Lord Faringdon, or rather the foreman, and the cook
was subsequently sacked for being a bad influence on the boys!”***



Photographs show the boys saluted with different arms, which may have indicated their backgrounds.

The **CNT-ALT** was an Anarchist group brought together *Solidaridad Obrera*. This was the largest group at the start of the Spanish Civil War.

The **JSU** was the *Juventud Socialista Unificada* (United Socialist Youth) and **P.S.U.** was the Catalan *Partit Socialista Unificat*, which came under Communist control by the end of the War.



In July 1938, after the fall of Barcelona, an **“Arms for Spain”** rally was held in Trafalgar Sq. Amongst those addressing the 10,000 strong crowd were the Civil Rights activist Paul Robeson, President of the Indian Congress Party Jawaharlal Nehru and future Prime Minister Clement Atlee.

The Pacifist Lord Faringdon who was cheered for saying:

“Your fight is being fought for you in Spain...”

It is your duty to see that Spain is not betrayed...

Non-intervention is contrary to all interests...”



Lord Faringdon returned to Buscot Park to host a summer camp for Socialist Youth at Eaton Hastings. The actress Dame Sybil Thorndike (right) came to support this by giving readings.

Barbara Betts (center) from Bradford Grammar School attended. She went on to become Mrs Barbara Castle –the Labour Party's Minister of Education.

A Spanish exile who helped as a translator was the former Professor of Philosophy from Salamanca University, Luis Portillo, whose son Michael was to become an M.P. and cabinet minister.

Lord Faringdon also opened Buscot House to the public at a sixpence admission charge, promising all proceeds to the ***Spanish Medical Aid Committee.***



Lord Faringdon continued provide sums for **Spanish Medical Relief** by supporting *“Art for Spain”* . This painting of Buscot House was made by Eric Ravilious who donated his 10 guinea fee to a charity which supplied ambulances to Spanish Republicans.

At a party for the boys on Xmas Eve 1938 Lord Faringdon gave a speech saying that he hoped the boys would return Spain after the defeat of the Fascists:

'with vigour, and a social consciousness fortified by their stay in England'.

In mid January late the Chipping Norton Advertiser reported their move to larger premises:

'The children arrived at Shipton-under-Wychwood from Buscot'. They came with Walter Leonard, a German Jew aged 27 whose real name was Water Levy. The boys call him "Leon".

The local Vicar refused to welcome them as he called them "Reds", but others rallied round to help them settle in.

A group of adult refugees, mainly Catalans, moved into *Basque House*. One of these was the Andalusian poet, Pedro Garfias (above) who produced what has been described as a classic poem of exile translated here as:

'Spring in Eaton Hastings'

***My sun bleached Andalusia!
Inevitably, the blossoms around me fade into grief.
Tonight, while the village sleeps, I'll be crying alone."***





There were four residential homes in Oxfordshire, at Buscot Park (the largest), Thame, Shipton-under-Wychwood, and Westfield House at Aston which took about 30 children.

The *Aid Spain* movement in Oxford gave support and there were many acts of individual kindness.

Scarlet blankets were provided for every child by the Early family from their world famous blanket mills.

One of those who volunteered help was Cora Blyth, a modern languages undergraduate at St Hilda's College, Oxford. She later married Luis Portillo, the republican exile. Their son became the politician and broadcaster Michael Portillo.

Women flee with babies to England

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a hor

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Daily Express Staff Reporter

MARSEILLES, Monday.

ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-ONE Spanish Republican leaders and their families, including forty women and six babies, left Marseilles tonight in a special train on their way to England.

They arrived this morning in the British hospital ship *Maine*. There were eighty-six Fascists who had



As the war ended in April 1939 he organised the evacuation of 171 Spanish Republican leaders and their families from Valencia on a British hospital ship. His friend Peter Rodd (above left) went on to help evacuate more from Perpignan.

Peter Rodd and his wife, the novelist Nancy Mitford, separated after she arrived to help and quipped:

“I’ve heard of having all your eggs in one basket but never of getting all your Basques on one ship”.



