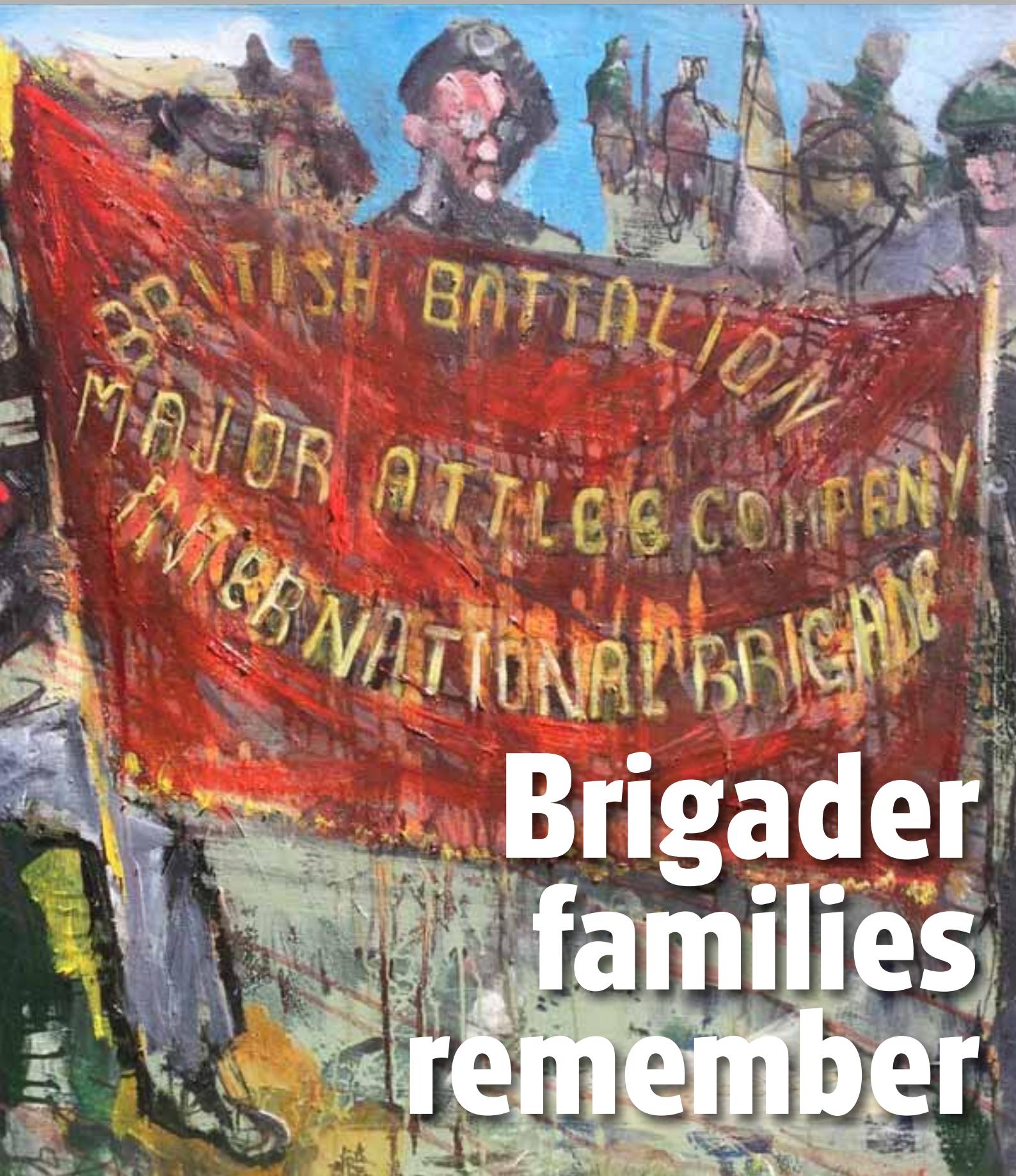




iNO PASARÁN!

International Brigade Memorial Trust • 1-2021 • £5



Brigader
families
remember



Become a Friend of the IBMT and help preserve the memory and spirit of the International Brigades

You can help make a special contribution to our essential work by becoming a Friend of the IBMT.

Donate more than £50 a year and your name will be listed as a Friend of the IBMT in our magazine. If you dedicate your donation to a particular International Brigade volunteer, this will be published along with your name. We'll also send you an exclusive Friend of the IBMT badge (above) to wear with pride.

- Send a cheque for £50 or more made out to the IBMT, along with your name and address, to: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU. If you are a UK taxpayer and wish to make a Gift Aid

declaration with your donation, you can request a form from admin@international-brigades.org.uk

- Alternatively, click the Donate button on our website (www.international-brigades.org.uk) and make a donation of at least £50 via PayPal. If you do this, please email admin@international-brigades.org.uk to notify us.

Thank you for your support. ¡No pasarán!



International Brigade Memorial Trust
www.international-brigades.org.uk

¡NO PASARÁN!

Magazine of the International Brigade Memorial Trust

No.56 ● 1-2021



► 'Brigaders with Banner' by Crispin Green, grandson of George and Nan Green. It depicts British Battalion volunteers with the Major Attlee Company banner. See page 7.



Surname: Williams

First name: Rowland

Other name:

Place of birth: Mardy, Glam



Surname: Osbourne

First name: Ernest

Other name:

Place of birth: Walsall

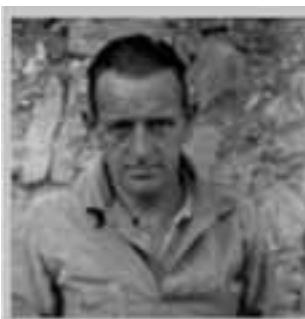


Surname: Goldman

First name: Bernard 'Benny'

Other name:

Place of birth: Manchester



Surname: Anderson

First name: Thomas

Other name:

Place of birth: Glasgow



Surname: Slater

First name: Mary

Other name: Elizabeth

Place of birth: Preston, Lancs



Surname: Nicoll

First name: Arthur

Other name: Reid

Place of birth: Fife

4 Notice of Annual General Meeting

6 New Year message

- IBMT President Marlene Sidaway writes

7 Crispin Green's art

8 The Oxford Carritts

11 Tribute in verse

- Remembering Walter Tapsell

12 Harry Stratton's scrapbooks

16 Our history

- Pauline Fraser gives her account of the IBMT's forerunner organisation

18 Books & the arts

- Reviews of 'Firing a Shot for Freedom' and 'The International Brigades'

22 Final word

- Paul Preston's tribute to Stuart Christie

iNo Pasarán! (formerly the *IBMT Magazine* and the *IBMT Newsletter*) is published three times a year. Back numbers can be downloaded from the IBMT website. All content is the © of the IBMT and credited contributors and cannot be reproduced without written permission. Views expressed are not necessarily those of the IBMT.

Editor Ajmal Waqif

IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU

020 7253 8748

admin@international-brigades.org.uk

International Brigade Memorial Trust

www.international-brigades.org.uk

More photos on our website

The IBMT is continuously adding new photos of volunteers to its online database, which contains entries for nearly 2,400 International Brigaders from Britain and Ireland.

In recent months hundreds of new photos have been uploaded, with the help of voluntary work done by Mick Brunton, and a donation of photos from IBMT member Kevin Buyers, who maintains a website documenting the XV International Brigade.

However, there are still many entries in the volunteers' list without a photo. The IBMT is calling on family members, friends and researchers to submit any photos they may have of International Brigaders so that they can be added to our website.

These should be emailed to:
admin@international-brigades.org.uk or posted to the office: IBMT, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1R 0DU.



Surname: Lane

First name: Ronald

Other name: George

Place of birth: London



Surname: McGregor

First name: William

Other name: Scott

Place of birth: Dublin



Surname: Dempsey

First name: Charles

Other name: W

Place of birth: Bristol



NEWS

Notice of AGM on 20 March

The International Brigade Memorial Trust keeps alive the memory and spirit of the men and women who volunteered to fight fascism and defend democracy in Spain from 1936 to 1939.

International Brigade Memorial Trust

37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU
Executive Officer: Ajmal Waqif
020 7253 8748
admin@international-brigades.org.uk
www.international-brigades.org.uk
Registered charity no.1094928

President Marlene Sidaway
president@international-brigades.org.uk

Chair Jim Jump
chair@international-brigades.org.uk

Secretary Megan Dobney
secretary@international-brigades.org.uk

Treasurer Paul Coles
treasurer@international-brigades.org.uk

Ireland Secretary Manus O'Riordan
manusoriordan@gmail.com

Scotland Secretary Mike Arnott
scotland@international-brigades.org.uk

Wales Secretary David McKnight
wales@international-brigades.org.uk

Other Executive Committee members

Pauline Fraser, Alex Gordon, John Haywood, Jonathan Havard, Alan Lloyd, Dolores Long, Tosh McDonald

Founding Chair Professor Sir Paul Preston

Patrons Professor Peter Crome, Hywel Francis, Professor Helen Graham, Ken Livingstone, Len McCluskey, Christy Moore, Jack O'Connor, Maxine Peake, Baroness Royall of Blaisdon, Mick Whelan

Historical Consultant Richard Baxell

The Executive Committee has agreed that the IBMT's postponed 2020 Annual General Meeting will be held online at 11am on Saturday 20 March 2021. Further details will be published on the IBMT website and in the *IBMT eNewsletter*.

The main items on the agenda will be to approve the annual report and accounts and to elect members of the Executive Committee.

Nominations are therefore invited for candidates to fill four



Communist centenary salutes

On 17 October the Communist Party of Britain organised a series of wreath-laying ceremonies at International Brigade memorials and other sites around the country to remember the role of communist volunteers in the Brigades.

Supported by the IBMT, the events were part of the CPB's programme of activities to mark the centenary of the foundation of the party.

Historians calculate that about three-quarters of the International Brigade volunteers from Britain were members of the

Communist Party or the Young Communist League.

Gatherings took place in Cambridge, Cardiff, Crewe, Glasgow, London, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Oxford, Sheffield, Southampton and Taunton.

