



# INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

Patrons Ken Livingstone  
Prof. Paul Preston

[www.international-brigades.org.uk](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk)

Charity no. 1094928

Issue seven / February 2004

## INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

37 Reginald Road, London E7 9HS

Tel/Fax: 020-8555 6674

Email: [marlenesidaway@hotmail.com](mailto:marlenesidaway@hotmail.com)

President: Jack Jones

Secretary: Marlene Sidaway

Treasurer: Peter Crome

Committee Members: Sam Lesser, David Marshall,  
Richard Baxell, Tish Collins, Pauline Fraser, Katie  
Green

Co-opted Members: Gerry Abrahams, Jim Jump,  
David Leach, Dolores Long, Manus O'Riordan

It's amazing to realise that this is our 7th Newsletter, and Pauline tells me our membership has grown to over 500 since we first decided to form the Trust in 2000. During that time, Jack has been a wonderful figurehead as our first President. His charm and diplomacy have won us many friends and supporters, and the committee felt that we should acknowledge the great debt we owe him by awarding him the title of Honorary Life President. If this is agreed, we can ratify it at the Annual General Meeting, which we hope to hold in Cardiff this year. I am writing to all our members in Wales in the hope that some of them will be willing to help in organising this, and Pauline has volunteered to co-ordinate it – the provisional date is 16 October.

I can't refer to the AGM without thanking Gerry and all concerned with the organisation of the meeting in Glasgow; it was absolutely splendid. The warmth and support which we received from the unions and the people of Glasgow was a testament to their commitment to the memory of the volunteers and it was great to see Steve Fullarton, James Maley and John Dunlop there, sharing their own vivid memories of Spain with us.

This year's memorial gathering in Jubilee Gardens will be on Saturday 17 July and we're delighted that Ana Perez, President of the Asociación de los Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales in Spain, has accepted our invitation to be the main speaker. The social afterwards will be in the Travel Inn again and we hope to have some music and dancing, with the catering arrangements improved, and friendlier seating arrangements; more details in the next newsletter.

Details of the Len Crome Memorial Lecture in March are on the back page. Richard Baxell's book will be on sale, as will some of the latest titles from Warren & Pell. March is also the month when two more of our Brigaders will reach the grand age of 90 – George Wheeler and Sol Frankel, so again we can celebrate with a special cake. Are there any more of you reaching that grand age this year? Salud,

*Marlene Sidaway*



Scottish veterans (from left) James Maley, Steve Fullarton and John Dunlop. "You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy's solidarity and universality..."

## Memorable day in Glasgow



On a clear, crisp afternoon in October around 600 people gathered at Custom House Quay on the banks of the Clyde in Glasgow to pay tribute to the young men and

women from Britain and Ireland who went to Spain to fight fascism in the years 1936-39.

La Pasionaria's farewell address to the International Brigades echoed across the steel grey waters, the words spoken by Dolores Long, daughter of Sam Wild, last commander of the British Battalion in Spain, who named her in honour of the Republic's great inspirational orator.

The recitation of La Pasionaria's address served both to re-dedicate the Glasgow International Brigade memorial, a representational statue of La Pasionaria atop a symbolic girder of Scottish iron, arms outstretched defiantly in the direction of Spain, and underpinned by her words: "Better to die on your feet than to live forever on your knees", and to introduce a day of reflection and celebration built around the Annual General Meeting of the British and Irish International Brigade Memorial Trust.

Among those present were a number of International Brigade veterans from the two

islands. The last three surviving Scotsmen, John Dunlop, Steve Fullarton and James Maley were joined by the last two Irishmen, Bob Doyle and Michael O'Riordan. From England came Jack Edwards, Jack Jones and Bernard McKenna. Unable to travel to Scotland, Alun Williams, the last surviving Welsh volunteer, sent best wishes, as did Sol Frankel and George Wheeler from London.

The City of Glasgow and the Scottish labour movement hosted the day and short, relevant and moving speeches were given by Councillor Charles Gordon, Leader of Glasgow City Council, Jane McKay, Secretary of Glasgow Trades Council and Bill Spiers, General Secretary of the Scottish Trades Union Congress, each speaker in different ways focusing on the extraordinary commitment made by young working people from around the world to defend Spanish democracy in its struggle against military rebellion.

Scotland contributed a disproportionately high number of the volunteers from Britain and Ireland. Fifty-three men from Glasgow alone were killed in Spain. This sense of sacrifice was brought home to the banks of the Clyde on that autumn afternoon in three distinct and poignant ways.

Standing by a wooden board bearing the

*Continued on page 2*

# Brief notes

## Remembrance Day

Recently there have been questions in the press and in Parliament as to why International Brigades veterans have never been invited to take part in the Remembrance Day parade in Whitehall. I wrote to the Royal British Legion, who organise the event. They replied that “the current guidelines on eligibility for the march past... that those marching as part of the ex-Services contingent must have served in HM Armed Forces or have been under their direct command. After careful consideration with the Department for Constitutional Affairs, we have concluded that the inclusion as a contingent of those who fought in the Spanish Civil War (on either side) would not be in accordance with these criteria.” The letter goes on to say that those who fought previously or subsequently under British or Commonwealth command would be entitled to march with their regimental associations or as individuals. So, there we have it! Incidentally, the Trust did not write to seek permission for IB veterans to take part in the parade, merely to establish what the position would be if enough of them wished to do so. What a shame, though, that the Royal British Legion apparently saw fit to equate the IB veterans with those who fought with Franco’s fascists and their Nazi German and Italian allies.

