



Proposal for a memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire

A proposal was received from John Roberts (Independent Labour Publications, formerly the Independent Labour Party) and Quentin Kopp (chair of the Orwell Society, but in a personal capacity) that a memorial should be sought in the NMA – to all those who went to Spain to support democracy. They invited the IBMT's support for the project.

There has been some discussion on the IBMT Executive Committee, and Dolores Long undertook to make contact and discuss with JR and QK. This was followed by a visit in August to the NMA by Richard Baxell (IBMT historical consultant), Megan Dobney (IBMT secretary), and Marlene Sidaway (IBMT president) who met with QK on site.

QT has had an initial discussion with NMA personnel about the feasibility of such a memorial. They say that there is an initial fee of £1,000 to put in an application but that they do not readily accept applications (and the fee) when they think the Trustees won't accept the proposal.

About the National Memorial Arboretum (from their website):

We are a UK registered charity and 150-acre visitor site on the edge of the National Forest in Staffordshire. Part of the Royal British Legion, but a separate legal body, we exist to ensure that:

- the unique contribution of those who have served and sacrificed is never forgotten
- the baton of Remembrance is passed on through the generations
- there is a year-round space to celebrate lives lived and commemorate lives lost.

The Arboretum welcomes over 300,000 visitors to site each year, including over 20,000 young people for formal and informal learning visits. Visitors can enjoy discovering over 400 memorials nestled amongst some 25,000 trees, experience riverside walks and participate in a wide variety of daily activities: guided walks, land train tours, memorial talks, exhibitions and buggy tours.

Each year around 250 events take place on site, from small intimate services of Remembrance to set piece events like Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, a summer proms and Armed Forces Day.

The NMA is a beautiful space with lovely trees. It's well designed with pathways, a land train, and a visitor centre.

Three issues...

1. the principle of a memorial in the NMA with which the IBMT is involved – yes or no?
2. finance – how would money be raised?
3. site and appearance of a memorial

Clearly 2. and 3. are irrelevant if 1. is not agreed. Here is some information about 2. and 3. for your consideration if appropriate.

Finance: JR is confident that the money can be raised via crowd-funding and approaching the membership of the three organisations involved (IBMT, ILP, Orwell Society). The IBMT would not be required to donate as an organisation. JR and QK propose establishing a body with charitable status that would raise the money for a memorial and its consequent upkeep and then close. It would therefore be able to claim Gift Aid.

Site: we looked at a space (currently available) fairly close to the Land Train route and near to the Shot at Dawn memorial. There is no purpose in having a memorial that people won't see. A QR code on the memorial would take people to the websites of the three organisations – however, phone reception is not strong and would be needed to be purposeful.

Appearance: memorials can take the form of built memorials, works of art, natural landscape features or infrastructure projects. If we decide to go ahead this decision can be taken at that point. The question of any text on the monument is an interesting one. It seems, but could be tested, that fighting "in defence of democracy" would be acceptable to the NMA, but fighting "against fascism" might not be...