

**International Brigade Memorial Trust
Annual General Meeting: Hull, 13 October 2018**

AGENDA ITEM 3

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 14 October 2017 at GMB, Garley House, 17 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0TB

(To be read in conjunction with written reports presented to the meeting)

Present: Gerry Abrahams, Mike Arnott, Richard Baxell, Bill Baxter, Terry Bayes, David Boyd, Margaret Bruton, Colin Carritt, Lesley Carritt, Ramon Coria, Lisa Croft, Graham Davies, Alun Davies, Hamish Drummond, Pauline Fraser, Alex Gordon, Mary Greening, Rob Griffiths, Chris Hall, Lorraine Hardy, Malcolm Hardy, Jonathan Havard, John Hayward, Nicholas Hourigan, Myra Hunter, Charles Jepson, Margaret Jepson, Hillary Jones, Roger Jones, Keith Jones, Jim Jump, Meirian Jump, Judith Langdon, Stephen Langdon, Denis Lenehan, Philip Licinio, Alan Lloyd, Nina Londragan, Dolores Long, Duncan Longstaff, Jim McGarrol, Marshall Mateer, Moira Mateer, Patrick McKenna, Mark Mizzen, Anna Monks, Manuel Moreno, Anne O'Hara, Brenda O'Riordan, Manus O'Riordan, Terry Palfrey, Frieda Park, Ray Parkes, Danny Payne, Nancy Phillips, Beth Richards, Manuel Rodríguez, Denis Rogatyuk, Sid Sherriff, Pippa Sherriff, Marlene Sidaway, Ceinwen Statter, Richard Thorpe, Chris Tranchell, Ernest Walker, Lynda Walker, Stuart Walsh, Alan Warren, Judith Wicks, Rainer Worden.

1. Opening remarks

Richard Baxell (Chair) welcomed everybody and thanked Mary Greening and Nina Londragan, along with the GMB, Unite, ASLEF and RMT, for organising and sponsoring the AGM.

The meeting remembered the deaths of Stan Hilton, the last of the British International Brigaders and possibly the last in the world, Tony Atienza, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Joan Brown, Margaret McLean, Rachel Ritchie, Hugh Thomas and Bill Thornycroft. A short video with clips from speeches given by Rodney Bickerstaffe at IBMT events was screened.

A message of solidarity and good wishes for our AGM was received from KFSR, our sister organisation in Germany.

2. Welcome from the First Minister of Wales

A message of greetings and support from Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales, was read out to the meeting (see appendix to these minutes).

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Jane Bernal, Tommy Campbell, Ruth Coates, Geoff Cowling, Ciaran Crossey, Connie Fraser, George Fuller, Angela Jackson, Keith Jenkinson, Keith Jerome, Nigel Morgans, Jess, Neil and Luke O'Riordan, Miriam Peet, Tom Sibley, Lee Solomon, Nancy Wallach and Mike Wild.

4. Minutes of the 2016 AGM and matters arising

The minutes were approved. There were no matters arising.

5. Executive Committee and financial reports

Jim Jump (Secretary) said the Executive Committee report was testimony to the collective effort of not just Executive Committee members but also IBMT activists up and down the country. It recorded another year of achievement, but the shadow of a financial deficit hung over our activities. This had arisen mainly because the expectations and demands put on the IBMT were now so large. For example, the IBMT Magazine had over the past three years gone from two to three issues a year and the print-run had almost doubled. As a result the annual cost of producing and distributing it had risen from more than £8,000 to in excess of £15,000 a year. The Executive Committee had therefore decided, from 2018, to limit distribution of the magazine to members only. Meanwhile a bigger and better recruitment leaflet would be produced to give away at meetings and events.

He said that the IBMT also needed to improve its subscription income stream, especially as membership wastage rates were far too high. There was considerable scope too for more recruitment and to increase trade union affiliations, whether nationally, regionally or at branch level. For these and other reasons the Executive Committee had taken the decision in principle to employ a full-time IBMT Coordinator & Fundraiser, and a four-year business plan was being drawn up with that aim.

Future plans, Jim Jump added, would involve some belt-tightening, but, overall, prospects for the IBMT were positive. We now had a proper office at the Marx Memorial Library in London, and the new fortnightly IBMT eNewsletter was proving very popular. The aim must be to create a professional and sustainable organisation to last for years to come, so that the story of the 2,500 volunteers who went to Spain could be taken forward to new generations.

Manuel Moreno (Treasurer) said that greater financial controls had to be exercised by the Trust. We were not a money-making organisation, but the aim of any event must be to at least cover the costs. If we continued as we were, then we would have four years of growth, but in the fifth year we would not have the money to finance our activities. We needed to have more of a culture of raising money and to professionalise ourselves, to become more productive and more influential.

