



# IBMT Newsletter

www.international-brigades.org.uk

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## INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST

### Sam Lesser – active until the end

The death of IBMT chair Sam Lesser was a blow for the IBMT on the eve of its Annual General Meeting in Liverpool. He died on 2 October, just one week after chairing an IBMT committee meeting in London. In the week before that, he opened a showing of the “Antifascistas” exhibition on the International Brigades at the Marx Memorial Library, London.

Lesser chaired the IBMT from 2006 when fellow International Brigade veteran Jack Jones relinquished the post to become the Trust’s Life President. As chair, Lesser was a highly active spokesman for the IBMT, giving frequent media interviews in Britain and in Spain about the International Brigades and the importance of remembering their legacy.



Marshall Mateer

**CLENCHED FIST:** Sam Lesser in front of the “Guernica” tapestry at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, in 2009.

“He was an inspiration to us all,” said Marlene Sidaway, the IBMT Secretary at the time of his death. “It is a comfort to know that he was active and cheerful to the end.”

● See obituary: pages 6-7. To view Sam Lesser’s last public speech, at the opening of “Antifascistas” at the Marx Memorial Library on 20 September 2010, visit: [www.shapesoftime.net/pages/viewpage.asp?uniqid=14388].

## 2011 lecture to focus on the medical services

### ... and follows death of Penny Feiwei, the last British nurse

The IBMT’s annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture will this year turn the spotlight on the men and women who served as medics on the side of the Spanish Republic and against the fascist-backed military coup launched in 1936.

It is to be delivered at London’s Imperial War Museum on 5 March by Linda Palfreeman, with the title “¡Salud! The British Contribution to the Republican Medical Service during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939”. The event will be chaired by Professor Paul Preston, who will lead a question-and-answer session after the talk.



Linda Palfreeman.

The event comes soon after the death of Penny Feiwei, the last of the British nurses who served in Spain. She died on 6 January in a Bournemouth nursing home.

The lecture begins at 2.30pm. In the morning, the IBMT is organising a tribute in words, images and music to former Trust Chair Sam Lesser as well as Feiwei and other Brigaders who have died over the past year.

Teesside-born Palfreeman completed degrees in media and linguistics at Leeds University, before teaching at secondary school and university level and then moving to Spain. She currently teaches at the Cardenal Herrera University in Elche, Alicante. Some of her spare time is spent writing for the English-language newspaper, *Costa Blanca News*, and researching the Spanish Civil War.

See “Diary dates: page 8.



**MERSEYSIDERS:** Liverpool-born Brigader Jack Edwards (right) is greeted by fellow Scouser Len McCluskey at the IBMT’s annual general meeting in Jack Jones House, the Liverpool regional office of the Unite union, on 16 October. McCluskey – who, like Jack Jones, is a former Liverpool docker – was elected as the new general secretary of Unite in November.

● AGM report and pictures: pages 4-5.

*Keeping alive the memory and spirit of the men and women who volunteered to defend democracy in Spain from 1936 to 1939*

## International Brigade Memorial Trust

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

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*Annual membership rates are £15 standard; £7.50 for concessions; £20 family (single household); affiliating organisations by arrangement. Further details and forms are available from the Membership Secretary.*

## IBMT NEWSLETTER

The IBMT Newsletter is published three times a year and is sent free to all members. Back numbers can be downloaded from the IBMT website on [[www.international-brigades.org.uk/newsletter.htm](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/newsletter.htm)]. Send all items for the next issue to the Editor by 31 March 2011 at the latest.

**Editor:** Jim Jump

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By Jim Jump

### Successful annual general meeting

We held a very successful annual general meeting in Liverpool in October, in terms of numbers attending and quality of contributions. The day-time venue and facilities and the evening social were outstanding, for which thanks must go to Danny Payne and others in the Merseyside International Brigades Network who organised everything, as well as to the unions Unite and Unison for their hospitality and generosity. Another positive factor was the presence of representatives from the AABI Spanish International Brigades friendship association. The report by Vicente González to the AGM and the discussions which many of us had with him and Isabel Pinar made it clear that the battle for justice and recognition for the victims of fascism and the Franco dictatorship in Spain is far from over. The IBMT supports their efforts, part of the process known in Spain as the recuperation of historic memory.

### Germans in fine voice

The nine-strong delegation at the Liverpool AGM from our sister organisation in Germany, the KFSR, formed an impromptu choir for the evening social – and were quite a hit. Earlier in the day Harald Wittstock, chair of the KFSR, deplored the lack of official recognition in Germany for the Brigaders but, on a brighter note, reported that many younger people were now interested in the International Brigades and the anti-fascist movement in Europe. He said that the KFSR had tried unsuccessfully to get the Bundestag (German parliament) to honour the Brigaders. The matter would now be taken to the European Parliament and the parliaments of the German federal states.

### Remembrance Day wreaths



Duncan Longstaff reports that his aunt visited London shortly after Remembrance Sunday in November and spotted that two wreaths (pictured), one of red poppies, the other in the colours of the Spanish Republic, had been left at the International Brigade memorial in Jubilee Gardens. It's good to see that the memorial is being used not just at the annual commemoration organised by the IBMT each July (though probably not this year – see story on facing page). Does anyone know who left these wreaths?

### "Land and Freedom" still stirs controversy

Run by our Membership Secretary Mary Greening, the IBMT's electronic information service (EIS) is proving to be an invaluable means of getting instant news and views to supporters by email. This was undoubtedly the case when one member asked for opinions on Ken Loach's still controversial 1995 film about the Spanish Civil



**DIRECTING:** Ken Loach (right) on the set of his film, "Land and Freedom".

War, "Land and Freedom". Mary was flooded with responses and put out two selections of replies, totalling nearly 4,000 words on the EIS. The views ranged from supportive of Loach's analysis of the war – essentially that the Republic betrayed the Spanish revolution – to outrage at the way that the film depicts the International Brigades as Stalinist stooges. It was fitting that the third and final word that Mary sent out went to a Brigader, the late John Dunlop, with a 1,700-word review that he wrote after seeing the film at the Edinburgh Film Festival in 1995. His verdict? "I can certify that it bore little resemblance to the realities of those days and the film-makers made little attempt to get even the small details right." If you haven't read the comments and would like to have copies, contact me at [secretary@international-brigades.org.uk] or send me (address on left) a stamped addressed envelope.

