



# IBMT Newsletter

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

Issue 30 / Autumn 2011

## INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

### Celebrating the 75th anniversary

October 2011 marks the 75th anniversary of the creation of the International Brigades in Spain to fight the fascist-backed military revolt against the Spanish Republic.

Events will be held in London and Spain to commemorate the anniversary, with the IBMT holding its Annual General Meeting (AGM) in the capital on 1 October as part of a weekend of activities. Later in the month many IBMT members from Britain, Ireland and around the world will travel to Spain for events centred on Madrid, Albacete – where the International Brigades were based at the start of the Spanish Civil War – and Barcelona.

The outbreak of the war in July 1936 was remembered at this year's annual commemoration at the International Brigade memorial in London's Jubilee Gardens on 2 July. Two veterans, David Lomon and Thomas Watters, took centre stage at the gathering, which drew a crowd of more than 500 people.

Lomon also plans to go to Madrid for the unveiling on 22 October of a memorial to the International Brigades in the University City campus that was a crucial battlefield in the early stages of the civil war.

The IBMT's AGM in London on 1 October has been timed to coincide with 75th anniversary events on the following day to remember the Battle of Cable Street.

It was on 4 October 1936 that the people of London's East End prevented the police from clearing a way for fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley's antisemitic Blackshirts to march through their streets. Demonstrators at Cable Street adopted the slogan used by the defenders of Madrid, "They shall not pass" – "No pasarán", and several of them afterwards joined the International Brigades.

Although many anti-fascist volunteers had already arrived in Spain after Franco and other army generals launched their coup on 18 July



1936, the first International Brigade – the mainly German-speaking XI Brigade – was not formally created until 22 October of that year.

The International Brigades rallied over 35,000 people from more than 50 countries to the anti-fascist cause. Some 2,500 of them came from the British Isles, of whom nearly 530 died in Spain.

For details of the IBMT Annual General Meeting on 1 October and 75th anniversary events in London that weekend, see page 14. Report of Jubilee Gardens commemoration: page 4.

**POSTER:** This 75th anniversary poster is on sale for £10 (A3 size) or £5 (A4) and can be ordered from IBMT Merchandise Officer Chris Hall, 286 Brantingham Road, Manchester M21 0QU. Designed by Sheffield-based artist Martin Bedford, who is famous for his music posters for artists such as Patti Smith, Echo & The Bunnymen and Richard Hawley, the poster is printed on heavy art paper, making it ideal for framing. Send orders with cheques payable to the IBMT and add £3 for p&p.

*Keeping alive the memory and spirit of the men and women who volunteered to defend democracy in Spain from 1936 to 1939*

## International Brigade Memorial Trust

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

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*Membership applications, renewals and queries should be sent to Membership Secretary Mary Greening. All other correspondence should go to Secretary Jim Jump.*

*Annual membership rates are £15 standard; £7.50 for concessions; £20 family (single household); affiliating organisations by arrangement. Further details and forms are available from the Membership Secretary.*

## IBMT NEWSLETTER

*The IBMT Newsletter is published three times a year and is sent free to all members. Back numbers can be downloaded from the IBMT website on [www.international-brigades.org.uk/newsletter.htm]. Send all items for the next issue to the Editor by 30 November 2011 at the latest.*

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By Jim Jump



**GRABBED:** Charlie Goodman, who afterwards joined the International Brigades, being arrested during the Battle of Cable Street on 4 October 1936. See "Heady days".

### Heady days

With this year marking the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street and the creation of the International Brigades, London's Royal Court Theatre is to be applauded for reviving Arnold Wesker's "Chicken Soup with Barley" in June and July. First performed in 1958, the play charts the disintegration of a radical Jewish East End family in the two decades following 1936. The action opens with the Battle of Cable Street raging outside the Kahns' house and with daughter Ada's boyfriend Dave about to leave for Spain to join the International Brigades. The subsequent falling-out among family members is matched by the growing political disenchantment felt by many, though not all, of them. There are plenty of name-calls of International Brigade volunteers, including Nat Cohen, Sam Masters, Sid Avner, Lorimer Birch, Felicia Browne, Ronny Symes and Steve Yates. A bit of poetic licence is exercised when the death of poet John Cornford is pronounced a good two months before the actual event on 28 December 1936. But no-one should really mind, with Wesker's play brilliantly recreating what must have been such heady times for anti-fascists in October 1936. See page 14 for details of Battle of Cable Street anniversary events in London on 2 October, including an IBMT-supported march and rally.

### My dad, a hero

Several members contacted the IBMT on Father's Day on 19 June to draw attention to a touching piece in the previous day's edition of *The Guardian* in which 20 children wrote about their relationship with their father. One contribution was from the daughter of an International Brigader, Julie Norton, whose piece started: "You



died suddenly, aged only 58, leaving me no time to say sorry." After recounting how she would hide the *Morning Star* and his false arm from her friends, she

**CUTTING:** Help us identify this Brigader, pictured in *The Guardian*.

added: "I was too young and self-absorbed to appreciate that you actually were a hero, a veteran of the Spanish Civil War." We learnt too that his arm was amputated in a Franco prisoner-of-war camp – but there are no more clues to the identity of the father. Can any readers help?

### Roll of honour

Also in *The Guardian*, there was a splendid editorial about the International Brigades on 29 June. It was prompted by the release online that week by The National Archives of MI5's list of some 4,000 individuals suspected of wanting to join the International Brigades (see page 9). Headed "In praise of... those who fought for Spain", it concluded: "More than 500 people from these islands died for Spain in those three years [1936-39] – more than have died in Afghanistan in nearly a decade. The names of the dead have long been collected together on the International Brigade Memorial Trust website. Now, thanks to a liberal gesture by the security service, the dead and their comrades who survived have been reunited in this much longer list, an enduring roll call of a generation and a company who should be remembered in honour."

### Extraordinary ordinary people

Not to be outdone, the *Daily Mirror's* political editor, Kevin Maguire, wrote in his weekly column, also on 29 June: "Every passing year thins the ranks of the International Brigades... they were ordinary people displaying extraordinary courage, leaving Britain to fight General Franco's Hitler-backed fascist coup. Only a few are famous, such as writers George Orwell and Laurie Lee, and union leader Jack Jones. It's fitting we honour the heroism of volunteers who fought fascism when a Conservative government was appeasing Hitler."

### Clash of dates

We were delighted that Fidel López, the cultural counsellor at the Spanish embassy in London, laid a wreath at our commemoration on 2 July in Jubilee Gardens on London's South Bank. But had it not been for Rafael Nadal reaching the final stages of the Wimbledon tennis championship that same week, the ambassador himself would have been at Jubilee Gardens, we were assured by embassy staff. His Excellency Carles Casajuana had to attend to the various dignitaries that arrived from Spain to watch the Spanish tennis star. We used to hold our commemoration in the middle of July, but this would always clash with the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival, which many of our supporters like to attend. For the same reason we avoid the weekend of the Durham Miners' Gala, which generally falls the week before Tolpuddle. Now we have to compete with Wimbledon!

### 75th anniversary weekend

We had a record turn-out at the July commemoration at Jubilee Gardens, with many new and young faces among the crowd. Let's hope we can repeat this success on our 75th anniversary weekend of 30 September-2 October. See page 14 for the full programme.

## Island plaque to Norwegian volunteers unveiled days before massacre



Just four days before the Utøya island massacre in Norway on 22 July by a right-wing terrorist, a plaque (pictured left) was unveiled on the same island to four Norwegian International Brigade volunteers who died in Spain.

Some of the 69 teenagers shot dead by the Muslim-hating extremist Anders Behring Breivik are said to have attended the unveiling ceremony for the plaque on 18 July.

Located 25 miles north-west of capital city Oslo, the island is the venue for the

Norwegian Labour Party's annual AUF youth summer camp in July.

According to a report of the plaque's unveiling in Spain's *Público* daily newspaper, one of those named on the memorial, Martin Schei, wrote home a few days before being killed at Mediana de Aragón in September 1937.

Predicting the Nazi occupation of Norway, he said: "The loss of this war will not only mean a fascist dictatorship in Spain... but also the victory of fascism in our own country."

## Anniversary crossing of Pyrenees planned for June 2012

By Pauline Fraser

A crossing of the Pyrenees by foot is being organised to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the closing of the border between France and Spain in early 1937. The French government sealed the border under the "non-intervention" pact that denied arms to the Spanish Republic. Afterwards, volunteers were led by night along smugglers' paths to avoid French border guards.

The walk will take place over the double bank holiday weekend in June 2012. Walkers will travel by train to Perpignan on Saturday 2 June (leaving London St Pancras at 9:44am) and return on Tuesday 6 June (arriving 7:03pm). The crossing will be made on the Sunday and there will be a re-dedication of the plaque erected in the Castle of San Fernando in Figueras on the Monday.

The aims of the walk are to commemorate the Brigaders from across Europe who crossed the Pyrenees into Spain and to raise sponsorship money for the IBMT.

