International Brigade Memorial Trust

2024 Annual General Meeting
Weston super Mare 5 Oct. 2024

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

1/ INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period from October 2023 to September 2024.

We remember those members and supporters who have died this year, among them **Eddie Lindon**, a Scottish-Irish poet. **Tony Lloyd MP** who died earlier this year. Tony was a long time supporter of the IBMT. He spoke in Jubilee Gardens in 2008 and joined us at our 2022 AGM in Manchester. **Ronnie Moran** who was a leading campaigner for the Blockade Runners Memorial in Glasgow that commemorates the seafarers that sailed to Republican Spain between 1936 and 1938. **Betty Birch**, who died in August 2024 at the age of 94, was a leading anti-Franco activist during the postwar years and was a founder member of the IBMT. She campaigned on behalf of Spanish political prisoners and was the first chair of the Aid to Spanish Youth Committee. **Martin Bedford**, Sheffield-based designer of our poster for the 75th anniversary of the International Brigades. The image is to be used for the new memorial in Burnley. **Peter Carroll** died in September 2024. He gave the 2012 Len Crome Memorial Lecture at London's Imperial War Museum on "From Guernica to Human Rights: The Spanish Civil War in the 21st Century". As one of the leading lights in ALBA, our US sister organisation, he was a great friend of the IBMT.

2/ EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee has met three times: on 7 October 2023, 13 January, and 11 May 2024. The October meeting was held in person at the 2023 AGM in Stockton on Tees, whilst the January and May meetings were hybrid – with some members in the Marx Memorial Library and some online.

Executive Committee members elected at the 2023 AGM for a full three year term were David Chanter/John Haywood (jobshare), Paul Coles, Alex Gordon, Jonathan Havard.

The President's role is ongoing and is carried out by Marlene Sidaway. The following other roles were agreed by the EC: Jim Jump Chair; Megan Dobney Secretary; Paul Coles Treasurer; Mike Arnott Scotland Secretary; David McKnight Wales Secretary; John Haywood Fundraising Coordinator; Dolores Long North West Representative; Alan Lloyd Archivist and South East Representative; Marshall Mateer Film Coordinator; Dolores Long Minute Taker; and Alex Gordon and John Haywood were appointed as the IBMT's Auditors.

Helen Oclee-Brown, Executive Officer, was appointed journal Editor.

Membership, Merchandise and Social Media are dealt with by the Executive Officer with the support of the Finance & Management Committee.

The Finance & Management Committee (comprising the President, Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, and Executive Officer) has met many times during the year dealing with the day to day interests of the organisation.

3/ TREASURER'S REPORT

The April 2023 to March 2024 accounts are submitted separately for your approval.

The F&MC has received a Treasurer's report at each meeting. The report to the end of August will be circulated to members at the AGM.

4/ IBMT OFFICE

The IBMT continues to rent a room at its registered office at Marx House, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU.

5/ MEMBERSHIP AND ¡NO PASARÁN!

The Finance & Management Committee discussed membership subscriptions and will make a proposal to the AGM when we are clear on the status and flexibility of Direct Debits. In brief, we suggest that the Household Category is now redundant now that the hard copy magazine requires an additional subscription; we need to define "Concession" category; there should be a 10% increase – therefore £22 Concessions, and £27.50 Ordinary. Any change agreed to take place on 1 April 2025.

Following much work by the IBMT Executive Officer we are now "fairly confident" in our membership figures: 749 individual members plus 29 affiliates.

The decision to go over to an online version of our magazine was carried out from May 2023 with all members being given the option of an extra subscription of £15 per year to receive a printed copy. The quality of the "on demand" printed version is good. 39 individual members have picked up this option.

Three issues of *¡No Pasarán!* have been published since the last AGM. All have been edited by Helen Oclee-Brown with the constant support of former editor Jim Jump.

We have local groups affiliated to us in Aberdeen, Belfast, Cardiff, Hull, Manchester/North West, Oxford, Stockton and Sussex.

6/ COMMUNICATIONS

eNewsletter The IBMT eNewsletter continues to keep members informed of IBMT activities and events linked to the International Brigades and Spanish Civil War. It is published monthly and is also posted on our website.

Social media The IBMT's social media presence continues to slowly grow, with original content shared over Facebook and X every week. In September 2024 our Facebook group had 7,100 members, and our X feed had 5,996 followers.

Website Our website is regularly updated with news stories, updates and ongoing revisions to the database of International Brigaders.

