



IBMT Newsletter

www.international-brigades.org.uk

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INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

Reenacting Clarion's 1938 cycle ride

By Jim Jump



Flyer for the 1938 ride.

The National Clarion Cycling Club 1895 will this summer be reenacting a Glasgow to Barcelona fundraising bicycle ride undertaken by two members, Ted Ward and Geoff Jackson, in May 1938.

Jackson and Ward aimed to collect about £70 for the women and children of Republican Spain; in fact they raised over £300. Proceeds from this year's anniversary ride will go to the IBMT.

The original ride went through France; this year's will go by ferry across the Bay of Biscay and then through northern Spain.

Over a dozen cyclists, including Spanish riders, will be visiting a number of towns and cities between 29 July and 8 August on the first leg to Portsmouth. They will arrive in Bilbao on 10 August and make their way to Barcelona, arriving on 19 August, taking in various Spanish Civil War memorials and battlefields.

Two Clarion members were killed in Spain while serving with the International Brigades: Ray Cox (Boadilla, December 1936) and Roy Watts (Ebro, September 1938). A new banner has been commissioned by the Clarion Cycling Club to commemorate them.

See contact details in "Diary dates" on page 4.



The banner for Ray Cox and Roy Watts.



The Scottish International Brigade banner drapes the coffin of the last surviving veteran from north of the border. Steve Fullarton, whose portrait stands above his coffin, died in February. He was one of the 500 men and women from Scotland who volunteered to fight for democracy in Spain and who wrote a remarkable chapter in the history of Scottish political and labour movement activism. See obituaries on page 3.

Invitation to Barcelona

By Martene Sidaway

Events to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the farewell to the International Brigades will be held in Barcelona from 23-26 October. They are being organised by the Generalitat (Catalan government), the AABI (Friends of the International Brigades) and other organisations.

Veterans from around the world are being invited. The organisers also hope that many other friends, families and supporters of the International Brigades will attend.

IBMT members wishing to take part should let me know as soon as possible (my contact details are on page 2). Veterans and their companions/partners will have all their expenses covered, including flights. Everyone else will have to pay their own flight and accommodation costs.

The provisional programme includes a visit to the monument to the International Brigades in Barcelona; wreath-laying at the Fossar de la Pedrera; a reception hosted by the Catalan government at the Palacio de la Generalitat; a trip to Sitges for the inauguration of the exhibition "New York and the Spanish Civil War"; a lunch of honour; and an evening meal with musical entertainment.

At the farewell parade for the International Brigades in Barcelona on 27 October 1938, Dolores Ibárruri, "La Pasionaria", the deputy speaker of the Spanish parliament, told them: "You can go proudly. You are history. You are legend. You are the heroic example of democracy's solidarity and universality... We shall not forget you and, when the olive tree of peace is in flower... return!"

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

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Annual membership rates are £15 standard and £7.50 for concessions; affiliating organisations by arrangement. Further details and membership forms are available from the Membership Secretary, along with standing order and gift aid forms.

IBMT NEWSLETTER

The IBMT Newsletter is published three times a year and is sent free to all members of the IBMT. Members living overseas can access the current issue by using a password on the IBMT website. Back numbers can be downloaded from the IBMT website on [www.international-brigades.org.uk/newsletter.htm]. For information about receiving the IBMT Newsletter on tape, contact the IBMT Secretary.

Send all items for inclusion in the next issue to the editor by 31 August 2008 at the latest.

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By Marlene Sidaway

President's birthday

Our President Jack Jones celebrated his 95th birthday and the launch of a new edition of his autobiography "Union Man" (see page 11) in April. Over 200 people gathered in Transport House, London, and Tony Benn, Neil Kinnock, Rodney Bickerstaffe and Paul Preston were among those who paid tribute to Jack. Actors Alison Steadman, Michael Elwyn and Chris Tranchell read poems and extracts from the autobiography and Jack gave a speech of encouragement for the future, ending with his signature song "Keep Right on to the End of the Road" – a truly memorable evening.

Fundraising run

Chris Hall is organising a 10km jog in Sheffield on 7 September, ending at the International Brigade memorial in Peace Gardens, to raise money for the IBMT. Contact Chris by mid-June to register on 0161-861 744 or [christoff_hall@yahoo.com] and Dolores Long for sponsorship forms on 0161-226 2013 or [doloreslong@fastmail.fm].

Ebro memorial

We've decided to postpone the inauguration of monument near Gandesa commemorating the last action of the British Battalion at the Battle of the Ebro. It had been scheduled for 23 September, but will take place next spring instead.

Spanish nationality

Following the Spanish government's decision to offer Spanish nationality to all Brigaders without them having to renounce their current nationality (see story on page 1 of our last issue) we are hoping to arrange a ceremony at the Spanish Embassy in London at which those who wish to can receive some form of official recognition from the ambassador.

Farewell Steve

We were sad to lose our last Scottish Brigader, Steve Fullarton (see obituary on facing page). Bill

IBMT Chair Sam Lesser looks on as Stefany Tomalin reads two poems written by her father and Brigader Miles Tomalin at the Viva la República fiesta in London on 26 April. Sam read C Day Lewis's poem "The Volunteer" in an evening that saw dancing, singing, film and music before a packed house of more than 300 people. I was proud to read two poems by David Marshall.

Congratulations go to our own Jim Jump and to Manuel Moreno, Chair of the Basque Children of '37 Association, for organising such a memorable event. Hopefully, it will now become an annual fixture, bringing together the various communities, British and Spanish, whose lives were touched by the Spanish Republic and civil war.

Butler MSP honoured Steve's memory with this motion in the Scottish Parliament on 5 March which was supported by 41 MSPs. It reads: "That the Parliament notes with great sadness the passing of Stevie Fullarton, the last surviving Scot to have fought in the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War; commends the heroic contribution of the estimated 500 Scots who fought valiantly on the side of the democratically elected government of Spain against the fascist forces during the course of the war, and sends its sincere condolences to Mr Fullarton's family and friends."

Scottish names

One of Steve Fullarton's last wishes was that his comrade William Gauntlett's name should be included on the plaque in the Scottish TUC headquarters in Glasgow. Efforts are being made to do this and to correct other mistakes and omissions, probably on a supplementary plaque.

At the Tolpuddle festival

The IBMT will have a stall at this year's Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival in Dorset on 19/20 July. Next year we hope to adjust the date of our Jubilee Gardens commemoration so that the two events don't clash again.

Jewish volunteers from Palestine

Martin Sugarman has written in to challenge remarks reported in the January 2007 issue of the Newsletter that Cyprus provided proportionately more International Brigade volunteers than any other country. Kim Economides had said that between 40-60 Cypriots joined the IBs out of a population of 350,000. But Sugarman says that the island's population was actually 371,000 and that the British Mandate of Palestine – including the current state of Israel, which did not exist at the time – sent a higher proportion: between 200-300 from a population of 1.38 million. He adds that, if the Arab population were excluded and only the 386,000 Jews counted, the proportion would be even higher as only one Palestinian Arab is thought to have gone to Spain.

Andy Andrews: As this issue of the Newsletter goes to press, we learn the sad news of the death of Howard "Andy" Andrews, our oldest surviving Brigader, who celebrated his 101st birthday in February (see page 6). Andy served as a medic in Spain for nearly two years, having driven there in an ambulance in August 1936. A fuller tribute will appear in our next issue.

Steve Fullarton

By Jim Jump

Steve Fullarton, who died on 29 February, aged 88, was the last of the 500 Scots who fought with the International Brigades. Aged just 18 and halfway through his engineering apprenticeship when he crossed the Pyrenees in April 1938, he was also one of the youngest volunteers, having had to lie about his age to be accepted.

He decided to go to Spain after seeing cinema newsreel of the bombing of Spanish cities by Franco's German and Italian allies. "There were women running around with terror in their eyes," he recalled. "Some people could ignore it and say: 'It's none of my business'. I made it my business," he later said.