Messages came in from supporters at home and abroad. CPB General Secretary Rob Griffiths providing the following communication, which was read out loud to gatherers:

Britain's Communist Party salutes the memory of those volunteers who went from

vacancies on the Executive Committee. Should five or more nominees accept nomination, a ballot will be held among members who attend the online AGM.

The four vacancies arise because Alex Gordon, Jonathan Havard, John Haywood and Tosh McDonald will have completed their terms of office at the AGM. They must therefore step down and an election, in which they are permitted to stand, along with other IBMT members, will take place. The



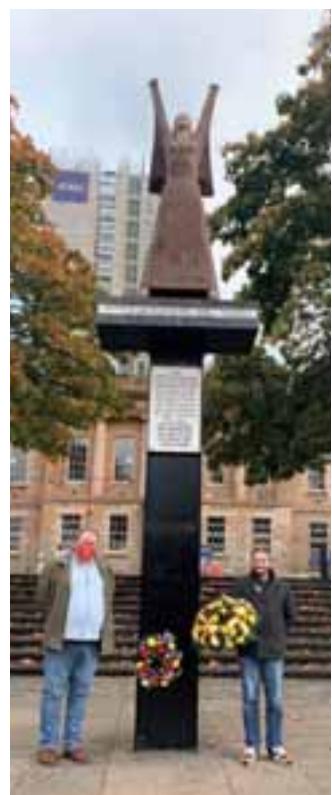
four elected members will serve until the 2023 AGM.

All IBMT members may nominate fellow members to serve

on the Executive Committee. Nominations must be made in writing and received by the Secretary by 8am on 6 March 2021.

The names of candidates for election will be published on the IBMT website in advance of the AGM. Proposed items for agenda item 'Any other business' must be received in writing by the Secretary by 8am on 13 March 2021.

Send nominations and proposed agenda items by email (these will be acknowledged) to: secretary@international-brigades.org.uk or by post to: IBMT Secretary, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.



► Gatherings in (from left) Manchester, London and Glasgow.

the volunteers

England, Scotland and Wales to Spain in defence of democracy against fascism.

They played a heroic part in the struggle to expose and resist the Nazi and fascist threat to the peoples of Europe and beyond.

Today, as the scourge of racism, fascism and imperialist war walks the earth with renewed vigour, we must ensure that the sacrifices of the International Brigaders and their medical units were not in vain.

Those volunteers for freedom call from beyond the grave for unity, courage and determination to build a society in which people

live in peace, cooperation and solidarity.

¡No pasarán! The fascists and racists shall not pass! ¡Venceremos! We will win!

Javier Moreno Díaz, a representative from Madrid's Domingo Malagón Foundation which campaigns for the recovery of historical memory in Spain, also sent the following message in support:

In our thoughts are those precious anti-fascists whose memory still teaches us.

Yes, the British internationalists who came to fight the coup were fundamentally workers. Our war was never an internal conflict. Our war was the first battle, long, very long, against Hitler and what his regime meant.

The International Brigaders knew how to stand alongside the legitimate government on

the Spanish battlefield, because the British Communist Party immediately anticipated that the defence of democracy in Europe would begin in Madrid.

That's how it went: from 7 November 1936, defending the capital of the Republic, the heroine of Spanish democracy. ¡No pasarán!

Those first British volunteers marched, together with their French comrades, towards Ciudad Universitaria to defend, and perhaps to die, for freedom – for our freedom, for yours, for everyone's, in return for nothing.

Thanks to the British Communist Party for having sent its members to save Spain from reaction. Through that example, the stream that advances towards equality and socialism continues to flow.

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

Despite the pandemic we continue to fulfill our mission

Dear IBMT member,

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the creation of the IBMT. During our first years I was constantly asked 'Why? There can't be many International Brigade veterans left now.' This absolutely convinced me that we had done the right thing in joining together the remaining veterans and the Friends of the International Brigades group, who felt they had been excluded – particularly the families – from the International Brigade Association because the IBA was for veterans only.

The veterans were adamant that they never regretted their decision to go and fight fascism in Spain and felt that it was important to remember their comrades, over 500 of whom had died in Spain and many more had sustained life-changing injuries. The conflict changed all their lives.

Many of you have been loyal members and supporters of the IBMT since those early days, and we have welcomed over 1,000 more members during that time. We should all be proud of the work and support we have given to make our Trust the successful and important historical memorial organisation it has become.

Recent world events have made it clear that fascism is still present and increasing in our time. This is why the IBMT, by highlighting the example of the volunteers who went to Spain, needs to support the fight against fascism and for justice and equality.

'We should all be proud of the work and support we have given to make our Trust the important historical memorial organisation it has become.'

which the Brigaders began more than 80 years ago.

So, please continue to support us by renewing your membership, by becoming a 'Friend', or by donating whatever you can to help us remember the Brigaders. It is vital that their memory is kept alive.

During the lockdown perhaps you have re-read the books about the Spanish Civil War which inspired you to join us in the first place. Maybe you've had a clear-out and found treasures of

personal letters and diaries from the Spanish Civil War in bequeathed boxes. Yes, this has happened!

During this past year we have managed to arrange some meetings and commemorations within the restrictions which the pandemic has forced upon us.

Our work has continued online, on social media and on our website.

Our merchandise is being revamped, the eNewsletter goes out regularly with up-to-date news and information and of course our thrice yearly magazine *iNo Pasarán!* is our flagship publication.

We have a brilliant team doing this work, including our Executive Officer Ajmal Waqif and our Trustees. Your continued support and encouragement has enabled us to do all this, and I can't thank you enough.

Sadly, the events of 2020 prevented us from meeting in the ways we have enjoyed and valued during the past 20 years. I hope 2021 will be a better year for us all, allowing us to meet our friends and resume our planned commemorative events as soon as possible.

All good wishes to you and all your loved ones. Keep safe.



IBMT President

MARLENE SIDAWAY President of the IBMT, as well as actress and partner of the late International Brigader David Marshall (1916-2005). She is pictured here speaking at the the IBMT's 2019 annual commemoration in Jubilee Gardens, London.



Andrew Wiard



► 'Rallying to the fight. The popular call to the government was not heard.'

► 'It all opens up along the Ebro front allegory.'

▲ 'Later George became a soldier.'

◀◀ 'Volunteers came from all walks of life.'

◀ 'When Nan died there was a gathering at West Norwood Cemetery. Many IB veterans arrived to pay their respects.'

Painting the British Battalion

Artist **CRISPIN GREEN** has produced a series of expressionist paintings on the theme of the British Battalion volunteers. He derived inspiration from stories about his grandparents, who were the distinguished Spanish Civil War volunteers George and Nan Green.

The starting point for me to begin making these images came when I attended, with my father Martin, the unveiling ceremony of the plaque commemorating those volunteers who died at the Battle of the Ebro, including his father (and my grandfather) George Green.

After my father died, myself and my siblings decided to spread some of his ashes in Barcelona, just as he had spread those of his mother Nan Green years earlier. The rest would be spread where we believe George still lies: in a trench by an unmarked field outside Gandesa.

The paintings came about in an unplanned way, in stops and starts. Many I regard as potential seedlings for further development. Making them was as much a process of looking at my past relationship with my father Martin, who rarely spoke intimately about himself or his parents, as it

had been about artistic creation.

As a boy in Canada I was largely ignorant of the Spanish Civil War and what I knew came from exchanges with school mates when they tried to talk grandiosely of what one's father or grandfather did 'in the war'. Not knowing my absent father then, or about his absent father, I first consulted with my mother. I could then tell them that my grandfather was an ambulance driver who was blown up while driving a medical vehicle on the last days of the Spanish Civil War. My boasting school friends had never heard of the war, which put an end to any claims to glory I may have had.

I only learnt relatively recently that George driving an ambulance to Spain was his way of bypassing the legal restrictions imposed on travelling to Spain at the time, and that he intended to join up with the International

Brigades soon after arriving and delivering the supplies.

I have had to adjust my picture of him as a non-combatant volunteer medic from a cultured background (he was a trained classical musician), to that of a man who spent his last days as a sergeant machine gunner sticking it out with a 'few Spanish lads' to the bitter end at the Ebro.

George himself must have known the odds of survival were against him and his comrades when he wrote to Nan in the spring of 1938: 'Will you tell the children why we came to Spain... Nan, dear, whoever gets killed at Teruel or Aragón; or whatever gains the fascists may get today WE WILL WIN! And we in our way, have helped the forces of progress win... That it is our faith in our ability to build a world where people can lead decent lives, and our knowledge of the forces that cause us to take up dynamite and destruction; tho' loving peace and the growing of cabbages and the flight of kestrels; that it is this faith and this knowledge that make a better world possible.'

Although I never knew the man these words, and his little-known story, give me a catch in my throat whenever I chance to read them aloud.

I make these images without an idea of chronology but with brief descriptions providing a story and context.

Brothers who put their lives on the line for liberty

COLIN CARRITT tells the story of his father Noel (1911-1992) and uncle Anthony (1914-1937). These two brothers from Oxford left behind their comfortable lives to fight fascism in Spain, one of them making the ultimate sacrifice.

Boars Hill is a leafy suburb of Oxford, home to the well-heeled and the well-to-do. Its residents look down, both literally and metaphorically, on to the sprawling city below them. Boars Hill was where the Carritt family lived in a rambling Victorian house and where Edgar Carritt, Professor of Philosophy at University College, Oxford, and his wife, Winifred, brought up their seven children during the turbulent years of the mid-20th century. Two of the children, my father, Noel Carritt and his younger brother Anthony went to Spain with the International Brigades.

How was it that these privileged young men ended up in the cold and wet and stinking mud at Jarama, and later, suffered the hellish heat of Brunete, where Anthony, driving an ambulance, was killed in a fascist bombing raid? What was it that radicalised them and their siblings to make such life-changing commitments to anti-fascism?