The walk will set off from Las Illas, on the GR10 long-distance footpath, crossing the border at Coll de Lli and ending at La Vajol. It can be undertaken by anyone with some experience of hill walking. There are several memorials along the way, where the group will stop to remember the Brigaders, read appropriate poems and extracts from their memoirs and sing their songs.

A group booking will be made for train travel to and from Perpignan. Participants will be given hotel details and will reserve their own accommodation by a deadline agreed with the hotels. Coaches will be booked to take walkers to the start of the walk and to pick them up at the end.

A minibus will also be hired in case anyone is taken ill and to transport those with mobility problems across the Pyrenees.

Anyone interested in taking part should contact Pauline Fraser.  
Email: [pbf262@googlemail.com] or tel: 020-8506 0088.

## Brigader David Lomon at IBMT exhibition



**SALUTE:** Brigade veteran David Lomon (above) was a visitor to the "Antifascistas" exhibition when it was shown over the Easter bank holiday weekend on 22-24 April at Eastbourne's Leaf Hall Community Arts Centre. As is evident from the photo, David greatly enjoyed the experience.

"Gracias de mi corazón" ("heartfelt thanks") was how Seki, a young Spaniard from Burgos, northern Spain, greeted David when he was introduced to him at the exhibition. Another visitor was local LibDem MP Stephen Lloyd. He said the IBMT's exhibition was "a tribute to the bravery of the International Brigades".



# Have our hopes for a better world been dashed?

This is the message sent by Austrian Brigader Gert Hoffman to the AABI Spanish International Brigades friendship group on 7 May – VE Day – the 66th anniversary of the end of the Second World War.

*“Reflecting on the anniversary of the end of the war, I still have the hopes that we had at that time, when we were feeling the great relief of peace finally returned.*

*I have wondered – for decades – whether these hopes were justified. Have we achieved a fairer world? Has the scourge of war disappeared? Have we overcome the arrogant belief in a self-appointed superior race? Those of us who have sacrificed much of our youth to achieve these goals find ourselves disappointed, betrayed by governments that claim to preserve the ideals for which we fought and won the war on 8 May 1945.*



*On the eve of leaving this beautiful world, I want to declare that I have never for a moment lost confidence that our goals were just and that the future of humanity will be socialism.”*

**AMONG FRIENDS:** Brigader Gert Hoffman (centre) surrounded by Spanish youngsters visiting the Nazi concentration camp at Mauthausen in Austria on 5 May, where many Spanish Republicans were killed during the Second World War.

Marshall Mateer



**FLORAL TRIBUTES:** Placed at the Jubilee Gardens memorial and (right) in the hands of veterans David Lomon and Thomas Watters (seated front, from left).

## Music, words and wreaths in Jubilee Gardens to remember the volunteers

A record crowd paid tribute to the British and Irish volunteers of the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War on 2 July at the IBMT’s annual commemoration at the International Brigade memorial in London’s Jubilee Gardens.

There was loud applause from the estimated 500 people present for the two veterans present, David Lomon and Thomas Watters, both of whom laid wreaths on behalf of their departed comrades.

Lomon was captured with other members of the British Battalion during fighting in Aragón in the spring of 1938 and spent six months in the notorious prison camp of San Pedro de Cardeña, near Burgos. Thomas Watters served in the Madrid-based Scottish Ambulance Unit.

Among the wreath-layers was the Spanish embassy’s cultural attaché, Fidel Lopéz, who praised the values of democracy and anti-fascism which had propelled the 2,500 volunteers to Spain 75 years ago. In addition, floral tributes were presented by the Catalan government’s delegation in London, as well as by representatives of refugee, trade union and political groups and several individuals.

There was a strong musical theme to the event, with songs from folk duo na-mara inspired by volunteers Penny Feiwel and George Wheeler and two songs from the cast of the Spanish Civil War musical “Goodbye Barcelona”. The Strawberry Thieves Choir sang the British Battalion’s song, “Valley of Jarama”, and “The Internationale”.

The main speaker was historian Paul Preston, who said it was important to remember the International Brigades because they had been motivated in part by the savagery of the repression unleashed by General Franco against supporters of the Spanish Republic. Many influential parts of Spanish society had still not properly come to terms with those crimes, so it was essential that people were reminded of them.

The Spanish Civil War saw the murder of some



# Praise from Portsmouth duo for ‘Antifascistas’

When the IBMT’s “Antifascistas” exhibition was shown at Portsmouth University library in April in May, it received endorsements from two notable local women: Betty Burton and Joan Hill.

Joan Hill, aged 92, made a point of seeing the exhibition. It brought back memories of working tirelessly with her late husband Fred to raise money for the International Brigades. She has a collection of photographs and other memorabilia from the period, including photos of fundraising posters designed and painted by Fred.

She treasures the memories of the friends and other acquaintances who joined the International Brigades and risked their lives for

the cause, says IBMT member Alan Lloyd, who organised the exhibition’s showing in Portsmouth.

One of the local volunteers recalled by Joan was local dockyard worker Jimmy Moore, who died in a London hospital at the age of 22, two weeks after his return from Spain, as a result of wounds received in battle.

Another Portsmouth woman who welcomed the exhibition was author Betty Burton. One of her novels, “Not Just a Soldier’s War”, traces the experiences of Portsmouth factory worker and union activist Lu Wilmott, as she joins the struggle taking place in Spain against the fascist dictatorship.



**SUPPORTERS:** Betty Burton (above) and Joan Hill (left) holding a woodcut of an internment camp for Spanish Republicans in France.

Betty said: “It is important we remember the heroic role many ordinary men and women from our country played in the fight against fascism in the period leading up to the outbreak of the Second World War. I very much welcome the work being done by the International Brigade Memorial

Trust to remind us of this legacy.”

The IBMT’s exhibition chronicles the experiences of the 2,500 British and Irish volunteers who risked their lives to fight against fascism in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39 as part the International Brigades. More than 525 of them did not return.

200,000 Republican supporters, including thousands of school-teachers and trade union leaders, said Preston. A further 100,000 died from neglect and mistreatment in Franco’s prisons and concentration camps – which held a million Spaniards after the war.

In Spain today there had been no proper coming to terms with these crimes, Preston added. This demonstrated how effective had been Franco’s indoctrination of many Spaniards. The result was that the only person to have been processed judicially as a result of these crimes was Baltasar Garzón – the judge who tried to open an investigation into them.

From the Spanish International Brigades friendship group AABI, Isabel Pinar said she hoped that the anti-fascist fighters of the 1930s would inspire young people today to fight for liberty, equality and justice. This was especially important now, with many rights under threat that had taken generations of struggle to achieve.

The event was followed by a social at the nearby Camel & Artichoke, where there were more songs from “Goodbye Barcelona” and the IBMT’s exhibition “Antifascistas” was on display.

See [[www.na-mara.com](http://www.na-mara.com)], [[www.goodbyebarcelona.com](http://www.goodbyebarcelona.com)] and [[www.strawberrythieveschoir.org.uk](http://www.strawberrythieveschoir.org.uk)].

## Women’s tribute to cave medics

A further tribute has been made to the International Brigade medical services in the mountains of the Priorat, Catalonia. Members of Ca La Dona, a feminist group from Barcelona, visited the cave near La Bisbal de Falset to see for themselves one of the places where British and

other foreign doctors and nurses had worked alongside Republican medical staff during the Battle of the Ebro in 1938.

The cave is now becoming well known for its role during the civil war as a hospital where, despite the shortages of medical supplies and equipment, many lives were saved thanks to improved surgical practices and newly developed techniques of blood transfusion.

Ca La Dona was founded in 1988 to campaign for women’s rights following the long years of repression under Franco’s dictatorship.

On 7 May this year, 55 members made the coach trip to the cave on their annual excursion to celebrate Women’s Day. After a talk given by Angela Jackson, author of several books relating to the subject of women during the Spanish Civil War, the audience gave a rousing rendition of the anthem of their movement – in the words of their song, aiming to make their demands for freedom and equality heard all around the world.

To commemorate the work of nurses like Patience Darton who had struggled to save the

lives of injured soldiers and civilians in the cave, Montse Cervera Rodón and Antònia Pallach i Estela presented a plaque on behalf of Ca La Dona to the mayor of the village. It will be placed alongside the one inaugurated in 2009 by British IBMT members. The inscription of the new plaque reads: “In memory of the International Brigade nurses who worked here in this cave hospital and in recognition of the part they played in defence of the Spanish Republic, liberty, democracy and dignity. We will always remember you. –Feminists of Ca La Dona, 7 May 2011.”

## Named after Lilian Urmston

A meeting room at the Liverpool offices of the PCS public sector workers’ union has been named after Lillian Urmston (right), a nurse from Stalybridge, Greater Manchester, who in 1937 joined the International Brigades.



The dedication by the union’s general secretary Mark Serwotka and president Janice Godrich took place on 27 April on the third floor of Jack Jones House – a building also named after a Brigader – that PCS shares with Unite the Union.