### Now on Facebook

Congratulations must go to Richard Baxell for his success in launching and running the IBMT Facebook group. It now has nearly 1,500 members, from all over the world, and is proving a very useful medium for announcing events. The site includes photos of earlier events, plus nearly 30 videos and seems to be generating regular contributions and discussions. Richard is also responsible for managing the main website of the IBMT, which continues to be popular, with up to 2,000 "unique visitors" every month.

### Picture perfect



Many readers have commented on how much they liked the picture (above) of our "Antifascistas" exhibition on the front page of our last issue. Unfortunately we gave the wrong credit for it, saying it was taken by Stuart Forster. In fact the photo was by Sheila Gray, an IBMT member and freelance photographer who was for many years a photographer with the *Morning Star*.

## It's up to us now to preserve their memory and values

By Marlene Sidaway

The last few months have been a time of great change for the IBMT. For the first time, there were no Brigade veterans at the Jubilee Gardens commemoration in July and we have no veterans on the committee now. We were particularly saddened by the sudden death of Sam Lesser, our chairman, and by the loss of nurse Penny Feiweil.

Both Sam and Penny were founder members of the Trust, wonderful personalities, always ready to be interviewed and spread the word about their comrades in Spain and both, when over 90, enjoyed visits to Spain and elsewhere to attend commemorations. They were loved and admired by all who knew them and will be greatly missed. We will be commemorating them during the morning of the Len Crome Memorial Lecture at the Imperial War Museum on 5 March.

To our knowledge, we have only four veterans still with us in England now – plus one living in Australia – and this presents a challenge and an opportunity for us in the IBMT. We must ensure that their bravery, sacrifices and values are not forgotten in this 75th anniversary year and that the wider public is made aware of the fight against fascism in Spain and realise that the issues that these men and women faced in the 1930s are just as relevant today.

On a personal note, I want to say what an honour it was for me to be the Secretary of the Trust for the last 10 years and how delighted I am that Jim Jump agreed to take over, on top of his duties as editor of the *IBMT Newsletter*, and was duly elected Secretary at our annual general meeting in October. With him and the rest of our hard working committee, I know the work of the IBMT will continue to thrive for many years to come.

## Time to pay 2011 membership subs

IBMT subscriptions for 2011 are now due. Please send them as soon as possible. When returning your cheque, clearly state your name and address so that these can be matched with our membership records. Also, please consider paying your subs by direct debit. The direct debit form can be downloaded at: [[www.international-brigades.org.uk/join.htm](http://www.international-brigades.org.uk/join.htm)]. Send cheques or completed direct debit forms to Mary Greening, IBMT Membership Secretary, 2 Woodford Close, Radyr Way, Cardiff CF5 2PH. For any queries, tel: 029-2019 5412; email: [[memsec@international-brigades.org.uk](mailto:memsec@international-brigades.org.uk)].

## NEWS

The national memorial to the International Brigades in Jubilee Gardens will be beyond use during 2011 if a planned major re-landscaping of the central London park begins on schedule in the spring.

The £5.5 million development of the gardens will mean that the memorial, which was unveiled in 1985 by former Labour leader Michael Foot, will be placed in secure storage before being re-positioned away from its current close proximity to the London Eye.

As this issue of the *IBMT Newsletter* went to press, the developers were unable to confirm the starting date, but were nonetheless confident that the work would proceed as planned.

IBMT officers have been closely consulted during the planning process and are pleased that the memorial – the only one in the park – will be a focal point of the new lay-out of paths and open spaces. The memorial will also retain the backdrop of the former Greater London Council headquarters. This was one of the wishes of its sculptor, the late Ian Walters.

With Jubilee Gardens likely to be closed to the public in July, when the annual national commemoration ceremony for the International Brigades would normally be held, local groups of IBMT members and supporters will instead be encouraged to arrange events at their nearest International Brigade memorial. There are over 90 such memorials in Britain and Ireland.

There are already provisional plans to organise a commemorative meeting in London on 2 July, possibly at the Marx Memorial Library. The MML houses the British Battalion banner and has a sculpture dedicated to the Brigades in its Memorial Garden.

Originally laid out in 1977, it is expected that the revamped Jubilee Gardens will be opened

## Jubilee Gardens memorial likely to be out of action during 2011



**EYE-CATCHING:** Computer-generated image of the memorial in its new position, with the former Greater London Council building, the London Eye and Big Ben in the background.

early in 2012. Whereas the current Thames-side park is virtually flat, the new version will have an undulating landscape and dozens of new trees.

The redevelopment is being undertaken by the South Bank Employers Group/Southbank Centre consortium, representing groups with a direct interest in the park.

### Final addition to Ebro memorial

The final space next to the memorial to the British Battalion dead of the Battle of the Ebro has now been filled. The latest addition to the memorial wall near Pinell de Bray is a plaque for the combatants of the UGT socialist trade union federation who fell in the Republican army during the fighting in the summer and autumn of 1938.

Unveiled by Brigadier Alun Menai Williams in May 2005, the British Battalion plaque lists the names of the 90 British, Irish and Commonwealth dead. It is one of eight plaques on top of what was known during the battle as Hill 705.

In brief...



Lucy Craig, daughter of Thora Silverthorne, with IBMT committee member and former Unison general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe at the memorial meeting in Reading.