After basic training with wooden rifles near Figueras, Fullarton was sent to Marsa on the north bank of the Ebro where the British Battalion and other units of the XV International Brigade were billeted.

He took part in the Ebro offensive with the rest of the battalion in July 1938 and was injured by a bullet in the groin on 1 August near Gandesa. He was rushed to a cave hospital near the front and operated on without anaesthetic. Following convalescence at Vich, he arrived home on 23 December.

In 2003 he returned to the Ebro battlefield. "We fooled ourselves into thinking we had a chance, but we had no chance from the beginning," he recalled. "If I had known that, though, I would still have gone. It was a question of morality."

Terry Maloney

By Jim Jump



Terry Maloney, who died on 16 March, aged 90, volunteered to join the International Brigades in November 1937 while a student at the Richmond School of Art and was to spend most of the next nine years as a soldier,

first in Spain and during the Second World War in the Royal Corps of Signals, serving in France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany.

He worked as a commercial artist following discharge from the army, as well as becoming the art editor of *Spain Today*, the magazine founded in 1946 by the International Brigade Association to publicise the repression in Francoist Spain and the underground struggle being waged against the regime. He later worked on the Dan Dare strip in *The Eagle* comic and wrote and illustrated several books on astronomy and related topics.

During the Spanish Civil War, Maloney was assigned to the British Battalion's machine-gun company and received a shrapnel wound in the chest at the Battle of the Ebro in August 1938.

Earlier, he met the singer and US civil rights campaigner Paul Robeson and got his autograph, which he sent home to his mother. She had been heartbroken by his decision to go to Spain, though politically supportive of the cause.

He returned to England in December 1938 and continued campaigning for the Spanish Republic until its defeat three months later. "Joining the International Brigades was one of the more worthwhile things I've done in my life," he said as an old man.

Also remembered...

● Described by Ernest Hemingway as "as brave and as good a soldier as any that commanded battalions at Gettysburg", **Milton Wolff**, who died on 14 January at the age of 92, was the last commander of the US volunteers in Spain. He joined the International Brigades in March 1937, aged 21. By the time he was 22 he was leading the Lincoln-Washington Battalion as it crossed the Ebro in July 1938 in the Republic's last offensive in the war. Born into a New York Jewish family, after the war he was active in the US Committee for a Democratic Spain and led the US veterans in demonstrations against the Vietnam War, organised aid to a children's hospital in Cuba and sent ambulances to Nicaragua.

● **Carmen Walker** (née Gil) died in January, aged 94. Carmen was Basque and was with her mother going to market in Guernica when it was bombed. They survived because their train driver reversed into a tunnel, where they remained during the raids. She volunteered, aged 21, to travel with the *niños* (Basque children) on the *Habana* in May 1937 and worked in the colony at Percy Park in Tynemouth. She married into a family of Newcastle Labour Party activists – her husband had been a luminary in the local Basque Children's Committee – and lived in Penrith.

● Antonio Díez writes to pay tribute to **Ruth Frow**, who died on 11 January at the age of 85. She was the founder of the Working Class Movement Library in Salford, which holds an extensive archive on the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades. Díez writes: "What she and Eddie [her husband] have done in the Manchester area for the working class memory can never be forgotten and the library will be their best legacy for future generations, a valuable tool to keep fighting against fascism and imperialism." He adds: "The book I wrote about the Manchester IBers and some other articles are entirely thanks to the library."



Jack Jones (left) with fellow International Brigader Bob Doyle beside the IB memorial at Morata de Tajuña, where the two veterans attended a 71st anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Jarama on 16 February.

By Jack Jones

Welcome to another packed issue of our excellent newsletter. Such a lot has been happening and there are so many interesting and worthy events coming up that sometimes it is hard to keep pace with everything.

I enjoyed the 71st anniversary commemoration of the Battle of Jarama in Spain in February. It took place just before the Spanish general election and I was personally very relieved to see the PSOE socialist party returned to power. However belatedly, they have done much to honour those Spaniards and volunteers from abroad who fought for democracy in Spain 70 years ago.

I also enjoyed the Viva la República event in London in April. It was wonderful to see so many children and young people, especially from the Spanish community in London, finding out more about their heritage.

Now we must look forward to our commemoration in Jubilee Gardens, London, in July. I plan to travel to Barcelona in October for the anniversary of the farewell to the International Brigades and, before then, go to Dundee for our Annual General Meeting. I hope to see as many of you as possible at these events.

We have lost two more comrades this year and they will be greatly missed. But they will not be forgotten and it is up to us to continue keeping alive their story and that of the International Brigades.

¡Salud y suerte!



The annual commemoration at the International Brigade Memorial in Jubilee Gardens, beside the London Eye, takes place on 19 July. This image of part of the memorial and London Eye is taken from the documentary “Memories of a Future”. See listings below for details of the commemoration and screenings of “Memories of a Future”.

● **11 June 2008** Screening of “Memories of a Future”, a documentary by Margaret Dickinson and Pepe Petos about the 70th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades; Showroom Cinema, Sheffield; tel: 0114-275 7727 for times.

● **14 June 2008** Screening of “Memories of a Future” (see above); Phoenix Cinema, East Finchley, London; tel: 020-8444 6789 for times.

● **21 June 2008** (NB: *Changed from original date*): Talk by Professor Michael Alpert, “The Blockade of Bilbao”, 2.30pm, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU; organised by the Basque Children of ’37 Association; contact Natalia Benjamin at [n.benjamin@ntlworld.com] to register.

● **21 June 2008**: “Sussex and the Spanish Civil War”; Lewes; organised by the local trades council as part of the town’s cultural week, it will use verse, prose and song to tell the story of Sussex’s involvement in the International Brigades and the Aid Spain movement; contact Mike Anderson for more information: [mike.c.anderson@talktalk.net].

● **27/28 June 2008**: Commemoration of the Kilkenny men who fought in the International Brigades. They included George Brown, who was killed at Villanueva de la Cañada in June



Left: IB veteran Bob Doyle in Figueras in 2006 in a still from the “Memories of a Future”, which is being shown in London and Sheffield (see above).

1937, along with his brother, Michael, and Michael Brennan and Sean Dowling. For more information contact Ciaran Crossey; email: [jirelandscw@yahoo.co.uk].

● **4/5 July 2008**: Anniversary walk over the Brunete battlefield, plus poetry and music; meet at CAUM, Plaza de Tirso de Molina 8-1º, Madrid 28012 on Friday evening for a reception and on the Saturday walk the route of the offensive finishing on Mosquito Hill; more information from Alan Warren on tel: 01495-775 561 or email: [warren.ofbooks@virgin.net] or Seve Montero [seve.montero@gmail.com].

● **19 July 2008**: Annual commemoration at the International Brigade Memorial, Jubilee Gardens, London SE1; 12.30 for 1pm; speakers include Tony Lloyd MP, Jack Jones and Sam Lesser; followed by a get-together with an optional lunch at the adjacent Premier Inn (formerly Travel Inn), Belvedere Road, London SE1 7PB.

● **24-27 July 2008**: Events marking the 70th anniversary of the start of the Battle of the Ebro, including a conference at Mora d’Ebre, music and theatre and a commemoration in the Sierra de Pandols; organised by Terre de Fraternité; among those participating will be IBMT Patron Professor Paul Preston and Angela Jackson; more details from [www.terredefraternite.eu] or email [sagudo@edu.ictnet.es].

● **29 July- 18 August 2008**: Clarion Cycling Club’s Glasgow to Barcelona bike ride, commemorating 1938 fundraising trip; first leg to Portsmouth (arriving 8 August), then ferry to Bilbao for second leg to Saragossa and Barcelona; proceeds to IBMT; more details from Charles Jepson [clarion@yahoo.co.uk] or Alan Warren (see above); IBMT member Brian Ferris has spare seats in his hire-car and is offering a lift from Reus airport; contact him at [brian@brianferris.co.uk].