7/ TRADE UNIONS

We continue to foster strong links with the trade union movement. In April we jointly published with RMT a booklet *They Shall Not Pass* describing the rail and maritime workers in the fight against fascism, in particular, the Spanish Civil War.

Articles by Jim Jump on the International Brigades appeared in the journals of BFAWU (foodworkers) and the NEU (education workers). In addition, the ASLEF (train drivers) journal has carried an advert for the IBMT.

8/ SPANISH CITIZENSHIP FOR BRIGADER FAMILIES

The implementation of the provision in the 2022 Law of Democratic Memory granting citizenship to qualifying descendants of International Brigaders

is under way. The IBMT is supporting members in their applications.

9/ BRIGADER INTERVIEWS

PhD candidate and IBMT member David Grant checked the physical and digital archives. He has screened and prepared notes on interviews with six Brigaders. These will be updated to the website alongside the three existing interviews.

10/ IBMT ARCHIVES

IBMT archivist Alan Lloyd is currently halfway through the second trawl of the volunteers' database and says: I am concentrating on correcting typos from my first effort and having another attempt to find details of those about whom we still know almost nothing.

It is also possible to use the search facility to input the names of streets, towns and cities, and not just surnames. One change is that, in the event we do not have a picture of a volunteer, I am now including a picture of their gravestone or local memorial.

Please feel free to get in touch, whether it is to amend or to add information to any of the profiles.

One outside activity was to do an hour slot at the Bristol Radical History Festival on 20 April, with an attendance of about 60 people. Along with Beth Richards we also ran a stall for the day. Sales were disappointingly poor, but we did speak to a lot of people and dish out a good number of membership forms.

11/ LONDON SOUTHBANK COMMEMORATION

The IBMT's annual commemoration in London Southbank's Jubilee Gardens took place on 6 July. This was well attended on a mostly sunny and dry day and the conversations continued in a local pub. Speakers were Fran Heathcote *(above right)*, general secretary of PCS trade union, and IBMT's historical consultant Richard Baxell. We were very happy to welcome again musical duo Na-Mara – and less happy that they will do no more gigs – so this was their last performance – well received by the substantial crowd as usual.

Many wreaths were laid to and by individuals and groups, including by the Spanish Embassy and our stall was busy with sales and queries.

The 2025 event will be held on Saturday 5 July.

12/ LEN CROME MEMORIAL ONLINE CONVERSATION

The Len Crome Memorial Online Conversation took place in November – chaired by IBMT historical consultant Richard Baxell, Paul Preston and Helen Graham discussed "Spain in the European Civil War". They traced the conflict's origins back to the First World War – not only with attempts to wipe out the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 but also to double down on any socially levelling reform inside the developed industrial heartlands of Europe, including Britain. The event can be viewed on our website.

The 2024 event will be at 2.30 on Saturday 9 November in the Marx Memorial Library and also online.

13/ MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATIONS

In the Spring of 2024 we were alerted by the Jubilee Gardens Trust to damage to the pointing on the base of our national memorial in Jubilee Gardens. The Finance & Management Committee decided to get this work done and launched a special appeal for the money. The money was raised and the work completed before the annual commemoration in July. We are particularly grateful for the generous donation from the Jubilee Gardens Trust of half the cost.

Discussion is ongoing on the placing of the Nottingham IB memorial. It is currently on County Hall in the town but the council is moving from that building to an out of town site. The current facia is likely to be kept and talks continue.

The engraving on the Hampstead memorial bench has been vandalised. The families have been alerted and we hope for repair.

The proposed Memorial at the Spotted Dog

Football Ground in Stratford, East London, is progressing and the Clapton Community Football Club are sourcing their chosen marble.

In Dover the South East Kent TUC unveiled a plaque to local International Brigade volunteers on the RMT's offices in the town. This took place in December 2023 and Jim Jump spoke at the event.

14/ MERCHANDISE

Good relations have continued with both Red Molotov and Past Pixels for partnership production of merchandise. This helps us not having to hold so much stock in our small office and also lifts some of the burden of distribution from the office. We now have a functioning card reader.

We now have a new stock of the classic high quality enamel IBMT badge, for sale at £5.

The October 2023 Executive Committee meeting took a decision to seek a higher profile for the IBMT with stalls at key labour movement events. This has been carried out with stalls at RMT Young Members, STUC Congress, ASLEF and RMT conferences, London May Day, Levellers Day, Durham Miners Gala, Tolpuddle Festival, and the Burston Strike School Rally. We particularly thank Alan Lloyd and Beth Richards for their work on stalls all over the countries.

Affiliated IB groups are reminded that merchandise can be bought at a 10% discount.