**Silverthorne is remembered**

A memorial meeting to remember the centenary of the birth of nurse Thora Silverthorne (1910-1999) was held on 25 November in the Silverthorne Room – named after her – at the regional offices of the Unison public sector union in Reading. Born in Abertillery, South Wales, Silverthorne was living in Reading when she went to Spain in September 1936. After the war, she was an editor of *Nursing Illustrated* and helped establish the National Association of Nurses (later merging with Nupe, one of Unison’s founder unions). She was its general secretary, as well as secretary of the Socialist Medical Association.

**Hull initiative**

The inaugural meeting of the International Brigade Memorial Group (Hull) was held on 29 September at Unison’s conference centre in the city. Participants agreed to take steps to secure “a lasting and fitting” memorial to the local volunteers who went to Spain. A

prominent memorial would be in addition to a plaque in Hull’s Guildhall, listing the names of eight International Brigaders, four of whom died in Spain. The meeting noted that Unison’s Hull City Branch carried a motion in 2008 to campaign for such a memorial and that all three of Hull’s MPs supported the initiative.

See BBC Humberside report: [[http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/humberside/hi/people\\_and\\_places/history/newsid\\_9355000/9355571.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/local/humberside/hi/people_and_places/history/newsid_9355000/9355571.stm)]; If you would like to get involved, contact [[j.gibbins@unison.co.uk](mailto:j.gibbins@unison.co.uk)].

**Street in Bilbao**



Mayor of Bilbao Iñaki Azkuna (above) unveils a street name plaque dedicated to George Steer, the South African-born correspondent for *The Times* who reported the bombing of Guernica on 26 April 1937 and who helped in the evacuation of 4,000 Basque children to England in the following month. The naming ceremony in the city’s Atxuri district was held on 8 October in the presence of Steer’s son and granddaughter. Steer’s report helped to unmask the lies of the Francoists, who claimed that the Basque town had been destroyed by retreating Republicans rather than by German and Italian planes.

**Plaque for Keogh**

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council agreed in September to award a blue plaque to James Keogh, International Brigade volunteer, who died in action in March 1938 in Aragón. It is hoped that the plaque will be unveiled later this year and will refer to the other volunteers from the area.

**Alan Warren statement**

At its meeting on 25 September last year the IBMT executive committee recognised the valuable work carried out by Alan Warren as a battlefield tour guide in Spain. But it agreed the following statement: “The officers and trustees of the IBMT have been made aware of various complaints regarding the business dealings of Alan Warren, a former IBMT committee member. The IBMT wishes to make it clear that it has no connection with Alan Warren’s business dealings, and that he is not authorised to act for, nor on behalf of, the IBMT.”

**Philosophy Football cheque**



IBMT President Marlene Sidaway (right) and Secretary Jim Jump (left) accepted a £100 donation from Philosophy Football at its Hopemass anti-fascist Christmas party in London on 17 December. Pictured centre is Mark Perryman of Philosophy Football.



**UNVEILED:** Brigader Jack Edwards admires the plaque in the entrance lobby of Jack Jones House, Liverpool.

**AGM opens in Liverpool with rededication of plaque**

By Pauline Fraser

The 2010 IBMT annual general meeting was held on 16 October in Liverpool at Jack Jones House, the refurbished Liverpool office of Unite the Union. Brigader Jack Edwards, 95, made the journey from his home in Telford to unveil the newly positioned memorial to the Liverpool volunteers. He was assisted by Len McCluskey, speaking as Unite assistant general secretary, but soon to be elected to the post of general secretary.

A throng of IBMT supporters and Unite members gathered in the lobby of Jack Jones House to hear McCluskey speak movingly of the heroic example and sacrifice of those who went to the aid of the Spanish Republic in its fight against fascism.

At the AGM, Membership Secretary Mary Greening reported to the 70-strong meeting that here were currently 794 members and she hoped we would get to 800 by the end of the year.

Treasurer Mike Anderson was unable to attend, but his written report showed bank balances of £25,589 at the end of the last financial year. Income increased from £18,938 during the previous year to £22,695 for the latest one.

Marlene Sidaway said she had decided to stand down as Secretary, a post she had held for 10 years. Warm tributes were paid to her work for the Trust and, following her election as an IBMT executive committee member, it was agreed that she should serve as the Trust’s President.

Jack Edwards had decided not to stand for re-election to the committee, Sidaway reported, as it was now impossible for him to get to meetings. She said he had been a very valuable committee member and thanked him for all he had done.

The following members were elected as IBMT officers: Dolores Long (Chair), Jim Jump (Secretary) and Mike Anderson (Treasurer). The other



**BENCHES:** Friends and family (above right) of Hilda Baruch, a leading light in the Aid Spain movement in Halifax, attended the unveiling of a bench in her memory on 17 October at the town’s Piece Hall. Baruch (née Froom) died in 2009.

A few weeks later, on 11 November, the memorial bench to Halifax-born Brigader Ralph Fox was relocated



Marshall Mateer

to the same site, having stood in Bull Green since 1950. A renowned author, journalist and founder member of the British Communist Party, Fox was killed in fighting around Lopera, near Córdoba, in December 1936.

It is hoped that there will also soon be a memorial bench to fellow Halifax Brigader Alec Tough, alongside the two newly installed benches.



executive committee members elected were: Mike Arnott, Richard Baxell, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Pauline Fraser, Mary Greening, Chris Hall, Mick Jones, Hilary Jones, Duncan Longstaff, Manus O’Riordan, Marlene Sidaway and Richard Thorpe.

A copy of the draft minutes of the AGM is available from the IBMT Secretary: [secretary@international-brigades.org.uk] or send a stamped addressed envelope (see address on page 2).