In 1930, Noel was a student at Oriel College, Oxford, reading Zoology, and he was caught up in the burgeoning 'new left' movement in the universities at the time. Noel joined the October Club, Oxford University's first communist society. At home his older brothers were already politically active. Michael was working with the Indian Civil Service and was secretly helping the Indian independence movement in their anti-colonial struggles, and Bill was in the US supporting striking miners in Kentucky.

The house at Boars Hill became a Mecca for

left-wing intellectual debate during the mid-thirties, with Auden, Spender, Crossman and the Carritt brothers joining with seasoned political activists like Abe Lazarus, who was organising the workers at Morris Motors to secure union recognition.

In Germany, Hitler's fascists had taken control of the Reichstag and were embarking on the reign of terror against all who stood in their way. Many from the political left or who were Jewish were urgently seeking asylum outside Germany, but the UK government was far from welcoming. Exiles had to have financial means of support if they were to be admitted and Professor Carritt was one of several Oxbridge academics providing such guarantees. One exile was Heinrik Mottek,

'How was it that these privileged young men ended up in the cold and wet and stinking mud at Jarama, and later, suffered the hellish heat of Brunete.'

editor of a left-leaning paper in Frankfurt, Germany, who, with his wife and 18-year-old daughter Liesel, made it to the UK in 1932. But Liesel risked being forcibly returned to fascist Germany upon reaching her 21st birthday and, as both a communist and a Jew,





◀ Noel, convalescing in Madrid, following a shrapnel injury at Jarama in February 1937.

▲ Anthony, pictured in Oxford, shortly before leaving for Spain.

► Liesel Mottek with a militia unit in Aragón, 1936.

she would almost certainly not have survived persecution and the concentration camps of the 1940s. So, in 1933, Noel married her, and provided the passport that safeguarded her future. Was it just a marriage of convenience or was it more than that? I'm sure that their joint political commitment brought them together and it was Liesel who first went to Spain in the late summer of 1936. In those early stages of the formation of the International Brigades women were not permitted in front line fighting positions, so Liesel, being a headstrong girl, joined a militia unit fighting in Aragón.

Noel, by then, had left university and was teaching at a school in Sheffield, but in the autumn of 1936 he decided to follow Liesel's lead. Without giving any notice to the school's headteacher, one evening he packed a rucksack and caught the train to London. He had an hour to kill in London so thought he should at least tell his parents back at Boars Hill of his plans. As a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain he had the credentials for membership of the Brigade, and as a passport holder at a time before the UK government had made membership of the Brigade illegal, he was easily able to travel to Spain without the added hardship of so many volunteers who had to cross the Pyrenees into Spain on foot.

At some point whilst in Spain, Liesel must have transferred to the Brigade because towards the end of 1936 we know that she was



secretary to Dave Springhall, the Stalinist Assistant Brigade Commissar in Spain. But she and Noel had little if any interaction in Spain and their relationship slowly disintegrated.

Much has been written about the Jarama conflict...For Noel, as for so many, it was a baptism of fire.'

Despite the increasing distance in their relationship, Noel still cared for Liesel, as was evident when Liesel took herself off to Barcelona without any official leave of

absence. Noel wrote to the senior party officials in the city pleading for leniency in dealing with her and suggested that the Brigade might more usefully employ her for her language skills. It seems that Noel's persuasive letter worked and Liesel continued in the Brigade for some time before being repatriated.

In February 1937 Noel, as one of the Brigade's foot soldiers, took the fight to the fascists at the key Battle of Jarama. Much has been written about the Jarama conflict and readers of these pages will be familiar with the background. For Noel, as for so many, it was a baptism of fire. Weather conditions were appalling; it was cold and wet, training had

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

THE OXFORD CARRITTS

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

been insufficient, communications and intelligence were almost non-existent and leadership, whilst always of high calibre and idealistically positive, was constantly changing as senior officers were killed or injured. Given the circumstances, it is quite remarkable that the heavily out-numbered and out-gunned Brigade held their own against the fascist onslaught, even preventing Franco's forces from cutting the Madrid-Valencia road and putting the capital city under siege.

Noel would not have been a good soldier. Brave, certainly, but it was not in his nature to fight with the aggression that is necessary in war. It must have been an awful experience for him. He took some comfort in an odd friendship that developed in the trenches with Clem Beckett, the international speedway rider. They were chalk and cheese, Noel from a privileged background and an academic and Clem being a down to earth working class northerner. It hit Noel very hard when Beckett was killed at Jarama. But he stuck it out until his hand was injured by shrapnel and he was withdrawn for medical treatment.

Whilst recovering in Madrid, his brother, Anthony, joined the Brigade and arrived in Spain sometime in April. Both brothers decided to volunteer as ambulance drivers and

in July 1937 were deployed at the battle for Brunete. By then, the cold and wet of Jarama had been replaced by the intolerable heat of a Spanish summer. But as at Jarama, the Brigade was out-numbered and out-gunned, and, in particular, it was the fascists with their Italian and German backers who dominated the skies.

Sometime around 10 July Noel heard that Anthony was missing. Noel searched for evidence of his brother's fate, walking from

'Noel searched for evidence of his brother's fate, walking from village to village, from field station to first aid post to try to discover what happened.'

village to village, from field station to first aid post to try to discover what had happened. But neither Anthony's ambulance nor his body were ever found and Noel had to accept that he had been killed and to communicate the terrible news to his parents in Oxford. More than 40 years later, I was in conversation with Len Crome, the chief medical officer with the battalion at Brunete. Len told me that Anthony

had delivered a number of injured Brigadiers to his field hospital on that fateful day and had been instructed to return immediately to the front lines because there were reports of further casualties. Anthony set off straight away, but Len remembered a particularly intense period of bombing at the time and it must be assumed that Anthony was caught up in that fascist assault.

After Brunete, Noel was transferred to the base hospital at Huete, where Peter Harrisson, his close friend from Boars Hill, was the chief administrative officer. Whilst at Huete, Noel was briefly appointed to the role of political commissar, in addition to his routine driving duties. As always, the Brigade was short of medical personnel and, on the strength of his degree in zoology, he was briefly co-opted by Dr Douglas Jolly as an assistant anaesthetist.

Noel returned to the UK in December 1937 where he continued to campaign for the International Brigades and for the Aid Spain movement. During the Second World War he applied to serve in the Royal Navy but was refused on account of his MI5 record. After the war he returned to teaching. He died in 1992.

Colin Carritt is Chair of the IBMT-affiliated Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee.

FRONT LINE: Noel, standing on the left of picture, at Brunete, July 1937.



There's Wally

There is Wally toppling like *toro* in the *hora de la verdad*
 There's the dead glare in his eyes even before he hits the ground
 There is the small cloud of gun smoke from the barrel of the pistol
 There is the rosette bullet hole flowering in the soil of his flesh

There's the stricken, disbelieving stare of his comrades in ideals
 There is the turret of the tank from which the shot was fired
 There is the flush of panic in the faces of the ambushed Brigaders
 There is the frantic, headless chicken-run as realisation kicks in
 There are the boys ducking and diving as if caught oggy-raiding



There is the sporadic yell and sputter of hastily returned fire
 There are the Italian infantrymen emerging from the tree line
 There are the British throwing tins of food as if they were grenades
 There is Lewis Clive barking orders like a starting gun, 'Regroup! Retreat!'
 There is the scatter and scramble for escape into the woodlands

There is Bob Cooney shouting, 'I thought they were ours!'
 There is Malcolm Dunbar dragging Bob behind a tree trunk
 There is Bob insisting they can't leave their Commissar like that
 There is Malcolm pointing at Wally Tapsell lying still in the dirt
 There's his voice saying, 'He's gone! Now run! Run, or we're done!'

BOB BEAGRIE



My poem 'There's Wally' was inspired by reading the developing manuscript of 'Sing of My Comrades' by Tony Fox, which is due to be published in late 2021 as a booklet to accompany the unveiling of the Stockton memorial to the eight members of the International Brigade born in Stockton-on-Tees.

I was particularly struck by one particular incident which occurred during the Aragón Offensive. On 31 March 1938, during the second Battle of Belchite, the British Battalion was being escorted to their forward positions and came across a group of six tanks which the men mistook for Republican tanks. As Bob Cooney recalls in 'Proud Journey':

We were soon disillusioned. With terrifying suddenness the tanks opened fire on us. Another group of tanks emerged from the wood on the right, and simultaneously hoards of Italian infantry appeared yelling their heads off. It was a shambles!

The account goes on to describe how the British Battalion commissar Wally Tapsell was shot immediately by a fascist officer in the first tank.

Tony Fox writes in his upcoming history:

The British managed to return fire, some men tried throwing empty cans, in an attempt to fool the tank crew that they had grenades, this gave enough respite for the Battalion to scatter. The men made

A poem for Walter

Poet and playwright **BOB BEAGRIE** introduces his elegy to Walter Tapsell (pictured left), who was killed at Calaceite on 1 April 1938.

their way back to Republican lines in small groups: Walter Gregory led one group, Malcolm Dunbar another, Lewis Clive led a handful of men who took several days to make their way back, Bob Cooney had been captured initially but managed to escape with another handful of men.

This incident and the flight back to Republican lines would make a strong and dramatic screenplay. In an attempt to begin a rudimentary exploration of the ambush I focussed it into a poem, trying to use each line as a cinematic style close-up of accumulating details, which paint a bigger picture and capture the shock, drama and tragedy of the event.

The pictorial nature of the poem led to the conceit of using the refrain 'There is the...' which renders the event in a kind of fixed eternal moment, one which we might view from afar, study intensely but never fully understand.

I realised the approach bore similarities to illustration and remembered the children's 'Where's Wally?' picture puzzle books by English illustrator

Martin Handford. These books ask the reader to locate 'Wally' among the extraneous details and other figures within a certain location.