Peter Middleman, PCS regional secretary said: “The heroic sacrifice of the International Brigades is well known – indeed the local men who fell there are honoured on a plaque in this building’s reception – so we’re delighted to be able to recognise the contribution of Lillian, and women like her, who fought fascism at home and abroad throughout the last century.”



**NEW PLAQUE:** Angela Jackson (right) with Antònia Pallach i Estela from Ca La Dona. The IBMT plaque can be seen on the left.

# Nathan Clark

By Jim Jump

Nathan Clark, the great-grandson of the co-founder of the Clarks shoe firm and an ambulance driver in the Spanish Civil War, died on 23 June, aged 94. Based on his wartime experiences in Spain and later Burma, he created the world-famous desert boot.

Designed in 1949, the soft-soled suede boot has remained a best-seller for Clarks since it first went on sale in the US in the



1950s and then in Britain in the 1960s, when it became popular among mods and radical students. An estimated 12 million pairs have been sold.

It was in Spain that Nathan noticed that the ankle-laced, jute rope-soled *alpargatas*

(espadrilles), commonly worn by Spanish peasants, were favoured by Republican soldiers for agility and comfort over the standard army boot.

Then, while serving with the Royal Army Service Corps in Burma, he was interested to see that several British officers of the Eighth Army similarly preferred wearing rough suede boots with crepe soles that had been made especially for them by cobblers in Cairo's Old Bazaar.

Clark was born in Street, Somerset, in 1916. In tune with the Quaker and radical traditions of his family, he received an unorthodox education at the Odenwaldschule boarding school in southern Hesse, Germany, where pupils were allowed a say in how the school was run. Leaving in 1933, he went on to Queen's College, Oxford, and following graduation decided to volunteer to be an ambulance driver for the Spanish Republic instead of joining the family business. He left for Spain in May 1937 as a member of the Spanish Medical Aid Committee and served until his return to England in September 1938.

Reports say he was cool and calm in action and drove his ambulance in many hectic situations. He served for part of the time as head of transport at the International Brigade hospital at Huete, in the province of Cuenca.

After the Second World War Clark worked for the family shoe business before leaving the company in 1951, though he carried on advising the firm on shoe designs. He later settled in New York.



**FOR GEORGE BROWN:** Participants at the fourth annual George Brown Commemoration Weekend at Inistioge, Co Kilkenny, on 24/25 June included (from left, holding flag) Labour Party presidential candidate Michael D Higgins, Unite Ireland

Secretary Jimmy Kelly and Sean Garland, former leader of the Workers' Party. The event is named after the Inistioge-born political commissar of the British Battalion who was killed at the Battle of Brunete in July 1937. Speakers included IBMT Ireland

Secretary Manus O'Riordan, whose talk was titled "In Defence of Two Republics" about the four volunteers from Co Kilkenny. IBMT activist Harry Owens spoke on the subject "The Catholic Church and the Spanish Civil War".



**MANCHESTER MEMORIAL:** Lord Mayor of Manchester Harry Lyons with IBMT Chair Dolores Long (left) and Executive Committee member Hilary Jones beside the International Brigade memorial inside Manchester Town Hall. The Lord Mayor attended a concert on 11 July to honour the men and women of the city who served in Spain. On 16 July a commemoration was also held at the memorial.



**WHERE'S THE ENEMY?** To mark the 75th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War, members of the La Columna Spanish Civil War re-enactment group staged a depiction of the arrival of volunteers in Barcelona at the English Heritage Festival of History at Kelmarsh Hall, Northamptonshire on 16/17 July.



**PLAQUE FOR KIWI:** Spanish ambassador in New Zealand Marcos Gómez and Wellington mayor Celia Wade-Brown unveiled a memorial in May to the New Zealanders who served in the International Brigades.

The plaque (pictured right) will be placed on a seawall of Frank Kitts Park on the Wellington waterfront. The mayor and the ambassador are

holding the book "Kiwi Compañeros – New Zealand and the Spanish Civil War" and a 1939 poster for a public meeting commemorating the New Zealanders who died in Spain.

Gómez said that until he came to New Zealand he didn't know that the country had sent volunteers to his homeland during its civil war. The memorial, he said, would thank them

for defending democracy in Spain.

Among guests at the unveiling were the family of Jim Hoy, who fought with the British Battalion and later spent many years working on the Wellington wharves. The New Zealand volunteers included surgeon Doug Jolly, nurse René Shadbolt, fighter pilot Eric Griffiths and mathematician Griff McLauren.



# ‘Neither Orange nor Green but Red’



A unique cross-community event took place in Thorndyke Street in the heart of Loyalist East Belfast on 17 April, when a plaque was unveiled at the birthplace of International Brigade volunteer William “Liam” Tumlinson (left), who died in the Battle of the Ebro in 1938.

The plaque and ceremony were arranged by the Lower Castlereagh Community Group and Teach na Failte with the help of local historian and author John Quinn.

Organisers pointed out that Tumlinson was typical of the Irish volunteers who crossed not just borders but also the denominational differences of the city of Belfast, united by socialism and their determination to defeat fascism.

In attendance at the unveiling were local MLA (Member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly) and former Progressive Unionist Party leader Dawn Purvis and representatives of Loyalist and Republican ex-prisoners groups and East Belfast community groups.

More information and photos: [<http://hubpages.com/hub/International-Brigade-Volunteer-Liam-Tumlinson-Plaque-Unveiling>].

## Remembering ‘Tom Spain’

Welsh International Brigader Tom Jones, better known as Twm Sbaen (Tom Spain), was honoured at a ceremony at the Cymru Cuba stand at the National Eisteddfod at Wrexham on 4 August.

Twm worked for 14 years as a miner in Hafod, Vauxhall and Bersham collieries, near Wrexham. In 1937 he joined the British Anti-Tank Battery in Spain. During the Battle of the Ebro in July 1938 he was badly wounded in the right arm.

His family believed him dead, but he was among prisoners kept in harrowing conditions in Franco’s jails. At one point he was sentenced to death, though this was later commuted to 30 years’ imprisonment. He was released in 1940 and returned to Wales. He became a full-time officer with the Transport & General Workers’ Union, eventually becoming its Wales Secretary until his retirement in 1973.



Panel on the life of Tom Jones displayed at this year’s National Eisteddfod.



DE MADRUGADA ENSEMBLE: Playing new compositions at the concert in London.

## Music for defenders of the Republic

By Michael Chant

*E’ en as the sweetest note is born of pain,  
So shall the song of songs be born in Spain.*

– TE Nicholas

To mark the anniversary of the commencement of the Spanish Civil War and to celebrate the heroes of the Spanish Republic and of the International Brigades, a concert of music, film and poetry was held at the historic Bridewell Hall in central London on 16 July.

The music was specially written for the occasion, while two new films had been authored by Stuart Monro. Marlene Sidaway, IBMT President, read poems by David Marshall. Some of them formed the narrative to the film “The Planet Tilts”, a tribute to the International Brigaders. A banner “¡No Pasarán!” was displayed at the front of the hall.

The short opening film “In the Dawn” combined images of the fallen of the International Brigades with the hills around the Ebro river, set to the song “De Madrugada” sung by the late communist composer Cornelius Cardew accompanied by People’s Liberation Music. It

set the scene, epitomised by its closing lyrics: “And a backward glance will tell us who we were/And today in the battle, who we are.”

A composition for piano by John White reflected the systematic destruction of Guernica, followed by a quiet, sustained reflection on the devastation. The piano work by Robert Coleridge was deeply influenced by the content of poems by John Cornford.

The concert included two substantial works for the De Madrugada Ensemble. The vivid “Tomorrow’s Seed” by Hugh Shrapnel expresses in music the lines by Langston Hughes: “The mighty roots of liberty/Push upward in the dark/To burst in flame”.

My own work, “The Song of Songs”, took its inspiration from the poem by TE Nicholas, rendering it into music twice to begin and end the concert. It moves from the images of war to the necessity and inevitability of the final victory of the anti-fascist forces, symbolised by the melody of “De Madrugada” emerging in triumph to conclude the concert.

A DVD of the concert is available from Stuart Monro, price £6 including p&p. Email: [[s.monro@ntlworld.com](mailto:s.monro@ntlworld.com)].

## In brief...

● A memorial to the International Brigade volunteers from **Dunbartonshire** is to be unveiled on 27 August in front of MA Centre, Main Street, Renton G82 4LY. For more information go to [[www.renton-cdt.org.uk/date-of-memorial-unveiling](http://www.renton-cdt.org.uk/date-of-memorial-unveiling)].

● A series of events was hosted by the South Wales Miners’ Library in **Swansea** on 16 July to mark the 75th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War. There was a screening of “Return Journey” about Welsh Brigader Alun Menai Williams revisiting the Ebro battlefields. Afterwards lectures were given by Dr Martin Hurcombe and Dr Stephen McVeigh respectively on French intellectuals and the Spanish Civil War and on the role of British and US writers in the

war. This was followed by a rededication of the library’s memorial plaque to the Welsh volunteers who died in Spain. Dr Hywel Francis talked about its history and IBMT Membership Secretary Mary Greening spoke about the work of the trust. Dr Julian Tudor Hart urged people not just to dwell on the past but to look at what lessons could be taken from past events and translated into fighting fascism now and in the future.