## IB stereotypes are wrong

Volunteers in the International Brigades have been falsely stereotyped by the left and right, John Callow, director of the Marx Memorial Library, London, told an audience at the National Army Museum on 7 October. In a lunchtime talk at the London museum, titled “Freedom Was Never Won Without a Fight”, he said the International Brigades were a unique military unit in that they comprised volunteers from many countries, most of whom had had to undertake strenuous or often dangerous journeys to arrive in Spain.

There were misconceptions about the Brigaders from Britain and Ireland. Some on the left had tried to give them a romantic gloss by identifying them as intellectual idealists and poets in the Byronic mould. On the other hand the right, especially newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Express*, damned them as unemployed adventurers and communist dupes.

Neither caricature was accurate, said Callow. The truth was that the volunteers were mainly working class activists, though they contained representatives of all sections of society among their ranks. What was undeniable was their sacrifice and bravery: 526 of the 2,500 volunteers from Britain and Ireland died in Spain, and most of the others were wounded at least once.

## Found: George Nathan’s grave

The mystery of the whereabouts of the grave of George Nathan, British Battalion commander, who was killed at the Battle of Brunete in July 1937, may have been solved.

Madrid-based amateur historian Ernesto



**INSPIRATION:** Cast members give Brigader Sam Lesser an ovation after a reading of the musical in 2008.

## International Brigade musical scheduled for London run

“Goodbye Barcelona”, a new musical by Karl Lewkowicz and Judith Johnson, will open at the Arcola Theatre, London, in November later this year.

The musical was inspired by the story of the International Brigades, and is based on interviews with Brigaders, including Sam Lesser, who attended the first reading of “Goodbye Barcelona” in 2008 and said: “Really really wonderful. I felt so much the sincerity of what you were doing.”

A fundraiser for the production will be held in London on 4 March at Europe House (see page 8 for details). This will be an opportunity to see excerpts and songs from the show, alongside comments from International Brigades experts.

There will also be a chance to enjoy songs from the show as part of the tribute to Sam Lesser and other Brigaders on the morning of 5 March at the Imperial War Museum, London, prior to the IBMT’s Len Crome Memo-

rial Lecture (more details on pages 1 and 8).

The IBMT is also supporting moves to stage a production of the musical in London on 30 September, on the eve of the Trust’s annual general meeting and the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street.

Anyone interested in attending the fundraising event at Europe House should email: [contact@goodbyebarcelona.com].

Viñas, who has studied the Brunete battlefield extensively, reports that he has found a document in the civil register of Torrelodones saying that Nathan’s grave is in the village cemetery.

Torrelodones, midway between Madrid and Brunete, was one of the villages on the road used for the evacuation of the dead and wounded.

Viñas has been in touch with the nearby memorial built by Franco for himself and the civil war dead, the Valle de los Caídos. He has been told that no remains were received from Torrelodones

when in 1958 and 1959 many local civil war mass graves were emptied and their contents taken to the memorial that became Franco’s mausoleum after his death in 1975. “We can assume therefore that George Nathan’s grave should be still there, in Torrelodones, where he was buried in July 1937,” says Viñas.

Does George Nathan have any surviving relations? If so, they can claim access to the civil register’s records relating to his burial. Contact [secretary@international-brigades.org.uk].

## AGM fun at La Casa bar

A highlight of the IBMT’s AGM was a packed social event at the La Casa bar. Run by former Liverpool dockers who were sacked during the lock-out of 1995-98, the bar was the venue for a lively evening of entertainment by musicians and singers.

Performers included Alun Parry, Rich Man’s Ruin, Geoff Lawes, Vic Merriman, Gary and Florence Bowman and the Liverpool Socialist Singers.



**ON STAGE:** Rich Man’s Ruin perform at the IBMT social.

They were joined from the floor by, among others, the German visitors to the AGM, who sang Spanish Civil War songs,

and by IBMT President Marlene Sidaway, who read poems by her late partner and Brigader David Marshall.

## Praise for Jack Jones

Tributes to former IBMT President Jack Jones were paid at the latest meeting of unions on the European Economic and Social Committee.

In Brussels on 13 December, the committee’s workers’ group – which includes IBMT executive committee member Manus O’Riordan as the representative of the Irish trade unions – heard an opening address by Nicolás Redondo, veteran leader of Spain’s UGT trade union federation.

Frequently arrested and imprisoned for his underground union activities during Franco’s dictatorship, Redondo emphasised Jones’s vital role in the 1960s and 70s as a union leader prepared to give maximum support to the Spanish underground union movement.

## Penny Feiwei

By Jim Jump

**P**enny Feiwei, the last of the British women who served on the side of the Spanish Republic during the civil war of 1936-39, died on 6 January 2011 at the age of 101. Like Feiwei, known in Spain by her maiden name of Phelps, most of the volunteers were nurses and worked in often makeshift hospitals in conditions of great hardship and danger. Phelps herself suffered serious injuries in a bombing raid that put an end to her time in Spain.

Born into a working class family of nine brothers and sisters in Tottenham, north London, she left school at 13. Following work in domestic service and in a factory, at the age of 18 she trained as a nurse, working in several London hospitals, including Homerton and Charing Cross.

By her mid-20s she was eager to overcome her lack of school education, so spent 1934 studying English, history, economics and psychology at Hillcroft College, Surbiton, Surrey, which specialised in teaching working women from less privileged backgrounds. It was at the college that she began moving in more politically aware circles.

Though after the Spanish Civil War she would play down her political activism in the 1930s, saying that she had been motivated more by humanitarianism, it was a politically charged incident that triggered her decision to go to Spain. In 1936 she took a temporary nursing job at a hospital in Hertfordshire where, with another nurse, she volunteered in her spare time to collect food for hunger marchers on their way to London and to care for the sick among them. One marcher's feet were so shockingly raw that she rang for an ambulance and used her name to get him admitted to casualty. The following morning she was confronted by a furious matron: "Nurse Phelps, we don't employ nurses who are 'red'."