● **10 & 14-15 August**: Events to commemorate the Battle of the Ebro at Vilalba dels Arcs, La Fatarella and Gandesa; more details from Alan Warren (see above).

● **7 September**: 10km fundraising run for the IBMT in Sheffield; see page 2 for more details.

● **9 October 2008**: Bill Butler, MSP for Glasgow Anniesland, hosts a reception for the IBMT at the Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh; veterans, their families and Trust supporters are invited; if you would like to attend, contact Marlene Sidaway tel: 020-8555 6674 or email [marlenesidaway@hotmail.com].

● **10-12 October 2008**: IBMT’s Annual General Meeting in Dundee, plus other related events; see more details on page 5/6.

● **23-26 October 2008**: Commemoration in Barcelona of the 70th anniversary of the farewell to the International Brigades; more information on page 1.

● **8-9 November 2008**: Commemoration at Els Guaiquets of the withdrawal of the International Brigades from the Priorat district of Catalonia; more details from Angela Jackson at [nojubilemlamemoria@yahoo.com].

Viñas demolishes anti-Republican myths

By Jim Jump

The Spanish Republic never stood a chance of defeating the coup d’état led by reactionary elements of the military in July 1936 for two reasons: the massive assistance given to the rebels by the fascist powers and the negative attitude of the democracies, especially the UK, towards the plight of the Republic.

This was the core argument presented by Professor Ángel Viñas at the Imperial War Museum, London, on 8 March.

Delivering the IBMT’s annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture, Viñas demolished various common myths nurtured on the political right and left suggesting, for example, that the Republic was defeated because of its internal divisions. Prime Minister Juan Negrín successfully united the various factions on the Republican side after taking office in May

1937. Where difficulties did exist between the anarchists and the communists and socialists, these were the result of local rivalries and not top-down dictates, with Soviet advisers and Comintern (Communist

International) officials, for example, urging the Spanish communists to work cooperatively with the anarchists.

Nor was it true that Stalin was planning to impose a communist dictatorship in the event of a Republican victory in Spain – for which, Viñas said, there was “not a single piece of documentary evidence”.

Stalin, he added, did not consider Spain a priority for Soviet foreign policy. He was much more concerned about helping the Chinese in their war against Japan and ignored the pleadings of Soviet advisers and diplomats in Spain to send more military aid. In the critical 12 months from November 1937 to November 1938, the USSR did not send a single shipment of arms to the beleaguered Republic. It was only after the Anglo-French Munich pact with Hitler and Mussolini in September 1938, when Stalin felt that it was in the Soviet interest to check the installation of a fascist regime on France’s southern border, that he decided to resume supplies.

As far as Britain was concerned, Viñas hinted that its policy of “non-intervention” masked much more sinister motives and activities. New evidence, for example, had only recently emerged about the MI6 intelligence officer Hugh



Viñas: No communist plot.



San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom (standing, left) at the unveiling of the memorial to the US volunteers.

Pollard who piloted the plane that took General Franco from the Canary Islands to Spanish Morocco to launch the uprising.

It was also clear that British intelligence knew from intercepts about the full extent of the military support being given to Franco, including the Italian role in the bombing of Guernica. In addition, British banks blocked any prospect of the Republic engaging in financial transactions in the City of London or purchasing much-needed foreign currency. The result was that the Republic had no choice but to sell its gold deposits to the Soviet Union.

He went on to insist that, based on evidence that had come to light in the past two years, particularly in the UK's Public Record Office, all histories about Britain and the Spanish Civil War would now have to be rewritten.

Viñas went so far as to compare wildly exaggerated Admiralty intelligence briefings before the civil war about the prospects of a communist takeover in Spain – at a time when the Spanish Communist Party was small and unimportant – with the British government's "dodgy dossiers" of intelligence assessments produced in the run-up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

In conclusion, Viñas said that the mystery was not why the Republic and its supporters lost the war, but rather how they managed, as "the world's first premature anti-fascists", to postpone defeat for more than two-and-a-half years.

A professor of political economy at Madrid's Complutense University, Viñas was introduced by IBMT Patron Professor Paul Preston, who chaired the lecture and question-and-answer session afterwards, as one of the world's leading historians of the Spanish Civil War. Viñas is currently completing the final volume of his three-part history of the Spanish Republic at war. The second volume, "El Escudo de la República", was published last year in Spain to critical acclaim. Viñas has also had a distinguished career as a diplomat, having served as the European Community's ambassador to the United Nations from 1992 to 1996, as well as holding diplomatic posts

for the Spanish government in Washington, Bonn and Brussels.

The Len Crome Memorial Lecture is named after Len Crome who had worked as a doctor in Lancashire before volunteering to go to Spain. He rose to become the chief medical officer of the Republican army's 35th Division, which included the International Brigades.

Memorial for US volunteers

US veterans of the Spanish Civil War finally have a national memorial to the nearly 3,000 volunteers who fought with the Lincoln and Washington Battalions. The memorial was unveiled on 29 March in San Francisco at a ceremony attended by 11 of the veterans themselves as well as representatives from the IBMT.

Spanish Ambassador, Carlos Westendorp y Cabeza paid tribute to the volunteers, acknowledging that, though they had lost the battle in 1936-39, they had eventually won the war for democracy in Spain.

Located in the Embarcadero district of central San Francisco, the structure is made of 45 onyx panels held together by a steel structure. The translucent stone squares show scenes from the war and faces of soldiers, as well as words about the period from writers like Ernest Hemingway.

It was designed by Ann Chamberlain and Walter Hood and cost \$400,000, which was donated by veterans and supporters.

One of the veterans, Abe Osheroff, said it had been a privilege to have spent his life as an activist. Of the memorial, he said: "Some day a kid will ask his dad what this is all about, and that will be a small step in progress."

Sadly, just days after his speech, Osheroff died – as did sculptor Ann Chamberlain – and a few days later he was followed by two more of the Lincoln-Washington veterans.

See footage of the unveiling on You Tube: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWmWEJkshbA].

Exhibition appeal

The IBMT has launched an appeal for funds for a permanent travelling exhibition about the British and Irish volunteers in the Spanish Civil War.

The aim is to create an exhibition which would make the general public aware of the history and legacy of the International Brigades. It would be made available to schools, colleges, trade unions, libraries and other groups and institutions around the country.

The estimated cost of the exhibition exceeds £15,000. Donors will be credited in the exhibition's acknowledgements.

Send donations to IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway, 37 Reginald Road, London E7 9HS; email: [secretary@international-brigades.org.uk] for more information.

New plaque in Benicàssim

Saturday 12 April saw the unveiling of a new monument honouring the International Brigaders who died in Benicàssim. Installed by the Associació Republicana González Chermá and the Benicàssim local council, the metal memorial in the town's cemetery replaces a previous marble plaque which was found vandalised last year. The coastal town of Benicàssim was a convalescence centre for the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War, following which the remains of some 30 Brigaders buried there were dumped in an unmarked grave by the Franco regime.

Lilian Urmston



A blue plaque has been unveiled to International Brigade nurse Lilian Urmston (left) at St Paul's Primary School, Stalybridge, near Manchester, where she was a pupil.

Organised by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, the unveiling was attended by her sister, Hannah, and Manchester IB veteran Bernard McKenna. Lilian died in 1990, aged 75. During the Second World War she served as an army nursing officer. In later life, she became a writer and journalist. Her old school now plans to incorporate the story of Lilian's life in its curriculum.

