International Brigade Memorial Trust
Annual General Meeting on 15 October 2016

Minutes of the meeting held at the Liberty Hall, Eden Quay, Dublin 1
(To be read in conjunction with written reports presented to the meeting)


1. Opening remarks

The Chair, Richard Baxell, welcomed everybody to the 2016 Annual General Meeting, noting that this was the IBMT’s 15th AGM and his first as Chair.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Rodney Bickerstaffe, Margaret Bruton, Tommy Campbell, Ruth Coates, Connie Fraser, Pauline Fraser, Andy Irvine, Jim McGarrol, Anna Monks, Christy Moore, Tom Sibley, Marlene Sidaway, Stuart Walsh, Alan Warren and Mike Wild.
Jim Jump, IBMT Secretary, read out the following message from IBMT President Marlene Sidaway:

Once again, I am sorry that work prevents me from being with you at this AGM.

Our Annual General Meetings are so important, not only to review our work, but to give everyone an opportunity to meet socially and discuss our involvement in IBMT events in our own areas.

We choose to hold the AGMs in a different city each year to reflect the many different places from which the volunteers came. I’m sure the events taking place this weekend will generate publicity, and so achieve the main aim of the Trust – to inform and educate the general public about the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigades and those who supported them at home.

During the 15 years of our existence, we have achieved a great deal, and our work must continue for many years to come. Our collective achievements have succeeded because, despite the many shades of political opinion we as Individuals might hold, we are united in the wider aim of keeping alive the spirit and memory of the International Brigades.

We must never lose sight of this aim, and reject any influences which could threaten our great purpose – a purpose which has been given support and approval by the many hundreds of our members who are not here today and by our many friends in trade unions and the wider labour movement.

My very best wishes for the success of today’s meeting and the social events in Dublin and my thanks to Jim and especially Manus for organising it all.

3. Obituaries and fraternal greetings

Richard Baxell mourned the deaths of Jim Carmody, the IBMT’s Researcher, in August this year and David Leach, former Executive Committee member and film-maker, in June. Lynda Walker paid tribute to Belfast IBMT member Joe Law, who had died in September following a life dedicated to cross-community progressive causes.

Nancy Wallach, board member of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives in New York, brought fraternal greetings from ALBA, noting that the IBMT and ALBA shared the same goal of celebrating the legacy of the International Brigades. She also reported the death in February of Delmer Berg, the last US volunteer.
Jim Jump reported that the Dutch International Brigade memorial association Stichting Spanje 1936-1939 had sent fraternal greetings to the AGM.

A minute’s silence was observed for those who had passed away over the past 12 months.

4. Address by the President of Ireland

The meeting rose to welcome the entrance of the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, his wife Sabina Higgins and attendant staff. The President was invited to address the AGM. [His address is reproduced on the IBMT website www.international-brigades.org.uk/content/irish-presidents-speech-ibmts-annual-general-meeting]. Following the address, IBMT Ireland Secretary Manus O'Riordan presented the President with a ‘Volunteers for Liberty’ plate and copies of the ‘Connolly Column’ by Michael O'Riordan and ‘Poems from Spain’ edited by Jim Jump.

The meeting was briefly adjourned to allow the President to meet members attending the AGM. After he left, the meeting returned to its business.

5. Minutes of the 2015 AGM and matters arising

The minutes were approved, subject to the addition of Margaret Bruton to the list of those attending. There were no matters arising.

6. Executive Committee report
Jim Jump introduced the report by stressing that it represented the collective efforts of a committee containing many hard-working members. It showed moreover that the IBMT had enjoyed another year of achievement and activism.

He went on to draw attention to the section in the report on the IBMT’s premises at the Marx Memorial Library in London and the decision of the Executive Committee to set a budget for the employment of freelance help to handle the growing workload of the Trust and, in particular, to assist in the production of the IBMT’s new fortnightly e-newsletter with event listings, news snippets and links to the latest web postings. Launched on 1 September, the e-newsletter would, he added, have the added benefit of allowing the IBMT Newsletter to carry more in-depth articles and features.

He also pointed out that ‘Dare Devil Rides to Jarama’, the play commissioned by the IBMT with a grant of £6,000 to Townsend Production, was now touring Britain.

Finally, he drew attention to the fact that membership had remained static since last year, though the number of lapsed members had more than doubled. He said that the Executive Committee would have to examine why this had happened, given that income from membership subscriptions was the bedrock of the IBMT’s finances. He went on to point out that membership subscriptions had remained unchanged for the past five years, and that the rate of £12.50 per year for unwaged members barely covered the cost of producing and mailing the IBMT Newsletter to them.