Taking this cue, she walked out and another nurse soon suggested that she should go to Spain. Within a few weeks Penny, aged 27, was on her way, leaving London on 6 January 1937 with three other nurses. Via Barcelona and Valencia they arrived at Albacete, the main base for the International Brigades, and from there she was sent to Murcia and put in charge of a 200-bed ward for French volunteers.

Next she was attached to the German-speaking Thälmann Battalion. At Tarancón, east of Madrid, with New Zealand surgeon Douglas Jolly, a pioneer of mobile emergency surgery, and four Spanish medics, and while facing deadly bombing raids by fascist planes, she helped set up an improvised operating theatre.

At the end of February she was sent to the front at Jarama, south east of Madrid, where a desperate battle was raging as Franco tried unsuccessfully to surround the capital by cutting the main road to Valencia. "We were flooded with wounded men. It was ghastly. Inside



Penny Feiwei (above) celebrating her 99th birthday and (right), as Penny Phelps, seated, centre, with colleagues at Quintanar during the civil war.



the operating theatre we had no heating except a gasoline stove, and sometimes it was so cold that I would be glad to be in a room crammed full of people to share their bodily heat. I was working as an anaesthetist, assistant surgeon and theatre nurse. I had to decide which case was the most urgent for operation, and then at once set up tables for instruments."

Moved to an international hospital at Colmenar Viejo, north of Madrid, she fell ill with typhoid, spending a month in bed before making the first of three brief visits to England to recuperate, collect medical supplies and speak at public meetings in support of the Republic. She would later recall being admonished: "But Spain is red." "Yes," she replied, "it is red with blood. Blood splashed over the streets and the gutters run with it. For weeks my fingernails were stained by the blood, and my arms were spattered up to the elbows with it."

She was back in Spain in time for the Republic's offensive at Brunete, west of Madrid, in July 1937. Her battlefield hospital at Torrelodones was regularly bombarded – despite a prominent red cross – as she and the other medics worked into the small hours every day, at times by the light of torches and cigarette lighters. Afterwards she was sent home suffering from shock after six of her colleagues were killed by a shell. On her return, she was posted to Quintanar, east of Madrid, and became the medical officer in charge of the barracks of the Italian Garibaldi Battalion.

Penny was badly injured in the spring of 1938, while attached to a mobile medical station in the mountains of Teruel, tending to the wounded in the Republican retreat eastwards. In a bombing raid by Franco's planes she suffered lacerations to the arm, broken ribs and abdominal shrapnel wounds. She was eventually evacuated from the port of Gandía by HMS

***"Yes, Spain is red with blood. Blood splashed over the streets and the gutters run with it."***

Sussex, taken to Marseilles and put on a train to hospital in London.

While convalescing from her wounds she met Michael Feiwei, a noted dermatologist, whom she married three months later. Unable to have children because of the injuries sustained in Spain, she dedicated herself to her nursing career, eventually becoming her husband's assistant in his Harley Street practice.

In 1992 she published her memoir, "English Penny", under the pen-name Penny Fyvel. She also described her experiences in Spain in a chapter in Max Arthur's "The Real Band of Brothers" (2009). She will be remembered by IBMT members as an active and cheerful supporter of the Trust, always ready to attend events and eager to recount her experiences in Spain and those of the people she worked with and cared for.

## Sam Lesser

By Jim Jump

**S**am Lesser was a proud veteran of the International Brigades, a founder member of the IBMT in 2001 and its Chair at the time of his death, on 2 October, aged 95. He was one of the first British volunteers to arrive in Spain, fighting in French units in Madrid and Lopera before the British Battalion was created in January 1937. Injured at Lopera and unable to continue fighting, he became a reporter in Spain, acquiring a profession he would pursue over the next five decades.

Not only was it in Spain that he became a journalist, but he also met his future wife, Margaret Powell, one of the British nurses who had also volunteered to help the Spanish Republic during the civil war of 1936-39.

As a journalist with the *Daily Worker* and later *Morning Star* under the name of Sam Russell, Lesser was a witness to many of the great events of the 20th century. He saw the Soviet tanks in Hungary in 1956 and reported both from Cuba during the missile crisis of 1962 and from Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the Prague Spring of 1968. He was also in Chile when President Salvador Allende was over-

thrown in 1973 in a CIA-backed military coup.

Mannassah “Sam” Lesser joined the Communist Party as a young anti-fascist son of Jewish immigrants in London’s East End and remained a party member for most of his life. In 1934 he won a scholarship to University College, London, where he studied Egyptology. Aged 21 when the war in Spain began in July 1936, he was preparing to go on a dig in Egypt. After much agonising he told his younger brother – who would subsequently also join the International Brigades – of his plans to go to Spain, but did not tell his parents.

Assigned to a British unit in the Commune de Paris Battalion of the XI International Brigade, Lesser took part in the fighting around Madrid in November and December at University City and Casa de Campo where, with the help of newly arrived Soviet arms, Franco’s advance on the capital was checked. At the end of December he joined a reconstituted British company in La Marseillaise Battalion that was sent south for an assault on Lopera, near Córdoba. Casualties were high and Lesser was hit by shrapnel as the Republican advance came under heavy fire. “I didn’t know at the time where I’d been wounded – in which part of my body – except that when I tried to get up I couldn’t. I just fell down.” The Republican attack was pushed back and by the end of the day Lesser was lying in no-man’s land. Eventually he was dragged clear by a friend who had insisted on going to look for him.

Repatriated to London for medical treatment on an injured leg, he was soon back in Paris, working at the International Brigades recruitment office. Later in 1937 he returned to Spain, accompanying a dozen young volunteer nurses. They entered Spain on a fishing boat under cover of darkness. In Barcelona, having failed a medical examination to rejoin the International Brigades, Lesser was given an address to go to. It turned out that it was the headquarters set up by the Spanish authorities to broadcast on short wave in German, Italian, Portuguese and English, and he was put in charge of the

**“The road to the frontier was crammed, mostly with women, children... It would later be re-enacted in towns and cities across the whole of Europe.”**

English-language broadcasts.

