



THE WHITEWAY COMMUNITY & REFUGEES FROM THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR



THE WHITEWAY COLONY WAS ORIGINALLY SET UP AS A TOLSTOYAN COMMUNITY BY A GROUP OF EIGHT LIKE-MINDED SOCIALISTS IN 1898. SITUATED JUST EIGHT MILES FROM STROUD, IN THE AREA OF MISERDEN, WHITEWAY IS STILL GOING STRONG OVER TWO CENTURIES LATER WITH ABOUT 150 PEOPLE CALLING IT HOME TODAY.

The Whiteway Colony has moved on from its original founding principle that rejected the idea of private property but for many years it aimed to build a socialist utopia in the heart of the Cotswolds.

The people of Whiteway were in favour of creating a utopia based on socialist ideals and so felt a strong bond of kinship with the republicans fighting in the Spanish Civil War 1936-39. Following a coup d'état in July by

right wing, nationalist generals and led by the Fascist, Franco the democratically elected leader of Spain, Manuel Azaña, was deposed. What followed was a bitter and divisive civil war that led to millions of Spaniards being displaced and half a million refugees fleeing to France where many were interned in camps.

Towards the end of the Civil War when it looked increasingly likely that the Nationalists would win, a number of Republican fighters and supporters left Spain looking for refuge. The people at the Whiteway Colony were quick to offer support to ten refugees who subsequently arrived at Miserden over the spring and summer of 1939. The refugees were given food, shelter and clothing. In return they contributed to the running of the colony by helping with daily chores, cooking and farm work.



'OUR SPANISH FRIENDS' FROM JOY
TRACKER'S WHITEWAY COLONY: THE
SOCIAL HISTORY OF A TOLSTOYAN
COMMUNITY

Through consultation with the refugees the colonists at Whiteway devised a system whereby everyone could live comfortably together. This included a rota for meals, an open approach to sorting out any issues as well as a zero tolerance approach to alcohol consumption. The refugees were encouraged to learn English during their time at Whiteway - the intention being to enable them to find a job in the local community. Many locals responded generously towards the arrival of refugees with gifts

of oranges and bananas with local fund raising activities to provide hard cash to support the community in helping establish these refugees in their new lives in Britain.

Eventually the refugees were in a position to move on from Whiteway. For two years they had been given the care and support they needed by the people of Whiteway to start a new life after their lives had been turned upside down by the Spanish Civil War.