

# **International Brigade Memorial Trust**

## **Annual General Meeting**

**17 October 2015**

**Draft minutes of the meeting held at the Town House, Broad Street,  
Aberdeen AB10 1AQ**

**Present:** Mike Arnott, Richard Baxell, Huw Bendall, Pat Bradford, Kevin Buyers, Tommy Campbell, Brian Carroll, Frank Casey, Lisa Croft, Nina Cunningham, Pauline Fraser, Albert Grant, Mary Greening, Lyn Hurst, Stuart Hyslop, Keith Jenkinson, Charles Jepson, Margaret Jepson, Hilary Jones, Jim Jump, Margaret Lawrence, Steve Lawrence, Dolores Long, Duncan Longstaff, Doreen McArdle, Laura McDonald, Jim McGarrol, Pearse McKenna, Margaret McKenna, Dominic McVey, Marshall Mateer, Moira Mateer, Ronnie Moran, Manuel Moreno, Anne O'Hara, John O'Neill, Brenda O'Riordan, Manus O'Riordan, Anne Park, Frieda Park, Danny Payne, Martin Perfect, Gemma Reid, Margaret Sampson, Maureen Saunders, Sid Sherrif, Reinhardt Silbermann, Liz Snape, Ernest Walker, Lynda Walker, Lynne Walsh and Stuart Walsh (52 in total).

**In attendance:** David Shannon.

### **1. Chair's opening remarks**

The Chair, Dolores Long, welcomed everybody to the 2015 Annual General Meeting, in particular the members of the National Clarion Cycling Club 1895 who had cycled from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, visiting International Brigade memorials along the way. She then introduced Reinhardt Silbermann, Secretary of the Hamburg KFSR German International Brigades friendship group, who brought greetings from the KFSR and good wishes for a successful AGM.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Gerry Abrahams, Terry Bayes, Dave Boyd, Ruth Coates, Peter Crome, Connie Fraser, Myra Hunter, Harry Owens, Dodie Ritman, Marlene Sidaway, Rob Smith, Maggie Thomson, Alan Warren and Mike Wild.

Jim Jump, IBMT Secretary, read out the following message from IBMT President Marlene Sidaway:

*I'm sorry that work commitments prevent me from being with you today on what is probably the most important of all our three key events of the IBMT year – the AGM.*

*It's important that we continue to hold these meetings in as many different places as possible in order to reflect the commitment of the Brigaders who went from these areas, and the very important support for the Spanish Republic which was given by the communities all over Britain and Ireland at that time.*

*Of course, these are much more than an Annual General Meeting; they are an opportunity for our members – almost 1,000 now – to take part in deciding the future of the IBMT, for them to meet and socialise with old and new friends, and to explore the host city.*

*It is also an opportunity for the IBMT members organising the events to bring to the notice of their fellow citizens their links with the International Brigades and to the Spanish Civil War and the fight against fascism.*

*The original International Brigade Association only allowed veterans to be members and when the veterans passed on, their wives and families were excluded. This was naturally distressing for them, though they formed their own group of 'Families & Friends'.*

*The IBA Secretary Bill Alexander – former commander of the British Battalion – was concerned that if membership was open to all, some people, for their own personal or political ends, would attempt to take over the name and the ideals of the International Brigades.*

*However, when Bill died in 2000, the family and friends and the remaining Brigade veterans decided to join forces and form the International Brigade Memorial Trust, with the aim of keeping alive the memory and spirit of the International Brigades and to educate the public about their role in the Spanish Civil War.*

*Bill's concern about the organisation being 'taken over' was addressed by the Trust becoming a registered charity – which prevents us from taking part in political activity other than that which would further our aims. This also helped us to raise money with which we started the IBMT, and our support from individuals, trade unions, academics and other organisations has continued to be a great help and encouragement.*

*I hope this brief history of the beginnings of the IBMT has been a useful reminder on this special day, and I send you my very best wishes for a successful meeting. My thanks to all who have organised what promises to be a very enjoyable weekend in Aberdeen.*

### **3. Minutes of the 2014 AGM and matters arising**

The minutes were approved. There were no matters arising.

### **4. Executive Committee report**

Jim Jump, IBMT Secretary, began his report by referring to the publication of Bob Cooney's 'Proud Journey' by the Marx Memorial Library in conjunction with the IBMT and Unite the Union. The memoir by the Aberdeen Brigader had been written in the 1940s but had remained unpublished until now. A complimentary copy was being given to all members attending the AGM.