He soon became a correspondent for the *Daily Worker*. The city was being attacked mercilessly by Mussolini’s bombers from their base in Mallorca. “They bombed our area of Barcelona, and I shall never forget the smell there when I went outside. There was one wonderful row of lime trees – a beautiful scent when they’re in flower,” he wrote. “The gutter was literally flowing with blood, and the smell of the blood of these poor people was mixed with the smell of the lime trees.”

He fled from the city on the day before Franco’s troops entered in January 1939 in a car driven by *Daily Herald* correspondent Scott Watson. “The road to the frontier was crammed, mostly with women, children and old men trying to get out. It was something that would later be re-enacted in towns and cities across the whole of Europe.”

Lesser became the *Daily Worker* correspondent in Paris and, after the Communist Party was banned following the Nazi-Soviet pact, relocated to Belgium, fleeing the country as the Nazis invaded in May 1940. For the next four years he was a foreman at the Napier aero-engine factory in west London, rejoining the newspaper in the final months of the war.

From 1955 to 1959 he was the *Daily Worker* Moscow correspondent – where younger brother Frank had been the correspondent after the war. Promoted to foreign editor, Lesser was then based in London until his retirement in

1984. His work involved frequent foreign travel, including trips to Havana in 1962, where Che Guevara granted him a 2am interview, and to North Vietnam in 1971.

Following retirement, he frequently visited Spain and was regularly asked to address public meetings and be interviewed about the civil war, both in Britain and Spain.

Charming and opinionated, he was always a powerful presence in any gathering, formal or informal. Yet he remained an essentially modest man. Typically, following the death in April 2009 of IBMT President Jack Jones, whom Lesser always deeply admired, he dismissed suggestions that he should succeed Jones, preferring instead to remain the Trust’s Chair, a post he held from 2006.

He died leaving instructions for his ashes to be scattered by the International Brigade memorial at Montjuich in Barcelona.

## Also remembered

● **Dora Levin** (née Birnbach), who served in the International Brigades as a nurse, has died in Israel at the age of 99. After the fall of the Republic and internment in French concentration camps, she acquired a permit to enter the UK. She stayed in Britain until the end of the Second World War, working for the anti-fascist seamen’s union. In 1945 she returned to her native Poland and from there, in 1968, to Israel.

● **Alex Clark** was a tireless anti-fascist and working class activist and trade unionist in Aberdeen. Born in 1922 and too young to join the International Brigades, he was involved in fundraising and food collections for the Spanish workers. He became a friend of Bob Cooney and the other dozen local volunteers.

● **Arnold Owen**, who died on 11 November, was appointed an MBE for his work on behalf of Welsh International Brigaders. His elder brother Frank Owen served with the International Brigades and was killed in Spain.

● Spanish Republican veteran **Roma Márquez Santo**, who spoke at the IBMT’s annual commemoration in Jubilee Gardens, London, in July 2007 and attended the following year’s event, died in December in his native Barcelona at the age of 94. A veteran of the Columna Lenin and an officer of the Popular Army, he also unveiled a plaque at the Working Class Movement Library in Salford in May 2009 to the Independent Labour Party members who volunteered to fight in Spain. He was held in a Franco jail until the winter of 1943 and afterwards worked as a builder, including several years in Britain.

● IBMT member **Maggie Comley**, who died in September, helped organise the IBMT’s 2006 commemorative crossing of the Pyrenees. She lived in Cascastel, a French village close to the Spanish border, and recommended the route.

Daily Worker



Sam Lesser (left), in the role of Sam Russell, interviewing Che Guevara in Havana for the *Daily Worker* in 1962.



A new play about the International Brigades has a four-day run at the Liverpool's Actors' Studio in March. Written by Steve Aspinall, it features George, an unemployed Liverpool docker and hunger marcher, who joins the International Brigades. During fighting in Spain he finds himself trapped in a villa with two other volunteers, Murphy and Kieran, and three Spanish Republicans. Do they surrender or can they escape? See listing below for 9-12 March.

**12 February 2011:** Annual commemoration at Dundee International Brigade memorial in Albert Square; 12 noon; contact [mike.arnott@dundeecity.gov.uk].

**25 February 2011:** Quiz night with Paddy Mackle in a fundraising event for the Belfast-based International Brigades Commemoration Committee; 7:30pm; Copperfield Bar, Fountain Lane, Belfast BT1 5ED; contact Lynda Walker [lyndaernest@btinternet.com].

**25/26 February 2011:** Battle of Jarama commemoration opens on Friday evening with the launch of a biography of Irish Brigadier and poet Charles Donnelly at 7pm at the Ateneo de Madrid, Calle del Prado 21, Madrid 28014; on Saturday there is a tour of the Jarama battlefield (coaches leave Hotel Agumar, Paseo de Reina Cristina 7, Madrid 28014) at 9am, followed by lunch in Morata de Tajuña; organised by AABI Spanish Friends of the IBs; more details from Danny Payne [danpayne40@yahoo.co.uk]; tel: 07862-257 372.

**26 February 2011:** Unveiling of plaque to Belfast Brigadier Jim Straney; 1pm; John Street, Belfast BT12; followed by Jim Straney Memorial Lecture; 2pm; National Club, 17-19 Queen Street, Belfast BT1 6EA; organised by Belfast's International Brigades Commemoration Committee; more information: Ciaran Crossey [irelandscw@yahoo.co.uk] or tel: 07759-393 607.

**26 February 2011:** Annual general meeting of the Basque Children of 37 Association UK; 12noon-1:30pm; Consejería de Trabajo e

Immigración, 20 Peel Street, London W8 7PD; contact [secretary@basquechildren.org.uk].  
**1-27 March 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at Southampton Solent University, Sir James Matthews Building, 157-187 Above Bar Street, Southampton SO14 7NN; 9am-5pm Mon-Fri (4.30pm on Fri).