## ‘Days of Hope’ production

“Days of Hope” will be performed by students of the Italia Conti Drama School (020 7253 1430) at the Landor Theatre in Clapham, London, between 10 and 20 March (but not on 17 March).

## Inaccuracy in the press

Steve Thomas alerted me to a letter published in the *Northants on Sunday* free paper. Part of the letter referred to the Spanish Civil War, with such inaccuracy as to suggest that “...the English socialists were motivated by doctrine to join forces with the Nazis to fight on the side of General Franco... while Edward Heath and hundreds of Tories fought on the side of the Spanish

loyalists...” Yes, it is laughable, but it was in print, and some readers might be persuaded that it was a truth. Thankfully the editor printed my reply the next week, but it shows how we must all be vigilant about what appears in the public domain – after all, one of the aims of the Trust is to “educate the public in the history of the men and women who fought in the International Brigades and in the medical and other support services in the Spanish Civil War”!

## Memorabilia

Just a reminder about how careful we need to be with memorabilia, books, letters and other documents or artefacts belonging to Brigade veterans who have died, perhaps many years ago. They are valuable. These things may have been kept by spouses/partners with great care, but those entrusted with “clearing out” a home may not be so aware of their value and significance. It would be tragic if they were consigned to a dustbin. There are several places where such items can be taken to be properly catalogued and displayed in various areas of the country for the benefit of researchers and for our collective memory. The Trust will be happy to give advice on this matter.

## Essay competition

We are planning a schools essay competition, based around the International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War. The Scottish Executive Council of the National Union of Journalists has provided initial sponsorship.

## Oral history project

An oral history project (Memory of the Vanquished: The silenced history of the Spanish Civil War) is proposed by a Spanish group anxious to gather information from International Brigaders after so many years of silence about the war that shaped their lives. They are particularly anxious to talk to anybody who was at Teruel during the winter of 1937-8. Many thanks to Brigaders who indicated their willing-

ness to be interviewed for this project. Meanwhile, other people have asked if they can interview Brigade veterans, and I know you will be helpful if possible. I will always ring you before making any arrangements, depending on the part of the country the interviewers are working in.

## Glasgow memorabilia

We have several items to remind us of the Annual General Meeting in Glasgow: posters, bookmarks and a video – these are free to members, but donations would be welcome. We should also have IBMT members’ badges soon, these will cost £2 each if you buy them at an event and £2.50 by post.

## Article on Felicia Browne

Tom Buchanan published an article on Felicia Browne in the *History Workshop Journal*, issue 54, 2000, in which he draws on previously unknown private letters to “show that the journey to her death in Aragon was far more tortuous than has previously been imagined. In particular, it will be argued that it is impossible to discern in the latter part of Felicia Browne’s career any simple choice between art and political action”. If you have no access to the journal, I can photocopy the 22-page article – cost £2.50 including p&p; contact Marlene at address on the front page.

## IB files from Moscow

As discussed at the Annual General Meeting, we are in the process of acquiring these files from ALBA (Abraham Lincoln Battalion veterans). The 10 microfilms should provide access to a lot more information for our researchers, Jim Carmody and Richard Baxell.

## Book exchange

Please don’t forget our book exchange scheme. If you want a particular book, contact

## Memorable day in Glasgow

### *Continued from front page*

names of the Glasgow men who fell in Spain, a lone piper played the traditional lament “Flowers of the Forest”. Then noted Scots folk-singer Mick West gave an unaccompanied, emotional performance of Ewan McColl’s ballad “Jamie Foyers”.

Then it was the turn of Edinburgh veteran, John Dunlop. Tall, upright and elegant at 88,

his smile reflected the respect and affection that flowed towards him from the crowd. John, who served in Spain from the Jarama Front in spring 1937 to the last action of the British and Irish volunteers at the Ebro in autumn 1938, read the poem, “An Ode to my Comrades”, that he wrote after his first visit back to the battlefield of Brunete.

*David Leach*

# President's message

Christopher Hall at [christoff\_hall@yahoo.com]. He will then publish your request in the Newsletter, and it's more than likely that *someone* will have a spare copy, or can tell you where to get one. The "Memorials of the Spanish Civil War", compiled by Colin Williams, Bill Alexander & John Gorman and published in 1996 by Alan Sutton Publishing, is often asked for. Has anyone got a spare copy? Come to a mutual agreement about price, but many books are quite rare now, and cost quite a bit from dealers!

## Memorial Mosaic

Sadly, the unveiling of this project has had to be postponed yet again, due to illness, but the mosaic is still being worked on. If you'd like to take part, contact Eddie Adams on 020-8964 9531. The group meets on Thursdays 1.30-4.00pm at Gloucester Court, 2 Bassett Road, London W10. Ring Eddie first, to check it's on.