● The recently formed Peter Daly Society Wexford will unveil a memorial stone to the socialist republican **Peter Daly** in Monageer (Enniscorthy) Co Wexford on 3 September. Daly died while serving with the International Brigade in Spain in September 1937. For further information about the aims of the society, contact Steve McCann; tel: +353(0)87 413 2560.



Above: Cutting (left) from the letters page of the *Morning Star* of 29 July 2011, which refers to an initiative by sculptor Frank Casey to raise a memorial to the crews of British ships who died during the Spanish Civil War. This was also reported (right) in the June issue of the *Telegraph*, journal of the merchant navy officers' union Nautilus International.

Right: John Harnor (left) with crew mate Sam on the *Sea Glory* in Cartagena in spring 1938.



By Jim Jump

It's worth remembering that it wasn't only International Brigaders from the British Isles who faced danger during the Spanish Civil War: many merchant seamen lost their lives when their ships were attacked as they made for Spanish Republican ports or while they were in port.

Among the seamen who survived the bombs and shells is John Harnor, of Romford, Essex. Now aged 90, he still has vivid memories of a trip he made to Cartagena and Valencia early in 1938 on board the 1,964-ton *Sea Glory*, owned by Dover Navigation. It was a period in the war when attacks were especially intense and Republican ports were facing regular bombardment.

Most attacks were carried out by Mussolini's planes, warships and submarines sent to help Franco's military rebellion, though, farcically, Italian vessels were at the same time patrolling Spain's Mediterranean coastline to enforce the international non-intervention agreement.

Scores of British ships were attacked, underlining the humiliation that the British government was willing to endure in supporting the non-intervention policy that was skewed to disadvantage the Republic.

John and the rest of the crew set sail from Antwerp in the spring of 1938. The *Sea Glory* had loaded grain from the quayside as well as mysterious boxes in no.1 hold that were taken on from a barge close under the port bow.

The ship called at Gibraltar before proceeding to Cartagena. One early incident sticks in Harnor's mind. "During the night, I was at the wheel," he recalls. "A very large ship was seen ahead coming our way. It was the Italian liner *Rex*. According to the rules of the road, she should have put her helm to starboard so we would have passed 'red to red'. She didn't bother; I had to turn to port as she passed us on our starboard side, about 200 yards away. Even though we were fully loaded her wake made us move about quite a bit. I wonder whether it was ever reported."

That same night the crew observed many flash-

## John Harnor: a merchant seaman in the civil war

es, followed by loud bangs. The bosun, a former Royal Navy man, said it was a naval gun battle. "Next morning, we steamed through quite a lot of wreckage, mostly smashed wood, some grey, some white. Although we slowed and looked carefully there were no signs of bodies."

Harnor continues: "In the early dawn we approached Cartagena, when there was a roar and a heavy burst of machine-gun fire. A navy launch hailed us and then gave us permission to proceed. According to our Spanish navy guard who came on board in harbour, Franco's navy, including cruisers, had tried to attack the port in the night. But the government's navy had had a

***"The mysterious boxes were unloaded and turned out to contain naval gun barrels."***

patrol out and surprised the Franco vessels from the seaward side and inflicted a lot of damage."

The government's ships looked very smart, thought Harnor. They included the *Libertad* and the *Admirante Méndez Núñez*. The British crew noted too that the port's shore defences included ex Royal Navy 15-inch guns.

The mysterious boxes in no.1 hold were unloaded and turned out to contain naval gun barrels. "We were fêted for this and given a bottle of wine in each hand," remembers John.

The ship then set sail for Valencia, where, says Harnor, "things were bad". Many ships were anchored off, waiting to get into the bomb-damaged docks. The *Sea Glory* waited for several days, with food running low, until *HMS Hood* arrived. John and some of the crew went over in a

leaky jolly boat for some provisions: "The Navy did us proud."

When it finally docked in Valencia, in April 1938, the *Sea Glory* had to be laid up for repairs so, for their own safety from bombs, the crew were temporarily discharged from the ship. They travelled around the city by tram. "Sometimes during an air-raid a bomb would hit a building up in front of us; it would bulge out and collapse into the street; there was much screaming and the police kept us away."

"This was all more than 70 years ago, so some of my memories are very hazy," admits Harnor. But he says that he recalls that three of the crew, including himself, met up with three International Brigaders who had been wounded and wanted to return to the British Battalion. The six of them travelled north by tram, coach and lorry to the front and made contact with a British unit of around 15 men with French machine-guns overlooking a valley separating them from Franco's and Mussolini's troops. He stayed there for three nights before the seamen had to return to their ship.

John notes that the *Sea Glory* might have survived the bombs and torpedos of the Spanish Civil War, but was sunk in the Atlantic on 7 July 1940, by a German U-boat with the loss of 29 lives.

A report published by the Spanish embassy in London in 1938 calculated that, between July 1936 and June 1938, 13 British merchant ships were sunk by enemy action, 51 others were bombed from the air, two were mined, five were attacked by submarines and 23 seized or detained by Franco's forces. According to Rafael González Etchegaray in "La Marina Mercante y el tráfico marítimo en la Guerra Civil" (Madrid, 1977), 29 British ships were wrecked or lost during the Spanish Civil War.



# Have we underestimated the number of volunteers?

**RICHARD BAXELL** examines MI5's list of 4,000 individuals suspected by the security services of travelling to Spain to join the International Brigades.

“MI5 list reveals 4,000 Britons joined the fight against fascism in 1930s Spanish Civil War, almost double previous estimates”, ran the headline in the *Daily Mail* on 28 June. You might have thought, given the paper's history, that “fascism” would have been spelt correctly, but never mind; it is certainly a step forward when the volunteers are referred to as fighters against fascism, rather than mercenaries or the “dupes of Moscow”, as they were at the time.

The digitised records to which the *Daily Mail* was referring had shrewdly been released by The National Archives to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the war in July 1936. Amongst the files, the key document is a list of names of 4,000 people believed by the security services to be heading for Spain. However, the index cards and other related files actually form the majority of the collection and contain much more detail. All remain free to access at The National Archives in Kew.

The national media were quick to pick up on the release of the digital files, with pieces on Radio 4's prestigious Today programme, Channel 4 News and in the national press. The files have since proved to be The National Archives' most success-

ful digital release of all time, with 1,800 downloads on the first day alone.

While these files reveal much, they do not, as some have claimed, mean that historians have previously underestimated the number of volunteers. Lists already exist in London, Moscow and, of course, Spain, which have been thoroughly pored over, and there is a wide consensus on a figure of around 2,500 British and Irish volunteers. As Tom Buchanan pointed out in *The Guardian*, the missing “phantom regiment” of 1,500 includes writers, journalists and other visitors to Spain, plus a number who never fought, such as, for example, James Conlon, who left Dover on 24 April 1937, but returned home only six days later.

What the files do show are the efforts made by MI5 to keep tabs on suspected volunteers; however, conversely, they also reveal how ineffective these efforts actually were. A number of volunteers were missed and, threats aside, there was

**“There is a wide consensus on a figure of around 2,500 British and Irish volunteers.”**

The National Archives



**SECRET:** Extract from MI5's list of 4,000 “volunteers”.

little the security services could actually do about it, despite the government's attempt to invoke the obscure Foreign Enlistment Act.

Even these 4,000 men and women were just a small proportion of the huge number in Britain who supported the democratically elected Republic in its fight against Franco and his fascist and Nazi backers. And what this summer's furore over the release of The National Archives' documents demonstrates, above all, is that the cause – and the story of the 2,500 volunteers from Britain and Ireland who fought for it – is one which still resonates powerfully today.

## CAN YOU HELP?

● Historian Linda Palfreeman is trying to find out about a children's colony run by Nancy and Archie Johnstone in their hotel in **Tossa de Mar**, Catalonia, during the Spanish Civil War. Contact [[linda.palfreeman@gmail.com](mailto:linda.palfreeman@gmail.com)].

● Film-maker Michelle Mason from Vancouver is researching her grandfather's service in Spain with the Canadian MacKenzie-Papineau Battalion. She is trying to track down a painting of the **Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse**, with Hitler, Mussolini, Death and Mars as the horsemen, that hung on the side of the church of Tarazona de la Mancha, where the battalion was based. Does anyone have a copy of the image? Contact : [[cypress-park@shaw.ca](mailto:cypress-park@shaw.ca)].

● Diana Suan Juan is trying to find out more about her grandmother, Matilde Zarate Ajuria, who settled in Liverpool in 1905/6 and was active in pro-Republican circles during the Spanish Civil War under her married name of **Matilde San Juan**. Diana's father recalls her giving speeches at rallies at the Philharmonic Hall and Picton Hall and on at least one occasion she led a march from Islington Square, carrying the Spanish Republican flag. Matilde was born in Villoslada en Cameros, near Logroño, in 1886 and died in Liverpool in 1959. Contact: [[diana.sanjuan@btinternet.com](mailto:diana.sanjuan@btinternet.com)].