**4 March 2011:** Fundraising event for International Brigade musical "Goodbye Barcelona" at Europe House, 32 Smith Square, London SW1P 3EU; 4pm-6:30pm: to apply for tickets: [contact@goodbyebarcelona.com].

**5 March 2011:** IBMT's annual Len Crome Memorial Lecture, "¡Salud! The British Contribution to the Republican Medical Services during the Spanish Civil War, 1936-1939" by Linda Palfreeman; 2:30pm, Imperial War Museum, Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ; earlier, from 11am, a tribute in words, music and film to former IBMT Chair Sam Lesser and Brigaders who have died in the past 12 months. Contact IBMT Secretary (details page 2).

**9-12 March 2011:** "A Crime of Compassion" by Steve Aspinall, a play about International Brigaders; Actors' Studio, 36 Seal Street, Liverpool L1 4BE; 7:30pm; box office: 0151-709 9034 (see poster and caption above).

**28 March-16 April:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at the Great Hall, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO2 3PJ; 10am-5pm; [www3.hants.gov.uk/greathall].

**22-24 April 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at the Leaf Hall Community Arts Centre, 51 Seaside, Eastbourne BN22 7NB as part of Eastbourne Festival of Arts and Culture; Good Friday: 12pm-5pm; Easter Saturday: 10am-5pm; Easter Sunday 10am-4pm; [www.leafhall.co.uk].

**26 April-13 May 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at University of Portsmouth Library, Cambridge Road, Portsmouth PO1 2ST; 8am-6:30pm; more information: [www.port.ac.uk/library/essentials/open].

**16-28 May 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition at the Irish Labour History Society Museum, Beggars Bush Barracks, Haddington Road, Dublin 4; 10:30am-4:30pm Mon-Fri; [http://ilhm.tripod.com/museum.html]; tel: (+353) 1-668 1071.

**21 May 2011:** Lecture: "Irish Volunteers in the British Battalion" by Richard Baxell; 4pm; Irish Labour History Society Museum, Dublin (see details above).

**2-25 June 2011:** IBMT's "Antifascistas" exhibition in the Library, Market Street, Kidderminster, Worcs DY10 1AB; 9am-5:30pm (8pm on Tues and 7pm on Weds/Thurs); [www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/community-and-living/libraries-and-learning/local-library-details].

**2/3 July 2011:** Annual commemoration of the battle of Brunete; organised by AABI; details to be confirmed; contact Severiano Montero: [seve.montero@gmail.com].

*NB: Events not organised by the IBMT are the responsibility of the individuals and organisations concerned.*



signed by Fox, who was killed at Lopera in December 1936. Contact [gavinfox4ql@btinternet.com].

● Elaine Turner is seeking details about her uncle, **Joseph "Joe" Henry Parker**, who fought in the Spanish Civil War. He was born on 9 April 1915 in Hackney, London, though he could later have had links to Bristol. Contact [elaine@s1exige.co.uk].

● Nina Watson wants to find out more about Spanish artist **Enrique Garrán** and his family, who stayed with her mother and father in Reading in the 1940s before her family moved to Northumberland in 1950. He had been secretary of the Spanish Syndicate of Fine Arts and is thought to have died in London in the 1950s. Nina writes: "Unfortunately both my parents, Pete and Nell Johnson, are now deceased so I can't check the details. During the war they lived in a small house in Amity Road, Reading. I remember coming home from school one day and finding a strange man, woman and two children in our tiny front room. I recall the children having black hair and looking very beautiful. My mother told me that they were



A sketch and painting by Enrique Garrán for the Johnson family in Reading.

staying with us because they had nowhere else to go. I remember Enrique doing lots of drawing and painting, using any materials he could get hold of. My parents were very active in the Communist Party in Reading, and I believe the drawing of Lenin was done for them. He also painted a picture of a ballerina which he gave them. At some time either before or after he stayed with us, he and his family lived with my uncle and aunt (Sumame Edmonds) in a house in Kendrick Road, Reading. Also living in the house at that time was the artist John

Morley Bury. He later moved to Hampstead. A name which my parents often mentioned was the Peto family... I believe they were very active politically and some members of the family went on to have distinguished careers and may know more about the Spanish connection."

Contact Nina at [terninawatson@aol.com].

*If you do not have access to email, contact the IBMT Secretary (details on page 2). Please share your information about Brigaders with Jim Carmody, the IBMT's researcher: [jamescarmody@yahoo.co.uk].*





John Sommerfeld.

Peter Sommerfield

“May Day” has now been republished in a new edition featuring an introduction by novelist John King, plus Sommerfeld’s note to the 1984 edition of his novel.

Set in London and centred on Langier’s factory in the East End, “May Day” describes events leading up to May Day from the point of view of the factory workers and bosses and their families. It is a tale of exploitation, political awakening, and class struggle. Sommerfeld said in his 1984 note: “When I wrote it I’d probably have said that ‘May Day’ was socialist realism. Now I’d call it early ’30s Communist romanticism.”

As communist-inspired fiction, the novel offers an insight into the fervent utopianism that took Sommerfeld and many other volunteers to Spain. Some will argue that the politics and class relations depicted have clearly dated, though the inner conflict felt by James Seton’s brother John about whether to risk the livelihood of his young family by joining other union militants at Langier’s will sound familiar to many trade unionists today. So too will the callous disregard for health and safety shown by the factory bosses.

What has undeniably aged well are the descriptions of London, all belching chimneys, fog horns on the Thames and West End neon lights reflected on wet tarmac. They combine social realism and poetry and are delivered with a sharp cinematographer’s eye: “London extends itself around the grey-silver curling worm of the river like some sprawling monster. The million sounds of machinery and voices and laughter, of traffic and typewriters and hammers and saws, of dogs barking and the cries of birth

and death, the sounds of music and bicycle bells and pigeons cooing blend together and rise into the air, varying in tone from hour to hour, the monster’s breathing.”