## Memoirs and poems

John Manson has sent a selection of "Memoirs and Poems of the Spanish Civil War", which he has translated. For a copy, contact Corbie Press, 57, Murray Street, Montrose, Angus, Scotland, DD10 8JZ, quoting Corbie Poets series No 12 Cost £3.00.

## 'Homage to Catalonia'

A major new theatre production of George Orwell's "Homage to Catalonia" is currently in rehearsal. A co-production between Northern Stage (Newcastle), West Yorkshire Playhouse (Leeds), Teatre Romea (Barcelona), Forum Barcelona 2004 and MC93 Bobigny (Paris), the production will be showing in all of these cities from March-June. The script has been written by Pablo Ley and Allan Baker who have tried to reproduce the events of the war through Orwell's eyes. The show will also feature documentary footage of the war. Dates and venues for the Northern Stage Company's production are: West Yorkshire Playhouse, Leeds: 15 March to 3 April (box office 0113-213 7700) and Newcastle Playhouse: 22 April to 8 May (box office 0191-230 5151). If anyone has any memorabilia or photos which they would be willing to lend/photocopy for a display or publicity, call Marlene (020-8555 6674).

Salud,  
Marlene Sidaway

The very successful efforts and activities in Glasgow associated with our Annual General Meeting gave great encouragement to all concerned, with special thanks to Gerry Abrahams and other comrades – I thank them all most warmly.

With the diminishing numbers of Brigaders it is most important to increase the educational efforts of our Trust. In addition to the annual lecture at the Imperial War Museum it is hoped that similar events could be arranged in areas outside of London. Of major importance is the need to secure increased



references to the historical role of the International Brigades and the Spanish War itself in the wide field of educational activity. I hope we can enlist aid on this from our

many friends in all areas.

Personally I was sorry to miss the momentous events in Spain in July last year due to my increasing age, but my son Mick attended and gave me a full report.

At 91 my energy level is decreasing – so I look forward to the support of all friends in carrying the message forward – stronger than ever. In this connection I look forward to a lively and well-attended annual rally in July at our national memorial in Jubilee Gardens, London.

¡Salud, suerte!  
Jack Jones

## Hello...

Welcome to baby **Martin Thorpe-Ortiz** and warmest congratulations to proud parents and active Trust members Richard and Abigail. Martin was born on 24 December, weighing in at 9lb 2oz.

Richard Thorpe is a history teacher whose "The Ebro 1938" booklet, written by pupils at North Axholme Comprehensive School, was very well received at the Trust's Annual General Meeting in Glasgow last year.

All agreed that the booklet was an excellent example of how young people can be involved in learning about and remembering the role of the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.

*For more details of the booklet, see page 6.*

### British Battalion's first battle

Our front page article "Gathering at Jubilee Gardens" in the September 2003 edition of the Newsletter described the song "Jarama" as referring to "the first battle in which the International Brigades fought". It should have said that this was the first battle in which the British Battalion fought.

### IBMT Newsletter

Editor: Geraldine (Gerry) Abrahams  
Email: [gerry@reelscoop.freeserve.co.uk]  
Production Coordinator: Jim Jump  
Email: [jimjump@mac.com]

## ...and goodbye

**Tom Entwistle**, 65, passed away peacefully in Madrid on 28 December, after suffering a stroke in October 2003.

Tom, from Chicago, served in the US Marine Corps in Vietnam in the late 1960s. Through his Spanish wife Sofia's involvement in the politics of the Left, he became interested in the causes of her country's conflict and the involvement of the International Brigades, especially that of the Lincoln Battalion.

He tracked down former Lincolns and organised commemorative visits for them to Jarama Valley and the Sierra de Pandols.

He played a major organisational role in the Brigades' first large-scale return to Spain in 1986. Many reading this will no doubt remember the trip to Hill 666 in the tractor and trailer he managed to hire at the last minute!

Tommy was not slow in expressing his dislike of committees and procedures. His differences with the organisers in 1996 meant that he did not play a big part in the *Homenaje*, though he continued to organise his own battlefield trips and seminars for US army-university students.

His last big trip coincided with a seminar in October 2002 at Madrid's International Institute with special guest Milton Wolff, followed by a bus trip of over 1,500 kms that took in Belchite, Caspe, Gandesa and Hill 666.

His death was a cruel shock to those of us accustomed to the company of this passionate, grisly, Ducados-smoking character in his green zipper jacket and rich sense of humour; a lover of life with a surprising gentility and sensitivity below his trademark red bulldog baseball cap.

Rory O'Brien

# News from home...

## Jewish perspective

Thelma Frye (below) laid a wreath on behalf of the Trust at the Soviet War Memorial in the grounds of the Imperial War Museum and spoke movingly about her husband, Peter Frye, who “went to Spain for humanitarian reasons, after seeing a newspaper picture of the bodies of children killed by the German Stuka raid on civilians. When he got to Spain, he realised he also had a very strong Jewish motivation, because this was the first place where Jews could stand up to Hitler, whose persecution of the Jews was well under way.” Thelma went on to say that about 30 per cent of volunteers were Jewish.