15/ FUNDRAISING

Two raffles are foreseen – one in person at the AGM, and an online one to be drawn before xmas on 12 December. We are pleased to say that the first prize will be travel and accommodation (up to £500) to Madrid, and including a tour of the Prado museum conducted by Almudena Cros, a professional guide from our sister organisation AABI in Madrid.

16/ SCHOOLS PROJECT

Our volunteer David Grant has prepared a fourth model for the IBMT guide for teachers focusing on the role of women volunteers. It is currently being assessed for content and design.

17/JARAMA EVENT ORGANISED BY AABI

Many members attended AABI's annual commemoration, and also the event organised by ARMH Cuenca in Tarancon (that gives tribute to the 39 Scots who fell at Jarama). The 2025 events will be on 21 and 22 February.

18/AGM 2023 MOTIONS

Two motions were carried at the AGM – one on the creation of a memorial in the National Memorial Arboretum, the other on the possibility of making the AGM a hybrid event.

The motion on the NMA was discussed at length by the January Executive Committee. The full text of the reasons (for and against) was provided in the minutes of that meeting, but the outcome was, by 7 votes to 3, a decision not to proceed.

At the May EC meeting the proposal to make AGMs hybrid was not progressed. We felt that the IBMT's finances are not robust enough to allow us to invest in the equipment required for a fully functioning hybrid meeting, and many members feel that real life attendance at the whole weekend's events enriches the formal discussions at the actual Annual General Meeting.

19/ SCOTLAND

Annual Commemorations

Dundee: 10 February; Ceremony at the Albert Square memorial.

Paisley: 16 February; Ceremony at the Cotton Street memorial to the Renfrewshire Brigaders.

Tarancon: 23 February; at the Municipal Cemetery memorial to the Scots Brigaders who fell at Jarama. At the Jarama commemoration the following day, Anne Azak, granddaughter of Leith brigader Robert Bridges, and Janet, great neice of Blantyre brigader William Fox, spoke at the February 1937 British Battalion Memorial.

Motherwell: 23-29 July; Flying of Spanish Republican Flag from Motherwell Civic Centre.

Motherwell: 28 July; at the Duchess of Hamilton Park memorial to the North Lanarkshire Brigaders.

Glasgow: 21 September; Ceremony at the Pasionaria Memorial, Custom House Quay.

Kirkcaldy: 28 September; Ceremony at the Forth Avenue memorial to the Fife Brigaders.

Brigaders Return Activities

Paisley: 5 December; Open Zoom talk and discussion with Paisley TUC and Morning Star Scottish Readers Group.

Fife: 9 December; Rally and Social Event at KUSI Club, Kirkcaldy with Fife TUC. Article in Fife Free Press.

Aberdeen: 11 December; Showing of the film and unveiling of painting in Unite the Union office, King Street.

Dundee: 12 December; City Square Rally followed by Film Screening at DCA. Article in Dundee Courier magazine on 9 December.

Events

25 November; British Battalion Scottish Contingent standard took part in STUC's Annual St Andrews Day Anti Racist/Anti Fascist March, Glasgow.

28 February; Scotland Secretary gave talk to Carse Continuing Education Group at Inchture Village Hall on Dundee and the Spanish Civil War.

15-17 April; IBMT Merchandise Stall at STUC Congress, Caird Hall, Dundee. An Aberdeen TUC Motion praising the IBMT was passed unanimously at the Congress.

22 April; Glasgow band The Tenementals release their first single dedicated to ILP volunteer Bob Smillie.

7 May; Arran Heritage Museum; Liam Turbett gave a talk on Brodick-born Bertie Milton's role in SCW.

18 May; Edinburgh; PCE Exterior and CP public meeting; The Spanish Republic, Past and Future.

6-11 June; Delegation attended 20th Birthday Celebrations of ARMH Cuenca in Tarancon.

3 August; 'The Wee Gaitherin'; Poetry at Stonehaven War Memorial, included SCW reading.

14 August; Our Fathers Fought Franco: Willy Maley and Jennie Renton gave a talk at the Edinburgh Festival.

15 August; Neil Cooney gave a talk on his uncle, Bob Cooney. Aberdeen Trades Council centre.

Research

As well as helping Alan Lloyd with the IBMT Brigader Database queries, assistance was given to people researching the following Scottish brigaders; Frank Casey, John Mudie and Charles Watt (Mac Pap). Birth certificate copies of a number of brigaders on the Alvah Bessie Project list were also sent to the Catalan Generalitat.

