

Public talk

Child refugees from the Spanish Civil War in Britain and Lancaster

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Thursday 11 August, 2-4 pm,
Friends Meeting House

85 years ago, the Civil War in Spain created a humanitarian disaster for children. 3,862 children came to Britain, amongst whom was Simon's father, Enrique Martínez Baranda. He was just twelve years old. Every refugee experience is unique but by recalling the successes and mistakes our humanitarian response can be improved.



One lesser-known and under-researched aspect of this history is the small 'colony' of Basque refugees in Lancaster. A group of 10 stayed at Nazareth House, which still stands today on Ashton Road. They were looked after by a Spanish woman, Ricarda Elexpuru, a teacher or 'Maestra'. Research has uncovered elements of their stay, including interactions in the local area. The thorny issue of repatriation was also central to their experience.

Simon Martinez is one of the Trustees of the Association for the Basque Children of the UK. The Association collects first hand testimony about the events, encourages research into this forgotten episode of British history, and brings the story to academic and historical memory audiences.