## Poetry reading

A poetry reading (in Spanish and English) is to be held at 2pm on Sunday 21 March at the Torriano Meeting House, 99 Torriano Avenue, London NW5 at which Jane Duran will read poems from her collection “Silences from the Spanish Civil War”. More details are available from the Basque Children of ‘37 Association UK (Natalia Benjamin, tel: 01865-459 744/email[n.benjamin@ntlworld.com]).

## Oxford talk

A talk will be given by Prof. Valentine Cunningham on “Writers and the Spanish Civil War” at 2.30pm on Saturday 8 May at Corpus Christi College, Oxford. More details from Natalia Benjamin (details above).

## Socialist film co-op

The Renoir Cinema (Brunswick Square, London WC1) is hosting a season of films for the London Socialist Film Co-op (on selected Sundays at 10.30am) from 22 February to 16 May. More details are available from the LSFC, 13 Foundling Court, London WC1N 1QE. and the Renoir (tel: 020-7278 5764).

## Brigader comes in from the cold

When we write about the men and women who went to Spain to uphold freedom and democracy and fight the forces of fascism, we now have a fairly accurate picture of the total number killed, but not of all those who went to Spain. Even now, when many brave Brigaders have breathed their last, veterans still come to light. One such is Les Gibson, of Southend, who wrote a letter to the *Morning Star* which was spotted by Dr Reg Saxton. Reg promptly contacted the paper, wrote to Les, and forwarded me the reply. I have visited Les a couple of times since and my interview with him forms the basis for this article.

Les Gibson is now approaching 90 and when I first met him, I was surprised to be greeted at the door by a tall, imposing figure. I had been led to expect a virtual invalid who could barely stir from his seat. Les speaks simply, directly, but with measured thought. As a young man when the Spanish Civil War started, Les was an open-air speaker for the Young Communist League (YCL) in Hammersmith, London.

Les made up his mind to go to Spain when a wounded Brigader returned and spoke to the local YCL about his determination to go back again. He was 22 years old. Another young lad from the YCL, AE (“Dicky”) Bird, travelled with him to Paris, running the gauntlet of the detectives at Victoria Station and Dover who quizzed them about their movements. In Paris they were split up in different safe houses. Les felt some responsibility towards Dicky, because he was so young.

He crossed the Pyrenees by night, following the route taken by many volunteers after France closed the border with Spain following a decision of the Non-intervention Committee on 20 February 1937. Most men were kitted out with espadrilles before the climb, but they had none big enough to accommodate Les’ size 13 feet, so he had to make do with his leather-soled shoes, which were “a bit slippery over the slopes.” They got to the top as day was breaking and saw “an old fort” (Figueras). Les said it was wonderful to be in there, with so many different nationalities, and was particularly moved when they sang “The Internationale” together in “all the different tongues”.

He signed on with the International Brigades in Albacete, and was taken to another country town, probably Madrigueras, for training. Shortage of rifles meant learning drill with wooden cut-outs, and at Jarama, the first time he squeezed the trigger to fire, he found himself on his back in the bottom of the trench. Trained on cut-outs, he had no idea of the power of a rifle’s recoil. Esmond Romilly, one of Winston Churchill’s nephews, a fellow volunteer, gave him some tips.



Les Gibson at home.

Les was present when Bill Alexander’s headquarters came under enemy fire. Les is clear that it was shelled. He had just come out of hospital, and was trying to return to the Battalion, when a messenger came by and told him he was going to Bill’s HQ. Les followed him when the shelling started. The messenger was able to get into the HQ, but Les didn’t have time to follow. Instead, he dived into a slit-trench that someone had started digging and got down as tight as he could. It was only about four inches deep, and he could feel pieces of shrapnel whirring across his back, missing him by a fraction of an inch. “I would have been cut to pieces if I had been going along the top,” he commented.

Les’ experience of fighting was interspersed with periods in hospital with colitis, a typhoid-related disease that nearly killed him, and treatment for a badly-burnt leg which frequently ulcerated. He became a paramedic, assisting a Hungarian doctor and his matron wife, eventually assisting in operations to remove bullets. He later served as a stretcher-bearer during the Battle of the Ebro.

Dicky Bird, the young YCLer who went out to Spain with him in the spring of 1937 had been killed at the Battle of Brunete.

When the International Brigade Association ceased contact with him, Les had to follow their affairs at arms length via the pages of the *Daily Worker* and later the *Morning Star*. He puts it down to a report a doctor wrote on him while in Spain, indicating his belief that Les had sabotaged his own leg in order to escape active service. Les continues to suffer the after-effects of the burn caused by an accident in the field mess in 1937, but perhaps this unfair judgment and lack of recognition cause the more hurt and rankle still.