A new memorial, Scotland's oldest, has been discovered at Carbeth, Stirlingshire. It was planted by the family of a fallen brigader and is known as the Soldiers Tree. It possibly dates from the late 1930s.

Social Media

Scotland and the Spanish Civil War Facebook Group; 2,200 members. In last year; 414 posts, 280 comments, 3,209 reactions, 38K views.

In October 2023, Wonder Fools theatre group posted a 15 minute YouTube film on their production of 549 Scots of the Spanish Civil War; https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=1UVod-teBfU&t=9s&fbclid=IwY2xjawE0CkxleHRuA2FlbQIxMQABHRoOtYj9AMpilj2DUn7khABIo-sp9a6_5oVTM8sYoDLtRb-04GASmh4zug_aem_ScQTnrOc3gpfxciISPYDOw

In Memoriam

15 February; Ronnie Moran. IBMT member, RMT Glasgow Shipping Branch stalwart and leading campaigner for the Blockade Runners memorial in Glasgow.

2 August; Allan Craig Jnr, son of brigader Allan Craig and founder of the Tarancon memorial to the 39 Scots who fell at Jarama, which began the annual Tarancon combined commemoration of brigaders, the town's civilian victims of the dictatorship and its fallen Spanish Republican soldiers. On 26 August a fourth memorial was unveiled to remember the Internationals who died in Tarancon's hospitals.

20/ NORTHERN IRELAND

The International Brigade Commemoration Committee – short report on our activities since the last IBMT AGM.

On 5 December 2023 the IBCC held an event showing the film Brigaders Return! marking 85th anniversary of the return of the British and Irish International Brigaders. We involved local actors and singers.

AGM had guest speakers Neil O'Riordan – tribute to Manus O'Riordan and Gerry Grainger – Tribute to Paddy McCallister

May Day events: 25 and 26 April Concerts and meetings on Derry and Belfast singers Joe Solo and Teknopeasant, trade union speakers: Theme World Peace – on the anniversary of Guernica.

We produced a booklet which contains the expanded and supplemented written version of a presentation given by Ewald P Schulz *The Story of the Thalmann Battalion* at an event organised by the IBCC as part of the Féile an Phobail the Peoples Festival 2023. It was reviewed by Jim Jump on the IBMT website.

This year's event in the Féile an Phobail was about Ruth Ormsby and the medical units. Ruth was a nurse from Sligo who died in Spain. Johnny Gogan-film maker spoke about *Behind the Lines*, a documentary that is being made. (A report of this was on the website.)

21/ NORTH WEST ENGLAND

Film *The Brigaders Return* and talk given at WCML, Oldham Church and Central Hall, Manchester

Commemoration of Thomas Moore at Moston Cemetery. The inscription on the grave has been re-gilded

Jarama commemoration at Manchester Central Library

Talk by Robbie McDonald at PCE GB event in Central Hall, Manchester

NW Group meeting at Waldorf Pub

Talk at WCML by Robert Hargreaves at Italian Liberation Day

Memorial of Brigader Harry Rowland Heap (also known as Harry Rawson) found in Greenacres Cemetery, Oldham, his home town. Harry died in Spain. The memorial is on his widow's family grave.

Marble grave markers were placed on previously unmarked graves of Brigaders Charlie Armitage and Charlie Hanson in local cemeteries. Funding provided by NW Group and donations from family and friends.

Talk at Ashton Library on local Brigaders

IBMT stall at Kinder Trespass

IBMT stall at ASLEF conference

Discussions with Central Library on wording and location of the plaque

Talk by Richard Baxell at Eccles Library on his book *Forged in Spain*

IBMT stall at Manchester Histories Festival

Talk on local Brigaders at Eccles Library – Chris Carson

Discussion with Manchester Cervantes Institute on joint future talk and book exhibition

NW Group meeting at Waldorf Pub

Meeting at WCML to discuss location, funding and publicity for placing a memorial to commemorate the Salford volunteers in a public space in Salford. Crowdfunding project being set up

Joint talk between Orwell Society and NW Group on "George Orwell in Wigan and Spain" at Wigan Library

Liaison with local group in Burnley on placing memorial to Burnley volunteers

New wording, that now includes info on Syd Boothe and Sol Garson, on plaque in Central Library

Progress made on placing portraits by Syd Booth at WCML and producing postcards of the portraits

Talk at Oldham Histories Festival on new material and film footage of local volunteers

Ongoing discussion with Oldham Council re moving IB memorial from Oldham Parish Church to the newly renovated Council/Library building.