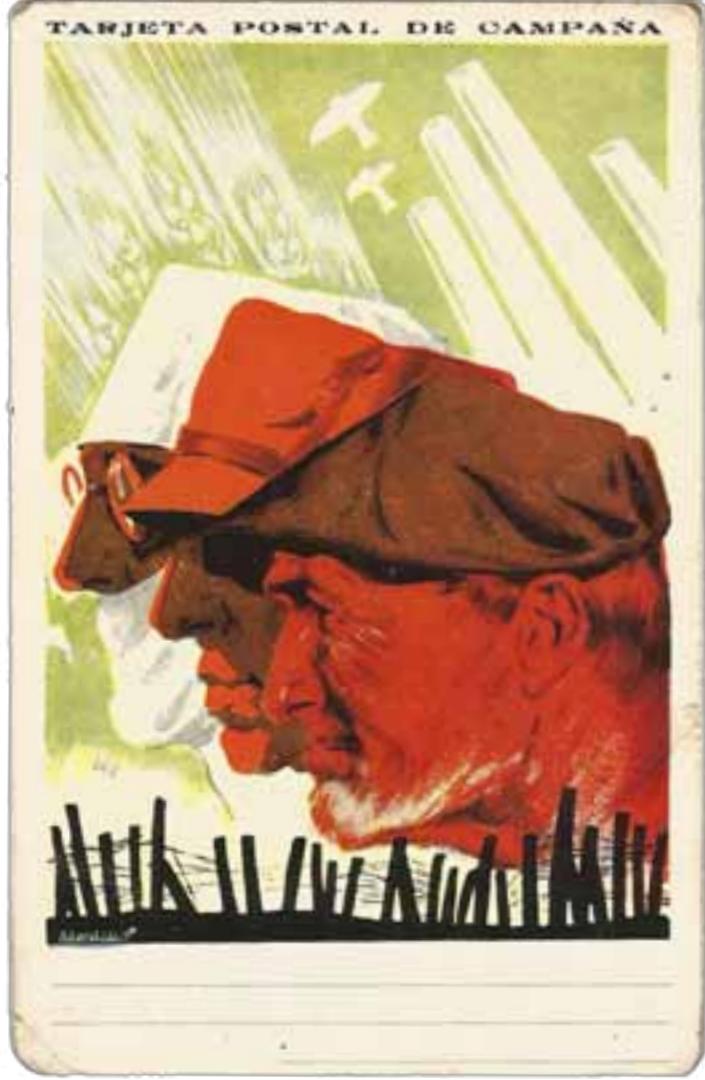
The connection between Wally Tapsell and Handford's 'Wally' is meant to be one of ironic tragedy given the poem begins with Tapsell's sudden death, described using the simile of the bull at the *hora de la verdad*, a sacrificial bull at 'the moment of truth' in a bullfight, when the matador makes the killing thrust of his sword between the horns.

The poem tries to capture the 'shambles' and panic of the situation and towards the end returns to focus upon the prostrate, still body of Wally Tapsell and the necessity to leave him if they are to survive the ambush and avoid capture.

A longer version of this piece appears on the News page of the IBMT website. The campaign for a memorial to International Brigade volunteers from Stockton is ongoing and receiving donations at: www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/stocktonbrigaders



◀ Tapsell (front row, fourth from left) at a railway station in Moscow with other members of the British Workers' Sports Association who competed in the 1928 Spartakiad.



Scrapbooks of an anti

Harry Stratton (1905-1989) was an International Brigader, and taxi driver by trade from Swansea, who drew cartoons, scribbled notes and collected stamps and newspaper clippings during his time in Spain, as well as in his later service during the Second World War. Stratton preserved these ephemera in extensive scrapbooks, which his son **LES STRATTON** has recently shared with the IBMT. The highlights are presented here, alongside a biography.

Harry Stratton was born in Swansea in 1905. His father ran a small horse cab business and when Harry left school at 14 he began working for his father as a coach painter. During the evenings he attended art classes and discovered a talent for drawing, as demonstrated by the cartoons he would draw in Spain. He began taxi-driving in 1922, when horses were replaced by internal combustion engines, and in 1929 he bought his own car and became self-employed. That same year he also married his first wife Winnie.

Harry was brought up as a Christian, and indeed had been a choirboy as a child. He began questioning his faith after his brother-in-law Alan was tragically killed in a road accident. Spurred on by the poverty in Swansea, and obvious inequality, he also questioned the political orthodoxy and became a socialist. He was a powerful man who worked 80 hours a week, swam 19 lengths in the mornings and still had time for political activity, including campaigning for Communist Party (CP) General Secretary Harry Pollitt, who stood for Parliament in the Rhondda in 1935.



-fascist life

When Franco started his rebellion against the Spanish government 'support and help was given by democrats from all over the world', Harry wrote in his autobiography 'To Anti-Fascism by Taxi'. The Welsh District of the Communist Party organised a petition asking Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin to recall Parliament to discuss the Spanish Civil War. A delegation, including Charlie Williams of the Cardiff Trades Council, two Communist councillors from the Rhondda and miners' leader Will Paynter, presented the petition to Baldwin. He was on holiday in mid-Wales and Harry drove two of the delegation there, where they subsequently held a meeting in Newtown.

Fly-posting

Harry was involved in helping with many meetings and driving for leaflet and fly-posting campaigns. He was asked to join the Communist Party, and agreed as he understood it to be the only party capable of fighting for socialism.

Food and clothing were collected for Spain, and Harry made many journeys to the docks, including

two trips to Spanish ships calling at Southampton and Port Talbot.

He agonised over whether to volunteer for the International Brigade, as he and Winnie had two young daughters, Jean and Elaine. Worse, Winnie did not agree with his politics. He was told by Charlie Williams that if he went to Spain, Winnie would be given a weekly allowance from a fund for International Brigade dependents, organised by author and campaigner Charlotte Haldane. Harry told Winnie he had a job in Southampton; in fact he set off for London. It would be the pivotal experience of his life.

He went to the Communist Party headquarters in King Street for directions, then to Victoria Station and travelled to Paris with many other volunteers. The MI5 records held in the National Archives state that on 22 January 1937 Harry Stratton left Newhaven for Dieppe. He visited the Place de la Bastille, significant to him as he was born on the anniversary of Bastille Day. Then he went to Perpignan by train, sent Winnie a postcard, and was taken by coach across the Spanish border to an old

► Postcard replicas of a series of posters produced by the Spanish Communist Party with the heading 'Conditions in order to win the war.' The above are numbers 3, 5 and 6.

▲ Back row (from left): Jack Williams, William Morrisey, Lance Rogers. Front: Harry Stratton.

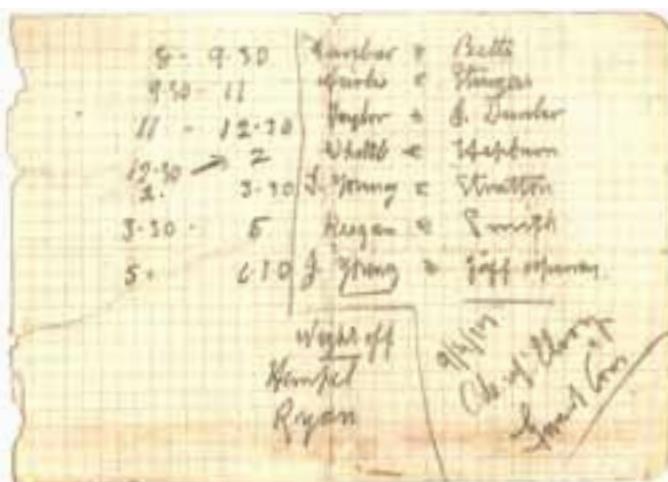
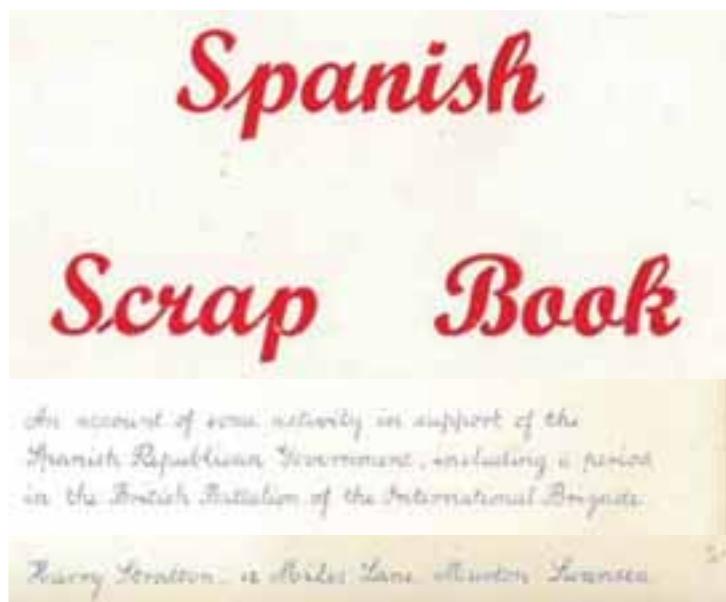
fort in Figueras, where Americans and others joined them. A thousand volunteers of many nationalities sang 'The Internationale' together as they marched from the camp. Harry never forgot the exhilaration.

After a train journey to Barcelona they marched up La Rambla to a great welcome. They were given oranges at every stop on the way to the International Brigade base at Albacete. At the British Battalion camp at Madrigueras, Harry delivered a pair of socks knitted for Tom Wintringham by his wife. Wintringham was one of the founders of the *Daily Worker*, who later trained the Home Guard in guerrilla tactics. A week later, on 15 February 1937, Harry was sent to the Jarama front line, and was immediately under fire. He remembers loosening a piece of rock from a shallow trench and as he pushed it onto the beginnings of a parapet, it was immediately struck by a bullet.

Harry was one of the fortunate ones. The heaviest losses and casualties – 450 out of 600 men – had happened over the previous three days. With two breaks, he stayed in the front line until the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

HARRY STRATTON



►►► Scrapbook front page and inner page: 'An account of some activity in support of the Spanish Republican government, including a period in the British Battalion of the International Brigade.'

►► Cartoon captioned 'The newly arrived, and thirsty, British volunteer.'