Pauline Fraser

## 65th anniversary commemoration at Marçà

In Marçà (Marsa), almost a year ago, an association was formed by people with a shared interest in research on the civil war in this part of Catalonia. Known as “No Jubilem la Memòria” (“We shall not retire the memory”), the group organised a weekend of events in the village, from 31 October to 2 November 2003 to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the Farewell to the International Brigades. Many Brigaders remember the area where they spent several weeks in the summer of 1938, training and preparing for the Battle of the Ebro. When the International Brigaders were withdrawn from the front in October, they mustered near Marçà once again before moving on to Montblanc and Barcelona for the farewell parade.

Several hundred friends and relatives of veterans, historians, students and others attended a varied programme of events in the village which included an exhibition, a one-day conference with parallel programmes in Catalan and English, tours of sites connected with the Brigades, book presentations and the inauguration of a new monument.

In particular, the participation of Milton Wolff, Clarence Kailin and Harry Randall was highly valued, not only because their first-hand knowledge of the Spanish Civil War was of great interest to many and enabled us to reach a wider audience, but also because their presence added considerably to everyone’s enjoyment.

Some of the photographs displayed for the first time in the exhibition were taken in 1938 in the area by Harry Randall and two Brigades colleagues. Local people have scrutinised the photographs and have recognised faces and places. Also on display were some unpublished contact photographs taken by Robert Capa in this area, and a selection of aerial photographs showing the bombardment of nearby villages. In addition to the well attended lectures in the large new theatre, a smaller group of about 30 English speakers listened to a varied programme of talks in the town hall, then both groups joined together to hear Milton Wolff answering questions from a local high school student, after which he was given a standing ovation. A highlight of the local tour was the chance to take a picture of Milton in the spot where Robert Capa had photographed him with the Lincoln Battalion in 1938.

After laying a wreath at the memorial stone to John Cookson, a Brigader killed during the Battle of the Ebro (see “Bond of comradeship” below), and another on an unmarked communal grave in which at least 10 Brigaders are buried, we returned for the presentation of Clarence Kailin’s book, “Remembering John Cookson”, recently published in Spanish. The inauguration



**Clarence Kailin (left) and Milton Wolff with Spanish veterans Leandro Godessart (second from left) and Carmen Casas at the site of the memorial stone carved by John Cookson’s comrades. Kailin, a friend of Cookson, has asked to be buried alongside his comrade. See “Bond of comradeship” story below.**

of a new monument, brought about by the efforts of Clarence Kailin and the Marçà town council, took place on the outskirts of the village in brilliant sunshine, against the backdrop of the mountains where so many died during the Battle of the Ebro.

Since the anniversary commemoration, No Jubilem la Memòria has received offers of help and collaboration from many different sources. The group is now planning its next projects, intends to buy more photographs taken in the area from archives in Canada and the United States and will continue to record the memories of local people. We are also working with the town council of Marçà to set up a permanent site to house all the material we gather, to make it available for future generations. Before too long, we hope to invite you all to join us for another programme of events.

Website: [www.nojubilemlamemoria.org](http://www.nojubilemlamemoria.org)

Email: [info@nojubilemlamemoria.org](mailto:info@nojubilemlamemoria.org)

Angela Jackson

### Bond of comradeship

Not long after Martin Kirby, Maggie Whitman and their two children Ella and Joe Joe moved to southern Catalonia from East Anglia, they

were told that the grave of an American who had fought with the International Brigades lay somewhere in the valley. A local schoolteacher was able to take them to the modest, easily missed tombstone of John Cookson at which a folded Republican flag marked the place where he was buried. Cookson had been killed by shrapnel from a shell in the last days of the Spanish Civil War. Amazingly, the local people of the village tended his grave during the Franco years.

### Battle of Jarama museum

On Saturday 14 February, the battlefield museum featuring battle remains, maps, texts, photos and audio/visual materials of the Battle of Jarama is to be opened in Mesón del Cid, at Morata de Tajuña, near Madrid. Directions to the museum: Take main road no.3 and turn at M-315 in the Morata de Tajuña direction.

### Children in exile

The exhibition “El Exilio de los Niños” (“Exile of the Children”) opened for a month in the Palacio Euskalduna in Bilbao on 17 December 2003. It moved to Barcelona on 12 February and will tour other cities, including Madrid, during the year. The exhibition reflects the lives of some of the nearly 40,000 children who were evacuated abroad from Republican Spain during the Spanish Civil War through photographs, texts, drawings and artefacts. They included some 4,000 children from the Basque Country who found refuge in Britain in 1937. Of special interest is the dance dress that Josefina Antolín (who lives near Southampton) had made when she was 11 years old. The speeches at the inauguration ceremony reflected the aims of the exhibition: to put the exile of the children in its rightful place in history.

### Spain launch for IB book

The launch of the “Book of the XV International Brigade”, which tells the story of the British, US, Canadian and Irish volunteers in Spain, published by Warren & Pell Publishing, is scheduled to take place at Biblioteca Arus, Passeig Sant Joan 26, Barcelona on 17 February. The list of speakers includes Manel Aisa, member of the Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular, Andy Durgan, historical adviser on “Land and Freedom” and book publisher Alan Warren.

# Can you help?

## Researcher wanted

● Anthony Richards needs someone to do some research on Arthur Morris for him in the Kew Public Records Office. He is unable to go to London himself. Anyone willing to do this for him for an agreed remuneration please contact: [anthony@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk] or by post "Oaklea", Lampeter Velfry, Narberth, Pembrokeshire SA67 8TS.