22/ SOUTH EAST ENGLAND

Oxford Oxford IBMT joined forces with Oxford TUC for May Day on 4 May with speeches and wreath laying, followed by a march to Bonn Square.

They also helped to organise Levellers Day, on Saturday 18 May, along with holding a stall with IBMT merchandise.

Eastbourne There was a full house in Eastbourne's Grove Theatre on 18 May for an assortment of songs, film clips and spoken word on the theme of 'Sussex and the Spanish Civil War'.

Organised by the IBMT-affiliated Sussex Brigaders Remembered and scripted by Mike Anderson and Pauline Fraser, the event attracted an audience of some 70 people.

Southampton Alan Lloyd addressed a room full of history and Spanish students at Brockenhurst College, on 19 March, this being the second year we have received an invitation.

The Southampton plaque was removed at the end of February as it was needing some repair/refurbishment, with paint flaking and some rust appearing. It is now back in place, with the £880 cost being covered by Unite Branches SE6217 & SE6236.

23/ WALES

The annual commemoration for the brigaders from Wales organised by IBMT affiliate, IB Cymru, took place on Saturday 22 July at the IBMT national memorial in Cathays Park, Cardiff, on the 88th anniversary of the start of the Spanish Civil War.

IBMT Wales Secretary David McKnight, spoke on behalf of the IBMT, and, with the far right on the ascendancy across Europe, emphasised the importance of remembering why the brigaders went to Spain – to fight against fascism and for democracy.

Author Gareth Thomas, also spoke, focusing on three brigaders from Wales: Harry Dobson, Alun Menai Williams and Edwin Greening. All feature in Gareth's new pamphlet *Rhondda Cynon Taf & the Spanish Civil War',* launched at the national Eisteddfod in Pontypridd on 5 August.

There are plans for a Gwyl Twm Sbaen Festival to remember north Wales brigader, Tom Jones (or Twm Sbaen as he was known) in Spring 2025.

24/FILM COORDINATOR

***The Brigaders Return!* project**

The film *The Brigaders Return!* was shown in 12 locations around UK/Ireland: Dundee, Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Belfast, Aberdeen, Teesside, Newcastle, Middlesborough, Southampton, Hull and London. Over 300 people attended events on or close to the anniversary date of 7 December – the 86th anniversary. A ceremony was held at Newhaven docks and at Hull railway station and Glasgow held an online discussion of current issues.

A final edit of the film will be made prior to a hoped for showing in London (Houses of Parliament). A paper and article about the project will be published on completion.

IBMT Annual Commemoration – recorded video and stills. See Flickr: https://www.flickr.com/photos/ibmt/albums/72177720318718039/

The WORLDwrite project The film *The UK Solidarity Story* has been produced by the charity WORLDWrite. The film includes an excellent 15-minute section about the International Brigades featuring IBMT members with footage shot by student volunteers at the 2023 Annual Commemoration. See https://youtu.be/hvg5Ncg_DDI?si=f-oHL330TljkFtG2

IBMT AGM 2023 in Stockton-on-Tees – video and stills recorded.

Research and support to members and sister organisations: ALBA – video of Peter Carroll 2012 Len Crome lecture. Hugh Slater; Cuthbert Worsley and Durham volunteers; IBMT archives; Early British volunteers to Spain.

Social media Management and development of the three on-line IBMT channels: Flickr, You Tube, Pinterest and the IBMT website video pages.

IBMT You Tube
https://www.youtube.com/IBMTnews

IBMT Flickr https://www.flickr.com/photos/ibmt/

IBMT Pinterest
https://www.pinterest.co.uk/IBMT_SCW/

IBMT website: http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/video-page

25/ OUTREACH

Picasso in Sheffield: A group of members and supporters continue to seek the installation of a statue of the boy Picasso, donated by artist Anthony Padgett, in Weston Park, Sheffield to commemorate Picasso's support for the Spanish Republic and the 1952 World Peace Conference. There is some latent opposition but we hope to succeed.

We began discussions with MPs in the Spring about the possibility of forming a Parliamentary Cross Party Group on the Spanish Civil War. We were making progress until the unexpected announcement of a general election and will continue in due course.

26/ THANKS

The Executive Committee places on record its gratitude for the support given to the Trust over this past year by all members and affiliated organisations, especially those who have attended, taken part or organised IBMT activities or who have made donations to help fund our work. In all our collective efforts our aim remains to ensure the long-term viability of the IBMT in order to help keep alive the inspiring story of the volunteers as a supreme example of international solidarity and anti-fascism.

¡No pasarán! They shall not pass!