Plans for AGM in Dundee

The IBMT's 2008 Annual General Meeting is to be held in Dundee City Chambers in the afternoon of Saturday 11 October as part of a weekend of activities. On Friday evening there will be a reception and exhibition at Wellgate Library. On Saturday morning the Dundee memorial to the International Brigades will be rededicated

Continued overleaf



International Brigade nurse Penny Feiwel (centre) celebrated her 99th birthday on 24 April at home in Bournemouth in the company of IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway (second from left) and family and friends. Marlene was joined by Membership Secretary Pauline Fraser in wishing Penny, who is working on a revised version of her autobiography, many happy returns.

From previous page

and after the AGM there will be an archive film show followed by a social at the Queen's Hotel in the evening. On Sunday afternoon, a plaque will be unveiled at the site of the Basque children's colony in Montrose.

IBMT committee member Mike Arnott has a list of hotels, ranging in price from £23 to £89 per person per night and can also advise on transport to Dundee. He can be contacted on 07951-443 6565 or [dundeetuc@hotmail.com].

Scots support IBMT

Dundee Trades Union Council successfully moved a motion at the Scottish TUC Congress in Inverness in April calling on the STUC and affiliated unions to "assist local campaigns to erect, maintain and, where necessary, amend memorials to those who volunteered, including current initiatives in Blantyre, Perth, Dundee and Fife", to "support preparations to host the 2008 IBMT Annual General Meeting in Dundee on 11 October" and to "join and participate in the work of the International Brigade Memorial Trust". IBMT affiliation forms and exhibition appeal leaflets were also given to each delegate and a bucket collection raised £150 for the IBMT.

Happy birthday Andy

Brigader Andy Andrews celebrated his 101st birthday at a party in Taunton on 15 February along with prominent figures in the labour and



Andy Andrews listens to speeches at his 101st birthday party. With him are IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway (centre) and Membership Secretary Pauline Fraser.

peace movements as well as IBMT representatives. Messages from Tony Benn and Kate Hudson, chair of CND, were read out and speakers from the local trade union and peace movement came forward to add their good wishes.

The theme of the evening was anti-fascism and a speaker from Searchlight South-West highlighted the necessity of continuing that fight today. Dave Chapple, of the Somerset Association of Trade Union Councils, who coordinated the event, read extracts from Angela Jackson's "Women in the Spanish Civil War" in which nurses remembered Andy's brave and steady support as a paramedic in Spain.

Modestly, Andy said he would rather have preferred "less adulation and more politics, a discussion of how we can support our brave railway workers, firefighters and others in struggle today".

In brief...

- A plaque to the Irish International Brigader and poet **Charlie Donnelly** has been unveiled at University College, Dublin, where he studied. The plaque was unveiled by his sister, Christine, and was designed by two children of his bother, Joe, Rosemarie and Joe Jr. Sadly, Joe died on 14 February, only 12 days before the ceremony to honour his brother. Charlie Donnelly was killed at Jarama in February 1937.

- IBMT member Dan Payne wants to make contact with fellow members on Merseyside who would like to set up an informal network to plan events in **Liverpool and the Wirral**. Among other things, there are plans for an exhibition on the local volunteers at the People's Centre in Liverpool. If any IBMT members are interested in being part of the network or have photos, artefacts or other material for the exhibition contact Dan on 0151-475 0168 or 07862-257 372; email [danpayne40@yahoo.co.uk].

- A commemorative plaque for the International Brigaders from the **Rutherglen/Cambuslang** area near Glasgow was unveiled on 6 February at a ceremony hosted by South Lanarkshire Council at Rutherglen Town Hall.

I was spied on for being an anti-fascist

The article in our last issue by Daniel Ahern about MI5 and Special Branch surveillance of the International Brigade Association prompted IBMT member **CHRIS BIRCH** to visit the National Archives at Kew to see if he and his wife Betty had been monitored by the spooks in the 1950s when they were both active in campaigning against the Franco regime. This is what he found...

We had always assumed that our mail was read and our telephone calls listened to by MI5 and the Special Branch as we had been active Communist Party members, albeit at a very lowly level, since our time at Bristol University.

When we moved to London we were both very active in our local party branch. The fact that our letters were being intercepted and read by the Security Services was dramatically proved in the 1950s when we lived in the same west London street, but on the opposite side of the road, as Bert Baker, the editor of the Communist Party's weekly bulletin, *World News and Views*.

One morning, I opened an envelope addressed to me only to find a letter for Bert inside while, on the other side of the road, Bert found my letter inside his envelope. Obviously, Homer had nodded off and after having read our letters replaced them in the wrong envelopes.

Nevertheless, it was a considerable shock to sit in the Document Reading Room at the National Archives at Kew recently and to read some of the mass of material with our names in it that had been accumulated by MI5 and the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch in the two years 1952 and 1953.

At that time my wife and I were heavily involved in the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee, which was campaigning, with some notable successes, on behalf of the young political prisoners in Franco's jails and in particular the Spanish youth leader López Raimundo and his 33 companions.

There is a four-page typed report headed "Metropolitan Police Special Branch. Subject: Anti-Franco Meeting", dated 27 March 1952, and signed by an inspector, a chief inspector and a chief superintendent. It begins ploddishly: "Accompanied by other Special Branch officers, I was present at 7.30pm today at Connaught Place, London W2 in connection with a proposed torchlight procession to the Spanish Embassy, 24 Belgrave Square, London SW1,



Chris Birch (right) with Betty Birch and Alec Digges at the Spanish Embassy in London in 1952. Photo: Sid Kaufman

organised by the International Brigade Association, Friends of Republican Spain and the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee, to protest against the sentences passed by the Spanish courts on Spanish workers and to demand the release of those at present awaiting trial.”

The policeman reports there were about 150 people, some of them with stick-torches or flares, and a large number with placards demanding the release of the Spanish strikers and gives a lengthy account of the speech I made and had long forgotten. Headed by a drum and pipe band, the procession proceeded via Park Lane and Piccadilly to Headfort Place, where it was stopped by the police, although a deputation of three, including myself, was allowed to take a petition to the embassy while the rest of the marchers “were passing the time by singing revolutionary songs”.

According to the police report: “The whole demonstration from start to finish was carried out in a peaceful way, and nothing suggesting of disorder occurred during the proceedings.” It was, perhaps, reasonable to send a couple of coppers to make sure we didn’t use our torches to burn down the embassy, but what a waste of notebook and pencil writing down everything I said!

Another report, headed “Secret”, although there was nothing secret about it, lists the

names, including Betty’s, of the newly elected members of the IBA’s executive committee. The secret report says that its “source was extremely well placed to obtain the above information”. So far, so silly. What is more sinister is the evidence of the interception of letters and phone calls and the bugging of rooms.

There is a very long list of the names and addresses including mine, divided into London and outside London, of individuals and organisations who had written to the Spanish ambassador expressing their concerns about political prisoners in Spain. And there are photographs (this was before the advent of photocopiers) of minutes of the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee, typed on my old Olympia portable, and letters I wrote together with extensive transcripts of private conversations in the office at Communist Party headquarters of Peter Kerrigan, who had fought with the British Battalion of the International Brigades in Spain.

All this was in the files kept on the IBA and the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee. There were apparently separate files on Betty and myself, numbered PF76717 and PF402/51/1064 respectively, but these have 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). So that’s all right then. It’s all nice and legal.

A peseta from my father

By Joyce Carroll

A friend kindly gave me “Poems from Spain” as a birthday present and I thought it about time (in my 71st year!) that I joined the IBMT. My father, José (Pepe) Fernández, was a Spanish Republican imprisoned in Lugo, Galicia, in north west Spain, in the first months of the war. My mother (British and seven months pregnant with me) left Spain with my 20-month-year-old sister, Daisy, and made the journey by boat and train back to her family in Liverpool.

My father was born in La Coruña in 1896 and spent many years of his adult life in Cuba before meeting my mum in England through a mutual friend on his way back to Spain in 1929/30.