## Hogar Español

● H Martinez, of 26 Hills Avenue, Cambridge CB1 7XA, remembers going to the Hogar Español in Bayswater, London, in the 40s as a youth and meeting a man outside distributing information. He was badly disabled probably due to injuries sustained in the Spanish Civil War. Does anyone else remember him? Possible name Jack Brent?

## Labour camps in North Africa

● Rob Satloff is researching forced labour camps in Morocco and Algeria during World War II, and knows that several Spanish Republicans were interned in the camps, and the International Brigade Association at the time had written letters to the Foreign Office regarding them. Rob would be grateful if anyone can throw light on how the camps were run. Contact him at [robs@washingtoninstitute.org].

## Peter and Margaret Walshe

● Roderick Walshe, of 14 Park Circle, Mount Marion, NY 12456, USA, would like to find out more about his parents. He believed his father had

died in 1946, but then found him alive but institutionalised in Glasgow in 1979. His mother Margaret (née Lynch of 229 Edgefauld Road, Glasgow, born 3 November 1919 or 1922) had apparently left Glasgow with Peter on 1 January '37 for Spain, but returned to the UK before him. Roderick would be grateful for any information.

## Antonio Diez

● Antonio Diez is planning to translate into Spanish and publish a book of letters from Brigaders which are in the Working Class Movement library in Manchester. Antonio says: "I think that would be the minimal tribute that I, a Spanish national, could make in memory of them." I believe he or the library will be contacting the owners of copyright, but if you have given letters to the WCM please contact the library yourself and hopefully give permission.

## Manchester exhibition

● Also in Manchester, there is an exhibition: "Reds! The story of the Communist Party of Great Britain" at the People's History Museum, The Pump House, Bridge Street, Manchester M3 3ER, until 25 April. For details, tel: 0161-839 6061, email:[info@peopleshistorymuseum.org.uk] or website:[www.peopleshistorymuseum.org.uk] for more information.

## George Dickie

● If anyone has any memories of this famous Brigader from Galloway, please contact: [noventa@winngteam.com] or tel: 01988-500282.

## Books reprinted

Warren & Pell's latest publication is "Britons in Spain" by Bill Rust (1939), Warren & Pell edition (2003). There is a limited numbered hardback edition of only 526 copies, costing £24 plus postage and packing. The unlimited softback copy is priced at £9.99 plus postage and packing. In addition, Warren & Pell is releasing the reprint of Hywel Francis's "Miners against Fascism; Wales and the Spanish Civil War" at the South Wales Miners' Library, Swansea University, on Saturday 1 May 2004. Jack Jones has agreed to attend the release. The library will be open and a small exhibition will be on show. For further information contact Warren & Pell at Old Bible Christian Chapel, High Street, Abersychan, Pontypool, Torfaen NP4 7AG; tel: 01495-775 561; fax: 01495-772 271; mobile: 07966-631 286; email: [warren.ofbooks@virgin.net].

## 'The Ebro 1938'

In the summer of 2003 a group of pupils at North Axholme Comprehensive School, Crowle, sat down to write a booklet. The event that inspired them was the return to Spain of the British veterans of the International Brigades.

The 10 pupils, aged 13-15, were given tasks that appealed to them most. Some looked at the weapons involved, others reviewed the recent discoveries of mass graves in Spain. What began as a 32-page work rapidly expanded, as more and more was discovered. Young researcher Elizabeth Richard's grandfather was dragged off the ship at Tilbury. His irate mother did not want her underage son to go to Spain.

The pupils were given a lot of help in their research. Using the ALBA (Abraham Lincoln veterans) website, help came in from around the world. David Leach came to the school to show his documentary "Voices from the Mountain" and presented the school with a signed copy of veteran George Wheeler's book "To Make the People Smile Again". Richard Baxell helped with information on the two Scunthorpe men who went to Spain, and the

pupils even secured an exclusive interview with Prof. Paul Preston.

At the heart of the booklet was coverage of the veterans return. It is difficult to say just how moving the events of July 2003 were for me. La Pasionaria said these men were history. I've taught the subject for 13 years, now I was walking with history. The Spanish Civil War is shamefully neglected and yet you can't get a better example of citizenship than volunteering to fight for democracy. I hope this can be a first move towards restoring it to its proper place in the curriculum.

**Richard Thorpe**  
History Coordinator  
North Axholme Comprehensive School



*The Ebro 1938;*  
Hogwash Press; 2003;  
ISBN 902920139, is  
available for £3 from  
North Axholme  
Comprehensive,  
Wharf Road, Crowle,  
Humberside.

# Remembering

## Thaelmann Battalion

This is our moment.

You can hear us singing

Where the earth is brittle under the southern sun

Watch us marching in serried ranks to the death that is our  
homage

To the unbroken spirit of our dishonoured country.

For here we are showing the world our country's other face,

And the voice that for three years in Germany has been  
silenced

Utters its songs of freedom under an alien sun.

