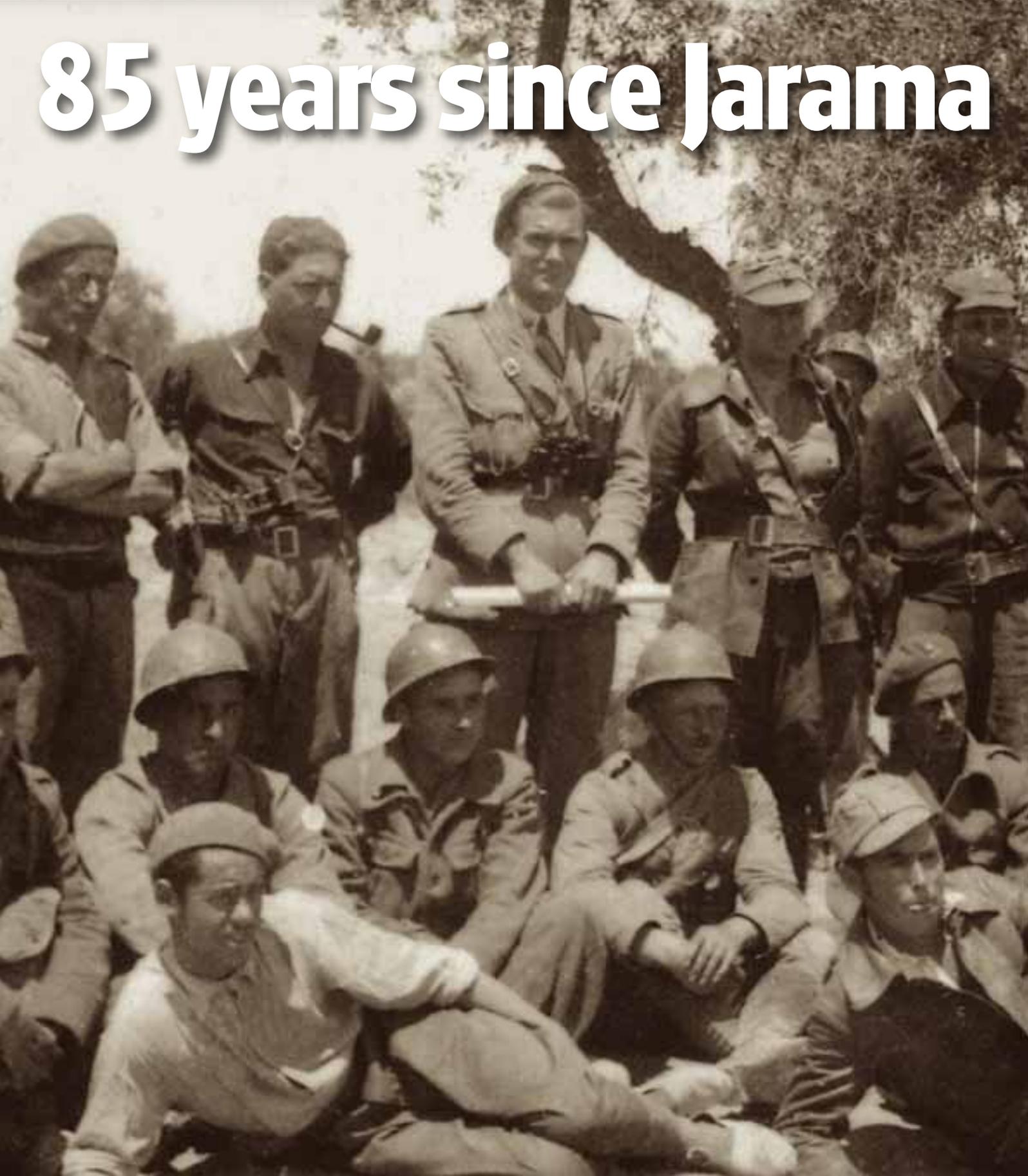


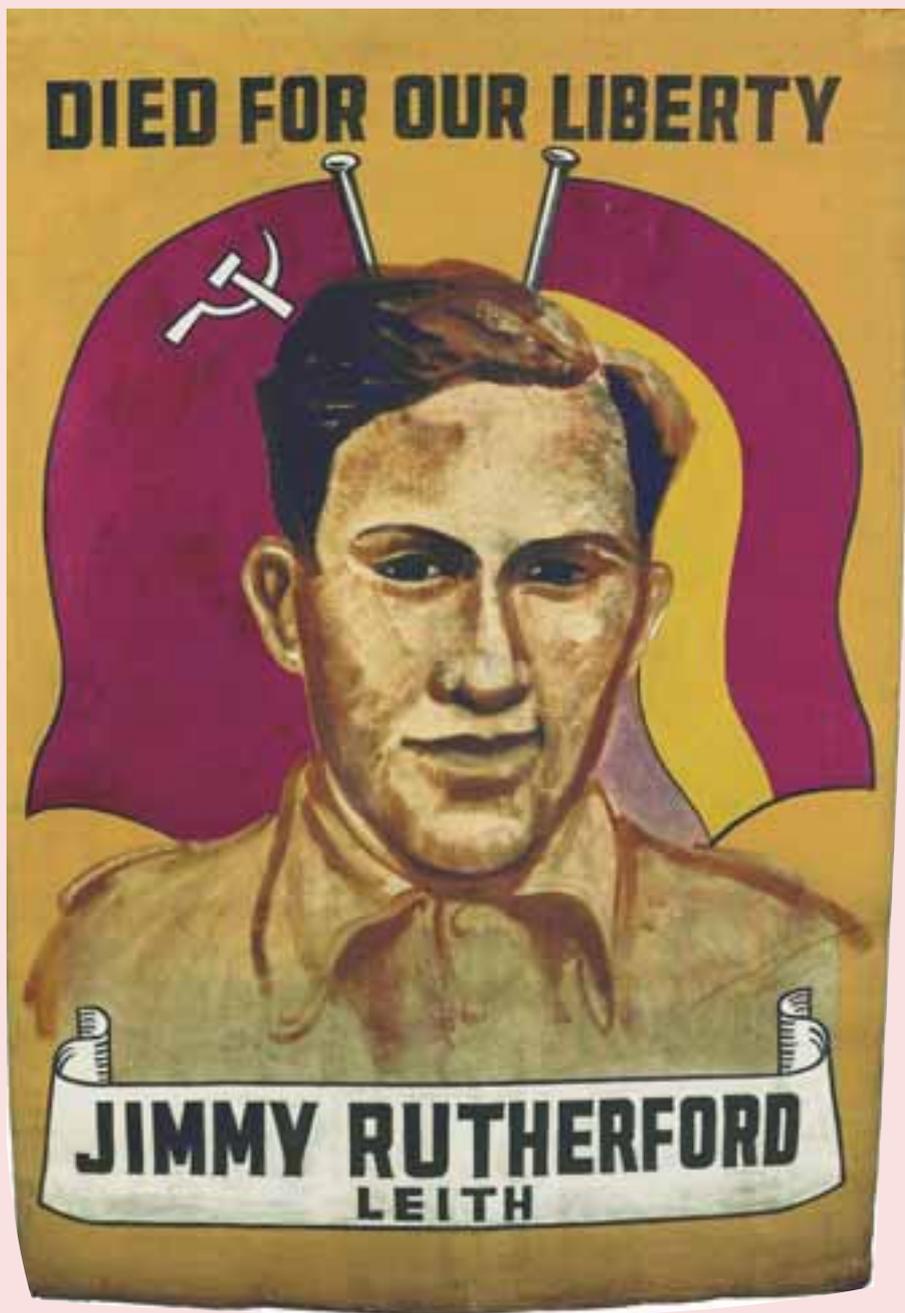


# ¡NO PASARÁN!

International Brigade Memorial Trust ● 1-2022 ● £5

## 85 years since Jarama





Jimmy Rutherford banner, made by Edinburgh East Communist Party and now held by the People's Story Museum, City of Edinburgh Museums & Galleries.

From Edinburgh's Newhaven district, Rutherford was only 20 when he was executed by the fascists. Captured at Jarama in February 1937, he was released in a prisoner exchange on condition he did not return to Spain. He was captured again, however, this time in Aragón and on 24 May 1938 he faced the firing squad.

Before returning to Spain he had told his father: 'If all the young men had seen what I saw out there, they would be doing what I am doing.'

**19 MARCH 2022**

IBMT's annual Len Crome Memorial Conference

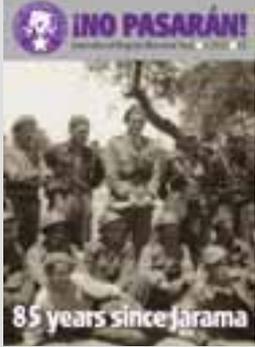
**SCOTLAND AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR**

John McIntyre Conference Centre,  
University of Edinburgh, 18 Holyrood Park Road,  
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## Magazine of the International Brigade Memorial Trust

No.59 ● 1-2022



◀ Surviving members of the British Battalion following the Battle of Jarama, February 1937

### 6 Obituary

● Manus O'Riordan (1949-2021)

### 7 Bert Maskey

● Mike Wild discovers a photo of the Brigader and considers his fate

### 9 Cover story

● The Battle of Jarama 85 years on

### 12 Basque footballers

● Daniel Gray on the Basque refugees who became professional footballers

### 15 Biography

● Veronica Maughan updates the story of her great-aunt Margot Miller

### 17 Books & the arts

● Reviews of 'Scots and the Spanish Civil War' and 'Poems from Prison and Life', plus 'Goodbye Barcelona' at 10 years

### 22 Final word

● Paul and Steve Bennett reflect on the search for their great-uncle Gordon's remains

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IBMT member Cristina Roe (left) and Colin Carritt, Chair of Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee, at the Charlie Hutchison mural in Coffee#1, Witney.