When we were older, she told my sister and me that she had been allowed to visit my father twice before she left for England. On the first occasion she went to the prison alone and my father was brought to the governor’s office. On her second (and last) visit she took my sister, expecting the same meeting place but this time was only allowed to see my father through a grille. My sister and father could not embrace and my mum always suffered guilt as she felt responsible for taking Daisy into that traumatic situation.

Apparently my father gave Daisy a peseta and said he was in prison so that one day every child in Spain would have a peseta. At the time, this did nothing to calm the distress of a toddler who who couldn’t understand why her daddy was not able to hold and cuddle her. However, when my mum told us about the peseta when we were old enough to understand, it became a very emotional consolation for not having a father. We thought of him – and still do – as the most heroic of men and it has certainly shaped our own political consciousness. My mum was always vague about the reason for his imprisonment, saying only that he had been on an anti-fascist demonstration in the town. I don’t think she knew the extent of his political involvement.

I was back in my grandmother’s house in Liverpool in October of 1936. My sister’s second birthday was in December and in the same month our mother received news that my father was dead.

My mother was heroic too. She was 40 years old, with a baby and a toddler, no money, no pension, but fortunately able to live with my grandmother and as soon as I was weaned she went back to work as a telephonist on full-time shifts at the Anfield exchange. I don’t think she ever really accepted that my father was dead and when she went to an International Brigades commemorative meeting in Liverpool in 1938 she must have hoped in some way for a sort of reunion with him.

With thanks to everyone at the IBMT for keeping alive these memories.

Our dad, the quiet hero

By Gerry Abrahams

Our dad, Gerry Doran, was born at Lowrie Street, Belfast, on 26 August 1911, the same year that the *Titanic* was launched from the docks there. The family moved from Belfast to Ballymoney where our grandfather was an electrical contractor, then on to Dublin in 1922 where dad would later join his father and brother in the electrical trade. As a committed trade unionist, it was a natural progression for him to join the Republican Congress in 1934 under the leadership of Frank Ryan, and when the news reached Dublin about what was happening in Spain, it was equally natural that he would want to join the Republican forces there.

On 14 December 1936, he was one of 14 Irishmen who crossed the border from France into Spain, led by Ryan. Ten days later, on Christmas Eve 1936, he fought at the Battle of Lopera in Cordoba, where he sustained severe head and arm injuries. A French doctor at the field hospital saved his life and he spent the next six months in Spain recovering from his injuries. Tragically, six of the men who crossed the border into Spain with him on the night of 14 December lost their lives at Lopera, two of them only 17 years old.

Like so many other volunteers, dad hadn't told his mother he was going to Spain. He wrote to her in April 1937 from Albacete where he was recovering from his injuries. He talked of those young men: "Well mother, I don't know what way you judge my action in coming out to Spain but even now I am more convinced than ever that I did the only thing worth doing – helping to kill fascism before it spread to my own country. Some of the best of Irish lads have fought and died in their efforts to save democracy – Tony Fox, only 17 years old – Kit Conway, the finest type of soldier I have yet met – Dinny Coady, Mick Nolan, Mick May – they had no regrets as their deaths each resemble a nail in the coffin of international fascism and of O'Duffy and his hirelings."

His mother was not the only person he hadn't told about going to Spain. His then fiancée Kay (our mother) broke off the engagement as soon as she heard he had gone. However, she eventually relented and forgave him, and they were married in 1940. Those people in the IBMT who knew our mother will recall that she became a great supporter of the organisation in the last few years of her life, but in those early years she had a very different view. Back then, she thought our father had gone out on the wrong side and discouraged any talk about Spain in front of us children – my sister Anne and me. Needless to say, despite that, our childhood was sprinkled generously with spontaneous renditions of the "Internationale" and shouts of "No pasarán".

Gerry Abrahams spoke these words at the IBMT Annual General Meeting in Belfast in October last year.

By Dan Carrier

For an unemployed miner from South Wales whose home town was suffering from 90 per cent unemployment, Paris was not the most obvious holiday destination in the spring of 1937.

But for Timothy Harrington, the trip to the French capital had nothing to do with ambling down the Seine, climbing the Eiffel Tower or marvelling at the furrowed brows of the gargoyles at Notre Dame. He was there to meet communist organisers, get over the Pyrenees and join the fight against fascism.

Now Timothy's story is the subject of a major new TV documentary told by his grandson, Richard – an actor who has starred in such TV dramas as "Spooks", "Holby Blue" and "Bleak House". Now he is turning his talents to a more serious quest: he wants to discover the story of his grandfather's mission to reach Spain. Harrington's family were Catholic: it was to cause ructions within the family for years, and

From Merthyr to the Ebro

his time in Spain was not spoken about.

Timothy came from Merthyr Tydfil, identified by the government as being one of the worst hit of the "distressed areas" – regions where the Depression was most keenly felt. His experience in this politically aware industrial heartland led him to be involved with the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, and he marched proudly with others to London to meet their comrades from Jarrow, to highlight the problems they faced.

So it seems now a natural progression that as the Spanish Civil War unfolded Timothy should join his Iberian brothers in the battle against reaction and fascism.

He left a note for his family saying simply

Return to the battlefields

By Alan Warren

Almost 70 years to the day when the British Battalion was sent to support the Spanish Republican army's taking of the city of Teruel, I had the privilege of exploring the battlefield and examining the remains still visible of the XV Brigade's presence.

Beginning at Mas de las Matas where the battalion spent Christmas of 1937 and Aguaviva where the US battalion was based (and the site of a unique piece of surviving graffiti written by American Brigadier Edward Muscala dated Christmas Day 1937), my journey to Teruel followed the original line of advance towards the city.

South from Montalbán the road rises up into the mountains and follows an uncompleted railway line dubbed by the Americans the "Great Teruel and Mañana Line". In various accounts of the battle, mention is made of a curved railway tunnel where the battalions tried to shelter from the bitter cold but suffered from the gales driving through the tunnel. The fires made inside melted the icicles and turned the floor into slush. The tunnel is still there and open, though densely overgrown, at the south.

There is a photograph in the Imperial War Museum of Dr Moises Broggi, a Catalan surgeon (who is still alive in Barcelona), operating on the wounded in this tunnel and whom Alun Menai Williams met. The tunnel is just south of the village of Peralejos and north of Cuevas Labradas.

Six miles west of the railway line, lying below the impressive Sierra Palomera, lies the village of Celadas, above which the Americans were posted on a ridge in trenches which they dubbed the North Pole because of the freezing cold.



Above: Republican tanks advance towards the Teruel bullring; below: 70 years later, the same scene today.



Teruel is an imposing city. Built on rocky cliffs, it is connected by a series of viaducts and has been largely rebuilt after its destruction during the battle in sympathy with the mudéjar (Moorish-style) architecture for which it is famous.

The positions of the British Battalion are easily identified to the west of Teruel. The machine-gun company under George Fletcher gave covering fire from the cliffs above the river Alfambra to the north of the city and the positions are still visible, though now the hill is slowly being covered with housing developments, making it difficult to access easily. Carefully walking down one of the steep tracks from the

“gone to Spain”. He met eight others, caught a train at Merthyr and headed for London. To avoid arousing suspicion they split up and made their way individually on to Paris. In Paris they met again and were fed in a café: they were warned that if they saw a man walking past clutching a large bunch of bananas they needed to leave immediately as the place would be raided. These were days of political conspiracy and oppression – the French and British, sympathetic to Franco’s illegal and murderous rebellion, had signed a non-intervention pact and were stopping nationals from heading south to join the fight.

The nine saw active service, fighting at Brunete and the Ebro.

Film maker Dewi Gregory says: “The story of the Welsh Brigaders has not been told fully, and this is the chance to try and understand what volunteers had to go through to fight for their beliefs.”

This is an edited version of a longer article that first appeared in the *Camden New Journal*.

of Teruel

cliff one can follow the route where Frank Zamora from Abercrave was killed. Frank was the battalion interpreter but it seems that at times neither the British could understand his Welsh/English accent nor the Spanish his native language when interpreting orders!