We were in Barcelona with the masses that stormed the Colón;

We left with the first militia for the Eastern Front;

Then we went to Madrid;

We were at Casa de Campo,

Guadalajara, Brunete, Belchite and Teruel,

Putting to rout the Italians in the name of Thaelmann.

Here we have shown to the world our country's other face;

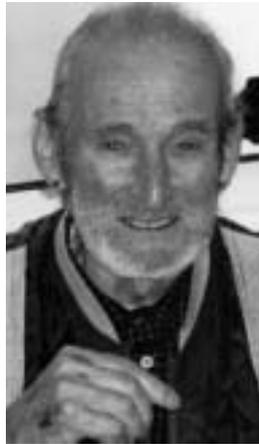
And not the face of the hangman with the sprouting forelock

But the face of the young men who march together singing

Through southern plains where the clay is brittle under the  
sun.

*Aileen Palmer*

*From "The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse"; edited by  
Valentine Cunningham; 1980.*



*David Marshall (left) remembers the Thaelmann Battalion...*

I was in Barcelona in September 1936 when the Thaelmann Battalion was fighting in Saragossa on the Aragon Front. After suffering about 30 casualties, the battalion paraded in Barcelona en route to Madrid. The Thaelmanns could not have taken part in the fighting in Barcelona (see poem); it was not formed until later. The fighting there was done wholly by Spaniards.

Our German comrades were exiles from their native land. They came from all corners of the earth to defend the Republic against fascism; all used pseudonyms to protect their families.

We, about 10 British and two dozen Flemings, joined the Thaelmann Battalion in Albacete, bringing it up to full strength. We were the first International Brigade, the 11th Mixed, to go into action in the defence of Madrid. We fought at Cerro de los Ángeles (Hill of the Angels) on 12 November 1936 where I was wounded. Chris Thornycroft was one of those who carried me off the field. There were many German comrades with me in hospital. It had been a badly planned battle. Later, the Thaelmanns fought at Casa de Campo and suffered badly at Boadilla when eight British and many Flemings were killed.

On 6 January 1937 the battalion was surrounded by Moors at Las Rozas, north of Madrid. They had been ordered not to retreat any further; the battalion held out against tanks, aerial attack and infantry. The Moors seized several trenches, and bayoneted the wounded. Finally, when in the confusion of battle, they were ordered to attack, the reply was: "Impossible, the Thaelmann Battalion has been destroyed". Of course, it later re-formed, and fought on. Many from the Thaelmann Battalion ended in the concentration camps of France. Many met their deaths in the camps in Germany when France was over-run. Only a few survived, and they provided some of the leaders of the German Democratic Republic.

*Transcription of a recording (by Pauline Fraser on 30 March 2003) of Dr Reginald Saxton on the circumstances of Julian Bell's death:*

In that excellent book by Bill Alexander concerning the Spanish Civil War, which I found very useful for reference myself, there is one serious error which I noticed in connection with the death of Julian Bell, who was very well known to people of liberal feelings in England.

Julian Bell died during the very first battle in July 1937 when the enemy was approaching... was driving south and the battle took place around the village of Brunete. Julian was bringing in wounded from Brunete to the monastery of El Escorial where we had a hospital. He was brought into this hospital himself as a casualty. There were a considerable number of others who had been rescued after a bombing attack on the ambulance in which he had been bringing patients in.

In the book it was recorded that Julian Bell was hit by a bomb killing him instantly. Nevertheless, I can testify that this cannot have been the case, because he was brought in alive to our hospital in El Escorial. There we had a tremendous shortage of medical personnel, and the senior medical stu-

## Witness to the death of Julian Bell

dent was in charge of the reception and deciding whether patients should be operated on, or were beyond help, and in the course of this sorting out by this senior medical student, Archie Cochrane, who was known to all us British people who you happened to meet from time to time in our war. Archie Cochrane decided that this wound, which involved the heart, was beyond the possibility of the surgical help that we had available at that time, and he indicated to the stretcher-bearers that Julian Bell should be put on the side of the room that was put aside for those who were beyond help.

Only after he had made this decision did he realise who Julian Bell was, and that he was well known to himself and to many other people, and that this was rather an important decision for a

medical student to make, and he asked for a second opinion, because he couldn't take the responsibility of making that decision himself. Julian Bell was then brought to a separate room where I saw him, and where we were waiting for the senior surgeon to come and give a second opinion. I gave him blood transfusion at that stage and he came round for a while and we had quite a conversation. He recognised me and said how glad he was to see me, how relieved he was to see me there. Then he became unconscious, so that by the time – this must have been up to a quarter of an hour, half an hour, that the surgeon came to see him, he was unconscious again. He looked at his wound and removed various personal data including a wallet, which I took home to his relations later, and declared that it was impossible to save him. Then he dressed the wound and Julian was left to die.

The report about him then, that he was killed in the Brunete battle, or coming away from the Brunete Battle, was obviously incorrect. I have never wanted to say too much about this, because I didn't want to discredit such an excellent book as that one of Bill Alexander's which is a most useful reference for most purposes.