## A mural for Witney's working-class action hero



Charlie Hutchison, the only known black volunteer in the British Battalion of the International Brigade, was born in the market town of Witney in Oxfordshire, though he didn't spend much of his life there.

In October a new coffee shop (Coffee#1) opened in the centre of Witney's Market Square. To the IBMT and Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee's surprise and delight, the owners

unveiled a mural in the shop celebrating Charlie's life and achievements.

Hutchison was living in London when he enlisted with the International Brigades in 1936 at the age of 18. After Spain he served in the British Army during the Second World War and moved to Bournemouth after the war.

He would remain active in the labour, anti-fascist and peace movements for the rest of his life and died in 1993, aged 74.

## Transatlantic trip to honour Scots Brigader

Mariah Wilson and her father David arrived in London from New York and Florida on 19 October to pay their respects at the memorial bench on Hampstead Heath dedicated to their relatives, International Brigaders Danny, Tommy and Joe Gibbons.

The granddaughter of Joe Gibbons, Mariah, played a key role in organising the restoration of the Gibbons bench, which had been in such a state of disrepair that it was set to be removed. The new bench, with a slightly modified inscription, was installed last June. The Wilsons were joined on their visit by writers Andrew Whitehead and Martin Plaut, who both 'discovered' and drew attention to the state of the old bench in 2015.

Then in November Mariah made a visit to Renton, West Dunbartonshire, to honour Joe Gibbons at his birthplace. She was warmly welcomed to the village's International Brigade memorial by local councillors and activists. She described the trip as the completion of a 'family pilgrimage'.



Mariah (right, standing) and David (right, seated).



The Wilsons (middle) in Renton.



## NEWS

# Southampton hosts 2021 Annual General Meeting

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

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**Patrons** Professor Peter Crome, 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 AGM took place on Saturday 9 October, as part of a weekend of commemorative, educational and social events. The AGM began with a rededication held at the memorial to the four International Brigaders from Southampton who died in Spain (below).



▶▶ IBMT Trustee Alan Lloyd presented his research on the 35 International Brigade volunteers from Hampshire.

▶ Manchester IBMT member Paul Ward's anti-fascist Spanish Republic flag tattoo.

▲ IBMT President Marlene Sidaway (left) presented IBMT founding Trustee Pauline Fraser with gifts to mark her retirement from the Executive Committee.

◀ The weekend concluded with a walking tour of the city, the first stop of which was at a plaque commemorating the arrival of Basque refugee children in May 1937.



## Membership rates changes

### Concessionary rate

From January this year onwards the IBMT will be increasing our Concessionary membership rate from £17.50 to £20. This brings it closer in line with the rates of other membership types.

IBMT Trustees believe a £2.50 increase is reasonable since the

old rate was increasingly unsustainable. It barely covered, for example, the cost of publishing and mailing the IBMT's magazine.

Trustees hope that members will understand why the IBMT has had to make this decision and that they will choose to continue

supporting the IBMT's educational and commemorative work.

### Friend membership

The IBMT has also decided to streamline the popular Friends of the IBMT donation scheme so that Friend is now considered a type of membership subscription.

Previously, members who donated an additional £50 or more in a year would be

considered a Friend of the IBMT, receiving a badge and a chance at having a dedication printed in *iNo Pasaran!*

Now, a Friend membership will be a £50 'solidarity-rate' annual subscription, for those supporters who are able and willing to contribute a little more than the standard £25 rate. There will also be exciting new incentives for Friend members.

## Thora Silverthorne honoured in Welsh labour exhibition

Unison Cymru/Wales has installed a new permanent exhibition in its Cardiff office celebrating Welsh labour movement history. A conference room has been named in honour of Thora Silverthorne with information panels that explain her life and legacy in detail.

Born in Abertillery, Silverthorne served in the International Brigades as a nurse. She went on to found the National Association of Nurses, which became part of the National Union of Public Employees and later Unison. She was also a leading member of the Socialist Medical Association.

The exhibition opened on 18 November, with Lucy Craig, daughter of Thora Silverthorne, invited as a special guest.

First Minister of Wales Mark Drakeford was also present, and inaugurated the event with a speech declaring that 'we can only understand today if we understand the struggles of the past.'



► Clockwise from top left: First Minister Mark Drakeford, Lucy Craig (née Silverthorne) outside and in the conference room dedicated to her mother.

## Madrid marks the formation of the International Brigades



Supporters gather at the memorial in Madrid's Jardín de las Brigadas Internacionales.



Tour stops at the memorial in Madrid's University City.

Over the weekend of 5-7 November, individuals and groups from across the world gathered in Madrid for a series of commemorative events celebrating the 85th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades.

The event was organised by the IBMT's Spanish sister organisation AABI (Asociación de Amigos de las Brigadas Internacionales) and included a documentary screening, wreath-laying and a walking tour of Madrid's civil war sites.



## Manus O'Riordan

On Sunday 26 September 2021 Manus O'Riordan, IBMT Ireland Secretary and respected trade unionist, activist and writer, died suddenly of a heart attack. He was 72. Among many to pay tribute was the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, who remarked: 'It was a privilege to have known him and his father, Mick O'Riordan, particularly for their testimony to the bravery of those who served in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War.' As the son of a former volunteer, Manus grew up steeped in his father's world of politics, of which Spain was always a significant part.

Born in Dublin in 1949, Manus was raised in the Portobello area of the city. Having earned a secondary school scholarship, he went on to take a degree in economics and politics from University College Dublin and a Masters in Economics and Labour History from the University of New Hampshire in the United States.

After graduation he returned to Dublin to work as a researcher and economist for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (later merged into SIPTU, the Services Industrial Professional and Technical Union), becoming the head of the Research

Department. It was a job to which he dedicated the entirety of his working life and where he met Annette, whom he married in 1974.

The couple regularly accompanied Manus's father to International Brigade commemorations and reunions in Ireland, Britain and, following the death of Franco in 1975, Spain itself. Continuing the work of his father, who wrote a history of the Irish in Spain, Manus penned numerous articles and reviews defending the reputation of the former volunteers, notably his fellow UCD alumnus, the Irish Republican leader, Frank Ryan. Soon after the International Brigade Memorial Trust was formed in Britain in 2001, Manus joined as a Trustee and Executive Committee member. In 2010 he officially took on the role of Ireland Secretary and, three years later, he took on a similar role in the Friends of the International Brigades of Ireland (FIBI).

### Knowledgeable

Both organisations were very fortunate to have him, for Manus possessed a unique skill set. He was extremely knowledgeable, with a prodigious memory and his presence and gravitas commanded

fellow committee members' respect. He was dedicated and hard-working, organising the IBMT's AGM in Dublin on two separate occasions: in 2005, when Irish President Mary McAleese invited a group of veterans, including Manus's father, to meet her at her official residence, and in 2016, when President Higgins opened the meeting and delivered a beautifully crafted and heartfelt speech on the volunteers' political legacy.

Erudite, cultured, with a mischievous sense of humour, Manus was always entertaining company. He was a brilliant linguist who translated poetry between English and Irish and, like his wife Annette (who sadly died in 2013), was an accomplished

**'He was on the side of all those brave men and women who had been written out of history'.**

singer. He often performed the wonderful Spanish Civil War ballad, 'Si me quieres escribir' (If you want to write to me), to captivated audiences. Somehow, he also found the time to be a devoted supporter of Bohemian Football Club. On the day after Manus's death, fans of both sides observed a minute's silence, paying their affection and respect with a large banner: 'RIP Manus – ¡No Pasarán!'

Manus's final hours were spent doing what he dedicated much of his life to. On the day before he died, he attended the annual International Brigade commemoration at Ormeau, County Louth, proudly bearing the flag commemorating the Irish veterans of the Spanish Civil War.

At the funeral, held on 1 October at Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin, Manus' partner Nancy Wallach (child of International Brigader Hy Wallach) paid tribute to his life and work:

'He was on the side of all those brave men and women who had been written out of history... As Ireland Secretary of the IBMT and FIBI board member, Manus brought his meticulous research skills, his prodigious intellect, his strong sense of justice and boundless energy to restoring the legacy of the anti-fascists who left their own homes to defend Spanish democracy... He travelled the length and breadth of Ireland and Spain to attend the memorials to those whose histories will not be buried, and thanks to his efforts, will not be forgotten.'

