

BALLYMENA AND GIBRALTARIAN LINKS

TEACHING IN ONE OF THE CAMPS

I found that a friend of my aunt had taught in one of these camps so I went to talk to her. She told me how the whole population of Gibraltar had been evacuated in 1940. Some went to Morocco, some to America, to England and to a number of camps in Northern Ireland - Antrim, Down and Derry.

She told me how she had been asked by the Ministry of Education to take up a post in Dunaird Camp, two miles beyond Broughshane - a village five miles from Ballymena.

On 1 September 1945 she took the bus from Ballymena to Broughshane and then walked the two miles along a country road where there was not a house in sight. After a while she got the pungent smell of paraffin and knew she was almost there. This was a smell she would get used to - the paraffin was used to light the morning fires. The Nissan huts were in a field, one for each family. There were bigger huts for school, kitchen, staff premises and the community. They were linked by concrete paths.

She got a cautious welcome from a group of people and was led to her classroom at the back of the camp by Mr Hermida. The classroom was clean, had a blackboard and chalk, two long

trestle tables and benches. That was all! No books, no jotters, no pencils and no glass in the windows.

She found that most of the children spoke no English and she had no Spanish. She recalled fondly how she was young and adaptable and spent the day organising games and having a concert.

The glass was put into the windows that evening, books and stationery soon arrived and all was set for the academic year.

During that year she taught the pupils aged from four to eight years.



Mr Hermida taught the older ones. She recalled how she found the children delightful and remembered them well - from Titi Bagu the youngest, who was often found crawling under the trestle tables, to the top group Jaime Ruiz, Jaime Garcia and the Dalmedo sisters.

She began to learn Spanish with Mr Hermida, aware that she would have to begin preparation for First Holy Communion.

She taught in Dunaird until June 1946.