The Secretary finished by saying that, though the Executive Committee report was necessarily focused on administrative detail, it was important to remember that, in keeping alive the memory and spirit of the International Brigades, the IBMT played a vital role in providing inspiration for all those involved in anti-fascist campaigns and in labour movement struggles, as well as in ensuring that the story of the volunteers and the Spanish Civil War was not completely overlooked in the school curriculum and text books, as it often was. The IBMT also had to in challenge the revisionism of 20th century history that was wrongly equating the Spanish Republic with communism and communism with fascism.
Much of the ensuing discussion on the report centred on membership recruitment. Manuel Moreno, IBMT Treasurer, challenged the notion that young people were reluctant to join organisations, pointing to the recent wave of new recruits in the Labour Party. Richard Thorpe, IBMT Facebook Coordinator, reported that the IBMT now had an Instagram account, and this might appeal to younger people. Graham Davies said that leaflets had an important part to play in recruitment. Sean Kettle said it was disappointing that the number of union affiliations was down on last year. Gerry Abrahams, IBMT Executive Committee member Danny Payne and Frieda Park contributed towards a discussion on the role of family members in the IBMT. In response Jim Jump said he was sure the next meeting of the Executive Committee on 5 November would examine all these matters.

Other topics raised included the closure of the Newhaven Fort exhibition, with Malcolm Hardy wondering whether the new management might be persuaded to reverse their decision.

Ernest Walker reported that he had plenty of spare copies of the updated booklet about the International Brigades stained glass window in Belfast City Hall.

The Executive Committee report was approved.

7. Financial report

Manuel Moreno introduced the financial report, saying that he was still settling into the job. He thanked everyone for their support and help. The report was approved.

8. Proposed amendments to the IBMT constitution
Charles Jepson, IBMT Executive Committee member, introduced the proposed amendments to the IBMT constitution on behalf of the Executive Committee. Most, he said, were ‘tidying-up’ amendments. He explained that the reduction in elected seats from 11 to 10 was being proposed so that the Executive Committee could guarantee national and regional representation. The proposed amendments were approved.

9. Election of Officers and Executive Committee members

Jim Jump reported that a ballot would be necessary for the Executive Committee. Manus O’Riordan proposed that Gearoid O’Machail and Lynda Walker should act as scrutineers. This was agreed.

Chair
– Richard Baxell was nominated by Lydia Syson, seconded by Mary Greening, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

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

Treasurer
– Manuel Moreno was nominated by Colin Carritt, seconded by Dolores Long, and, there being no other nominations, was duly elected unopposed.

Executive Committee members (11 to be elected)
A total of 48 valid ballot papers were returned in the following ballot:
– *Mike Arnott was nominated by Jim Jump, seconded by Manus O’Riordan, and received 36 votes.
– Lisa Croft was nominated by Margaret Jepson, seconded by Colin Smith, and received 21 votes.
– *Nina Cunnington was nominated by Danny Payne, seconded by Graham Davies, and received 22 votes.

– Graham Davies was nominated by Mary Greening, seconded by Rowland Davis, and received 17 votes.

– *Pauline Fraser was nominated by Mike Arnott, seconded by Gerry Abrahams, and received 28 votes.

– *Mary Greening was nominated by Hywel Francis, seconded by Judith Langdon, and received 41 votes.

– *Christopher Hall was nominated by Dolores Long, seconded by Richard Thorpe, and received 34 votes.

– *Charles Jepson was nominated by Terry Bayes, seconded by Danny Payne, and received 29 votes.

– *Dolores Long was nominated by Ruth Muller, seconded by Brenda O’Riordan, and received 33 votes.

– Duncan Longstaff was nominated by Charles Jepson, seconded by Mary Greening, and received 21 votes.

– *Marshall Mateer was nominated by Myra Hunter, seconded by Anne O’Hara, and received 23 votes.

– *Manus O’Riordan was nominated by Lynda Walker, seconded by Ernest Walker, and received 39 votes.

– *Danny Payne was nominated by Don Watson, seconded by Kev Buyers, and received 27 votes.

– *Richard Thorpe was nominated by Mary Greening, seconded by Duncan Longstaff, and received 22 votes.

* These candidates were declared duly elected.

Danny McGreevy entertained the meeting with a tribute to the International Brigades on his Irish whistle while the votes were being counted. Following the announcement of the result Richard Baxell thanked Hilary Jones, who had declined to stand for re-election, and Duncan Longstaff, who had failed to be re-elected, for their work as Executive Committee members over many years.

10. Any other business
There were no items of any other business.

11. Date and place of next AGM

Mary Greening proposed that the 2017 Annual General Meeting should be held in Cardiff, provisionally on 14 October. This was seconded by Manus O’Riordan and agreed.

12. Close of meeting

Richard Baxell thanked SIPTU for hosting the AGM and all those who had made it such a successful event. The meeting was declared closed.