*Obituary written by Richard Baxell, IBMT Historical Consultant, with additional material provided by Lynda Walker of the Belfast International Brigade Commemoration Committee.*

# A mysterious photo and death

**MIKE WILD**, son of Sam Wild, the last commander of the British Battalion, writes about a recent chance discovery: a photograph showing Bert Maskey, who left Manchester with Wild to fight in Spain.

In issue 1-2016 of the *IBMT Newsletter* (now *iNo Pasaran!*), David Mason presented a feature about his grandfather, entitled 'Remembering Bert Maskey'. He was born in 1893 in Vilnius, which at the time was part of the Russian Empire, to a Jewish family. He was arrested in 1907 for distributing revolutionary pamphlets and eventually he was smuggled into exile in Germany and thence to London.

After service in the British Army, where he was trained as a driver and barber, he was demobbed in 1919. Bert ran a barber's shop in Cheetham Hill, Manchester, which from the mid 1920s acted as a Communist Party meeting place, especially for the very active Young Communist League (YCL). A large number of young Jewish activists were members and took part in demonstrations against Moseley's fascists. A significant group from the Cheetham Hill YCL also took part and even led the Kinder Scout Trespass in April 1932; two of the six sentenced to jail with hard labour were from Cheetham's Challenge Club. A sizeable group of these YCL men went out in November 1936 to serve in International Brigades. This was before the formation of the British Battalion.

My family's involvement with Bert came about through our father Sam Wild, the last commander of the British Battalion. His mother, Mary Ann Wild (born McGrail in Castlebar County Mayo, Ireland) had died of heart disease in Manchester aged 28 in 1911, leaving three young children. Sam was two years old and was raised by Irish relatives in Ardwick, becoming a 'Fenian' and rebellious youngster. His father, Samuel Horobin Wild, had had bad experiences during and after the First World War where he served in the Manchester Regiment.

Inspired by the Invergordon mutineers, my father jumped ship in South Africa in 1934 – he had become disillusioned with the Royal Navy, imperialism and the treatment of colonial peoples. After his discharge, he came back to Manchester and became involved with the YCL and Communist Party. His elder sister Hilda

► Photo of a volunteer in Spain, believed to be Manchester Brigader Bert Maskey, discovered among Sam Wild's papers.



Wild was a Communist Party member; she had formed a relationship with Bert Maskey, who was married to Sally Boon, another active socialist and mother of his two sons. They had taken the name Mason from the pseudonym on Bert's alien card. Bert and Hilda also had a son, Albert Wild, who took his mother's surname.

**'Bert's knowledge of several languages, including Yiddish... made him a valuable liason officer and interpreter.'**

Guided by Bert, Sam soon became involved in the unemployed movement and anti-fascist actions in the city. His military training and abilities as a boxer would have been a valuable contribution to the Communists' anti-fascist activities. Bert and Sam eventually resolved to volunteer for Spain and enlisted after meeting the Communist Party organiser for Manchester and Lancashire, George Brown, who would have

recognised their reputation and potential.

Just after Christmas 1936 they joined a party for London and followed the familiar route by ferry and coach to the Spanish border and onwards via Figueras and Barcelona to the 15th Brigade base at Albacete.

## Muster

Bert and Sam were added to the 16th Battalion muster on 5 January 1936 – Bert was number 437 and Sam 454. At Madrigueras Sam became a member of the British Battalion's No.1 Company and a section leader for this rifle company. Later his navy experience with guns and as a blacksmith's mate came in useful, and he was appointed armourer.

Sam wrote a reply to family member David Mason's enquiry, saying that they were separated when Bert was transferred to Brigade headquarters. Bert's knowledge of several languages, including Yiddish, an unofficial universal language in the International Brigades, made him a valuable liaison officer and interpreter. He could also speak Russian and French. When the British Battalion was mobilised to join the defence of Madrid at

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

# Your local IBMT affiliated 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.

IBMT affiliation costs £30. You can affiliate through our website here: [www.international-brigades.org.uk/membership](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/membership).

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## International Brigade Memorial Trust

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

8 ¡NO PASARÁN!

# BERT MASKEY

## FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Jarama, Sam – in No.1 Company – was wounded by machine gun fire upon the men on the Conical Hill. Bill Rust famously relates that Sam and David Crook, the last survivors of No.1 Company, helped each other back, badly wounded, to a dressing station and ultimately to hospitals.

Sam recovered from his wounds, telling me he remembered ‘the oranges and pretty nurses’ at Elda hospital. He returned to the trenches at Jarama in May 1937 and went on to fight at Brunete where he was again wounded on Mosquito Hill, this time in the thigh.

Little is known of the fate of Bert Maskey. Despite some historians writing that he died manning a machine gun with Sam by his side on that first murderous day at Jarama, we feel that it is highly unlikely the pair were together. Tony Fox, a local historian in Teesside, has suggested to me a scenario which could explain the gap in our knowledge. He supports my instinct that Bert was not with Sam in No.1 Company on 12 February.

My father always maintained, in letters and interviews, that Bert was transferred to headquarters as an interpreter. In support of this we have so far failed to find Bert appearing in any reports, letters or memoirs prior to, or during the Battle of Jarama. There were five other Cheetham Hill YCL men in No.1 Company and it is noteworthy that not one of them mentions Bert, the man whose shop they used for their headquarters. He just disappears from the record after his enrolment at Albacete.

## ‘Enquiries on various Facebook groups and a facial comparison made me pretty certain that it was a photo of Bert Maskey’.

Although only conjecture, Tony’s theory tries to look at the situation logically; he suggests that once Bert and Sam get to Albacete they separate; Sam went on to Madrigueras, whilst Bert stayed at Albacete and worked for the 15th Brigade staff, which was made up of the British, the Franco-Belgian, the Dimitrov and a Spanish battalion, with the Americans still forming. It seems unlikely that Bert would be needed as an interpreter for the Spanish, and we think there would be plenty of French speakers. Hence by elimination he suggests that Bert was appointed as an interpreter with the Dimitrov Battalion.



Bert Maskey.



Sam Wild.

We suspect that Bert would not know much Bulgarian or Hungarian, but the commander of the Dimitrov Battalion, the Bulgarian Ivan Paunov, was Jewish, and Yiddish was Bert’s first language. Paunov was killed on 12 February 1937 when his HQ came under artillery fire. It seems reasonable to assume that Bert could have been at his headquarters as he is recorded as being killed on the same date. The lack of records could be due to Bert’s status as a temporary attachment. This would explain why he is not recorded on any casualty lists: no-one in the Dimitrov’s administration would know who he was, even if his body could be identified. Sadly, Bert’s third son, my cousin Albert Wild, died in his nineties never knowing where his father had died or was buried.

## Papers and photos

During 2020 I decided to spend time, after knee replacement surgery during lockdown, going through my mum and dad’s papers and photos. They had died in the 1980s and it was a daunting task and is still ongoing.

In one 1979 letter from my Auntie Hilda, then living in Sussex, to my folks in Manchester, I found a small black and white photograph of a soldier that had obviously been tucked into an envelope and eventually sent to my mother, Bessie (née Berry), and Hilda’s brother Sam. Enquiries on various Facebook groups and a facial comparison made me pretty certain that it was a photo of Bert Maskey standing by a *camión* or transport wagon. I felt very sad that my cousin Albert had not seen this before he passed away.

I have been helped in identifying Bert by Stuart Walsh, David Mason, Ray Hoff and Kevin Buyers and by making comparisons with earlier photos of Bert. Alan Warren has been very helpful discussing where Bert may have been killed and Tony Fox has helped me to clarify my thoughts. I am now almost certain that Bert was away from the British Battalion, acting as an interpreter on the day he was killed, 12 February 1937; the same day my father, his pal from Manchester, was severely wounded. It was a day of horrific fighting for the 15th Brigade, and left a void in the lives of so many.

An improvised memorial cairn on the Jarama battlefield, April 2014.



Wikimedia Commons

# MADRID LIVED

## 85 years since the Battle of Jarama

This February marks the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama, when the International Brigades, as part of the Spanish Republican Army, repelled Franco's forces south-east of Madrid. After days of bloody and chaotic battle, they checked the enemy advance along the Jarama River.

After failing to take Madrid in late 1936, Franco made a renewed attempt to surround the city by cutting the road to Valencia, which was the seat of the Republican government at the time.

The Republican forces stationed south of Madrid, including the 14th and 11th International Brigades, met the rebel assault on 5 February. They gave ground over the next few days and by 11 February the Rebels had taken the west bank of the Jarama River and began their crossing.

Very early in the morning of 12 February, the 15th Brigade, consisting of the British Battalion, the Balkan Dimitrov Battalion and Franco-Belgian units, were mobilised and moved to the Pingarrón Heights, which was part of the ridge of hills overlooking the Jarama River valley. Behind them were the groves of olive trees that have become an enduring symbol of the battle.

**‘It was a bloody slaughter as far as we were concerned. They had everything and we had nothing.’**

Facing off against the elite troops of the Army of Africa, the Battalion's lack of training and equipment took its toll, with the number of casualties growing at an alarming rate.

### Desperate

By early afternoon, the battalion was in a desperate position, its flank unprotected, the machine-gun company without ammunition and numbers decreasing by the minute. The hill where they made their stand came to be known as Suicide Hill.