► A drawing for the magazine *La Voz de la Sanidad*, composed at the front and printed in Madrid. It depicts an operating theatre in the town of Colmenar de Oreja near the Jarama front.

▲▲ Photographic copy of poster which was used at public meetings held in Cardiff in 1936 in support of the Spanish Republic.

▲ Cartoon sketches made at the front. Left: 'Spanish kitten taking cover in tin hat.' Right: 'Incident at Brunete.'

◀ A guard roster from the Jarama front, 9 April 1937.

FROM PAGE 13

end of April. His mother had written that Winnie was expecting in July, and he asked Will Paynter, now a battalion commissar, if he could go home in July. He asked again on 27 September and Will agreed.

Meanwhile he worked at a hospital and drew illustrations for *La Voz de la Sanidad*. At that time he was also suddenly taken ill with a heart problem and spent time in hospital himself.

He left for Barcelona, was deloused and returned to Swansea on 13 October 1937, where he learned that Winnie had miscarried. Their relationship slowly mended as Harry started work again, first coach painting and then driving. He started going to Swansea Communist Party meetings and became more involved in political activity. Harry campaigned against Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy and would also become a shop steward with the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), for his fellow taxi drivers. He would also sell the *Daily Worker* as well

'A thousand volunteers of many nationalities sang 'The Internationale' together as they marched from the camp. Harry never forgot the exhilaration.'

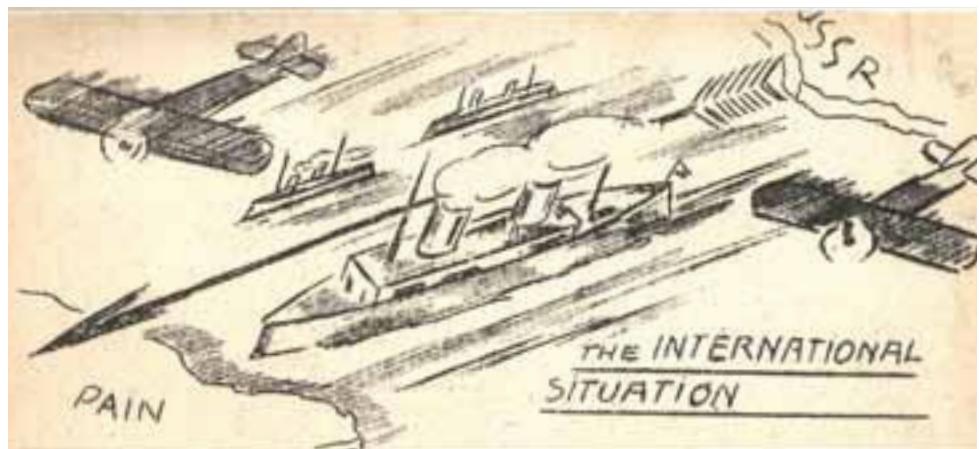
as other socialist literature, campaigned for bomb shelters as war became more likely and helped to set up the Swansea Peace Council.

Harry witnessed bombing in Cardiff and Swansea, and helped put out fires in the aftermath. He was called up in January 1941 and went to Kinmel Park in North Wales, to join the 11th Ack Ack Driver Training Regiment which was part of the Royal Artillery – he became a driving instructor. There he also met John Prebble, who would make a name for himself as a Communist author and historian of Scotland, and they struck up a friendship.

Tragedy struck on Harry's first leave in May, when Winnie became ill with meningitis. Harry wrote: 'For several days she fought that sudden and terrible illness with all her tremendous courage, but never had a chance.' He took Jean and Elaine to the top of Caerphilly mountain and broke the news to them there.

Petition

Back at camp, Harry and his comrades organised a petition calling for a Second Front – to attack Germany in the west, thus helping the Red Army in the east. He also exercised his



SPEEDING: Illustration from a Spanish Popular Front newspaper.

campaigning and organising skills through a number of small initiatives: writing to the Ministry of Food as their YMCA canteen was overcharging for food, starting a newspaper called *The Beam* and organising weekly meetings of talks, quizzes and educational classes.

Around this time Harry met Lil, a Jewish-Hungarian refugee who had joined the British Army and was working as an army cook. They fell in love and married. Lil organised opposition to compulsory church parades, recruiting other Jews as well as Christians to the campaign. Harry volunteered for a unit that would take part in the Second Front and was posted early in 1943.

Harry and Lil missed each other greatly, and wrote letters to each other every day they were apart, carrying on until November 1945, two months after their son, and the author of this piece, was born. The letters survive, and will be archived at Swansea University. The collection includes family letters, letters from government departments, and letters from friends and comrades – about 1,700 in total. They paint a picture of army life during the war, the political landscape – and a love story.

In 1943 he wrote to Lil about a film: 'It turned out to be fairish, with one interesting picture of life inside Franco Spain. The shots were taken with the permission of the Fascists, and weren't intended to be as revealing as they actually are.'

Lil responded that she had read that: *The CPs of 53 countries were represented in the International Brigades having sent, in addition to the others who were eager to join, quite a number of Central Committee members and leading Party workers. Among them were men like Hans Beimler, a member of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party who had been crippled in a German concentration camp, and who fell at Palasete crying 'Rote Front' (it means 'Red Front'). There were men like the Hungarian Communist, old Hevesi, who led the Rakosi Battalion in an attack on one of the enemy's concrete fortifications at Huesca, captured it but like the Battalion*

commissar, died a heroic death. There were rank-and-filers like John, an English truck driver who under heavy fire brought water to the men who were tormented with thirst; when mortally wounded he said: 'If Comrade Stalin saw this he would clap me on the back and say: Well done John, you're a fine comrade John!' I like this piece darling very much, it reminds me of our own little union, a Hungarian and an English.

Though he moved through many camps around the UK, Harry was never posted abroad. John Prebble, who had been part of the Second Front, wrote to Harry reassuring him: 'I know you well enough Harry to know that wherever you are you are doing valuable work. You went to Spain. In years to come that perhaps will mean more than saying "I went on the Second Front".'

Honour

Lil passed away in 1961 and Harry produced an album in honour of her life, meticulously written using calligraphy. After the fall of the Franco regime, he would return to Spain as a guest of honour. He continued to work as a taxi driver until he was well into his 70s and he died in 1989.

His obituary in the *Morning Star* attempted to capture the incredible range of commitments that defined his life: 'A life-long Communist, Stratton was a member of the International Brigade in Spain and served on the Management Committee of the *Daily Worker* and *Morning Star* from 1959 to 1973 and again in the late 1970s.'

He was involved politically in Swansea up to his death, was the *Morning Star* organiser in Llanelli, member of the West Wales Area Committee and the Welsh Committee of the Communist Party. Later, he joined the re-established Communist Party of Britain. As part of the TGWU, he organised a group of local taxi drivers.

Harry Stratton lived a rich life, committed to the politics of socialism and anti-fascism, the ample evidence of which is to be found in both his autobiography 'To Anti-Fascism by Taxi' and his incredible scrapbooks.

Your local International Brigade memorial group

Several independent locally-based International Brigade memorial groups have sprung up around the country in recent years. The IBMT welcomes this development and supports their work.

Local groups that join the IBMT gain extra benefits. They receive additional copies of *iNo Pasarán!*; they can buy IBMT merchandise at discount prices for resale; their details are published in this magazine so that members in their area can contact them; they enjoy all the rights of IBMT membership; they receive priority support and advice from the Trust.

To join, local groups pay an annual membership fee of £30. Download the application form from the 'Membership' page of our website (www.international-brigades.org.uk) or phone 020 7253 8748 to request a membership affiliation form.

DIRECTORY

● Aberdeen XV International Brigade Commemoration Committee

Contact: Tommy Campbell
tommy.campbell01@outlook.com

● Belfast International Brigade Commemoration Committee

Contact: Ernest and Lynda Walker
lynda.ernest@outlook.com

● Hull International Brigades Memorial Group

Contact: Gary Hammond
thehutpeople@gmail.com

● Oxford International Brigades Memorial Committee

Contact: Colin Carritt
colin.carritt@tiscali.co.uk

International Brigade Memorial Trust
www.international-brigades.org.uk

OUR HISTORY

How families and friends established the foundations of the IBMT

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the formation of the IBMT, when the IBA (International Brigade Association) veterans' organisation merged with the FIBS (Friends of the International Brigades). Drawing from papers and personal recollection, IBMT Trustee **PAULINE FRASER** has written a first-hand history of FIBS, which is summarised here and available in full on our website.

At last the story of the Friends of the International Brigades (FIBS) – the Friends, as it became known – has been told and not before time. It was urgent to get it done, as key protagonists had died, while those of us left were in our 70s. However, the importance of writing it only dawned on me slowly, when I realised that it might be of interest beyond those directly involved.

The story of FIBS began in November 1996, at the 60th anniversary reunion, or Homenaje (Homage), in Spain. Veterans from around the world came together for what would be the last time on such a scale, as most veterans were by then over 80.

The Homenaje was, by all accounts, brilliantly organised and coordinated by the organisation we knew then as the Amigos, or to give them their full title: Asociacion de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales (AABI). It left an indelible impression on all who took part in it.

The 60th anniversary reunion was the catalyst for the formation of groups in several countries which would bring together veterans, relatives, friends, historians and others who felt that the story of the International Brigaders, their fight against fascism and their example of international solidarity, must continue to be told. There was a feeling of urgency, because, as veterans died, younger generations would no longer hear at firsthand their accounts of the atrocities of fascism and why it must always be confronted and opposed.

It was in this atmosphere that four children of British Brigaders, Martin Green, Dolly West-Shaer, Dolores Wild and Hilary Jones, met in

Spain during the Homenaje, to discuss setting up a group to bring together relatives and friends of the International Brigades.

FIBS had a difficult birth, one filled with drama and suspense and fraught with conflict. Attempts to establish a solidarity and friendship group with the International Brigade Association (IBA) were met with suspicion and rejection. That opposition came principally from the Honorary Secretary of the IBA Bill Alexander. There were even moments when the future of a united organisation hung in the balance.