The gorge to the south west at Muela, where the Canadian “Mac-Paps” were positioned across the Conclud road is visible and the two hills to the north beside Masía del Chantre where the British Battalion advanced are sadly cut to the rear by a new bypass around Teruel. One can carefully cross the slow moving Alfambra river as the battalion did and by using a 1:25,000 map negotiate the bypass. On the top of one of the hills, traces of three separate extensive trench systems are easily identified, including the position of the HQ at the summit. It was to here that the battalion was forced to retreat and dig in after attempting to advance and secure the flank of the Mac-Paps to the left. Amid the debris of sardine cans are masses of shrapnel and other war material.

Finally I visited the bullring of Teruel which has been immortalised by a series of iconic photographs taken during the battle showing Russian-built T26 tanks moving up towards the building. One has to cross over one of two viaducts which link the main part of the city to the north. How the Republican army was able to cross them successfully under fire I dare not imagine!

Teruel has a surprising degree of remains to interest a physically fit visitor keen to explore the battlefield. There is as yet no museum concerning the battle, but a group has been formed in the city who wish to make such a place in time to come.



● IBMT researcher Jim Carmody has replied to the query from John Carass in our last issue about the above photo. The man is not John’s father, **Harry Carass**, but another man named Leonard Le Vann. The photo was taken at Victoria Station in London on 23 August 1936 and depicts the first British Medical Unit to leave for Republican Spain. Pictured are, from left, Randall Sollenberger (US doctor, later killed at Brunete in July 1937), Leonard Le Vann (from Edinburgh), Dr AA Khan (from London), Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit, Margot Miller and Doris Bird (both nurses). Seated are Arnold Kallen (US medical student at Glasgow), Frank Farr (from London, who became an ambulance driver) and an unknown person behind him (with glasses). Sinclair-Loutit, Le Vann and Kallen were all medical students). According to Jim’s records, Carass did not arrive in Spain until 11 February 1937.

● Dilal Khan is seeking information about his father in Spain, Dr **Ayub Ahmed Khan Naqshband** (known as Ayub Khan), who was a medical student at the London Hospital and a member of the Communist Party when he volunteered. He was with the first British Medical Unit to leave for Republican Spain and is in the photo above. Dr AA Khan is mentioned in Jim Fyrth’s book “The Signal was Spain”, but little more is known of him. Please contact Dilal Khan on [envionn@aol.com] if you can help.

● Rick Jorgensen is trying to find any records of Scottish volunteer **George Buchan**. He was from the Edinburgh area and after Spain was co-opted into the SOE (Special Operations Executive) and dropped into Yugoslavia. He spent some time as a PoW. He was a passionate trade unionist and well connected in Scottish TUC circles. Contact [rjorgensen@jorgensenandcompany.com].

● Sylvia Martin writes to say that she is writing a biography of **Aileen Palmer** (1915-1988), an Australian poet who, as a young Communist, joined the British Medical Unit as secretary and interpreter, leaving London on 23 August 1936. In Spain, Palmer was Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit’s secretary and later, Len

Crome’s. She was in Spain until mid 1938 and then worked for the Ambulance Auxiliary Service in London during the Second World War. She returned to Australia in 1945. Martin adds: “I have access to her 1937 diary and her letters home during that period (held in the National Library of Australia) but I would love to hear from anyone who remembers her or who has information about her. Three of her poems were reproduced in Jim Jump’s recent wonderful book, ‘Poems from Spain’.” Martin recently contributed an entry on Aileen Palmer’s time in Spain for Women’s History Month in Australia – see [www.womenshistory.com.au]. If you can help, contact Dr Sylvia Martin, PO Box 82, Woodbridge, Tasmania 7162, Australia; tel: +61-3-6267 4759; email: [sylviamartin@bigpond.com].

● Professor Robert Fraser is researching the life of the poet **David Gascoyne** (1916-2001), who in 1937 travelled to Barcelona with Roland Penrose and for several months worked for the radio station of the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista, translating texts and broadcasting them. He would be glad of any information from people who knew him in this or related contexts and can be contacted at [fras999@yahoo.co.uk].

● Susan Richardson is hoping for more information about her parents – **Susannah Allan/Sutor**, born in Scotland in 1910. She arrived in Spain on 29 September 1936 from Monte Carlo where she had been living. She was a nurse with the Spanish 27th Division in Aragón, and also worked in hospitals at Grañen and Polenino. She later married a Spanish army doctor, **Capt Gonzalo Aguiló Mercader**. They lived in exile in England until after the Second World War when they were allowed back to Mallorca, where they remained and where Susannah died in 1992. Susan believes that her mother’s sister, **Dr Grace Sutor**, was also a member of the International Brigades. If anyone has information on any of these three people, Susan would be very grateful. Contact her by email: [susan.richardson@orange.fr] or by post at: Kerforniou, 29640 Lannéanou, France.

● Anna Clarke is seeking more information on her grandfather, **Michael Clarke**, born in 1908 from Inglestone Street, Greenock. A plasterer, he had a wife and three children. He went to Spain, aged 29, arrived at Figueras on 11 February 1938 and was captured by an Italian armoured column at Calaceite on 31 March, taken to Zaragoza and from there to the concentration camp at San Pedro de Cardeña, near Burgos. He was released in late October 1938. He had previously been a regular soldier, serving with the King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, and after Spain was with the

Continued overleaf

From previous page

Cameron Highlanders in India in the Second World War. Contact Anna on: [annabel_clarke@hotmail.com].

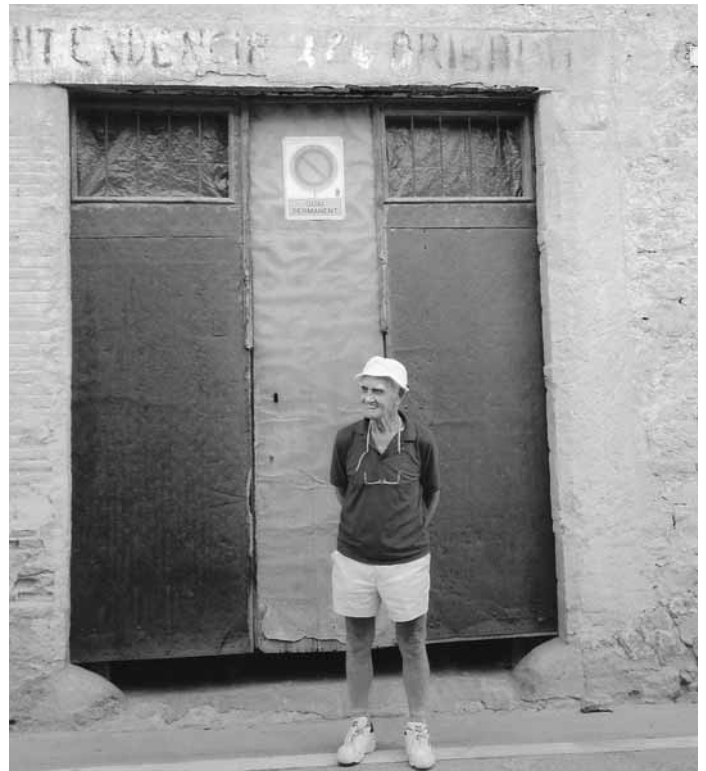
● Scott Kirsch wonders if there is anybody who remembers his grandfather, **Vincent Leo Deegan**, from Brighton, killed in Aragón in 1938. Scott's mother was only five years old at the time and unfortunately lost all contact with her father's family. She is now 75 and it is on her behalf that Scott is trying to find someone who knew him – or perhaps some of Deegan's family are reading this? If so, please get in touch with Scott at [scottkirsch@hotmail.com].