The remaining volunteers were faced with little choice but to pull back to the battalion's headquarters on the plateau behind them. The enemy rushed to occupy their position on Suicide Hill but were quickly forced to duck for cover by the machine-gun company, which at last had managed to reload and arm their weapons. As the first day of the battle came to an end, the battalion found itself with less than half the number that had set out from Madrigueras. Scottish volunteer Frank McCusker later said: 'It wasnae a battle at all, it was a bloody slaughter as far as we were concerned. They had everything and we had nothing.'

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

The next day, 13 February, was no less terrifying. The battalion waged a desperate struggle to hold back the rebel forces. As their flank once again came under attack, the commander of No.4 Company pulled his soldiers back and the machine-gun company, situated on a knoll to the battalion's right, became isolated and were surrounded.

Over 30 volunteers, including company commander Harold Fry and adjutant Ted Dickenson, were captured and several of the battalion lost their lives in an ill-judged attempt to rescue them. Somehow, the remaining volunteers in the battalion held on until nightfall.

## Despite their physical and mental exhaustion, 140 volunteers marched back... They sang the Internationale as they rallied'.

On day three, under a sustained attack from a hugely superior force supported by artillery and tanks, the line finally broke. In small disorganised groups the exhausted volunteers drifted back to the farm cookhouse which they had established as a base. There they were addressed by Lieutenant-Colonel Gal, the commander of the 15th Brigade. He explained to them that they were now the only troops between the Rebels and the Valencia road.

Despite their physical and mental exhaustion, 140 volunteers marched back, led by Jock Cunningham and Frank Ryan, to try to recapture their lost positions. They sang 'The Internationale' as they rallied, picking up stragglers along the way. The enemy forces, fooled into believing them to be fresh reinforcements while also suffering vigorous attacks



▲ Members of the British machine-gun company captured by the Rebels on 13 February.



◀ Republican machine-gunner in position at the Jarama front.

▴ Gravestone for the dead of the 15th Brigade.

from the Dimitrov Battalion to the right, retreated back to their earlier positions. 'A battalion that does not know how to be defeated deserves an occasional stroke of luck,' reflected Tom Wintringham, battalion commander at Jarama, a few years later.

### Reinforcements

Then, during the night of 14 and 15 February, the Republicans brought up actual reinforcements and the gap in the line was finally plugged. The Rebel advance ground to a halt. Both sides dug defensive fortifications and a stalemate ensued, which neither side was able to overcome.

The Republicans' repeated counter-attacks over the course of the month failed to push Franco's forces back over the river. The last of these attempts saw the newly-formed American Abraham Lincoln Battalion cut down by machine-gun fire while attempting a frontal assault on the enemy positions.

Charlie Donnelly, one of the Irish volunteers attached to the battalion, while crouching for cover, reportedly

said: 'Even the olives are bleeding.' Shortly afterwards he was shot and killed among those olive groves.

After February 1937 the positions at the Jarama front remained virtually static for the rest of the war. The bloody sacrifices at Jarama meant that Franco was never able to conquer Madrid militarily. As Wintringham later wrote: 'The biggest and best organised drive that Franco had so far made had been stopped – within a few miles of its starting place...Madrid lived.'

The Battle of Jarama epitomises both the horror and the heroism of the volunteers' experience of Spain's civil war. It served as a baptism by fire for the 15th Brigade who, barely trained, under-equipped and following chaotic orders, somehow managed to hold back the full ferocity of a professional army. Their sacrifice continues to resonate down the years, remembered in memorials, song, poetry and art. John Lepper, a British Battalion volunteer who took part in the battle, wrote a poem about his experience, which has been printed opposite.

**AJMAL WAQIF**



## Battle of Jarama 1937

The sun warmed the valley  
But no birds sang  
The sky was rent with shrapnel  
And metallic clang

Death stalked the olive trees  
Picking his mentions  
His leaden finger beckoned  
Again and again

Dust rose from the roadside  
A stifling cloud  
Ambulances tore past  
Klaxoning loud

Men torn by shell-shards lay  
Still on the ground  
The living sought shelter  
Not to be found

Holding their hot rifles  
Flushed with the fighters  
Sweat-streaked survivors  
Willed for the night

With the coming of darkness  
Deep in the wood  
A fox howled to heaven  
Smelling the blood.

**JOHN LEPPER**

- Clockwise from top: ● Suicide Hill as seen from the machine-gunners knoll ● Remains of a machine-gunners nest ● Monument to Irish Brigadier Charlie Donnelly in Rivas-Vaciamadrid, near the Jarama battlefield ● Battle of Jarama memorial at Morata de Tajuña, built on the site of Republican battle headquarters ● Local and international supporters at the 83rd anniversary of Jarama memorial march, February 2020 ● The *finca* once used as a base and cookhouse by the 15th Brigade ● Suicide Hill as seen from Conical Hill.



# BASQUE FOOTBALLERS

In October 1938, La Pasionaria described departing International Brigaders as examples of 'the universality of democracy.' Six Basque refugee children in Britain who went on to be footballers represent the universality of football: an internationalist game for an internationalist cause.

By the early spring of 1937, Spain's Basque Country was, perhaps, Franco's deepest irritation. Hitler's Condor Legion and the Italian Legionary Airforce were laden with bombs and advanced on the Basque Country. What happened next was a heinously brutal chapter in a war full of them. For the first time, civilian targets were bombed from above and modern methods of atrocity were born.

In all of this, of course, children, or those that survived, had to carry on. They had to find their joy, kick stones among ruins, play hide-and-seek in the rubble. Our six footballers were among them; most came from Durango and Guernica.

## Evacuation

In May 1937 an evacuation programme for Basque children began. Thirty-three thousand children were shipped off to Belgium, Denmark, Mexico, the USSR and Switzerland. At first, Prime Minister Baldwin held the British non-intervention line – no children would be taken, and in his words, 'the climate wouldn't suit them.' But public pressure could not be ignored.

Though no government aid would be given, a ship carrying 4,000 children would be permitted into Britain, and each permitted to stay for three months. Most stayed for longer; some made their homes here.

The ship carrying them to the UK was a cruise liner, the *Habana*, adapted to carry ten times its normal capacity of 400. It docked in Bilbao on 20 May 1937, preparing to set sail for Southampton.

It is a difficult scene to try and imagine. No-one really understood where they were going; Britain was left to the imagination. Claspings a few belongings wrapped in paper and tied with string, each child queued to climb board the *Habana*. Every girl and boy had an identification number, written on a tag worn around their neck. Among those children were: Emilio Aldecoa, Sabino Barinaga, José Bilbao, Antonio Gallego, José Gallego and Raimundo Pérez Lezama. Each one of these boys would grow into a professional footballer.

On 23 May, they arrived at Southampton to a splendid, heartfelt welcome from locals and those from elsewhere who had been part of a magnificent fundraising campaign for the Basque children.

All children were given a medical, fed and put into a camp consisting of hundreds of bright white tents. Football soon erupted – balls scrounged from somewhere and dribbled among guy ropes and campfires. Then, the children were dispersed to homes or 'colonies' across Britain.

As there would be no state aid for the refugee



◀ Emilio Aldecoa playing for Wolverhampton Wanderers. With his debut game in 1943, he became the first Spanish footballer to play a professional match in England.

▶ Raimundo Pérez Lezama playing goalkeeper for Basque team Athletic Bilbao.

▶▶ Football cards of Aldecoa (at Barcelona FC) and Lezama (at Athletic Bilbao).

## Refugee boys to professional players

Historian **DANIEL GRAY** draws connections between football and the Spanish Civil War, as personified by the Basque refugee children who became footballers in England.

kids, everything provided would have to come from charity: fundraising, donations, appeals, events. Everything ran on goodwill, too – churches, wealthy people and educational establishments gave up entire houses that were hastily converted into homes for the Basque children.

The example I know best is Mall Park in Montrose, 30 miles north of Dundee. Its creation and existence were typical of the many places our footballers and the other refugees found home.

Its funding came from a typically diverse set of people: The Bakers' Union, the Blind Institution, the Dundee Breakfast Club and the Women's Liberal

Association donated generously. Dockers took on a team of locally-berthed Spanish seamen at football and raised a hefty sum on the gate and from donations, while the Dundee School of Music staged a concert in Caird Hall.

The first residents arrived in late September 1937. Though distraught with homesickness and worry for their families in Spain, the children did find great contentment. Bene González, 15 years old on the day she arrived at Mall Park, recalled in 1985 that the children had lived 'immensely happily, and joyfully'.

It is important to point out that the Basque children also raised money for themselves. They

# BASQUE FOOTBALLERS



performed dance routines and organised football matches. It was in these matches that some of our six first showed their remarkable talents. Which brings us to one such boy, Emilio Aldecoa. Emilio was 14 when he boarded the *Habana*, one of the older refugees. From Southampton, he was sent to live in a Basque colony in Stafford. His interest in football blossomed into love, and Emilio developed his tricky, wily left-foot not least in those fundraising games.