He said he took great pleasure and pride in introducing the Executive Committee report. His introductory statement continued:

*Our report reflects increasing levels of activity of the IBMT and, I believe, the continuing improvement in the way we do things and our growing visibility and public profile. Our finances are healthy, our membership is at record levels, our online presence is growing.*

*I won't go through the detail of the Executive Committee report, as this AGM should be a time for members, not Trustees, to be heard.*

*I hope that the meeting can instead go through the report, item by item, or page by page, and raise matters that way. The same applies to the separately circulated financial and Ireland reports. Then the appropriate Executive Committee member can answer any queries.*

*Before I hand over let me make a couple of points.*

*The first is to say that there is now only one British Battalion volunteer left alive: Stan Hilton in Australia.*

*We are at a point in time when the Brigaders are passing out of immediate living memory. Our task is to make sure they are not consigned to dusty archives and history books, important though these are – but that the volunteers remain a prominent presence in all the areas of public life where they should be remembered.*

*They need to be present on the school curriculum, they need to be present in anti-fascist movements, they need to be present in music, theatre and the arts, they need to be present in radical history and in our labour movement, taking their place alongside others like the Chartists, Tolpuddle Martyrs, Suffragettes and others who stood up for a just cause against the odds. And they need to be present in local communities who take pride in their memorials to the Brigaders, as was shown this morning here in Aberdeen.*

*That's our task. It's a challenge too, especially for what is a wholly voluntary organisation such as the IBMT. We have no staff, no employees whatsoever, which can at times make things difficult in terms of maintaining standards of professionalism and in meeting growing demands and expectations on us.*

*How we meet this challenge is something that the Executive Committee has been discussing and must continue to discuss in the months ahead.*

*For my own part I'm convinced that we cannot make sure that the International Brigaders will be properly remembered by generations to come without some forms of institutional support. We've made a start in two ways: by renting our own premises in London for the first time with our natural partners in this cause, the Marx Memorial Library, and by making*

*sure that every major union in Britain, with only one or two exceptions, is now affiliated to us. Mick Whelan of ASLEF is one of our trustees and Len McCluskey, Rodney Bickerstaffe and, from Ireland, Jack O'Connor, all key union leaders, are among our Patrons.*

*I'll make one last point, and I say it with all due modesty, but we are the biggest and most successful of the various International Brigade memorial associations around the world – when judged by members, numbers of memorials and our range of activities and achievements.*

*Our friends in the US are in many ways similar to us – but they have two organisations doing what we do as one. They have the FFALB, which is a social network and messaging group that also goes on battlefield tours and political demos, and they have ALBA, which publishes a magazine, The Volunteer, helps preserve archives and the historical legacy of the Brigades, and works with teachers to encourage the teaching of the Spanish Civil War and International Brigades in American schools.*

*I think it's one of our great strengths that we do all these sorts of things within a single unified association, the IBMT. Long may that continue.*

The following points and questions were raised from the floor:

– There was a typo in item 2 of the Executive Committee report. It should read 2014 AGM (not 2015 AGM).

– The IBMT membership survey being conducted by Royal Holloway University of London had received more than 90 responses, a very favourable response rate, said Jim Jump, though they were mainly from those people who would have been expected to respond. RHUL had therefore put out an appeal to members aged under 50 to participate and was also now doing follow-up interviews. RHUL would be asked to make a presentation to the Executive Committee. Preliminary results were available to members on request.

– Frank Casey's merchant seafarers' sculpture would be stored in the Communist Party's office in Waterloo Street, Glasgow, until a suitable permanent site could be found. RMT's Glasgow Shipping Branch was giving help. Frank Casey thanked the IBMT for its assistance, and mentioned that additional funds might be required for a plinth.

– Jim Jump urged members to support the forthcoming play 'Ride on to Jarama' to be produced by Townsend Productions with help from the IBMT.

– Mary Greening, IBMT Membership Secretary, read out the membership rates on request. These were £12.50 (concessions) £20 (individual) £25 (family membership). There were now 920 paid up members, including union affiliates.

– Pauline Fraser proposed the production of the ‘Running Man’ plate to commemorate next year’s 80th anniversary of the formation of the International Brigades. Stuart Walsh offered a replacement plate to Worthing Labour Hall from the Working Class Movement Library, subject to one being available.

– Charles Jepson, IBMT Treasurer, referred to a recent very well attended commemorative event in Motherwell that he had attended.

The Executive Committee report was approved.

## **5. Financial report**

The IBMT Treasurer, Charles Jepson, presented the financial report, and made the following points:

– A legacy from Jonathan Carritt had put us in a strong financial position for several years to come.

– The costs of the Oxford memorial were escalating. The Executive Committee had offered more financial support, if required, in addition to the £500 already donated.

– An increase in the amounts collected in donations at the Len Crome Memorial Conference and at Jubilee Gardens had more than compensated for a reduction in sales of merchandise, and attendance at the LCMC was somewhat down.

– The *IBMT Newsletter* was a vital weapon, well worth the £4,400 cost of producing and distributing each issue. We needed to maintain it in hard copy format.

– The IBMT was contributing £6,500 towards the production of ‘Ride on to Jarama’, a play that would spread message of the IBMT across a wider audience.

– Affiliated national organisations were now all up-to-date with subscriptions.

– There had been an increase in committee expenses due to greater attendance at a number of local events.

– Office and storage space at the Marx Memorial Library was good value at £200 per month and was an important link.

– There was a need to establish local groups to undertake annual commemorations and to keep an eye on memorials.

He concluded by saying it had been a privilege to have held the post of Treasurer.

The Chair, Dolores Long, thanked Charles Jepson for his work as Treasurer over the past nearly four years, during which time he had been efficient and well organised.