● Begoña Rubio asks if we know anything about her father, **Joseph Barberan**, who was born in Linkieburn, Scotland, on 6 April 1909. Both his parents were Spanish-born, and had lived in a village called El Caserío just outside Bilbao. During the Second World War, Joseph, a Republican, was arrested and sent to Burgos. At some point he was repatriated to England, as he was British by birth and enlisted in the Pioneer Corps in May 1942, serving with the British forces during the rest of the war. Begoña has traced a photograph, taken in 1986, showing a group of men marching in commemoration of the Spaniards who gave their lives in the Second World War. She recognised two men who were friends of her father, one was Miguel Ramira, who joined the French Foreign Legion and then went on to the Queen's Royal Regiment. It turns out she is a relative of Manuel Moreno, Chair of the Basque Children of '37 Association! If anyone can tell her any more about her father – or the friends in the photograph – please contact Marlene Sidaway (details on page 2) as Begoña has no email address.

● We have been sent a copy of a postcard from Mr A H Stevens of Bristol which had been written from a hospital in Spain during the civil war. The message was “Dear Betty, I thought I'd let you know that I have stopped one, but I am alright now, so don't worry, and remember silence is golden. Don't forget to write to me will you. Excuse the writing. All the best. From Pat.” It was addressed to Miss B Ivans of Bowden Court, Ladbroke Road, London W11, and on the reverse is a picture of the “Jardín de Floridablanca” in Murcia. Does anyone know who **Betty Ivans** or “**Pat**” might be? Contact Marlene Sidaway.

If you do not have an email to reply to queries, contact IBMT Secretary Marlene Sidaway (details on page 2) and she will pass your message on. Much of the information above comes from the British IB archive, via the IBMT's researcher, Jim Carmody, whose work is much appreciated. Please therefore share your information with him – he always welcomes new facts to add to our files. Send it to: [jamescarmody@yahoo.co.uk].

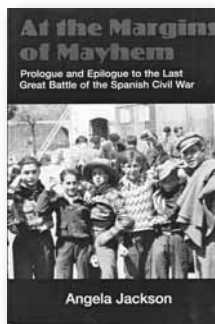
Steve Fullarton, who died earlier this year, is pictured in Marsa in 2003 outside the XV International Brigade's stores, or “intendencia”, with the 1938 lettering still visible above the doorway. The picture is taken from Angela Jackson's “At the Margins of Mayhem”.



Before the battle

“At the Margins of Mayhem: Prologue and Epilogue to the Last Great Battle of the Spanish Civil War” by Angela Jackson; £14.99 (Warren & Pell, Torfaen, 2008)

Reviewed by Pauline Fraser



In her latest book, Angela Jackson throws light on the regrouping of the International Brigades following the Aragón defeats in preparation for the assault on the insurgent forces of Franco at the Battle of the Ebro.

In the spring of 1938, the Brigades set up makeshift camps in the Priorat region above the Ebro in an area that became known as “Chabola Valley”, after the local farmers' storage huts. Jackson explores the impact of the IBs' presence on these rural communities, weaving together recent interviews with veterans and local people with contemporary accounts and with memoirs written many years later.

When the Brigaders had recovered sufficiently, training began. Bemused local children watched as volunteers used dry river beds, where they mimicked crossing the Ebro in non-existent boats. Meanwhile, the real boats were being built in a church which had been turned into a workshop and medical

preparations were put in place to receive casualties.

The heart of this lavishly illustrated book examines the relations between soldiers and civilians, which were invariably positive. For the children, in particular, it was an exciting time. They sometimes benefited from sweets or chewing gum, and one little girl had fond memories of receiving chocolate and condensed milk.

The decision to treat local people in the field hospitals was important in cementing good relations, while some Brigaders helped in the fields.

Several fiestas took place, often attended by famous visitors, such as Pandit Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi, La Pasionaria and André Marty. Brigaders saved up what little food they had in order to lay on a treat for the occasion, and all kinds of sporting events were held, from wheelbarrow races to high jump.

Moving on to the Battle of the Ebro itself, Jackson focuses on the role of the medical services in receiving and treating casualties. There was an appalling loss of life – nearly 4,000 were killed, more than a third of the total Republican troops deployed. She quotes at length from nurse Patience Edney, who lost the love of her life in that battle.

Angela concludes her book with an epilogue which takes the Brigaders from their withdrawal from Spain, to the concentration camps in France, where some become Resistance fighters, and the return, many years later, of survivors such as Steve Fullarton, Milt Woolf (see obituaries on page 3) and Alun Menai Williams to pay homage to their dead comrades.

Committed reportage

“Behind the Spanish Barricades: Reports from the Spanish Civil War” by John Langdon-Davies; £15.99 (Reportage Press, London, 2007)

Reviewed by Jim Jump



John Langdon-Davies was a *News Chronicle* correspondent who arrived in Spain by motorbike in August 1936 shortly after the Franco-led military uprising. Within three months he had written this vivid eyewitness account of Republican Spain at

the start of the civil war, reporting from Barcelona, Valencia, Madrid and Toledo.

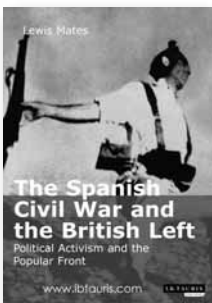
Reportage Press has now reprinted this classic text, one that Professor Paul Preston, who has written an introduction to the new edition, rates as being among the top ten books written about the Spanish Civil War.

The commitment of Langdon-Davies to the Republican is clear from his despatches: “I think one side right and the other criminally wrong”. Also evident is his energy, humanity and affection for the Spanish people, so it was no surprise that as a result of his experiences in the war that he founded Plan International, a child sponsorship charity that now works in 60 countries. Part of the profits of this book will go to Plan International.

Question of tactics

“The Spanish Civil War and the British Left: Political Activism and the Popular Front” by Lewis Mates; £52.50 (available to IBMT members at special price of £36.75, quote reference V63) (Tauris Academic Studies, London, 2007)

Reviewed by Jim Jump



This impressive study, which centres on the Aid Spain movement in the North-East, questions the tactics of the British left’s support for the anti-Franco cause. In particular, Lewis Mates is critical of the “popular front” strategy pro-

motivated by the Communist Party, the aim of which was to form a broad alliance of political parties and individuals opposed to fascism.

The author rightly points out that the fate of the Spanish Republic was sealed by the hypocrisy of the British government’s policy of “non-interventionism” in the civil war. He

argues that the largely humanitarian and non-political nature of much of the activity of the “popular frontist” Aid Spain movement in Britain deflected attention and effort away from the Conservative government’s covert support for Franco and the Labour and trade union leaderships’ failure to campaign effectively for the arms embargo on the Republic to be lifted.

Mates explores the nature of grassroots support, its extent and depth, the motivations of activists, the institutions they operated through, and importantly, the role and impact of ideas on activism. The testimony of several North-East International Brigaders is cited, including Frank Graham, Dave Goodman and George Aitken. Those within the British Left who did not embrace the Republic’s cause are also examined, as are the consequences of these divisions for the labour movement.

Many readers will disagree with the book’s main conclusion, which essentially belittles the hugely impressive coalition of support that was built for the Republic at a time when many British people embraced pacifism and their government conspired to allow a Franco victory. However, Mates provides a comprehensive and sympathetic portrait of the Aid Spain movement in the North East and offers new perspectives on an important period of 20th century British history.

Across the Pyrenees

“Memories of a Future”; DVD directed by Margaret Dickinson and Pepe Petos; narrated by Maxine Peake; music by Seanine Joyce; 83 mins; on sale for £12 at IBMT and associated events (produced by Marker [www.marker.org.uk], 42 Lisburne Road, London NW3 2NR)



First screened at the Renoir Cinema in London in March 2008, where the film played to a full house, “Memories of a Future” is a new documentary which commemorates and reflects on the Spanish Civil War, focussing

especially on the volunteers of the International Brigades.