## Stay

Being old enough, instead of returning to Spain in 1938 or 39 when so many did, he decided to stay in England, despite the end of war in Spain and its beginning in Britain. Emilio took a job with English Electric and began playing for the works football team. His skill was obvious. He stood out. Wolverhampton Wanderers offered him a trial.

This was war-time football, meaning that the normal league structure had been suspended, and regional fixtures organised in its place, all of them to take place in daylight on Saturdays.

Guest players were needed, but few were more exotic than Emilio. In 1943 Emilio made his first-team debut against Crewe Alexandra. It made him the very first Spaniard to play a professional match in England. What a thing for a teenager who had seen and heard things that no-one should, a migrant who had sailed into the unknown.

That 1943/44 season, Emilio was Wolves' top scorer. He was a dazzling footballer, full of vim and

verve. Here was a technicolour footballer in a black and white world.

In 1945, Emilio moved on to Coventry City, scoring against Portsmouth on his Sky Blues debut. He married a local girl and stayed for two seasons. For a while, another Basque refugee *Habana* kid played alongside Emilio. By some strange fate or mere coincidence, José Bilbao wound up at rickety Highfield Road.

José was an outside left, meaning that for his six Coventry games he played immediately next to inside left Emilio. Such an unlikely pairing so far from home; two young Basque men in the blue and white

## 'The all-Spanish left-wing was a happy partnership.'

of Coventry City, tearing down the wing in their long shorts. 'City's attack proved that it was the best constituted for a long time,' said one match report in a local newspaper. 'The all-Spanish left-wing was a happy partnership.'

Walking around Coventry must have been a chilling reminder of what was left behind almost a decade before. The city, much like their Basque homeland, had been pummelled by German planes, its cathedral violently sacked. Yet both had played football just as it was being reborn after the horror of war. A footballing boom was on the way, one tenet

of quietly emerging optimism in the country. It is hard to think of a more intriguing time for the Basques to have been plying their beloved trade in middle England.

José Bilbao slipped from view like many war-time footballers; we don't even know if he stayed or went home. Emilio Aldecoa returned to Spain and played for Athletic Bilbao, Valladolid and Barcelona.

Perhaps Emilio's greatest achievement came after his playing career. A dedicated, precise and sagacious student of the game, he compiled a lengthy blueprint document for youth development and scouting, setting out how Barcelona could become the greatest club in the world.

Emilio was not finished with England, and from 1960 undertook a coaching and scouting role at Birmingham City, implementing systems for finding and developing players way ahead of their time.

Before Emilio Aldecoa and José Bilbao had begun their professional careers, two other Basque refugee boys had used England as a starting point for theirs. Both would become greats of the Spanish game. Sabino Barinaga and Raimundo Pérez Lezama were also among the 4,000 on the *Habana*.

Sabino was leaving behind the debris of the bombed town of Durango, while Raimundo came from Baracaldo, just outside Bilbao. At the time of the sailing, Sabino was 14 and Raimundo 16. By some cosmic coincidence, these two young people that would become Spanish football stars were housed together.

Neither was forced to leave Southampton, a place of fond memories for young Basques after the welcome they had received. The two teenagers were instead given lodgings in Nazareth House, a city orphanage run by nuns. Outside, in the safety of this refuge's gardens, both began to play football in every spare moment they had.

Raimundo went further, studying textbooks about the game and its rules in his bunkbed. That adoration of football was again blossoming for young Basques in England. Their enthusiasm was matched by ability.

It seems that both-footed forward Sabino impressed Saints first team manager Tom Parker. 'Sabino is one of the most brilliant youngsters I have ever seen' noted Parker.

Goalkeeper Raimundo was soon scouted too, or possibly concurrently; one telling of the story goes that the two were spotted kicking a ball around in the car park outside The Dell, Southampton's dear old home. Both soon began playing for the Southampton youth team.

In 1938/39, their performances in the local youth leagues were astonishing, even if at a level clearly already beneath them. The team played 33 games, winning 31, scoring 277 and conceding just 17. In the

CONTINUED OVERLEAF

# BASQUE FOOTBALLERS

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

13 games he played in, Sabino scored 62 times.

Raimundo eventually played three games for the first team. Southampton wanted to make them first team players, but their Home Office licenses to remain were not extended. Besides, Britain was now at war where peace, albeit buttressed by violence

**‘A footballing boom was on the way... It is hard to think of a more intriguing time for the Basques to have been plying their beloved trade in middle England.’**

and suppression, existed in Franco’s Spain. The two travelled home in March 1940.

In three years they had grown into young men, fought the psychological traumas of fascist invasion and become two of the most promising footballers in Europe. Back in Spain, they pursued what family they had left.

Being Basque in Franco’s Spain was difficult enough; being Basque and probably the sons of dreaded Reds was even worse. Maybe it was football that spared them the repression of so many thousands of others:

## Rebuild

Spain needed players; it needed to rebuild its teams and league. Despite an offer to stay in Bilbao and play for Athletic (now renamed Atlético under Franco’s orders), Sabino understandably took the greater offer of Real Madrid money. Seeing the poverty of his family must have made that a fairly simple decision.

Raimundo signed at first for a lesser Basque side, Arenas, but after three months was spotted and scooped up by Atlético Bilbao. He was to stay for 16 years. Raimundo’s playing style made him both a marvel and a novelty. With Atlético Bilbao, the bunkbed boy of Nazareth House won two La Ligas and six cup medals.

Sabino, meanwhile, set Madrid alight. The strapping Basque scored four goals in an 11-1 mauling of Barcelona in 1943. Then in 1947 he became the first man to score at the brand new Bernabeu Stadium. Perhaps, in quiet moments, he allowed himself a bittersweet grin: the son of a Basque communist, now the hero of what some regarded as Franco’s team.

Raimundo and Sabino’s paths must have crossed regularly in league fixtures, but in 1943 the Nazareth boys clashed in the Spanish Cup Final. Atlético Bilbao



◀ Antonio (left) and José Gallego. Both settled in England and played for various smaller teams.

defeated Real Madrid 1-0; some said that Raimundo Lezama won the match. What joy to have seen Franco’s face that day.

While Raimundo was a one-club man, Sabino played for Real Sociedad and Real Betis after the Bernabeu. He then became a manager, holding the reigns at more than a dozen club and international sides, in Spain and across the world.

Sabino died in 1988, aged 66, while Raimundo lived on until 2007, passing away aged 84.

Both retained a lifelong love of Southampton, and of the England that gave them everything, including football. While at times the relationship between Sabino and Raimundo could appear to be that of adopted brothers, our last two *Habana* refugee footballers were blood brothers.

**A**ntonio and José Gallego came from Errentería in the far north-east of the Basque region. In April 1937, their father had been killed at Guernica. Defying the heartbreak it would bring, the boys’ mother insisted they board the *Habana* with their three sisters for safety in England.

Twelve-year-old Antonio, 14-year-old José and their sisters were given beds at first in Eastleigh, and then Cambridge. They stayed in a home for 30 Basque children, owned by Jesus College Cambridge.

Soon, like Sabino and Raimundo on the lawns of Nazareth House, and Emilio Aldecoa with his fundraising games, the Gallego brothers set up football teams and matches.

Then in his late 80s, Antonio told the *El País* newspaper in 2012:

*‘Football was all we thought about. As long as we had football we were happy. It meant everything to us; it was the only thing we knew about. We got attached to Cambridge and made a lot of friends there through playing football. If it hadn’t been for football, we would have lived a very different life.’*

Though never scaling the heights of Sabino, Raimundo or Emilio, both Gallegos had talent in abundance. They may have daydreamed that, had they gone home to Spain like those three, their careers could have taken off. But England, particularly Cambridge, had become home to the Gallegos.

In the mid-1940s, José, a left-winger, and Antonio, a goalkeeper, were signed up by local non-league side Cambridge Town. Scouts flocked to see the

exotic Basque boys in this most unlikely of settings.

José was signed by Brentford, and Antonio by Norwich City. Things did not work out for Antonio, and he was freed in 1947, returning to Cambridge Town. José played six times for the Griffins, before a 1948 move to that home-from-home for Basques, Southampton.

Football, while clearly a second heartbeat for the Gallegos, must often have faded into the background as the five siblings wondered what had happened to their mum. That year of 1947 marked a decade since they had last seen her at the harbour in Bilbao as the *Habana* set sail. Then, a breakthrough: mother and beloved children were reunited after the Red Cross helped her locate them. Soon, she too settled in

**‘Six young people, from the jaws of hell, arriving in a country where people defied their cowardly government to open their arms and rooms.’**

Cambridge. A family reunited 10 years after those vile bombs had fallen on their homelands.

The Gallego brothers, meanwhile, played football into their 50s, the game was under their skin. Antonio married, started a family and stayed here for the rest of his days, until he died seven years ago.

The story of the Basque refugee footballers is an incredible one. Six young people, from the jaws of hell, arriving in a country where people defied their cowardly government to open their arms and rooms. All six were united by the misery they had left behind, and the miracles they became.