## In search of Felicia Browne

By Geoff Lawes

August marked the 75th anniversary of the death of the first British combatant in the Spanish Civil War, Felicia Browne. There is some vagueness about the precise day of her death, but the only eyewitness account suggests it was 22 August 1936. Browne was an artist and she was also the only British woman to serve as a combatant.

I have been researching her life and discovered a website run by Ian Bone which carries a passport photograph of Felicia from 1931 (top right). This photograph was from her MI5 file. On the SBHAC Spanish Civil War website (in Spanish) there is a photograph (labelled: 29.1.13) of an unknown young militia woman (right) on the Aragón front, who looks like the passport photo of Felicia Browne. There is an excellent book by Tom Buchanan called “The Impact of the Spanish Civil War on Britain: War, Loss and Memory”, which tells the story of Felicia Browne. Google Books reproduces the Felicia Browne chapter in its entirety.

If anyone knows more or discovers more, I would appreciate it if they shared the information with me.

Email: [[geoff@lawes223.karoo.co.uk](mailto:geoff@lawes223.karoo.co.uk)]. Ian Bone website: [<http://ianbone.wordpress.com/2009/09/15/felicia-browne-only-photo-of-spanish-civil-war-fighter>]. SBHAC website: [[www.sbhac.net/Republica/Imagenes/Armas/Infanteria/Armas01.htm](http://www.sbhac.net/Republica/Imagenes/Armas/Infanteria/Armas01.htm)]. Google Books: [<http://books.google.com>].



Recent years have seen a remarkable out-pouring of fiction from Spain and Britain dealing with events and themes connected with the Spanish Civil War. One such novel, “The Sleeping Voice” by Dulce Chacón\*, is strongly recommended by London IBMT member JUDITH CRAVITZ. Here she explains why.

## Franco’s women victims break their silence



Dulce Chacón was the daughter of a Francoist mayor and grew up knowing, like most Spaniards, little about their recent past. When Franco died, the transition to democracy was achieved at great cost: a pact to “forget” the past. But as the survivors grew older they possibly began to think they had little to lose, and stories began to be told. Chacón started to look for these survivors – women in particular – to persuade them to speak out. Even 10 years after Franco’s death, many of them remained too terrified to tell their stories. Chacón said that “for many the civil war has not really ended”, because the older generation still would not speak.

The book is based on real events and people. It begins in 1939 as Franco celebrates his dominance over Spain. It tells of the women prisoners, the women who lost the war, and suffered possibly more than the men, learning to keep silent or speak only in whispers – their “sleeping voice”. Their jailers were often nuns, who were more cruel than anyone else, withholding food and medical treatment particularly from women who continued to reject religious coercion.

Hortensia, the central character, awaits the birth of her child, after which she knows she will be executed. Around her, her fellow prisoners take care of her and each other as best they can. Outside in the world, a network of supporters, still fighting the dictatorship, arranges visits to bring food and hope to the prisoners. A frequent punishment is to deprive the prisoners of their visits. This is graphically described – many people can make the journey only once or twice a year, so to be denied entry is a disaster. Furthermore, visitors must be relatives, so at least one prisoner, Tomasa, all of whose family have been murdered, has no visits. But the women will support her and share whatever gifts they receive.

We see the fighters who refuse to surren-

der and hold out against the dictatorship for years on end, many having to leave the country and try to interest the world in a largely forgotten war. When they are finally captured, they spend more than 20 years in prison, constantly at risk of being shot. On release, the prisoners are subjected to draconian controls, curfews, and notably imprisonment on May Day to prevent them taking part in anti-government demonstrations. Interestingly, this continued into 1976, after Franco’s death, and possibly later.

Chacón has a long list of people to thank, some by name and many only by implication,

***“Hortensia, the central character, awaits the birth of her child, after which she knows she will be executed.***

***Around her, her fellow prisoners take care of her and each other as best they can.”***

since they are still afraid to be named. For them the terror is still there; families are still divided, and many victims still seek justice.

This book is possibly the most harrowing I have read, the more because it depicts the dilemmas faced daily by the protagonists of the Spanish struggle. The choices that have to be made by fighters risking not only their own lives, but those of families and comrades, are graphically told. For those who told their stories, there is no happy ending.

\* “The Sleeping Voice” by Dulce Chacón (translated by Nick Caistor) is published by Harvill Secker; London, 2006 (£12.99).

## Jarama’s Suicide Hill was not named in vain

“They Shall Not Pass! The British Battalion at Jarama, the Spanish Civil War” by Ben Hughes; £20 (Osprey Publishing; Oxford, 2011)

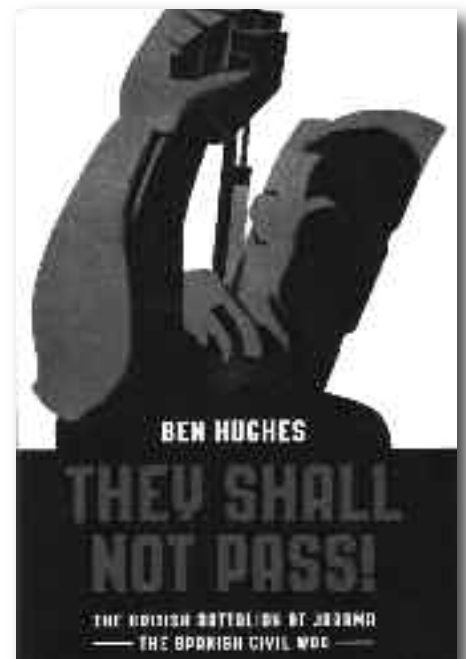
Reviewed by Richard Baxell

The Battle of Jarama in February 1937, the first action of the British Battalion in the Spanish Civil War, provided a brutal wake-up call both for the volunteers themselves and the British Communist Party, which had recruited them. During three days of bitter and sustained fighting, the 600 poorly-trained, ill-equipped “city-bred young men” were attacked by an overwhelming force, comprising the cream of Franco’s professional army, backed up by German armour.

That the British Battalion managed to hold the line – just – was a feat both of stubborn defiance and astonishing bravery. But the cost was substantial. After the three days of fighting of 12–14 February, less than half the Battalion remained; Suicide Hill was not named in vain.

Ben Hughes’s new study places the Battle of Jarama at the centre of the story of the British and Irish in Spain. Drawing on the numerous memoirs, both published and held in archives around the world, “They Shall Not Pass!” successfully weaves the volunteers’ accounts together, contextualising them within a clear narrative. This is a satisfyingly well-written account which tells the story – often horrifying – with verve and understanding.

Divided into three parts, the book’s scope actually extends beyond Jarama, though the main





**AT THE “ENGLISH HOSPITAL”:** New Zealand nurses, from left: Isobel Dodds, René Shadbolt and Millicent Sharples, who served at the International Brigade hospital at Huete, near Cuenca, are pictured in a new history in Spanish of what was known as the “English Hospital” during the Spanish Civil War. Written by local historian Manuel Olarte Madero and bringing together many photos from 1937 when the hospital was in service, “El ‘Hospital Inglés’ de Huete” offers a detailed account of how the hospital operated, its main protagonists and its relations with the local

community. Publication of the book last year by the Huete local council, the Cuenca provincial authority and local UNED University is a sign of growing interest in the network of International Brigade hospitals that operated in the area, including establishments at Tarancón, Uclés and Castillejo.

A group of local historians in Spain have set up a contact group for people interested in researching the Spanish Republic’s wartime medical services. To find out more, contact Ernesto Viñas on [evcos37@yahoo.es] or [bruneteenlamemoria@bruneteenlamemoria.com].

focus of the book is, of course, the battle itself. Part one begins with a chapter to set the scene, before two chapters briefly sketch out the volunteers’ journeys to Spain and the hurried and limited attempts to transform their political will into military skill. Hughes then returns to the Jarama Valley, concluding his first section at lunchtime on 12 February 1937, with the battalion under attack, but dug in, still determined that the fascists will not pass.

In the second and crucial section of the book, Hughes reveals how the naïve optimism of the

**“...the naïve optimism of the novice volunteer soldiers was violently shattered...”**

novice volunteer soldiers was violently shattered by the terrifying onslaught of Franco’s elite troops of the Army of Africa. Ten graphic chapters provide “a micro history” of the battle, almost forensic in the attention to detail. Hughes has clearly spent considerable time on his primary research here and the work certainly pays off. The events are recounted from, in Hughes words, “a worm’s eye point of view”, which provides the reader with an understanding of how shocking the experiences of the Jarama battle – and the war in Spain for that matter – really were for the volunteers.

The third and final part of the book provides an account of the experiences of the British and Irish volunteers from the Battle of Brunete of July 1937, through to their return to Britain at the end of 1938. Unfortunately, this section is somewhat of a disappointment, perhaps because the previous sections have set such a high standard. Increasingly reliant on secondary sources, it offers nothing like the level of detail of the earlier chapters and is correspondingly less original and informative.