Despite the rebuffs from Bill Alexander, Dolly West-Shaer and Martin Green, Secretary and Chair of FIBS respectively, were not deterred and contacted as many people as they could by letter. This was a successful strategy. Some members of the IBA had reservations about the way Bill had been running the association. They felt it had become more or less a one-man band. Brigader Fred Thomas, in particular, supported FIBS' efforts to establish a friendship organisation.

On 11 July 2000 Bill Alexander died. This was a turning point in the relations between the IBA and FIBS. It led to a historic meeting taking place at the Marx Memorial Library in October 2000. Members of the IBA, FIBS, Marx Memorial Library and historians came together at that meeting to discuss the possibility of developing a closer relationship. To prepare for the meeting, the IBA and FIBS asked veterans how they envisaged a future organisation, if any, and this triggered a wide range of responses. Replies ranged from: disbanding entirely, through to establishing an association of veterans and friends of the International Brigades to be jointly



ORIGINS: A preliminary meeting in 2000 to discuss the foundation of the International Brigade Memorial Trust. From left: Pauline Fraser, Marlene Sidaway, David Marshall, Paul Preston, Sam Lesser and Angela Jackson.

responsible for maintaining the memorials, keeping the 'memory and spirit' alive and disseminating information. Veterans who were also supporters of FIBS favoured moves to create a joint organisation.

The struggle to establish FIBS is unique among the friendship groups that were set up in many countries following that landmark 1996 Homenaje. To the best of my knowledge, none of the others encountered such difficulties in their formation.

'It's always important to know your history and, in the case of FIBS, that history is what came before the IBMT.'

One problem was the uncertainty over the redevelopment of Jubilee Gardens on London's South Bank, the home of the national Brigaders' memorial. Representations were made by both organisations, but no satisfactory conclusion had been reached by the time the IBMT was formed and these concerns continued to dog its earlier years.

Writing the story of FIBS provided an ideal lockdown project for me, especially as I had all the paperwork to hand. Dolly West-Shaer, Secretary of FIBS for most of its existence, handed everything over to me in the spring of 2001 when I

took over from her as Acting Secretary. By then moves to create a new organisation were already well advanced.

Dolly had carefully filed everything in manila folders and there they all were, piled up in my loft, gathering dust. I didn't have to go anywhere or meet anyone face-to-face to put it all together. All I had to do was to contact the others who had been involved or their relatives to see what papers they might have that would add to the story. What they unearthed made a big contribution to the final work.

Thanks are due to Dolores Long (Wild in the history) and Hilary Jones, British Battalion Commander Sam Wild's daughters, Crispin Green, Martin Green's son, and Carole Mathurin, daughter of Dolly West-Shaer.

A big thank you must also go to IBMT President Marlene Sidaway, who sent me useful information concerning the coming together of the IBA and FIBS. Together with partner David Marshall, she carried out much of the work of the IBA in its final months before the merger with FIBS.

I put everything I found into chronological order and filed by month and year in two venerable lever-arch files. Next I collated all the items in a chronological database, under date sent, by whom, to whom, whether Brigader, relative, friend, historian or other, and with a comment column to give a snapshot of the contents. And then I started to write.

The history is based on the evidence of these

letters, printed emails, minutes of meetings and other documents in my possession. I used these sources to explain how things happened the way they did and kept my own comments to a minimum, allowing the documents to speak for themselves.

In the history you learn what key players in the drama did or said, perhaps even what they were thinking at crucial moments. It's always important to know your history and, in the case of FIBS, that history is what came before the IBMT. It's equally important for those who joined FIBS and for those who have joined since the IBMT was formed. Most FIBS members would not have known what problems beset the nascent group at the time.

Looking through the paperwork, I was amazed how little I remembered, yet I was one of those involved. The Friends of the International Brigades existed as an independent organisation for less than five years, from 1997 until late 2001, when it came together with the International Brigade Association to form the International Brigade Memorial Trust. Those five years were, however, crucial in establishing an organisation which would continue the legacy of the British and Irish volunteers. This history sets out to show the importance of FIBS in the formation of the IBMT.

'History of Friends of the International Brigades' is available to download as a PDF from the About section of the IBMT website.

Medical volunteer's memoirs provide unique insight



'Firing a Shot for Freedom: The Memoirs of Frida Stewart' with foreword and afterword by Angela Jackson (The Clapton Press, 2020).

Frida Stewart's memoirs, 'Firing a Shot for Freedom', give a gripping account of many of the momentous events of 20th century history up to the end of World War Two.

Born in Cambridge in 1911 to a well-heeled and well-connected academic family, Frida enjoyed a sheltered and privileged childhood. Her 'vague interest in politics' was sharpened when she visited Frankfurt in 1928, witnessing the 'poverty and unemployment'.

Back in Britain, Frida completed a violin course, but 'what...was a mere musician...barely on the fringe of socialist activities to do?...I was enormously enthusiastic and ready for anything – the more arduous the better – that combined music and some form of contact with the industrial proletariat!' she wrote.

The answer was to take a job organising music and drama in Ancoats. While in Manchester she travelled to the

Theatre Festival in Moscow, and 'felt I'd had a glimpse of a new world...After Moscow, Manchester seemed very grim.'

In 1936 Frida visited France with her father, where she was keen to witness the achievements of the country's Popular Front government first hand, but 'a few days after [we] got back from France the news broke: there had been a military coup against the democratic government of Spain...' Aid Spain committees sprang up, but

Frida had taken a job in rural Yorkshire, where she felt far removed from the action.

However, she 'soon discovered that York was by no means as dead-alive as first impressions suggested, and...there were many individuals both in the local Labour Party and in the Quaker community who were as keen as anybody, anywhere, to help.'

In summer 1937 Frida was asked to drive an ambulance to Almería where there were two hospitals for refugees fleeing the bombing of Málaga. Frida had two regrets: causing her parents anxiety and leaving just as plans were finalised to bring 4,000 Basque children to Southampton.

Once in Spain, the ambulance was diverted to Murcia where Frida helped feed starving refugees and assist at a newly-established children's hospital. She 'felt bound to go as often as possible to the International Brigade hospital [the Pasionaria] and visit the severely wounded in the wards.'

Frida longed to go somewhere that [she] could be of more use to the war effort', but was persuaded she should 'go back to England and do propaganda for Spain – tell 'em the truth, make 'em wake up, and send us arms.'

Before leaving Spain, Frida cadged a lift to Madrid. 'I was horrified by the desolation of the streets in the quarters which had been bombed in the raids of 1936, or consistently shelled, where every house had a gaping wound in its side or roof, or was gutted by incendiary bombs.'

'Over and over in Spain people expressed astonishment and bewilderment that the British and French would not sell the legal Spanish government the weapons it so desperately needed.'

'As for the leaders of the British Labour Party, they knew the full extent of the evil, and spoke fair words about helping Spain, but did next to nothing.'

Back in England, Frida took a job visiting the Basque homes and fundraising 'by organising meetings...and concerts at which the children themselves could perform.'

When Spain fell to Franco, 'we simply could not take it in: the disaster of the Republicans' defeat in March 1939.' Frida volunteered to go to the refugee camps and 'persuaded the authorities that I might be of some use in interviewing the refugees and in fetching them out of the camps.'

'At Argelès, she 'was absolutely sickened by the immensity of the problem...scores of little makeshift shanties which the refugees had erected out of old blankets and stick and bits of tin as protection against the bitter east wind.'

'The ones that came out of the camp were all

too few, and they had to have a personal invitation to enter the United Kingdom, along with a guarantee that they would not become a charge on the tax payer.'

On her way home via Paris, Frida called at one of the two Spanish refugee organisations that were still functioning. 'On the spur of the moment I volunteered to come and work for them.'

'People expressed bewilderment that the British and French would not sell the Spanish government the weapons it so desperately needed.'

Early in 1940 Frida left for France, in what was to prove the most difficult and dangerous part of her life. Trapped in Paris after the fall of France, she watched, horrified, as the Wehrmacht, bristling with the latest weaponry, made its triumphal parade into the capital.

On 5 December, all British women were rounded up and interned at Vittel. Helped by French workmen, she escaped to Vichy France with room-mate Pat, and thence back via Spain, Portugal and Ireland, to Portsmouth. Home at last, she broadcast on the BBC Foreign Service in French, German and Spanish, to tell the world about the resistance.

This is where 'Firing a Shot for Freedom' ends, but historian Angela Jackson, whose patient and painstaking work as editor has brought the memoirs to publication, picks up the threads. 'For Frida this meant almost another 50 years of continuous activity' whether in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the anti-Vietnam War movement, travels to China that led to her joining the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding, opposition to the Greek Junta or the Pinochet coup.

In 1992 her faith in socialism was restored by a visit to Cuba. Sadly, she died at the age of 85, shortly before the historic 60th anniversary International Brigade reunion (Homenaje) in Spain.

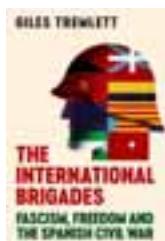
'Firing a Shot for Freedom' is a roller-coaster of a memoir, and while Frida's account of her involvement in Spain is central, her eye-witness account of other historic events is likewise compelling. Highly recommended.

PAULINE FRASER



They fought the most evil force of the 20th century

JIM JUMP reviews 'The International Brigades: Fascism, Freedom and the Spanish Civil War' by Giles Tremlett (Bloomsbury, 2020).



On 7 June 1940 Frenchman Jean Ballouard, a veteran of the Spanish People's Army's 14th Brigade, stood on the dunes near Dunkirk following the Allied evacuation. He gazed out over hundreds upon hundreds of tanks, armoured cars and lorries. Intact and abandoned, soon they would be in the hands of the invading Germans, and Ballouard thought just how useful these vehicles would have been for those fighting with him to defend the Spanish Republic.