A central strand is the event organised by the IBMT to mark the 70th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades. In 2006 a group set off from London, travelled through France and arrived in Spain by walking over the Pyrenees on a path the volunteers used from 1937 when they had to cross secretly, at night. The present day visitors met up with Spanish organisations to unveil a plaque in the fort of Sant Ferran, Figueras, in the presence of veterans Jack Edwards, Jack Jones and Bob Doyle.

The two filmmakers – one Spanish, one British – talk with the veterans, the walkers and

local residents, exploring both the past and present context of the event: why did the conflict rouse people all over the world? Have the issues behind it been finally resolved? Why does its memory still stir controversy?

In brief...

● Ray Parkes, an IBMT member in Reading, has donated three books for sale to raise funds for the Trust. They are two copies of **“Britons in Spain”** by William Rust (Lawrence & Wishart, 1939), one signed by British Battalion Commander Sam Wild and **“David Guest: A Scientist Fights for Freedom (1911-1938)”** edited by Carmel Haden Guest (Lawrence & Wishart, 1939). Any offers? Starting bid is £10 – double the amount for the signed copy. Send offers to Jim Jump (details on page 2).

● **“Renegades: Canadians in the Spanish Civil War”**, by Michael Petrou, has just been published in Canada by University of British Columbia Press and in Britain by Warren & Pell. It is priced at £16.99 and can be ordered, plus p&p, from Warren & Pell; tel: 01495-775 561 [www.warrenandpellpublishing.co.uk].

● Also published by Warren & Pell is **“From Aberdare to Albacete. A Welsh International Brigader’s memoirs of his life”** by Edwin Greening. The book recounts the early life of Edwin, his experiences in the retreat through Aragón and the Battle of the Ebro, World War Two and his fulfilment in becoming a teacher after the war. It costs £12.99 and can be ordered, plus p&p, from Warren & Pell (details above).

● **Belfast** and District Trades Union Council has published a 48-page pamphlet on the local support for the Spanish Republic and the International Brigades. With many newly available photos and other material, the pamphlet, written by Ciaran Crossey, lists all those local men involved – 78 in total – and is available for £5 (inc. p&p) from 45 Donegal Street, Belfast BT1 2FG. Cheques should be made payable to Belfast Trades Council.

● Poet and IBMT member Martin Green has written a play about the Spanish Civil War and is inviting anyone who is interested in seeing the script to get in touch with him. The play is called **“The Tolerance of Crows”** (after the eponymous poem by the Irish International Brigader Charlie Donnelly killed at Jarama in February 1937). It follows the fortunes of five British Battalion volunteers with scenes highlighting historical episodes that took place between 1936 and 1938. “Overall, it is hoped an impression of the fragmented and diverse nature of the conflict, and the fortitude of these volunteers for liberty, will emerge,” says Green. He can be contacted at 3 Antoine Terrace, Newlyn, Cornwall TR18 5BW; tel: 01736-333 169.



Above: Rosaleen Ross; centre: grand-daughter Mandy with one of Ros's old banners; right: part of the IB memorial in Victoria that Ros helped erect.

A British veteran in Canada

By Pauline Fraser

British International Brigade veteran Rosaleen "Ros" Ross celebrates her 99th birthday on 12 May at her home in Vancouver, Canada. I visited her in April after the dedication of the San Francisco memorial to the Lincoln and Washington Battalions.

Many of us will remember Ros when she lived in Sussex with Dr Reggie Saxton a few years ago. The story of how they first met lies many years ago, in Spain.

In the summer of 1936, Ros went on a walking holiday in the Pyrenees with her friends Winifred and Ralph Bates. On hearing the sound of gunfire, Ros says that they asked a shepherd what was going on. He told them that he thought it was "just the princes fighting amongst themselves again".

The three friends, who had met through the Communist Party and were active against Mosley's fascists in London, returned to Britain, where they volunteered to go to Spain, Ralph to fight as a member of the newly-formed

International Brigades, and Winifred and Ros to help in any way they could.

So in late 1936, Winifred and Ros found themselves back in the Pyrenees, waiting on the border to be escorted, as volunteers, into Spain. They were taken to Barcelona and attached to the British Medical Unit. First they worked on a newspaper, then Ros was sent to the hospital at Grañen where she worked as an administrator and later in various medical units, including at El Escorial, outside Madrid. There she met Saxton while working for the mobile blood transfusion unit in which he collaborated with Dr Norman Bethune. On one occasion, she gave a person-to-person blood transfusion.

Apart from a few weeks' break in England, Ros served in Spain until September 1938. After the war ended, she married Canadian Brigadier Allan Ross, who had worked as a machinist in the motor pool and as a transport driver in Spain. She returned with him to Canada and they had a son, Steve, born in 1940.

Life was difficult in the Canada of the 1940s and 50s for volunteers who had gone to the aid of the Spanish Republic. Although spared the worst excesses of the US's witch-hunts, the Canadian authorities' treatment of the "Mac-Paps" – as the Canadian volunteers were known – was little better, and they kept a close watch on those regarded as "reds". The constant surveillance made it

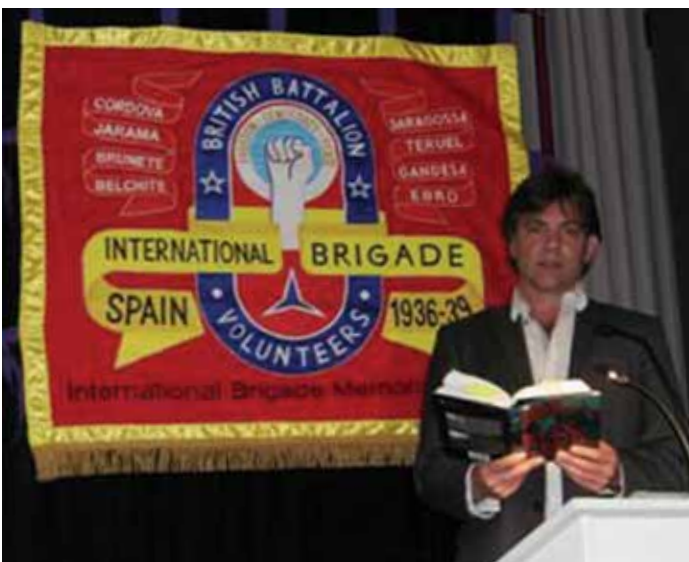
difficult to find jobs, but Ros was able to make ends meet working as a secretary.

She was made an honorary member of the Mac-Paps, attending their meetings and joining in campaigns with the Friends of Free Spain. A tattered and mildewed banner, calling for aid to Spanish refugees, recently retrieved during a family clear-out, is a reminder of those times.

One of her proudest moments was when she shook hands with Che Guevara in 1962, while part of an official Canadian government delegation to Cuba led by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau.

She was one of the three people instrumental in getting a fine memorial to the Mac-Paps erected in Victoria, Vancouver Island, the capital of British Columbia, in 2000, in Menzies Street, opposite the BC parliament buildings. It was unveiled in the presence of Ros, Reggie Saxton and other surviving volunteers, families and friends.

Ros and Reggie had met again in 1996, at the 60th *Homenaje* in Spain. Some years after the death of his wife, Reggie went to live with Ros in Vancouver, but when his health worsened, they moved to the UK. Following Reggie's death in 2004, Ros returned to Vancouver to be with her family, who all live locally – including her grand-daughter in the basement of her house and son and family next door.



This year's IBMT Len Crome Memorial Lecture at the Imperial War Museum, London, in March was preceded by readings by actor John Michie (left) from the newly re-published "Behind the Spanish Barricades", John Langdon Davies's classic reportage from the Spanish Civil War. Michie is best known for playing detective-inspector Robbie Ross in the TV drama "Taggart". See lecture report on pages 4 and 5 and review on page 11.

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