



**3rd September 2013:** Spanish Children Walk in their Grandfather's Footsteps Around Theydon Bois:



**The Basque Children at Woodberry, Piercing Hill in 1937. Vicente Romero (top far right), his Brother Jose (bottom right, arms crossed) and Sister Maria (third from left in second row).**

Village News and the Village Website have previously given coverage to Theydon's Spanish Connection (see issues 64, 78 and 82 of Village News still available as pdf's from the [Newsletters Page](#). These issues told the story of Vicente Romero who stayed in Theydon Bois between May 1937 and February 1938 as one of the Basque Child Refugees from the Spanish Civil War.

Vicente, who will be 90 in December of this year, loved his brief time in Theydon and had always wanted to visit again. He finally managed to do that last year and came with his wife Consuelo and daughter Covadonga. 2012 was also the 75th anniversary of the ship La Habana, that had brought the children, arriving in Southampton and a reunion was held at the University in the town to commemorate this anniversary of the ships arrival in 1937. The Romero's also managed to attend this event on their visit to England.



**David & Leticia Alfonso at 'Woodberry' (Wansfell) where their grandfather stayed.**

On returning home and speaking of his trip and his love of Theydon with his grandchildren, David Alfonso (12) and Leticia Alfonso (10) made them want to visit Theydon as well so they could see where their grandfather had stayed. This year they managed to persuade their parents (it did not take much effort) to bring them. They came recently with Vicente's daughter Covadonga (who came last year) and their parents, Covadonga's sister Consuelo and her husband Javier.



**L- R Linda Tilling, Javier Alfonso, Covadonga Romero, Consuelo, Leticia, David Alfonso and Jim Watts**

They stayed in Theydon with our Web Editor, Jim Watts who has become a close friend of the family and he showed them the many places in Theydon that their grandfather knew, including the house in Piercing Hill called 'Woodberry' (which was to become 'Wansfell College' and is now 'Coopers Court' flats) where the Basque children stayed. They managed to see most of the places their grandfather knew, visited the pubs Vicente ate in on his return last year for meals with their parents and attended the St. Mary's Flower Festival where they met and talked with villager Bob Day who remembered the Basque children staying in Theydon from his own childhood. They were though glad that it was the school holidays here, as well as in Spain, so that they only needed to see the outside of our Primary School!



**At the Queen Victoria and Theydon Bois Primary School**

It is a strange coincidence that Vicente was like his grandson also around 12 years old when he first came to Theydon Bois and Leticia (10) is the same age as Vicente's sister Maria when she accompanied him and brother Jose (9) as refugees. Unfortunately his siblings have now died, but Vicente remains a very active 89 year old, who intends another visit to Theydon himself. Maybe next year?



**David & Leticia at St. Mary's & below the room where their grandfather stayed at 'Woodberry'**

David and Leticia said they had enjoyed their visit to Theydon Bois very much and would now be able to exchange stories with their grandfather. They said "Theydon Bois es maravilloso y que era mejor que nuestra visita a la tienda de juguetes de Hamleys" - "Theydon Bois is wonderful and was even better than our visit to Hamley's Toy Shop" which of course was another essential attraction to be visited on their trip to England.