Interest picks up again in the epilogue, which brings the account up to the present day, revealing what happened to the veterans of Jarama during the Second World War and thereafter. For example, the later lives of the three commanders of the battalion at Jarama, Tom Wintringham, Jock Cunningham and Fred

Copeman, certainly make interesting reading.

The book also benefits from two useful appendices, including directions to help locate the actual site of the February battle. There is a thorough index and copious footnotes, both of which should prove valuable for researchers. The maps are very clear and other good touches are the brief biographies of the *dramatis personae* and the numerous photographs, including a number of colour pictures of Jarama features such as the sunken road and “the knoll” in the present day.

There are, of course, a few areas where the reader may disagree with Hughes’s approach or conclusions – I think that he overestimates the casualty rates at Jarama, for example – and there are a number of oversights and little errors, inevitable in a book of this scope and probably only apparent or of interest to the specialist. Most, though, do not detract from what, I think, is one of the best recent additions to the collection of studies of the brave group of British and Irish volunteers who fought in the Spanish Civil War.

**“English Captain”, the long out-of-print biography of the British Battalion commander at the Battle of Jarama, Tom Wintringham, is to be re-published by Faber & Faber. See [www.faber.co.uk/work/english-captain].**

## Sanctuary in Wales

**“Fleeing Franco: How Wales Gave Shelter to Refugee Children from the Basque Country during the Spanish Civil War” by Hywel Davies; £14.99 (University of Wales Press; Cardiff, 2011)**



Reviewed by Jim Jump

The people of Wales offered a remarkable level of support to Republican Spain during the civil war of 1936-39. Not only did more than 170 Welsh men and women join the International Brigades – the vast majority of them miners – but there was a groundswell of support for the Aid Spain movement.

Help for the Republic crossed many social and

political boundaries, but the role of the South Wales Miners’ Federation was pivotal, as this admirable study by Hywel Davies demonstrates. Indeed, the union was the driving force behind the mobilisation of public sympathy and efforts in Wales to care for the Basque refugee children who came to Britain in May 1937.

The 4,000 children arrived in Southampton during Franco’s brutal offensive against the pro-Republican Basque enclave in northern Spain. Public concern had already been aroused by reports of the bombing of Guernica by German and Italian planes. The children were dispersed to “colonies” around Britain that depended entirely on financial and practical help from local communities. The British government had only reluctantly allowed the refugees to enter the country, and on condition that no public funds should be spent on them. So everything, from shelter to education, was provided by volunteers.

Four such colonies were established in Wales, at Swansea, Old Colwyn, Caerleon and Brechfa (Carmarthen). Each is studied in detail by Davies, and there is perhaps a surprising amount of drama, including a notorious incident at the remote Brechfa colony in the summer of 1937 when a group of boys engaged in a bout of stone-throwing vandalism. A hostile press seized on the occurrence. A *Daily Mail* editorial demanded that the “Basque terrors” should be transferred. Even the *New York Times* reported “rioting”, when in fact there had been a disturbance involving about 20 boys.

The hysterical reaction of much of the press underlined the highly charged political context in which the Basque children were cared for. Hostility to the children and immediate calls for their repatriation after Bilbao fell to Franco came from those quarters that were most antipathetic to the Republic. Equally, left-wing organisations were at the forefront of the humanitarian effort. All this is carefully explained by the author, including the eagerness of the Communist Party to share platforms with other political groups in furtherance of their Popular Front project. But “Machiavellian manoeuvring”, says Davies, could not obscure the compassion felt by most Welsh people towards these “children of Guernica”.

● The *Aberdeen Voice* website has placed online a three-part profile of local Brigader **Bob Cooney**, written by his nephew Neil Cooney. See: [<http://aberdeenvoice.com/?s=bob+cooney>].

● **Anti-Franco agitation** among the Spanish community in London from 1960-1975 is the subject of the first of a series of occasional papers published by the Marx Memorial Library in April under the masthead of *Praxis*. “España Sí, Franco No” by Meirian Jump describes how a younger generation of economic migrants from Spain came into contact with political exiles already in the capital—as well as many International Brigade veterans and other campaigners for Spanish democracy. The IBMT has a limited number of copies of the study available free of charge. Email [[secretary@international-brigades.org.uk](mailto:secretary@international-brigades.org.uk)] or tel: 020-7228 6504.

● The Socialist History Society held a special meeting at the Bishopsgate Institute Library in London to celebrate the life of historian **John Saville** (1916-2009). As Professor of Economic History at the University of Hull from 1973, he wrote extensively on radical history and theory, including the Spanish Civil War. His famous 1981 riposte to Valentine Cunningham’s controversial introduction to the “The Penguin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse” can be read online at [[www.marxists.org/archive/saville/1981/xx/spain](http://www.marxists.org/archive/saville/1981/xx/spain)].

## ‘Our Open Eyes Could See No Other Way’ by Mike Wild

*Sheffield-based Mike Wild wrote this song and has sung it at several recent IBMT events. The son of British Battalion commander Sam Wild, he explained to the IBMT Newsletter: “The title comes from the poem ‘The Volunteer’ by C Day Lewis. A lot of the words are taken from accounts by Brigaders both written and oral. I was born in 1939 and growing up we met a great number of veterans at events and in our house. As the numbers of survivors grew ever fewer I decided to write this tribute and put it in their voice.”*

Now three score years and 10 have passed  
The olive tree of peace is green at last  
And you who took the flag and carry on the fight  
Must know, as we did, that the cause was right.

From many lands and tongues we came  
And no one came for private gain

From mines and mills and ivory towers  
To join the struggle that we knew was ours.

We were not dupes or mindless slaves  
We were not pawns in some great game  
We were at war and yet we were at peace  
We came to share the fight for freedom and release.

And if they ask you why we came  
What brought us here to fight for Spain  
The only answer we would say  
“Our open eyes could see no other way”.

So plough this earth in which so many lie  
And plant the seeds that will not die  
And let the people live as one  
That all may take their place beneath the sun.

So if they ask you why we came  
What brought us here to fight for Spain  
The only answer we would say  
“Our open eyes could see no other way”.

## LETTERS

### We were spied on too for supporting democracy in Spain

**W**e knew many International Brigaders, mostly gentle, courteous men and women who were no threat to anyone. Like them, as we now know from the release online of MI5 records about the volunteers, we aroused the interest and suspicions of MI5 as we were members of the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee in the 1950s. Documents with our names were released to The National Archives several years ago, and we were quite shocked to sit in the document reading room at Kew and see reports of a speech one of us made in 1952 and had long forgotten and photographs of letters we had written.

Apparently there are also separate files, PF76717 and PF402/51/1064 on each of us, but these had been retained by MI5 under section 3(4) of the Public Records Act (1958) and are exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (2000). No doubt this stupid waste of time and money continues.

**Chris and Betty Birch**  
London

### Forgotten in Poland

I’ve been interested in Spanish Civil War history since last year. Step by step I’m learning about

this conflict, which I consider to be the first major attempt to prevent fascism in Europe.

In my country few people are Spanish Republican supporters as they consider communism and related movements as a criminal system. This is not my point of view. I believe trade unions, labour movements and left-wing parties are the only guarantors of worthwhile workers’ rights.

Sadly, the history of Polish Jaroslaw Dabrowski Battalion of the International Brigade is forgotten in Poland, or considered to be a shameful attack on Christian traditions. But this it was not.

I’d like to express my support for the IBMT and recommend to members a YouTube tribute to the Republican photojournalist Gerda Taro who was killed during the Battle of Brunete: [[www.youtube.com/watch?v=xft8AGYUmhA&feature=feedu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xft8AGYUmhA&feature=feedu)].  
**Sergiusz Fiodorow**  
Poznan, Poland

### Thanks from South Yorks

I write to record my thanks to the hard work by a dedicated group of South Yorkshire IBMT members, friends and families who organised a very successful programme of events at Wortley Hall, Sheffield, Barnsley and Rotherham from 2-17 July (see reports on back page).

I have been researching the local men and women from South Yorkshire who went to Spain and also those at home who supported the International Brigades. The number of volunteers now stands at 34, nine of whom died and lie in Spanish soil.

This number is more than was previously

recorded and includes new information from the archives and information from local people in response to requests in the local press and radio, the website and Facebook.

Several articles in the *Sheffield Star* were widely read and 2,000 memorial cards with a roll of honour were distributed at events. An archive will be deposited locally for future researchers and to support memorial events when it is the centenary in 2036!

A book is in preparation and will be launched to coincide with the formation of the International Brigades in the latter part of 1936.

**Mike Wild**  
Sheffield

### Willi Bredel remembered



In the Battle of Jarama poster on page 3 of the *IBMT Newsletter* (Spring issue), the fourth comrade from the left with the beret is Willi Bredel.