*Daniel Gray is author of ‘Homage to Caledonia: Scotland and the Spanish Civil War’, ‘Black Boots and Football Pinks’ and many other books on the history of football and Scotland. This is an edited version of a talk given at the IBMT’s Len Crome memorial conference in March 2019.*

# Margot Miller: updating her story

Smith Archive/Alamy



Margot Miller (centre) with other women of the British Medical Unit outside Trades Union Congress offices, 23 August 1936.

When my great aunt, Margot Miller, limped onto the stage at the Albert Hall on 29 November 1936 to take her place beside Harry Pollitt, Communist Party general secretary, for the Aid for Spain fundraising event, she was the picture of the plucky heroine.

Miller had gone to the front line near Huesca to help transport a wounded volunteer to the British hospital at Grañén. As they ‘dashed across a stretch of open country to reach the wounded’, Miller was hit in both legs by an enemy machine gunner. She staggered to cover in a ditch and was pinned down until rescued by militiamen who risked their lives to retrieve her.

Margot had been in Spain only a few weeks, having left Victoria Station on 23 August with the rest of the first British Medical Unit (BMU).

**‘It is feasible that Miller was recruited to provide lively copy on the BMU’s achievements for use in SMAC fundraising publications back home’**

Nurse Miller’s heroic tale was covered by newspapers across the world. This spirited young Australian seemed to epitomise the noble ‘everyman’ nature of the conflict in Spain.

Since these early newspaper articles Margot has been described as both a nurse and Australian. She was neither. Margot was Scottish by nationality and a writer by profession.

Margot Mitchell Miller was born in Lenzie, Dunbartonshire. She was a 15-year-old schoolgirl when she emigrated with her mother to join their

**VERONICA MAUGHAN** recounts her great-aunt Margot Miller’s experiences in Spain, clarifying misconceptions about her service in the British Medical Unit and the wound she sustained.

family in Australia. Margot retained her British citizenship and spent only eight years away from Britain, returning in 1935. During those years, Miller completed her schooling, swam with the Bondi Ladies Amateur Swimming Club – achieving a Royal Lifesaving Bronze Medallion Award with associated first aid training, and was one of the first women to ride a longboard in the Bondi surf.

Although not Australian, Margot could have been mistaken for one by outlook and personality. She was unorthodox, anti-authoritarian, independent and outspoken.

### Departure

In photos taken outside the Trades Union Congress offices on the morning of their departure for Spain, we see Margot among the women of the BMU. They are wearing nurses’ uniforms with armbands showing the medical red cross emblem.

Miller’s name is listed first after the heading ‘Nurses’ in the *News Chronicle* pamphlet ‘British Medical Aid in Spain’. Countless later publications

(and databases) also refer to her as a nurse. However, responding to Jim Fyrth’s callout for material for ‘The Signal Was Spain’, Margot’s husband, Richard Bennett, wrote of Margot: ‘She never trained as a nurse.’

During my research on the BMU I found only Linda Palfreeman and Archie Cochrane had identified a different role for Margot in the unit: Palfreeman referred to her as the ‘publicity writer’, and Cochrane called her a ‘journalist’. I believe these descriptions more accurately align with Miller’s primary function in the unit.

At the time of her recruitment by the Spanish Medical Aid Committee (SMAC), Miller was a copywriter with advertising firm Lintas and had published short stories, book reviews, poetry and sundry articles. Her 1937 Spanish marriage certificate gave her profession as ‘journalist’. She enjoyed a successful writing career after Spain until her death in 1980.

While no volunteer recruitment information from  
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FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

the SMAC appears to have survived, it seems unlikely that Miller was recruited for her nursing skills. This is not to say that she, like Aileen Palmer the unit's secretary, did not also undertake relief nursing duties.

As Thora Silverthorne recalled during her interview with Jim Fyrrh in 1984: 'There were six nurses...There was an Australian girl who wasn't a nurse, she was a journalist, a copywriter. But she had done a bit of first aid, so she was able to go out as an assistant nurse; Margot Bennett [née Miller]...'

It is feasible that Miller was recruited to provide lively copy on the BMU's achievements for use in SMAC fundraising publications back home.

## Support

The SMAC needed funds for medical supplies and equipment to support the personnel providing medical assistance to Republican frontline fighters. The political left in Britain needed electoral support for British intervention in the cause against fascism in Spain. Essential to both outcomes was the SMAC's ability to communicate the worthiness and urgency of their cause to the British public. To do so they needed a timely supply of authentic content to give flesh to their narrative of need. This might explain why a valuable place on the medical team was given to a publicist.

They knew the importance of managing publicity. They appointed a press and publicity officer at their founding meeting on 8 August 1936,

## 'Essential was the SMAC's ability to communicate the worthiness of their cause to the British public. To do so they needed a timely supply of authentic content.'

and they chose a Sunday for the BMU's departure to Spain as 'preferable to a week-day for publicity purposes'. They created a finance and propaganda sub-committee the day after the BMU left Victoria Station.

Combining oversight of the two functions demonstrated their awareness that generating philanthropic income was linked to the capacity to manage propaganda favourable to the cause. It would be hard to argue that *realpolitik* had no place in the selection criteria used for the BMU.

Margot Miller's return from Spain for the Albert



Daily Worker

Estate of Alexander Wheeler Wainman



▲ Margot Miller (second from right) at the Aid for Spain fundraising event at the Albert Hall.

◀ Newlyweds Miller and Richard Bennett in Barcelona, April 1937.

political spectrum. At the time of her recruitment, Margot Miller was a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) and a member of the unit's secret 'fraction'.

When Miller was wounded, two other party members in the unit independently informed the CPGB in London. Hugh McDonnell telegraphed that Miller had suffered a 'superficial leg wound', and Aileen Palmer reported that Miller had been wounded 'while taking unnecessary risks at the front'.

This very different angle was repeated publicly in Australia in February 1937 by *The Daily News*, which quoted Aileen Palmer: '[Miller's] legs are alright again. She only got hurt through taking a shortcut when she was forbidden to do so.'

The narrative of the 'heroic, wounded, self-sacrificing nurse' was most certainly better fundraising spin than the alternative: 'Communist Party publicity officer injured while recklessly disobeying orders and endangering the lives of her comrades.'

It is easy to see how the story created for the Albert Hall event and used in later fundraising publications such as the *News Chronicle's* 'British Medical Aid in Spain' became a foundation narrative.

When 'Nurse Margot Miller' limped on to the stage at Albert Hall, she bore the weight not only of the propaganda of that moment, but of how she would be recorded in the history of the Spanish Civil War. Margot Miller had brought home the publicity that she had been sent to Spain to provide, but instead of covering the story, she became the story.

*Veronica Maughan is writing a biography of Margot and Richard Bennett and would appreciate any information or correspondence about either or both of them at: info2020@internode.on.net.*

# Magnifying glass on those who left Scotland for Spain



**'Scots and the Spanish Civil War; Solidarity, Activism and Humanitarianism' by Fraser Raeburn (Edinburgh University Press, 2020).**

Fraser Raeburn's book is important on a number of fronts. It is the first major publication on the Scots in Spain since Dan Gray's 'Homage to Caledonia' 12 years ago. He also aims to address a dearth of academic historical analysis of the subject of how Scots intervened in Spain, either by going there to fight or nurse, or via solidarity support on the 'home front'.

More specifically, whilst even UK-focused works have noted the relatively higher proportion of Scots in the British Battalion, there has been little investigation into why. Nor into the way in which the relative strengths and politics of Scottish Labour, ILP, communism and anarchism translated into practical results and how the tensions between these actors played out.

In answering these questions, Raeburn begins with as good a snapshot of Scotland in the 1930s as you could expect to find in a book of

**'While UK-focused works have noted the relatively higher proportion of Scots in the British Battalion, there has been little investigation into why.'**

224 pages. The economy, society and the left are clearly and concisely sketched and help set the scene for the reader for the following chapters. It is in his well-researched analysis of the make-up of the Scottish volunteers that fresh



International Brigade veterans at the unveiling of the Glasgow 'Pasionaria' memorial in September 1981, including Phil Gillan (back row, second from left), George Drever (front row, second from left) and James Maley (front row, second from right).

methodology first emerges. This leads him to call for them to be regarded as a cohesive group prior to leaving Scotland, rather than a disparate group of individuals who only bonded in Spain.

More controversially, but probably justified, is his rigorous approach to the records, which makes him scale down the previously accepted number of 549 Scots to 520, with Glasgow seeing its contingent reduced from 220 to 199.

Lack of previous detailed analysis of that city's Brigaders make it hard for this reviewer to challenge him, although I feel in a better position to query his reduction of Dundee's number from 60 to 57!

That 56 per cent of this number were verifiable as Communist Party members is interrogated further in the next chapter on why

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## FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

Brigaders went and the processes involved. Here, Raeburn posits that rather than being representative of Scotland as a whole, the volunteers were drawn from a relatively homogenous group who had both the politics and the societal connections within which to discuss the pros and cons of going to fight. This concentration amongst the CP and close fellow travellers can explain why volunteer numbers went down in the second half of 1937, yet Aid for Spain activity in Scotland grew. The core of volunteers was being mined out and hadn't been broadened successfully as a 'popular front' the way the Aid movement had.