Camp d'Argelès

LAISSEZ-PASSER *Permanent*

~~valable pour la journée du~~

M^r Farington du Comité National Britannique d'Aide à l'Espagne

est autorisé à pénétrer dans la zone intermédiaire et dans le camp de réfugiés d'Argelès dans sa voiture. n°



Argelès.

6 Avril 1939

Le Lieutenant-Colonel c^o le camp,

Stricte



In Feb 1939 Lord Farington addressed the upper house on the plight of 350,000 refugees in French camps. He detailed the lack of food, water, shelter, and dysentery due to poor sanitation. He called for government support and the *Manchester Guardian* quoted his speech under the headline:

'Spanish Refugees in France: Peer on "appalling conditions" in the camps'.

In March 1939 Domènec Perramon wrote from the *Basque House* to his fellow Catalan writer Lluís Ferran de Pol in one of the camps promising that help was on the way.

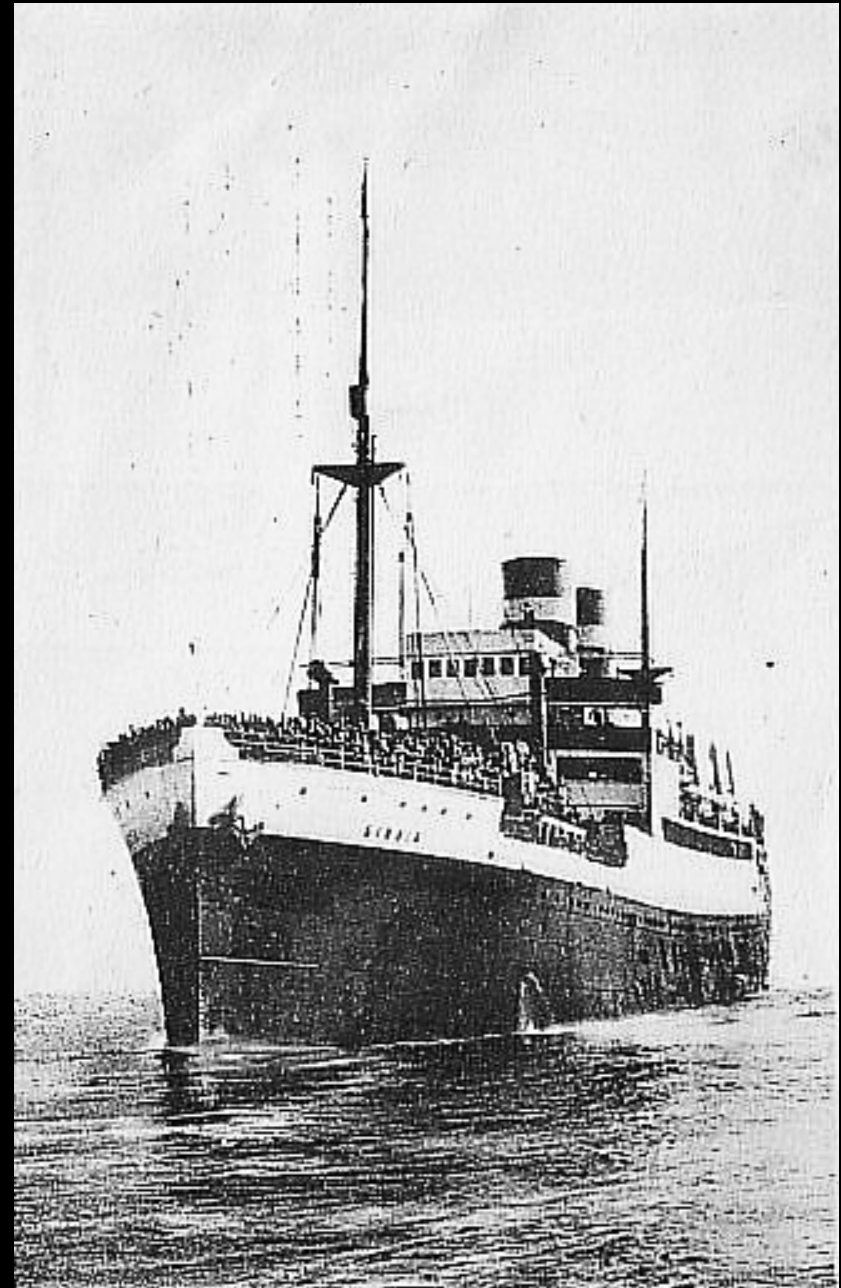
In April Lord Farington arrived and with the aid of Donald Darling, an undercover British Secret Service operative, got Ferran de Pol on board a ship bound for Mexico.