The story of Jean Ballouard, who would later join the French Resistance, captures two core threads in Giles Tremlett's book, the first English-language study of all the International Brigades for nearly 40 years. First, the international volunteers were usually hopelessly ill-equipped to fight Franco's battle-hardened troops, let alone Mussolini's expeditionary army and Hitler's Condor Legion. Secondly, for most of these anti-fascist foreigners in Spain, the civil war was part of a longer war that didn't end with the defeat of the Republic.

Tremlett, a contributing editor at *The Guardian* and author of the acclaimed 'Ghosts of Spain', says that the International Brigades were unprecedented since the medieval Crusades for being a truly international army. Drawn from 65 countries – three-quarters of all sovereign nations in 1936 – most were communists and arrived in Spain with the help of their national parties and the Comintern. Many were veterans of anti-fascist fights in their own countries. In Spain they fought for the most part with great bravery and honour. But they were not uniformly 'good' people, the author warns us early on. There were cowards, psychopaths and rapists in their ranks.'

Overall, Tremlett's obvious determination to seek out and tell the truth, warts and all, works to the advantage of the reputation of the Brigades. He demolishes many of the familiar tropes used to denigrate the volunteers and the Republican cause. 'Hundreds' of them were not shot for desertion or other disciplinary reasons. There is little evidence that André Marty, head of the Brigades, deserved to be called 'the butcher of Albacete'. Communists were appreciated for their disciplined approach to warfare, even among those with no party political affiliation.

The author also concludes that the impact in Spain of Stalin's purges in the Soviet Union was small. Indeed, the Soviet presence was modest, and Spanish victims of the NKVD, the Soviet secret police, numbered more than 20, not the hundreds or

▲ Members of the mainly French-speaking 14th Brigade.

thousands claimed by some. One of those murdered was Adreu Nin, general secretary of the outlawed revolutionary POUM party. But other POUM leaders were tried in open court and found not guilty of espionage. The party's foreign volunteers were freed, though its most famous, English writer George Orwell, had already evaded arrest and fled to France.

'Overall, Tremlett's determination to seek out and tell the truth, warts and all, works to the advantage of the reputation of the Brigades.'

Wrongdoing among any collection of 35,000 individuals was inevitable. The sadistic treatment of inmates at the International Brigade prison at Castelldefels was probably the worst example. Brigade authorities eventually, though far too late, ended the abuses. They arrested the man in charge, French lieutenant Marcel 'the Hyena' Lantez, and

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

BOOKS & THE ARTS

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

nearly 400 prisoners – mostly held for desertion and drunkenness or on suspicion of spying – were ordered either to go home or rejoin their battalions.

There were frequent desertions, hardly surprising in a 'volunteer' army, and battlefield discipline was sometimes harsh. Morale fluctuated, but remained perhaps surprisingly high given the circumstances and bleak progress of the war. To underline this point Tremlett cites the interrogation of International Brigaders at the San Pedro de Cardeña prison camp. Franco's military psychiatrist, Antonio Vallejo-Nájera, found that – despite capture and confinement in terrible conditions – 85 per cent of the prisoners refused to express regret for fighting to save Spain's Republican government.

Inadequately trained, short of weapons and munitions, lacking artillery and air cover and at times poorly led, the Brigades could only partially overcome these handicaps by their sheer determination and political commitment to the cause. They were the shock troops of the Republic's newly formed People's Army, repeatedly thrown into the front line at heavy human cost. The volunteers remained absurdly brave,' Tremlett notes at one

'The volunteers remained absurdly brave... This sense of suicidal bravado was even more pronounced amongst the officers.'

point. This sense of suicidal bravado was even more pronounced amongst the officers, who were mostly either enthusiastic young idealists or dogged veterans of clandestine activity, police beatings and prison cells.'

Their story is told by following the course of the Spanish Civil War itself, from early skirmishes to major battles at Jarama, Guadalajara, Brunete, Teruel, Aragón and the Ebro. Even after the Brigades were disbanded and many had returned home, remaining volunteers went back into action in the dying days of the Republic. Germans and Slavs fought a rearguard action in northern Catalonia early in 1939 to slow the Francoist advance, while tens of thousands of refugees streamed across the border into France.

Giles Tremlett would doubtless be the first to acknowledge that, as a history of the war, his 700-page book remains incomplete. The battlefield was not the only front that the Republic was fighting on. Orwell himself later remarked: 'The outcome of the



Spanish war was settled in London, Paris, Rome, Berlin – at any rate not in Spain.'

Britain's promotion of international 'non-intervention' was a fatal blow for the Republic. It meant turning a blind eye to the help being sent to Franco by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, while denying the Republic the ability to buy arms except from the Soviet Union or on the black market. Aptly described by one historian as 'malevolent neutrality', British policy cleared the way for Franco's victory. Its chief architect, Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin, revealed where Britain's political priorities lay when in 1936 he instructed his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden: 'On no account, French or other, must [you] bring us into this fight on the side of the Russians.'

So, deprived of armaments – such as those strewn on the beaches at Dunkirk – the Republic could only hope to cling on in the hope that a wider European war would force Britain and France to side with it.

It was not to be and, soon after Franco's triumph early in 1939, Europe was, as predicted by the volunteers, plunged into wider conflict. Many of the Brigaders, as well as Spaniards who fought

alongside them, would continue the war against fascism in Allied armies or as guerrilla fighters.

What happened to the volunteers in the Second World War and beyond is documented in a riveting final chapter, covering a topic worthy of being expanded into another book.

It was Brigader Pierre Georges, known as Colonel Fabien, who effectively launched the French Resistance with the assassination of a Nazi naval officer on the Paris Métro in August 1941. All four partisan armies fighting the Nazi occupation of Yugoslavia were led by Spanish war veterans. There were former Thälmann Battalion fighters with the Red Army at Stalingrad, shouting slogans at their invading countrymen. Brigaders helped organise underground resistance at Auschwitz and Mauthausen. When British Brigader Bernard Knox, now serving with the OSS, the US wartime intelligence agency, went behind the lines to meet partisans in Italy he was recognised as a veteran from Spain by an ex-Garibaldi fighter. From then on relations were no problem. Another Garibaldi veteran,

◀ Italian volunteers in the Garibaldi Battalion of the 12th Brigade.

► The image on the cover of Tremlett's book is taken from this 1937 poster heralding the incorporation of all the militias into the People's Army of the Spanish Republic.



Aldo Lampredi, was one of the three partisans who executed Mussolini in April 1945.

Passages on the fate of the volunteers during the Cold War can make for difficult reading. In the US, communists were persecuted during the McCarthy witch-hunts. Alvah Bessie, a Hollywood screen writer, was among the Lincoln veterans jailed for refusing to name names. In Poland some veterans faced

antisemitic purges – about one-third of the Polish volunteers were Jewish.

Trials held in Hungary and Czechoslovakia before de-Stalinisation saw prominent Brigaders convicted on bogus spying charges and three were executed: László Rajk in Hungary and Otto Šling and Osvald Závodský in Czechoslovakia.

Others in Eastern Europe were regarded as

heroes and served in senior government roles. This was especially so in East Germany, including in the country's Stasi secret police – described by Tremlett as 'feared', 'infamous', 'notorious' and 'hated' in the space of a few lines. Its founders were Brigade veterans Wilhelm Zaisser, known as General Gómez in Spain, and Karl Heinz Hoffman. As the author points out, the Stasi created an elaborate counter-espionage and surveillance system in East Germany. But it's surely also worth noting that agents spent much of their time successfully hunting down former Nazis and perpetrators of the Holocaust. Meanwhile, the West German BND secret police was headed by a former Nazi spy, Reinhard Gehlen, Hitler's military intelligence chief on the Eastern Front.

The memory of the Brigaders continues to be contested, this book reminds us. In post-communist Poland, the Institute for National Remembrance has called for the removal of memorials to the Dombrowski Battalion volunteers, on the grounds that they were mainly communists. And, as a tragic epilogue, there was the 2011 massacre of 69 young Norwegian socialists by a neo-fascist gunman. They had gathered at a summer camp on the island of Utøya to take part in the unveiling of a plaque to four Norwegian Brigaders.

War is a messy affair, especially a civil war, as Tremlett makes all too clear in this highly readable and informative study of all the volunteers who went to Spain. He also insists that it presents a binary choice, and you are on one side or the other. The international volunteers fought on the right side, 'against the most destructive and evil force' of the 20th century.

Their journey to Spain was for many the 'defining experience of their lifetime', though for thousands it led to the grave. Ernest Hemingway wrote their epitaph when, speaking of the American dead, he said that 'no man ever entered earth more honourably than those who died in Spain'.

Jim Jump is the Chair of the IBMT.

Clem Beckett song album now available

Townsend Theatre Productions have released a CD and digital download of the songs from their musical play 'Dare Devil Rides to Jarama'.

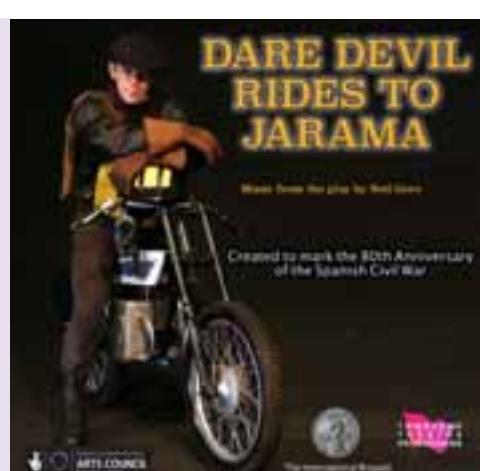
Originally commissioned by the IBMT for the 80th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades which was marked in 2016, the play tells the story of motorcycle ace Clem Beckett's life, his friendship with fellow International Brigader Christopher Caudwell and the tragic fate that awaited them at the Battle

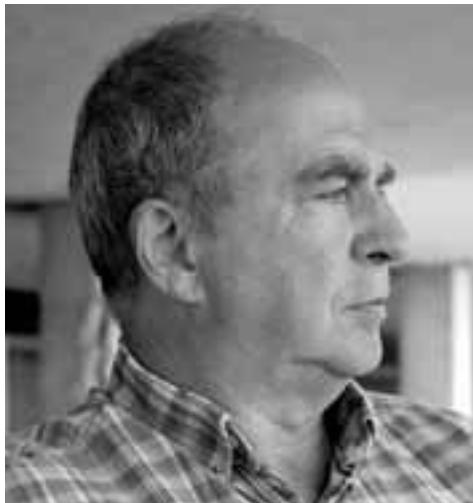
of Jarama in February 1937.