Subsequent chapters look at the Scots volunteers in Spain and how they acted and interacted, the support at home, both specifically for the volunteers and also the greater Aid Spain initiatives and a treasure chest of new research into the parts played by Scotland's wider labour and trade union movement.

A concluding epilogue gives a short summary of events after 1939, with the International Brigade Association's development through to the play '549: Scots of the Spanish Civil War',



**MEDICS:** Members of a Scottish Ambulance Unit in Glasgow's George Square prepare to set off for Spain, January 1937.

which toured the UK in 2018-2019.

The great value of this book is the magnifying glass it takes to the records of the volunteers and the broad solidarity movement and how they lie in the landscape of Scotland and the wider UK of the 1930s. It is not a popular hagiography of the volunteers. Some of it is painful reading, with descriptions and analysis of desertions and

some of the political attitudes making the going tough. Neither is it the all-encompassing epic work which the subject matter undoubtedly deserves. But it is entertaining, thought-provoking and without doubt a very valuable and important addition to the body of work already available on the subject.

**MIKE ARNOTT**

▼ Spanish Maquis crossing the Pyrenees, October 1944.



## Anti-fascists across the mountains

**S**panish Republicans and the Second World War' by Jonathan Whitehead tells the stories of the 500,000 Spanish Republicans that fled across the Pyrenees in 1939 as Catalonia fell to Franco's victorious army in the final weeks of the Spanish Civil War.

Many of the exiles played an active part in the Second World War. Some joined the French and British armed forces and saw action in various theatres including Africa and Europe (both in 1940 and after D-Day). In August 1944, Spanish Republicans in the La Nueve company of General Leclerc's 2nd Armoured Division were the first Allied troops into Paris during the liberation of the French capital. The Spaniards that had remained in Vichy France were active in the early days of the French Resistance and the Republican Maquis played a significant part in the liberation of the south-west of France in 1944. Those who fought the Axis troops in Spain during the civil war and then again in France assumed that once the Allies

had defeated the Nazis, they would launch a military campaign to overthrow Franco's government in Spain.

### Reconquista

In October 1944 a force of thousands of Spanish Maquis took part in Operación Reconquista, the invasion of the Valley of Arán on the Spanish side of the Pyrenees. Their aims were to establish a beachhead and to trigger a popular uprising that would force the Allies to intervene against Franco's dictatorship.

Among other questions, Whitehead also examines the role of the Spanish volunteers of the División Azul who swore an oath of allegiance to Hitler and fought with the Wehrmacht on the Eastern Front; the fate of so many Republicans in labour and extermination camps (including the 7,000 deported to Mauthausen); and the role of the Catalan master double-agent Garbo, who played a crucial part in the success of D-Day.

Although the author does not focus

on veterans of the International Brigades, he does describe the conditions in which many were held in the French concentration camps at Gurs and Vernet d'Arriège. Also examined is the role of Nan Green (whose husband George had been killed at the Battle of the Ebro) in her humanitarian work with Republican exiles and her trip on board the *Sinaia* accompanying refugees on their voyage to a new life in the Americas. There is also a description of the work of Tom Wintringham in the creation of the Land Defence Volunteers (Home Guard) and his part in setting up the training camp at Osterley Park, where he used veteran International Brigaders to instruct in the new methods of guerrilla warfare they had learned in Spain.



*'Spanish Republicans and the Second World War' (2021) is published by Pen & Sword.*



▲ Writers and directors of different productions of 'Goodbye Barcelona' hosted an online celebration.

▼◀ Photos from the (top left) 2013 Barcelona and the 2011 London productions.

# 'Goodbye Barcelona' 10 years on

Celebrating the 10th anniversary of the premiere of 'Goodbye Barcelona', the award-winning musical about a fictional group of British volunteers who go to fight in the Spanish Civil War, key people involved in its various productions held a livestreamed discussion. The event, hosted on 24 November, also served to inaugurate the forthcoming German production of the musical.

Karl Lewkowicz, composer of 'Goodbye Barcelona', provided a report of the proceedings:

*It was a truly enriching experience joining together with the wider international team who had generally never met before.*

*Brilliantly hosted by author Matthew Tree, the guests included Judith Johnson, who wrote the script, myself (music and lyrics), along with the directors from the different productions: Karen Rabinowiz (London), Fran Arraez (Barcelona), Hans*

*Friedrichs (New York) and Rodrigo Johnson (Mexico City).*

*We were joined by Lorena Cervera, who filmed many of the key moments in the show and Hartmut H Forche, the German translator for the*

**'The writers drew from interviews with International Brigade veterans to provide an authentic representation of the struggle in Spain.'**

*new production. The icing on the cake was a live performance of the title song from Pep Papell of the original Catalan cast and Dani Campos, the musical director. We will always be grateful to Hartmut who had seen the 2013 production in Barcelona and*

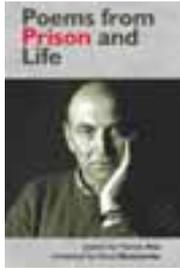
*who invited us to showcase it at the 2019 Luisenborg-Festspiele in Germany, where it was picked up by one of the major German publishers. I'm looking forward enormously to working with the publisher who is organising the German production.*

The narrative of 'Goodbye Barcelona' follows 18-year-old Sammy, who leaves his home in London and travels to Spain to join the International Brigades. The writers, with the support of the IBMT, drew from interviews they conducted with several International Brigade veterans to provide a representation of the struggle in Spain which was as authentic as possible.

They included Alun Menai Williams, Penny Feivel, Lou Kenton, Jack Jones and Sam Lesser – who gave his name to the musical's main character.

# Poetry born from Franco's prisons

**'Poems from Prison and Life' by Marcos Ana, translated by David Duncombe (Smokestack Books, 2021).**



**M**arcos Ana (1920-2016) was one of Spain's longest-serving political prisoners. He spent 23 years in Franco's gaols, many of them in solitary confinement. During that time he became a poet, and his poems were smuggled out of prison by fellow inmates who memorised them before their release and by sympathetic guards. The Francoist authorities were dumbfounded when his first collection of poems was published abroad in 1960 while Ana was still a prisoner.

Poetry specialists Smokestack Books are to be commended for producing this bilingual version of an anthology that was published 10 years ago in Spain. It shares the same title as the original, 'Poemas de la prisión y la vida', and the poems have been newly translated by English poet David Duncombe.

This is not the first time some of Ana's works

**'He was given several sentences of death, commuted to decades of imprisonment, at one time over 70 years.'**

have appeared in Britain. Appeal for Amnesty in Spain (AAS) published 'From Burgos Jail', with poems by Ana and illustrations by Agustín Ibarrola, soon after the poet's release at the end of 1961. It contained one of his best-known poems, 'Life?' (right), which begins with the memorable line 'Tell me what a tree is like'.

AAS, which was later to become Amnesty International, was one of the organisations that mustered considerable worldwide support to

demand Ana's freedom, with backing from luminaries such as Vera Brittain and Henry Moore in Britain, and Rafael Alberti, Joan Baez, Yves Montand, Pablo Neruda, Picasso and Jean-Paul Sartre internationally. AAS also

**'Ana was born Fernando Macarro Castillo in a village near Salamanca where his parents were illiterate farm workers.'**

hosted a month-long visit by Ana to London in 1962 to highlight the plight of Spanish political prisoners.

Ana was born Fernando Macarro Castillo in a village near Salamanca, where his parents were illiterate farm workers. In 1938 he joined the socialist youth and then the JSU, the union of young socialists and communists, around the time his father was killed by Nazi bombers. He enlisted with a militia unit and fought early on in the war. Then at 17 he became a political commissar in the Spanish Republic's 8th Division on the Madrid front. After the defeat of the Republican forces in 1939, he was captured near Alicante by Italian troops.

## Suffering

He moved from one gaol to another, suffering torture and beatings. Accused of trumped-up charges, he was given several sentences of death, commuted to decades of imprisonment, at one time over 70 years.

Prison, however, became his university. He met other gaoled poets and writers, such as Antonio Buero Vallejo, read the classics of Spanish literature, Quevedo, Lope de Vega and Cervantes, and even the smuggled works of banned poets Miguel Hernández and García Lorca. He began writing poetry 12 years into his prison ordeal, using the first names of his parents, Marcos and Ana, as a pseudonym in order to avoid identification. He wrote his

## Life?

Tell me what a tree is like.  
Tell me the song of the river  
when the birds flock above.

Talk to me about the sea, talk to me  
of the scent that fills the countryside,  
of the stars, of the air.

Outline a horizon for me  
without lock and without key  
like a poor man's hut.

Tell me what a woman's kiss  
is like. Give me the name  
for Love: I can't recall it.

Are the nights still perfumed  
with lovers trembling  
with passion beneath the moon?

Or is this pit all that remains,  
the light from a keyhole  
and the singing from my flagstones?

Twenty-two years...Now I forget  
the dimensions of things,  
their colour, their smell...I grope

for words: 'sea,' 'fields'...  
I say 'forest' but have lost  
the design of a tree.

I talk, for the sake of it, about matters  
and the years erased from me.

I can't go on: I can hear  
the footsteps of the guard.