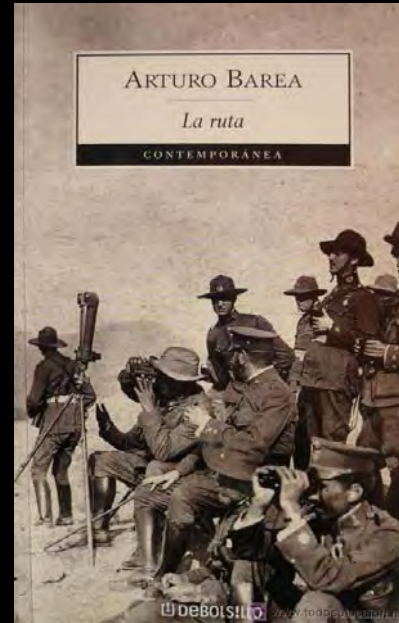
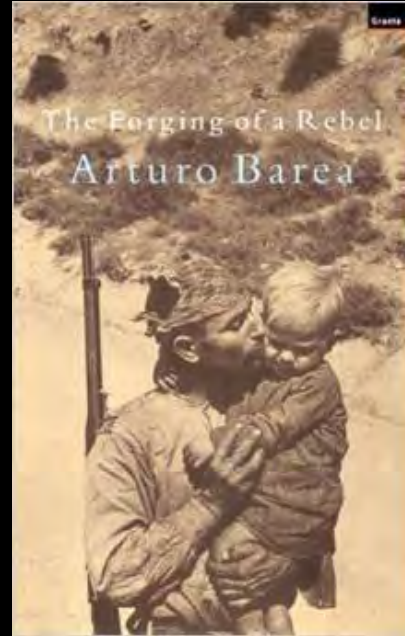


Lord Faringdon worked behind the scenes to help the **S.M.A.C.** charter a ship to carry 1,800 Spanish Republicans to Mexico in July 1939.

The Duchess of Atholl wanted the port of departure kept secret to prevent militant Communists taking over the evacuation.

However, the Stalinist agent Ramon Mercader managed to get aboard and went on to assassinate the exiled Anarchist leader Leon Trotsky a year later.





The last of the Spanish Republican exiles arrived after WW2. Arturo Barea spent his last decade at Middle Lodge, down the road from Basque House and after his death his ashes were scattered on its garden.

Barea's Czech wife Elsa translated his trilogy "*The Forge*", "*The Track*" and "*The Clash*" which wove his biography into the story of Spain in the 1920's and 30's. The books were successful internationally but not in Spain, where it was not published until 1978.

Barea was also famous in Latin America for the talks he broadcast for the BBC South American Service. After his death Lord Faringdon gave Elsa Barea an annuity to see her through her old age.



LORD FARINGDON poses before a proletarian mural which shows him addressing an outdoor Labor rally. The artist was the Earl of Huntingdon, who is also a Laborite.

Looking back a decade later:

In 1947 *Life* magazine showed "*The Socialist Peer*" standing in front of a fresco by his friend Jack Hastings.

Here Lord Faringdon was shown giving a speech from an upturned cart while his fiery oratory frightens two police horses.

Beyond him a Faringdon Labour Party rally includes a woman wearing a beret and a turbaned Sikh.

A Basque boy giving the Republican salute leads the parade.