Willi was a worker from Hamburg and political commissar in the Ernst Thälmann Battalion. He wrote a lot of wonderful books and of course about the Spanienkrieg (Spanish Civil War). In Hamburg we have the “Willi Bredel Gesellschaft”, a local history society. The website might interest IBMT members who can read German: [[www.bredelgesellschaft.de/schoeps/home.htm](http://www.bredelgesellschaft.de/schoeps/home.htm)].  
**Reinhardt Silbermann**  
Hamburg, Germany

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International Brigade  
Memorial Trust

In association with **Unite the Union** Organised by **Philosophy Football**

## International Brigade Memorial Trust: Notice of Annual General Meeting on Saturday 1 October 2011 from 2:30pm-4:30pm at Transport House, Unite the Union, 128 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8TN

### AGM agenda

- 1/ Chair's opening remarks
- 2/ Apologies for absence
- 3/ Minutes of previous AGM
- 4/ Matters arising
- 5/ Secretary's report
- 6/ Membership Secretary's report
- 7/ Treasurer's report
- 8/ Proposed amendments to the constitution (see panel on right)
- 9/ Election of officers and Executive Committee members
- 10/ Any other business (AOB)
- 11/ Date and place of next AGM
- 12/ Chair's closing remarks

● *Nominations for officers (Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and Executive Committee members must be made in writing and received by the Secretary by 17 September 2011.*

● *Proposed items for AOB must be received in writing by the Secretary by 24 September 2011.*

● *Email: [secretary@international-brigades.org.uk] or write to: IBMT Secretary, 6 Stonells Road, London SW11 6HQ.*

## Programme of events for the weekend in London

### Friday 30 September

- From 1pm-6pm, exhibition of paintings by Brigadier Clive Branson and daughter Rosa Branson at Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, EC1R 0DU; [www.marx-memorial-library.org].
- Late afternoon: Arrival at St George's Hall, Cable St, E1 0BL, of National Clarion Cycling Club 1895 riders from Edinburgh; 5pm (esti-

mated); details of the itinerary appeared in our previous issue; for more information, contact [clarioncc@yahoo.co.uk]; tel: 01254-51302.

● **Evening:** Social gathering for IBMT members at Wilton's Music Hall, 1 Graces Alley, E1 8JB; refreshments and food available at the bar; IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition will be on display and there will be local cabaret acts.

### Saturday 1 October

● 12 noon: Rededication of International Brigade memorial in headquarters of Unite the Union, 128 Theobalds Road, WC1X 8TN.

● 1:45pm: "Cable Street, the Road to Spain" talk by historian Richard Baxell at Unite HQ (see above).

● 2:30-4:30pm: IBMT Annual General Meeting at Unite HQ (see above)

● **Evening:** 75th anniversary fundraising gala at the New Red Lion Theatre Pub, 271-273 City Rd, EC1V 1LA. Performers include poet Jackie Kay, Tayo Aluko, star of "Call Mr Robeson", and folk duo namara; special guests include Billy Bragg, Robert Elms and Andy Croft. Limited availability of tickets for £12.99; see notice on preceding page; doors open at 5:45pm; food served at 6:15pm (seated tickets only); show starts at 7:15pm.

### Sunday 2 October

● March and rally to commemorate Battle of Cable Street; organised by Cable Street 75; [www.cablestreet75.org.uk]; assemble 11:30am at northern end of Lemen St (near Aldgate East tube station) for 12 noon departure to St George's Hall, Cable St.

● From 12 noon at Wilton's Music Hall, 1 Graces Alley, E1 8JB, events organised by the Cable Street Group [www.battleofcablestreet.org.uk], including live music, exhibition, book launch, panel discussion, stalls.

● From 6:30pm, "Sunday Night at Wilton's Music Hall", starring Shappi Khorsandi, Leon Rosselson and The Men They Couldn't Hang; more information from [www.alternative.arts.co.uk].

**Accommodation:** Information on hotels in the Cable Street area appeared in the Spring issue of the *IBMT Newsletter*. For a copy, contact the IBMT Secretary (details above).

**Left:** The bar at Wilton's Musical Hall, located just off Cable Street, where IBMT members are invited to meet on the evening of Friday 30 September.

## Proposed constitutional changes

The Trust's constitution has remained unaltered since the IBMT was founded in 2001. A review of the constitution by the Executive Committee has highlighted the need for amendments, which are considered necessary for the following reasons:

● To reflect the changing nature of the Trust (for example, the requirement to have three former International Brigaders on the Executive Committee, an increase in the size of the Executive Committee and a change to the current quorum of the Trust from one tenth of membership to one twentieth, which would ensure that, with the growth of the size of the Trust and with members throughout the British Isles and other parts of the world, all future AGMs will be quorate).

● To comply with good practice (for example, to replace "Chairman" with "Chair" and reduce the age of membership from 18 to 16).

● To reflect practices adopted by the Trust which were not included in the original constitution (for example, to allow job sharing of officer and executive posts and to include the post of President).

● To tidy up the original constitution (for example, to delete duplicate paragraphs).

A copy of the current constitution can be obtained by application to the Secretary (see details on left). Copies will also be available at the AGM. After the AGM the constitution, including any revisions passed, will be published on the IBMT website.

### Paragraphs E&F: Membership

● Paragraphs E and F are both headed "Membership" and the contents of paragraph E are fully included in paragraph F, which has additional content. Proposal: Delete current paragraph E and renumber accordingly.

● Currently membership of the Trust is open to any person aged 18 or over. Proposal: Lower that age to 16. In sub-paragraph F(1) delete "18" and substitute with "16".

### Paragraph G: Honorary Officers

● The current unnumbered sub-paragraph to be renumbered (1).

● Delete "Chairman" and substitute with "Chair".

● Add "President" immediately before "Chair".

● Add new sub-paragraph (2) which shall state: "At the Annual General Meeting of the Charity the members may elect from amongst themselves a President who shall hold office from the conclusion of that meeting. The President shall not be subject to annual election at a General Meeting, and shall remain in office until s/he notifies the Executive Committee of his/her resignation or a General Meeting of the Charity determines otherwise."

● Add new sub-paragraph (3) which shall state: "All honorary officer posts may be job shared."

### Paragraph H: Executive Committee

● In sub-paragraph (1) delete "11" and substitute with "15".

● In sub-paragraph (1) delete "and for as long as possible at least 3 of these members shall be veterans of the International Brigade".

● In sub-paragraph (1)(b) delete "8" and substitute with "11".

● In sub-paragraph (3) add at the beginning "Excepting the President (see sub-paragraph F(2))".

● Add new sub-paragraph (7) which shall state: "All Executive Committee posts may be job shared."

### Paragraph K: Meetings and proceedings of the Executive Committee

In sub-paragraphs (1), (2) and (4) delete "Chairman" and substitute with "Chair".

### Paragraph Q: Annual General Meeting

In sub-paragraph (3) delete "Chairman" and substitute with "Chair".

### Paragraph S: Procedure at General Meetings

In sub-paragraph (1) delete "tenth" and substitute with "twentieth".



● **To 30 September 2011:** Exhibition about local volunteers compiled by **Reading** International Brigades Commemoration Committee; Reading Museum, Blagrove St, Reading RG1 1QH; Tues-Sat 10am-4pm / Sun 11am-4pm; [www.readingmuseum.org.uk]; contact Mike Cooper [coomik1418@yahoo.co.uk].

● **9-12 September 2011:** International Brigade commemoration weekend in **Berlin**; organised by KFSR German IB association; contact André Mergen [andremergen@web.de].

● **10 September 2011:** Rededication of renovated memorial to Brigadier Percy Williams in Whitworth Road Cemetery, **Swindon**; 4pm followed by "memories and music" at Broadgreen Centre, Salisbury St SN1 2AN; 7pm; bring food and refreshments to share; organised by Graham Thompson: [g.thompson154@btinternet.com].

● **14 September 2011:** Local historian Mike Cooper talks about the volunteers from the **Reading** area; 1pm-1:45pm; Reading Museum (see details above).

● **25 September 2011:** Talk by Richard Baxell, "Cable Street, the Road to Spain"; St George's Hall, Cable St, **London** E1 0BL; time to be confirmed; organised by Jewish East End Celebration Society [www.jeecs.org.uk].

● **26 September-7 October 2011:** Exhibition of paintings by International Brigadier Clive Branson plus painting celebrating the IBs by daughter Rosa; Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, **London** EC1R 0DU; 1pm-6pm, Mon-Fri; [www.marx-memorial-library.org].

● **30 September-2 October 2011:** Weekend of events in **London** to commemorate 75th anniversary of International Brigades, including on 1 October IBMT Annual General Meeting at Unite the Union, 128 Theobalds Rd, WC1X 8TN, plus evening gala at New Red Lion Theatre Pub, 271-273 City Rd, EC1V 1LA; more details on facing page; see also page 13.

● **3-17 October 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at **Belfast** City Hall, Donegall Sq, BT1 5GS; Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm; Sat 10am-3pm; contact: [irelandscw@yahoo.co.uk]; [www.belfastcity.gov.uk].