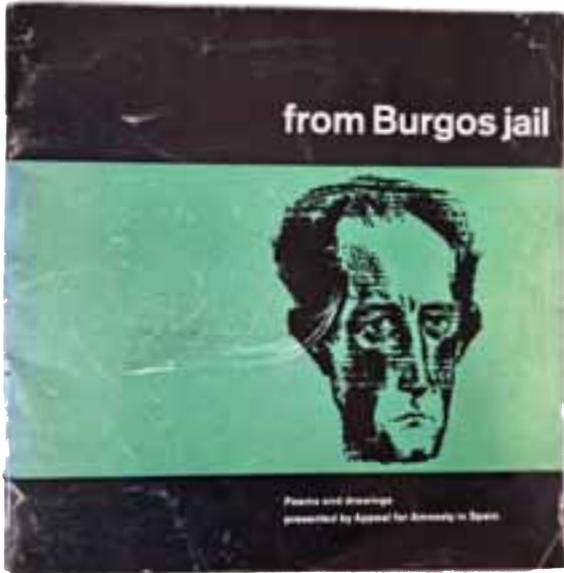
**MARCOS ANA**

poems 'in the depth of night, by the poor light of a peculiar lamp, assembled from an old inkwell, a little alcohol that I smuggled from the sick bay and a wick plaited from the lace of an *espadrille*.'

Ana was 42 when he was eventually released. He maintained his communist beliefs for the rest of his life and travelled and campaigned extensively, founding the Centre for Information and Solidarity with Spain to continue the struggle against Franco.

He settled in Paris, not returning to Spain until 1976, the year after the Caudillo's death, and said: 'I never wanted revenge. The only revenge I want is the triumph of our ideas.'

**JIM JUMP**



► Illustrations by Basque artist Agustin Ibarolla in 'From Burgos Jail' (1964). Ibarolla himself was imprisoned and tortured for organising an art exhibition celebrating the Spanish people's struggle at the time of the 1962 miners' strike in Asturias.



# Finding the brother who fell at the Ebro

**PAUL** and **STEVE BENNETT** recall the story of their grandfather Donald and great-uncle Gordon, both International Brigaders from Walsall. Gordon Bennett was killed during the Battle of the Ebro but his body was never recovered. However, Catalan authorities may now be able to identify his remains using DNA testing.



Gordon 'Dusty' Bennett in Spain (front row, third from right).

In September 2021 I took an unexpected phone call; my local authority wanted to know if I was related to a Gordon Alexander Bennett, writes Paul Bennett. I explained that I was and that he was my great uncle. 'Did he take part in the Spanish Civil War?' they asked. After a few background questions from them they explained the reason for their call. Catalan authorities had discovered a number of human remains in a mass grave near to Gandesa, in the municipality of Móra d'Ebre.

It was there on 28 July 1938 that Gordon Bennett, also known as Gordon 'Dusty' Bennett, was killed fighting for the Spanish Republic as a member of the International Brigades. He went to Spain alongside his brother Donald Stewart Bennett. Grandfather Don returned to England but great uncle Gordon was lost to our family. The Catalan authorities believe that one set of recovered remains may be that of Gordon.

My brother and I have spent the last 40 years or so trying to work out what happened in those last few days and what had become of Gordon's body. Finally, it would seem that we may be in touching distance of finding out. I will shortly give my DNA to the researchers at the Catalan authority, in the hope that it matches the human remains that have been found. My brother Steve, who now lives in Spain, takes up the story.

When we were kids, Paul and I always used to spend our weekends with Don at his apartment. Don was a very understanding



▲ Paul Bennett (left) with his grandfather Don.

man. He was always campaigning for peace; he hated war. I was at that age when you want to know everything and I learned about his time in the US. He was in Washington when the veterans from the First World War converged on the White House to demand the bonus the US government had promised them for their service. The 1934 'Bonus March' garnered a lot of support from all quarters in the US and Don told me that the National Guard were brought in to break up the demonstration, backed with army tanks rolling down Lexington Avenue.

I asked him about what happened to Gordon (Don's brother) in Spain – well, I didn't exactly ask but interrogated. I wanted to know every detail. It

was very insensitive of me, but when you are a child you don't pick up on these things. So there I was: 'what happened next?', 'then what happened?' and so on. Don told me that he had gone to Spain in late 1936 and trained at the International Brigades headquarters in Albacete. He was a machine gunner leading a group of three auxiliaries. He fought in all the major battles in Spain: Jarama, Madrid, Brunete, Belchite, Teruel, Aragón, Pozoblanco and the Battle of the Ebro, which is where Gordon was killed.

I ploughed on, oblivious to his mounting grief, as he told me that Gordon was a rookie and had been teamed up with Don to show him the ropes. I was told that the Maxim machine gun had a guard which bisected the gun triggers and the sights at the end of the water-cooled barrel. The guard came loose, Don couldn't see where he was shooting and Gordon jumped up and tried to force the guard back onto the gun. He flew back over Don. He had a small hole in the front of his chest, and when Don turned him over most of his back had been blown away.

'What did you do next?' I asked. 'Well Steve you gotta understand that we was in a battle. There was this wall behind our nest, so I pulled it over him, weren't no time for grieving, we had to carry on.'

**'My brother and I have spent 40 years trying to work out what happened in those last few days and what had become of Gordon's body.'**

Then to my surprise, Don just broke down sobbing. I felt awful, I began crying as well. I learned that sometimes it is diplomatic not to ask for every last detail.

He then said: 'War is the most terrible thing invented by man. No movie, no book, nothing can prepare you for war. You shit your trousers and piss yourself with fear. No one knows what is happening – your only thought is base survival. All the time you have the stench of dead corpses, flies everywhere. There is no glory in war.'

I never discussed it with him again. I knew why he would wake up screaming in the middle of the night; why he would sometimes start trembling uncontrollably.

Our story is a sad one, but one that has been replicated thousands, if not millions of times, whenever war raises its ugly head. Both Steve and I have been lifelong campaigners for peace, for trade unions and for socialism. Lessons from history are seldom learned and so when fascism raises its ugly head again let's hope that, like the International Brigades, many people will answer the call to fight it, in some cases, to the ultimate end.

# 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](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/catalog)) where there are also other items listed for sale.



#### International Brigade emblem t-shirt:

Produced by t-shirt specialists Red Molotov. Available in black, blue, bottle green, charcoal, grey, natural, navy, olive green, purple, red, sky blue, white, yellow and in sizes **XL** (119cms); **L** (109cms); **M** (99cms); **S** (89cms). £20 plus £4 p&p.



#### Scotland International Brigade t-shirt:

This t-shirt remembers the 549 Scottish volunteers who fought fascism in Spain. Produced by t-shirt specialists Red Molotov. Available in **XL**, **L**, **M**, **S** (see International Brigade emblem t-shirt for size details). £20 plus £4 p&p.



#### Wales International Brigade t-shirt:

Celebrate the 184 volunteers from Wales who fought fascism in Spain. Produced by t-shirt specialists Red Molotov. Available in **XL**, **L**, **M**, **S** (see International Brigade emblem t-shirt for size details). £20 plus £4 p&p.



#### Ireland International Brigade t-shirt:

This t-shirt combines the Spanish Republic's flag and the starry plough of the Irish Citizen Army. Produced by t-shirt specialists Red Molotov. Available in **XL**, **L**, **M**, **S** (see International Brigade emblem t-shirt for size details). £20 plus £4 p&p.



#### Anti-fascist women t-shirt:

Features 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 **XL** (120cms); **L** (110cms); **M** (100cms); **S** (90cms). £20 plus £4 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 **XL**, **L**, **M** and **S** (see Antifascist women t-shirt for size details). £20 plus £4 p&p.



#### Jarama Valley/Brigadista Reprise CD:

Billy Bragg performing 'Jarama Valley' and Maxine Peake reading La Pasionaria's farewell speech to the International Brigades. £6 plus £4 p&p.



#### Greetings cards:

Featuring five different pieces of International Brigade-themed artwork. Produced in collaboration with specialist merchandise suppliers Past Pixels. 10 cards and envelopes per pack. £10 plus £3 p&p.



#### Attlee Company 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.



#### Classic badge:

A vintage badge design which came back in stock due to popular demand. Metal badge in purple, red, blue and gold, with the IBMT name in a banner across the foot of the badge. £5 plus £3 p&p.



#### Football scarf:

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



#### International Brigades mug:

2,500 volunteers from Britain and Ireland joined the legendary International Brigades to fight fascism in the Spanish Civil War. This quality ceramic mug features the emblem they wore with pride. Produced by merchandise specialists Red Molotov. £10 plus £3 p&p.



#### Tote bags:

High quality cotton canvas tote bag with a design depicting the symbolism and flag of the Spanish Republic or depicting the International Brigades farewell ceremony. 38 x 42cms. Approximately 10l capacity. £7 each 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 BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

Help us inspire new generations with the story of the men and women who fought fascism and defended democracy in Spain from 1936-1939.

## **International Brigade Memorial Trust**

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www.international-brigades.org.uk

To make a donation to the IBMT go to:

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

¡No pasarán!  
They shall not pass!