A four-part audio adaptation of the critically-acclaimed drama was made available to stream and download in September last year.

The CD and digital download can be purchased, along with the podcast version of the play, through the Townsend Theatre Productions Bandcamp page: tiny.cc/DareDevilRides

The songs are performed by Neil Gore and David Heywood, and the music is directed by ex-Steeleye Span member John Kirkpatrick.





◀◀ Christie pictured in 2003. Politically active throughout his life, he notably re-founded the Anarchist Black Cross and started Cienfuegos Press.

◀ Police photo of Stuart Christie in 1964, after being detained by the Spanish police for transporting explosives.

Spanish Civil War; 'Pistoleros! The Chronicles of Farquar McHarg' (Christie Books, 2009-2012). Both funny and full of insight about the Spanish anarchist movement, we were embarrassed after the appearance of the third volume when I received a request from a student who wanted to do a PhD on McHarg whom she had assumed to be real. Looking at my copies of the three Farquar McHarg memoirs, I can see why. The second volume contains numerous endorsements from British journalists and academics from across Stuart's wide circle of friends, among them the actress Julie Christie and myself. Rereading them makes it clear why the student might have thought that it was a genuine memoir.

Julie Christie wrote: 'When I was in Spain making Doctor Zhivago I well remember a strikingly dashing and charismatic Scot who was working as an extra. His name was Farquar and one night after shooting we talked for hours in the bar. He said that he had been in love with a woman called Lara. I recall that he had had a remarkable life and I told him that he should one day write it down. What a thrill to find out that he did so.'

I wrote: 'Having known Farquhar McHarg in his prime, and despaired of him ever putting down on paper his extraordinary experiences, I am delighted that he has finally done so. Glasgow's answer to Victor Serge has produced a document of remarkable value, so grippingly written that one might almost think it was a novel.'

As might be imagined, we laboured for some time on how best to let the student down gently.

Although the dominant anarchist theorist in the UK, Stuart was remarkably open-minded. His publishing ventures never made much money and he augmented his income by editing some periodicals that might have seemed at a distance from his ideological beliefs. These included *House Magazine*, the journal of both Houses of Parliament, and *Pravda Digest*. In the case of the latter, he added a Soviet Observatory section with a series of critical articles by Sovietologists. For my sins, I was the music critic on both magazines.

I have the most wonderful memories of Stuart, a witty and generous man, with many friends and deeply loved by his wife Brenda, who died last year, and his daughter Branwen and her two daughters.

Sir Paul Preston is emeritus Professor of Spanish History at the LSE. He is the author of many books on Spain and its civil war, including last year's 'A People Betrayed' (HarperCollins).

My friend, the Scottish anarchist who wanted to kill Franco

Stuart Christie (1946-2020), anarchist, historian and collaborator in a conspiracy to assassinate Franco, died in August aged 74.

PAUL PRESTON pays tribute to his friend.

Stuart Christie was a close friend, a warm and funny man who was famous for his involvement in, and later imprisonment for, an ill-fated operation to assassinate Franco. We met in the 1970s in the Centro Ibérico in London, a rather ramshackle affair where people interested in the Spanish Civil War, particularly from an anarchist point of view, used to meet. Among the regulars was Miguel García, fresh (or perhaps wilted) from 25 years in Franco's prisons and author of 'Franco's Prisoner'. Another was Pepe Martín-Artajo, son of Franco's one-time Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alberto Martín-Artajo. Pepe had been obliged by his father to leave Spain because of his left-wing views.

One thing that most of the obituaries have missed is that Stuart was a learned man. In the early 80s, he secured admission to Queen Mary College in the University of London where I was then teaching. He did a degree in History and Politics. During his time at QMC, I'm sure that I and my colleagues learned as much, if not more, from him as he did from us.

Not long after, he began a series of publishing ventures which led to the appearance in English of many important works about the anarchist role in the Spanish Civil War and in the opposition to Franco. These included Chris Ealham's important annotated English edition of the great classic by José Peirats, 'La CNT en la revolución española'.

He also wrote several of his own books including his memoirs. The commercial publication 'My Granny Made Me An Anarchist' (Scribner, 2004) was an abbreviation of three earlier volumes

published by Stuart's own outfit:

- 'Vol. 1 My Granny Made Me an Anarchist. The Christie File: Part 1, 1946-1964' (Christie Books, 2002) was about his childhood in Glasgow;
- 'Vol. 2 General Franco Made Me a "Terrorist". The Christie File: Part 2, 1964-1967' (Christie Books, 2003) about the bungled attempt on Franco's life;
- 'Vol. 3 Edward Heath Made Me Angry. The Christie File: Part 3, 1967-1975' (Christie Books, 2004) about the period of Edward Heath's Conservative government when Stuart was accused of belonging to the urban guerrilla group known as the Angry Brigade.

'I'm sure that I and my colleagues learned as much, if not more, from him as he did from us.'

They were a relatively feeble part of the anti-Vietnam War movement and one erstwhile member later described it as 'the slightly cross brigade'. After 18 months in prison awaiting trial, Stuart was acquitted.

Among his other books are 'We, the Anarchists! A Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI) 1927-1937' (AK Press, 2008) and a superb trilogy about a fictional Scottish anarchist involved in the

Merchandise from the IBMT

Proceeds help fund the commemorative, educational and publicity work of the International Brigade Memorial Trust.

Free postage & packing on goods totalling £30 or more for orders within the UK and Europe.

Send orders, including your name and address, a size and colour where appropriate, and a cheque payable to the IBMT to: IBMT Merchandise, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.

For multiple orders in the UK up to a value of £30 (excluding p&p) calculate total p&p by taking the highest p&p among items ordered, halving the p&p of the remaining items and adding them together.

For orders outside the UK or to pay by credit card or PayPal, go to the merchandise page on our website: (www.international-brigades.org.uk/catalog) where there are also other items listed for sale.



Football scarf: In the colours of the Spanish Republic. Says ¡No pasarán! on one side, International Brigade Memorial Trust on the other. £13 plus £5 p&p.



Anti-fascist women t-shirt: T-shirt featuring names of British nurses who served in Spain. Made for the IBMT by t-shirt specialists Philosophy Football from ethically sourced cotton. 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in **XXL** (size 18); **XL** (size 16); **L** (size 14); **M** (size 12). £20 plus £5 p&p.



Three-pointed star International Brigade earrings: Bespoke perspex laser-cut earrings designed for the IBMT. 2.5cms x 3.5cms. £8 plus £4 p&p



International Brigade flag: Replica of the flag of the mainly English-speaking 15th International Brigade, which included the British Battalion. Based on the flag of the Spanish Republic. 150cms x 87cms. £11 plus £4 p&p.



IBMT badge: Solid metal badge with International Brigade medal in centre and 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' around the edge. £4 plus £3 p&p.



British Battalion flag: Reproduction of the first company flag named after Labour Party leader Clement Attlee. Red background with dark gold lettering. Ideal for carrying on marches or mounting on the wall. 150cms x 87cms. £11 plus £4 p&p.



Tin-plated badge: With three-pointed red star of the International Brigades and the background in the colours of Republican Spain. 2.5cms diameter. £2 plus £3 p&p.



International Brigades tote bag: High quality cotton canvas tote bag with a design depicting the International Brigades farewell ceremony. 38 x 42cms. Approximately 10l capacity. £7 each plus £4 p&p.



Volunteers for Liberty plate: Highly decorative commemorative plate made in Staffordshire by Heraldic Pottery exclusively for the IBMT. Fine bone china. 26.5cms diameter. Re-issue of the much sought after 50th anniversary plate produced by International Brigade veteran Lou Kenton. Includes mount for wall display. £25 plus £6 p&p.

British Battalion t-shirt: In red or grey and made for the IBMT by t-shirt specialists Philosophy Football from ethically sourced cotton. British Battalion banner on front and 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in: **S** (36inch/90cms chest); **L** (44inch/110cms); **XL** (48inch/120cms). £20 plus £5 p&p.



15th International Brigade t-shirt: With flag of 15th International Brigade, which included British, Irish, American, Canadian and Commonwealth volunteers. 'International Brigade Memorial Trust' on sleeve. Available in **S**, **M**, **L** and **XL** (see British Battalion t-shirt for size details). £20 plus £5 p&p.



Spanish Republic tote bag: High quality cotton canvas tote bag with a design depicting the allegory and flag of the Spanish Republic. 38 x 42cms. Approximately 10l capacity. £7 each plus £4 p&p.



Brooch in colours of the Spanish Republic: Bespoke perspex laser-cut brooch designed for the IBMT in art deco style. 6cms x 4.5cms. £10 plus £4 p&p.



Three-pointed star International Brigade brooch: Bespoke perspex laser-cut brooch designed for the IBMT. 4.5cms x 6cms. £9 plus £4 p&p.



Earrings in colours of the Spanish Republic: Bespoke perspex laser-cut earrings designed for the IBMT in art deco style. 3cms x 2.25cms. £9 plus £4 p&p.

IN HONOUR OF OVER 2100 MEN & WOMEN VOLUNTEERS WHO LEFT THESE SHORES TO FIGHT SIDE BY SIDE WITH THE SPANISH PEOPLE IN THEIR HEROIC STRUGGLE AGAINST FASCISM 1936 ~ 1939 MANY WERE WOUNDED AND MAIMED 526 WERE KILLED THEIR EXAMPLE INSPIRED THE WORLD



INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

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

37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU • 020 7253 8748
admin@international-brigades.org.uk • www.international-brigades.org.uk

Support our vital educational and commemorative work by becoming a Friend of the IBMT, making a donation, or remembering us in your will. ¡No pasarán!