The following points and questions were raised from the floor:

– Lynne Walsh commended the design of our badges and other materials and said that our logo was strong. Branding should be prioritised.

– IBMT Secretary Jim Jump reported that the new branded gazebo had cost in the region of £320.

– In reply to a question from Lisa Croft, Jim Jump said that the British Battalion archives were now freely accessible at the Marx Memorial Library, though he recommended making an appointment before visiting the library to do research.

– Manus O’Riordan, IBMT Ireland Secretary, pointed to the large number of memorials in Ireland. FIBI, the Friends of the International Brigades in Ireland, was committed to putting up memorials to all Brigaders in their home towns and was aware of the need for maintenance on some of the existing ones.

– Jim Jump pointed out that the upkeep of memorials could be an expensive business. Whenever possible, this should be entrusted to local authorities, trade unions, libraries or other appropriate institutions.

## **6. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members**

IBMT Secretary Jim Jump said there would be contested elections, so two scrutineers were required to conduct the ballots. Laura MacDonald and Brian Carroll were proposed and accepted.

### ***Chair***

– Richard Baxell was nominated by Dolores Long, seconded by Manus O’Riordan, and received 30 votes.

– Charles Jepson was nominated by Mike Anderson, seconded by Danny Payne, and received 22 votes.

Richard Baxell was duly elected as Chair.

### **Secretary**

– Jim Jump was nominated by Rodney Bickerstaffe, seconded by Dolores Long, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

### **Treasurer**

– Manuel Moreno was nominated by Tom Sibley, seconded by Richard Baxell, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

### **Executive Committee members (11 to be elected)**

– \*Mike Arnott was nominated by Danny Payne, seconded by Pauline Fraser, and received 50 votes.

– \*Pauline Fraser was nominated by Ray Parkes, seconded by Keith Jenkinson, and received 45 votes.

– \*Mary Greening was nominated by Nigel Morgans, seconded by Gill Malpas, and received 44 votes.

– \*Christopher Hall was nominated by Richard Thorpe, seconded by Lisa Croft, and received 36 votes.

– \*Charles Jepson was nominated by the National Clarion Cycling Club 1895, seconded by Danny Payne, and received 40 votes.

– \*Hilary Jones was nominated by Dodie Ritman, seconded by Paul Okojien, and received 34 votes.

– \*Dolores Long was nominated by Ruth Muller, seconded by Gerry Abrahams, and received 40 votes.

– \*Duncan Longstaff was nominated by Mary Greening, seconded by Charles Jepson, and received 41 votes.

– \*Manus O’Riordan was nominated by Lynda Walker, seconded by Ernest Walker, and received 50 votes.

– \*Danny Payne was nominated by Don Watson, seconded by Mary Greening, and received 41 votes.

– Richard Thorpe was nominated by Pauline Fraser, seconded by Duncan Longstaff, and received 30 votes.

– \*Mick Whelan was nominated by ASLEF, seconded by Danny Payne, and received 34 votes.

\* These candidates were declared duly elected.

## **7. Any other business**

– Keith Jenkinson reported that he had recently attended the 5th annual Jack Jones memorial lecture in Liverpool. The organisers of this event were desperate to get money to make a film about the life of Jack Jones, focusing on four areas: the fight against poverty, the fight against fascism, the fight for

trade union rights and the fight for pensioner rights. A collection was immediately carried out among members at the AGM, which raised £297.34.

– Pauline Fraser proposed that the co-option of Richard Thorpe, the IBMT's Education Officer, should be actively considered at the next Executive Committee. She pointed to the important work Richard had done in producing downloadable work modules suitable for use by teachers at different key stages in schools and colleges. Jim Jump, IBMT Secretary, advised that this item would be placed on the next Executive Committee agenda.

– Responding to a request from Jim McGarrol, Jim Jump said that the Executive Committee was likely to consider a proposal to advertise in the Durham Miners Gala brochure, but added that we had to be judicious and strategic about where we advertise.

## **8. Date and place of next AGM**

Manus O'Riordan, IBMT Ireland Secretary, reported that there was some delay in setting a date for an Annual General Meeting in Dublin next year as he wanted to work around the President of Ireland's diary to enable him to attend some of the weekend's events. A date would be set early in the New Year.

## **9. Closing remarks**

The Chair, Dolores Long, thanked Marshall Mateer for his quiet, unobtrusive work in filming our events and using the material for our YouTube and Flickr sites.

Jim Jump, IBMT Secretary, expressed warmest thanks to Tommy Campbell, the Unite regional officer in Aberdeen, who had worked very hard to organise the weekend in Aberdeen and make it such a success. Tommy was presented with a framed poster and an IBMT t-shirt.

Finally, Jim Jump thanked Dolores Long for all her hard work as the IBMT Chair over the past five years, but who was now stepping down from the post. She had carried out her duties with great dignity, inclusivity and consensus. She had ensured that what we decided to do was realistic and achievable. He was glad that her wise counsel would continue to be available on the Executive Committee.

Dolores Long declared the meeting closed.