Ernest Walker reported the sad death of Ciaran Crossey's wife, the news of which had only just been received. It was agreed to send a message of condolence to Ciaran.

Margaret Jepson said that it was becoming increasingly difficult for all charities to fundraise.

Marlene Sidaway (President) refuted the idea that our legacy funds had been depleted. They were still in a deposit account. We should continue to encourage members to remember us in their wills, or ask for donations to go to the IBMT at funerals instead of flowers.

Lynda Walker said that the Belfast International Brigade Commemorative Committee was self-sufficient. It had raised £25,000 for the stained-glass window in Belfast's city hall from the council and labour movement organisations.

Richard Baxell (Chair) said that we punched above our weight, but needed a professional fund-raiser.

Duncan Longstaff made the point that we had a £19,000 loss this year, but would only recoup £8,000 under solutions currently being proposed. How could we afford to employ someone on £25,000 to fundraise?

Jim Jump explained that the current and recent financial statements had been distorted by the money for the Oxford memorial which had passed through the IBMT accounts.

Duncan Longstaff complained, however, that the Oxford money could not be identified in the accounts presented to the AGM.

Terry Bayes said that we shouldn't have monies for other organisations passing through our accounts; he was assured that that lesson had been learned.

Hillary Jones made the point that we were not a profit-making organisation, so we should be spending our money. She suggested that all IBMT members should be encouraged to recruit one more member.

Stuart Walsh said that the Working Class Movement Library had bought a stamp and a franking machine and that this, along with the help of volunteers, had saved money in sending out publications.

Rob Griffiths reported on a very successful day in July to commemorate the Caerleon Basque children's colony.

Charles Jepson felt that, if we cut back on the number of copies of the magazine produced, we would be losing a weapon in our armoury for recruitment. He added that getting rid of the concessionary rate would cause a loss of members on low incomes.

John Haywood said the most important objective for the IBMT was to increase our income rather than necessarily looking to cut costs, and made some suggestions, for example organising a national lottery and offering a reward to members who paid, say, after several years by direct debit.

Alex Gordon agreed that we should employ somebody to focus on fundraising and on bidding for special projects.

Lisa Croft emphasised that we should not underestimate the help that trade unions could provide.

Anna Monks said we should beware of moving away from the aims of the IBMT and on to fundraising. It was important to encourage donations that were unhypothecated, that is not tied to a particular project.

Lyn Hurst gave an update on the plans for a new memorial in Leicester in the city's Market Place. Welsh slate had been ordered for the memorial and there would be an unveiling ceremony probably in spring 2018, all at no cost to the IBMT.

Meirian Jump said that the Marx Memorial Library in London was the proud custodian of an extensive International Brigade and Spanish Civil War archive. The IBMT was a partner in the current project, funded by the National Archives, to employ an archivist to digitise the collection. This project would be completed in spring 2018, with the IBMT having an important role to play in promoting the new catalogue.

The Executive Committee and financial reports were approved.

6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members

It was agreed that Colin Carritt and Lynda Walker should act as scrutineers. A vote was taken on whether candidates on the ballot form should be given up to one minute to speak if they chose or whether they should simply rise and announce their names. The result was 36 in favour of candidates being allowed to speak for up to one minute, with 23 against.

Chair

Richard Baxell was nominated by Freddy Shaw, seconded by Marlene Sidaway, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

Secretary

Jim Jump was nominated by Alan Lloyd, seconded by Mike Arnott, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

Treasurer

Manuel Moreno was nominated by Marlene Sidaway, seconded by John Haywood, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

Executive Committee members (10 to be elected)

A total of 70 valid ballot papers were returned in the following ballot:

***Mike Arnott** was nominated by Marlene Sidaway, seconded by Alan Warren, and received 52 votes.

***Lisa Croft** was nominated by Charles Jepson, seconded by Stuart Walsh, and received 40 votes.

***Pauline Fraser** was nominated by Dolores Long, seconded by Hillary Jones, and received 47 votes.

***Alex Gordon** was nominated by Meirian Jump, seconded by Ray Parkes, and received 48 votes.

***Mary Greening** was nominated by Hywel Francis, seconded by Nigel Morgans, and received 56 votes.

***Christopher Hall** was nominated by Lisa Croft, seconded by Stuart Walsh, and received 42 votes.

***John Haywood** was nominated by Colin Carritt, seconded by Marlene Sidaway, and received 42 votes.

Charles Jepson was nominated by Terry Bayes, seconded by Bill Baxter, and received 30 votes.

Nina Londrigan was nominated by Mary Greening, seconded by Rowland Davis, and received 34 votes.

***Marshall Mateer** was nominated by Manuel Moreno, seconded by Brenda O'Riordan, and received 47 votes.

***Manus O'Riordan** was nominated by Lynda Walker, seconded by Ernest Walker, and received 51 votes.

Danny Payne was nominated by Don Watson, seconded by Colin Smith, and received 34 votes.