● **8 October 2011:** "Orwell and the Fight Against Fascism in **Barnsley** and the Spanish Civil War"

## 75th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama

February 2012 will mark the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama, one of the key battles of the Spanish Civil War and one in which the British Battalion played a leading role – though at the cost of scores of lives. A group of IBMT members is planning to commemorate the anniversary with a battlefield tour on Saturday 18 February (provisional date). In addition there will be a meeting in Madrid with guest speakers on the Friday evening.

To register interest in taking part, email **Danny Payne**: [danpayne40@yahoo.co.uk] or phone the IBMT Secretary on 020-7228 6504.

"Goodbye Barcelona", the IBMT-supported musical by Judith Johnson and Karl Lewkovicz about the International Brigades, is scheduled to open at the Arcola Theatre, London, on 24 November. Seats for the first 10 performances (except 25 November) are available at the special price of £10 (bookable by phone or in person). An IBMT gala evening is planned for Friday 25 November, with special guests plus food and drink and tickets at £40. See box office details below. A fundraising art auction, including works by Picasso, Chagall, Miró and Matisse, will be held at 6:30pm on 21 September at the Jewish Museum London, 129-131 Albert St, NW1 7NB. Contact [contact@releasethebeat.com] for more details.



talk by Professor John Newsinger; 1pm; Cooper Art Gallery, Church St, Barnsley S70 2AH; organised by UCU Barnsley College branch.

● **15 October 2011:** "Fighting Fascism, Fighting Franco: Scottish Volunteers for Spanish Freedom, 1936-2011": a one-day event to mark the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; Mitchell Library & Theatre, North St, **Glasgow** G3 7DN; participants include Jackie Kay and Stuart Christie; contact Willie Maley: [willy.maley@glasgow.ac.uk].

● **15 October 2011:** Lecture by Nick Rankin, "GL Steer and the Basque Children"; 2.30pm; Kensington & Chelsea Library Lecture Theatre, Phillimore Walk, **London** W8 7RX; organised by Basque Children of '37 Association; contact [secretary@basquechildren.org].

● **20-21 October 2011:** Conference "The International Brigades: from the local to the global" organised by International Institute of Spain; History Library of the University of **Madrid** (Miguel Ángel 8, Madrid 28010); proceedings in Spanish; speakers include historians Ángel Viñas, Julio Aróstegui, Marta Torres, Martin Minchom and James D Fernández; more details to be posted on [www.brigadasinternacionales.org].

● **22-29 October 2011:** Commemoration in **Spain** of formation of International Brigades, with events in Madrid, Albacete, the Ebro and Barcelona; organised by Paris-based Coordination Internationale; [www.ci-brigadas-internacionales.org].

● **27-29 October 2011:** As part of the commemoration in Spain (see above), an international congress in **Barcelona** on the fight against fascism, with academics from Spain, UK, France etc; CC00 de Catalunya, Vía Layetana, Barcelona 08003; to register email [sagudo@edu.ictnet.es] or see [www.ci-brigadas-internacionales.org].

● **27 October 2011:** Special evening performance of musical "Goodbye Barcelona" at the Jewish Museum **London**, 129-131 Albert St, NW1 7NB, as part of its "Radical Roots" season marking 75th anniversary of Battle of Cable Street and formation of International Brigades; more infor-

mation: [www.jewishmuseum.org.uk].

● **6 November 2011:** Sunday afternoon "75th anniversary in song and story" organised by Belfast-based International Brigades Commemoration Committee; Sandinos Café Bar, Water St, **Derry**; Ciaran Crossey, Manus O'Riordan, Joe Mulheron and others; includes launch of the IBCC song booklet; contact: [irelandscw@yahoo.co.uk]; [www.sandinos.com].

● **13 November 2011:** British première of the recently discovered Henri Cartier-Bresson film "With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain", including footage of the British Battalion; Renoir Cinema, Brunswick Sq, **London** WC1N 1AW; 11am, followed by discussion led by Professor Helen Graham; admission £10 (£8 concessions); organised by London Socialist Film Co-op; [http://socialistfilm.blogspot.com].

● **24 November-23 December 2011:** "Goodbye Barcelona" [www.goodbyebarcelona.com] at the Arcola Theatre, 24 Ashwin St, **London** E8 3DL; 7:30pm (2:30pm Sat matinées); £17 (£11 concessions); Tues from 6:30pm: what you can pay); possible IBMT gala night on Fri 25 November (see caption above); booking and details: [www.arcolatheatre.com]; tel: 020-7503 1646.

*NB: Events not organised by the IBMT are the responsibility of the individuals and organisations concerned.*



**London's Renoir Cinema** will be showing the documentary "With the Abraham Lincoln Brigade in Spain" made by French photographer and film-maker Henri Cartier-Bresson (above) on 13 November. See details above.

Photos: Jim Lambert



Clockwise from left: Wreaths at the memorial in Sheffield Peace Gardens; Sheffield Socialist Choir singing in the gardens; Roy Bailey at the IBMT fundraiser in Sheffield; the audience inside Sheffield Trades & Labour Club.



# Marking the anniversary in South Yorks

Led by Mike Wild, local IBMT members organised a series of events in July to mark the 75th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War

## At Wortley Hall

A ceremony was held on 2 July at Wortley Hall – “the labour movement’s stately home” near Barnsley – to remember local volunteers as part of the South Yorkshire Socialist Festival. Over 150 supporters attended the event beside the olive tree and plaque unveiled by Jack Jones in 2007.

Speakers included South Yorkshire MEP Linda MacAvan, Unite the Union assistant general secretary Tony Burke and Joan Brown, partner of Chris Smith, South Yorkshire’s last International Brigader. There were songs too from Rotherham Red Choir and local group Toein’ in the Dark.

Burke pointed out that most of the more than 30 local volunteers were working class and had been on hunger marches and had fought against Mosley’s fascists.



Supporters young and old (including IBMT Chair Dolores Long, third from left) at the rededication of the olive tree of remembrance at Wortley Hall.

Those who survived came home to continue the fight on other fronts in the Labour and Communist parties, as councillors and shop stewards and union reps – and like Jack Jones some reached greatness as trade union leaders.

## Ambassador in Rotherham

Spanish ambassador Carles Casajuana paid tribute to the International Brigades during a visit to Rotherham on 6 July. Speaking to A level students at Thomas Rotherham College, he said: “The fascist attack on Britain was launched in 1939, but in Spain it began three years earlier... I was proud to bestow Spanish citizenship on British survivors of the International Brigades in the Spanish embassy in 2009.” He reminded students that Spain remained under Franco’s rule until 1975. The ambassador was presented with a copy of the biography of local volunteer Tommy James.

## Sheffield Peace Gardens

Over 200 people were in Sheffield Peace Gardens on 9 July to see Lord Mayor Dr Sylvia Dunkley rededicate the International Brigade memorial plaque. Present were many local Labour politicians and trade union leaders, along with IBMT supporters and families of Brigaders.

Following songs and speeches, flowers were laid by Olivia and Eddie Wild, great grandchildren of Sam Wild, commander of the British Battalion in Spain, who died in Sheffield in 1983.

## University symposium

There was a full programme of IBMT-sponsored events around the showing of the IBMT’s “Antifascistas” exhibition at Sheffield University’s arts faculty from 4-15 July.

Attended by 100 people, a symposium was held at the university on the subject of international volunteering and chaired by Professor

Mary Vincent. Speakers included historians Tom Buchanan, Josie McLellan and Steve Ludlam.

At the opening of the exhibition on 6 July over 160 heard Pro Vice Chancellor Professor Mike Braddick praised the quality of the IBMT exhibition. Historian Richard Baxell spoke about the British Battalion’s first months in Spain, and Dolores Long, Chair of IBMT, read Dolores Ibárruri’s farewell speech to the International Brigades at their final parade in Barcelona in October 1938. Mike Wild, who headed the local IBMT organising group of members, sang his song in honour of the Brigaders, “Our Open Eyes Could See No Other Way” (see page 14).

## Music, poetry, film and archives

On 13 July there was an IBMT fundraising evening of music and poetry at the Sheffield Trades & Labour Club. Performers in front of a capacity audience of 250 included Roy Bailey, Dave Burland, Fay Hield, Sylvia Needham, Keith Kendrick and a host of local talent.

Also successful was a poetry evening, “Against the Yoke and Arrows”, in the Red Deer pub on 17 July, hosted by poet Rob Hindle.

During July, the Showroom cinema in Sheffield put on a programme of films and discussion on the Spanish Civil War, including Ken Loach’s controversial “Land and Freedom”.

In conjunction with Sheffield City Council’s archives and local studies unit, there was a display – compiled by Mike Wild – on the South Yorkshire men and women who went to Spain and worked in the local Aid Spain movement. This drew widely on the papers of Bill Moore, labour historian and driving force behind Sheffield’s memorial plaque.

See [[www.shef.ac.uk/spain1936](http://www.shef.ac.uk/spain1936)] and local Facebook site: Spanish Civil War 75th.