# Ebro memorials

## *A letter from Martin Green:*

In July last year, I joined the party of surviving members of the International Brigades, friends and relations to attend the 65th anniversary of the Battle of the Ebro. My father George Green was killed there on 23 September 1938, the day the International Brigades were withdrawn.

Jesús Gonzales, an *Amigo* from Madrid, pointed to the spot where my father died as we stood outside the ruined church at Corbera, and later a Spanish television crew took me to the site.

Like many others in the British Battalion who died at the Battle of the Ebro, my father has no grave, though there is a memorial for the Franco combatants at Gandesa. The fascist army presumably destroyed the Brigaders' grave sites as they did at Jarama following their victory. Those who fell at Jarama now have a memorial stone which was unveiled at Morata de Tajuña in October 1994.

I was a member of the Jarama Memorial Association that helped bring that about and I am now hoping that there might be a similar memorial for those Brigaders who fell at the Battle of the Ebro. In all, some 160 British and Irish volunteers were killed on the Ebro Front, nearly 50 on the last few days.

## *David Leach has written the following response to Martin Green's letter:*

Martin Green's suggestion of a memorial to the British and Irish Brigaders who fell at the Battle of the Ebro is timely. Last November I was contacted by David Tormo, Project Director at the "Consorti Memorial dels Espais de la Batalla de l'Ebre" (Comebe), which clumsily translates from the Catalan as "Memorial Consortium for the Spaces of the Battle of the Ebro".

Comebe, a consortium of six village councils backed by the Catalan regional government, is developing a substantial new Battle of the Ebro memorial "complex". Scheduled to open in 2004, the memorial is to be built on a hilltop east of Corbera and will incorporate an ossuary to store the bones of soldiers that continue to emerge from the earth in the local vineyards and olive and almond groves. The memorial complex will also house symbolic biographical display panels of eight combatants, both Republican and Nationalist, who lost their lives in the campaign. David Tormo requested that I prepare a brief text on a British volunteer. Accordingly I submitted a photo, and 300 words, on David Guest, the much-loved Cambridge mathematician and Battersea Councillor who was killed on Hill 481.

But having read Martin's letter prior to publication in the Newsletter, it occurred to me that the Comebe site would be a perfect location for a separate memorial to all the British and Irish dead. Situated near Camposines, the hill is close to the route taken by the British Battalion after it crossed the Ebro and pushed on towards Gandesa. It is also just a few kilometres from the defensive positions of the "Last Action", where Martin's father was killed and the soon-to-be-90 George Wheeler was captured.

I will approach David Tormo to see how the idea can be introduced to the "Ebro Consortium". Meanwhile, I am interested in hearing the views of IBMT members and would appreciate advice on how we might fund, design and install a memorial in Catalonia.

The battalion's "Roll of Honour" shows that 100 identifiable individuals were killed over two months at the Ebro. It would be fitting if we could return their names to the country they fought so valiantly to defend.

*dleach@globalnet.co.uk*

# The Len Crome Memorial Lecture

by  
Dr Richard Baxell

## "Laurie Lee in the International Brigades: writer or fighter?"

2.30pm Saturday 6 March 2004  
Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ

Dr Len Crome went to Spain with the Scottish Ambulance Unit and joined the International Brigade early in 1937. He served as Chief Medical Officer of the 35th Division and then of the 15th Army Corps. During World War II, as a captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps in Italy, Dr Crome won the Military Cross for extraordinary bravery, carrying on working despite heavy enemy fire. He was a valued President of the International Brigade Association for many years, and we are proud to join his family in this commemoration.

Richard Baxell is the historian who has developed and runs the IBMT website. His book, "British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: The British Battalion in the International Brigades, 1936-1939" will be published in February.

Light refreshments will be served, so for catering purposes, please RSVP to Marlene Sidaway, 37 Reginald Road, London E7 9HS; tel: 020-8555 6674 or email: [marlenesidaway@hotmail.com].

## 'The Spanish Civil War: Atrocity and Propaganda'

On Saturday 30 October 2004, an Oxford University day school will present new research into atrocities of the civil war and the propaganda battle for international opinion. The fee is £45 with lunch, £35 without. The fee should be sent to: The Day & Weekend School Office, OUDCE 1 Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JA. Tel: 01865-270368 / 270380.

## 'Spain in the Heart – Songs of the Spanish Civil War'

Steve Johnston has told us about this new CD which is produced by a progressive American company called Appleseed. According to Steve, it is a wonderful compilation of songs from the Spanish

Civil War, including "Jarama Valley" sung by Arlo Guthrie and numerous others by various US and Latin American artists. The inset also tells you about the Abraham Lincoln Battalion.

## Websites dealing with Spanish Civil War songs

Bernard Monaghan has found several websites dealing with songs of the Spanish Civil War:

<http://www.guer.racivil1936.galeon.com/canciones2.htm>

<http://site.voila.fr/espana36/chants/chanlis.htm>

<http://www.altavozdelfrente.tk>

<http://www.ku.edu/carrie/archives/espora-1/2002/05/msg00008.htm>

<http://www.folkways.si.edu/genr1.htm#american>

*Does anyone know of any others?*