***Richard Thorpe** was nominated by Mary Greening, seconded by Gary Hammond, and received 45 votes.

*These candidates were declared duly elected.

Richard Baxell (Chair) welcomed the members elected to the Executive Committee for the first time and offered thanks and commiserations to those who had failed to win re-election.

Marlene Sidaway (President) pointed out that Dolores Long had not sought re-election this year. She paid tribute to Dolores's important contribution to the IBMT as an Executive Committee member since 2002, five of them as Chair, and was pleased to have received

assurances from Dolores that she would remain active within the IBMT both nationally and in the North West.

7. Any other business

Charles Jepson, Duncan Longstaff and Dolores Long all urged people to attend the Len Crome Memorial Conference in Bristol on 24 March 2018 on the topic of Aid to Spain. This was a new venue and was therefore an opportunity to recruit and fundraise in Bristol. The Colston Hall seated 250 and we should try to fill all places.

Marshall Mateer reported on the Young People and the IBMT project and said he welcomed ideas from members.

Danny Payne reported that a North West-based trade union group was organising a trip to the Ebro next April.

Manuel Moreno said that, having attended the recent KFSR commemoration in Berlin, he wanted to see closer links between International Brigade organisations. This sentiment was supported by Nancy Phillips. Jim Jump (Secretary) said that there were good informal contacts between the various organisations. There had been an attempt some years ago to create a more formal central structure located in Paris, but it had made little progress as several groups felt that it should be based in Spain.

Ceinwen Statter announced that the SO Davies Memorial Lecture would be taking place on 19 October in Soar, where Huw Williams would be speaking on the Spanish Civil War.

Following an intervention by Manuel Rodríguez on the constitutional crisis in Spain, it was agreed to note the IBMT's concern at police violence in Catalonia on 1 October during the regional government's referendum on independence.

8. Date and place of next AGM

The 2018 Annual General Meeting would be held in Hull on a date in October yet to be decided.

Appendix: Message from Carwyn Jones, First Minister of Wales

I'm sorry that I am unable to attend this year's International Brigades commemoration and to be at the Annual General Meeting in person. I wanted to send a message on behalf of the Welsh Government to those in attendance to mark the day and to honour those that served in the International Brigades from 1936 to 1938.

It would perhaps be easy, with the passing of so many years, to lose sight of the story and the sacrifice of those individuals from Wales that fought and died fighting for democracy as members of the International Brigades in the Spanish Civil War.

But we choose not to. We choose to remember. As the Historian AJP Taylor once wrote: 'History is not another name for the past, as many people imply. It is the name for stories about the past.'

Though the pages may be yellowed, the newspaper clippings may have softened and the stories may now be second hand, we actively choose to remember those that joined the

International Brigades, to recall, to reflect and to re-describe – for new generations – their remarkable story; to recall the people and the principles they fought for.

We do it because it is our story. From the very same towns and villages that we know, that we live in, came brave individuals who signed up and sailed off to fight fascism.

And it is a truly remarkable story. Over 200 individuals – miners, writers, teachers academics, tradesmen, those without work; individuals from coalfield and coastal communities; both urban and rural; people – just like you and me – who joined up to fight for freedom.

Gwyn Thomas who travelled across Spain as a young student at the time spoke of the familiarity he felt and the similarity he saw between the mining villages of Spain and those of the Rhondda where he grew up. He saw in them ‘the same warmth, the same kindness, but above all the same marvelous intensity’ that he saw back home.

And they came from all across Europe to defend democracy. An anti-fascist barricade from Tonypany to Madrid, they called it.

For those that served, what they saw and what they witnessed forged them as people. The experience of those that served in the Brigades left an indelible mark on them. For individuals such as Will Paynter and Tom Jones – ‘Twm Sbaen’ – it was a defining moment in their lives.

Their stories, their sacrifice and those of many like them are engraved on plaques and memorials scattered across the length and breadth of Wales, in village halls and on school walls right across the land.

But above all we are left with the bravery, the heroism and the solidarity of those who signed up, individuals who saw their participation through a larger lens. At a time of mass unemployment, depression and the hardship of the 1930s they saw themselves participating in a bigger story – a struggle for freedom and democracy; a struggle for a common humanity.

As the great Paul Robeson once said: ‘These fellows fought not only for Spain, but for me and for the whole world.’ And today we honour them.

I’d like to thank the International Brigade Memorial Trust for the work they do and in particular to thank the volunteers and staff who do so much – all year round – to keep alive the memory and the spirit of the men and women from across the UK that fought for freedom in Spain eighty years ago.

Your work is valuable, your work is important. Perhaps now more than ever it is important these stories are re-told and re-described, for our daughters and for our sons. Thank you.