In “May Day” the country is in turmoil – the people are angry at the excesses and corruption of the ruling class; workers are told to increase production for less pay; bosses meet to discuss ways of increasing their profit margins; unions mobilise the masses; a march takes place; police clash with demonstrators and a man is killed on the streets of London. Sounds familiar?

“May Day” can be ordered from [www.london-books.co.uk].

## ‘Romanticism’ that still resonates

“May Day” by John Sommerfeld; £11.99 (London Books, London, 2010)

Reviewed by Jim Jump

Described by fellow International Brigader Bernard Knox as a “proletarian novelist”, John Sommerfeld was – like Knox – one of the group of volunteers recruited by poet John Cornford in the autumn of 1936.

Remarkably, Sommerfeld still had time to complete his second novel, “May Day”, in which one of the main characters, James Seton, has just returned from Spain, “a fugitive from a revolt drowned in blood”, before crossing the Pyrenees and taking part in the fighting around Madrid in late 1936. His account of these experiences, “Volunteer in Spain”, was published in 1937.

## Rotherham volunteer’s life



IBMT supporters in Rotherham have reprinted the “Pounded Earth” Spanish Civil War memoir of local volunteer Tommy James along with the 1985 biography of James, “A Lion of a Man”, by Brian Lewis and Bill Gledhill.

James (1898-1971) was a lifelong communist and supporter of progressive causes. During his eight months in Spain, he fought at Jarama in February 1937 and Brunete in July later that year.

The new book was launched at a gathering of 150 people last September at the opening of the IBMT’s “Antifascistas” exhibition in Rotherham.

“A Lion of a Man/Pounded Earth” is priced at £8.99 and can be ordered for £10.50 (including p&p) from [andyducker@blueyonder.co.uk].

## In brief...

● A new BBC Radio 4 documentary, “**The Last of the International Brigaders**”, is expected to be broadcast at 8pm on Saturday 26 February, with a shorter repeat on Monday 28 February at 3pm. Producer Angela Sherwin says it will include interviews with surviving veterans Paddy Cochrane, Jack Edwards and Thomas Watters, as well as archive clips of several other volunteers.



● The Catalonia-based Brossa String Quartet (Brossa Quartet de Corda) (pictured) has released a new CD

with songs from the International Brigades, titled “**Les cançons del brigadistes**”. Priced at €15, the album can be ordered from [www.vesc.cat/ca/discs/brossa-quartet-de-corda/les-cancons-del-brigadistes].

● Film maker Yoav Segal has produced a 20-minute documentary “**No Pasaran**” on anti-fascist activism in the East End, the Battle of Cable Street and the International Brigades. The film will be previewed at Rich Mix in London on 27

January. A première is planned for later in the year, closer to the 4 October anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street. Extracts from the film, including interviews with Brigaders Sam Lesser and Lou Kenton, who took part in the Cable Street protest, are being shown on a loop at the Jewish Museum London. See [www.yoavsegal.com] and [www.jewishmuseum.org.uk].



● The **online TUC archive** has a set of documents on the Spanish Civil War. It includes material on International Brigade nurse Ann Murray (above). It can be viewed at: [www.unionhistory.info/Display.php?irn=3000084].

● The latest issue of **The Volunteer**, journal of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA) is available online at [www.albavolunteer.org]. It includes articles on a “Songs for the Cause” concert given by Pete Seeger, Guy Davis and Patti Smith in New York last October in aid of ALBA.

● International Brigade supporters in Belfast have produced a web-page on “**Belfast Socialists in the Spanish Civil War**”. It tells the story of several Belfast Brigaders and points out

relevant sites of interest. See [http://hubpages.com/hub/belfast-brigadistas-in-the-spanish-civil-war].



● Castilla la Mancha’s Department of Education, Science and Culture has created an **online exhibition** of 18 photographs relating to the International Brigades. It is titled “They gave us everything... and asked for nothing in return” and includes this photo of British Battalion volunteers along with other images drawn from the Albacete provincial archive. It can be seen at [http://ccta.jccm.es/dglab/Cliente?id\_aplic=66&seccion=Archivos].

● The powerful poem “**Battle of Jarama 1937**” by British Brigader John Lepper has been put to music for a video that includes archive photographs and recent ones taken by John Corcoran. The music is by John Webster and Brindaband, with Steve Homes on flamenco guitar. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=eBJZAHmnUts].



Clockwise from top left: Quotation from La Pasionaria on the Cardiff memorial; the Reading memorial, created by Eric Stanford; the national memorial in London's Jubilee Gardens, by sculptor Ian Walters; and the Leicester memorial naming three local volunteers killed in Spain.

# International Brigade memorials

This is the second and final part of our list of memorials in Britain and Ireland to the International Brigades. The IBMT is updating the list, so, if you have any additions or corrections, or other relevant information about the memorials, please contact *IBMT Newsletter* Editor Jim Jump at: [editor@international-brigades.org.uk] or tel: 020-7228 6504.

## Wales

**ABERDARE:** Relief carvings in wood to local volunteers, including two killed on 25 August 1938 in the Battle of the Ebro. Installed by Aberdare Labour Party and local trades council in the party's premises in December 1967. Relocated to Aberdare Central Library and unveiled by Michael Foot MP June 1986.

**AMMANFORD:** Plaque in Old Town Hall. Erected 1998.

**BLAENAVON:** Plaque to miners who volunteered for Spain in the Big Pit coalmining museum. Erected 2006.

**BURRYPORT:** Plaque in Memorial Hall. Erected 1996 and unveiled 27 February 1997 by Evan Jones.

**CAERPHILLY:** Plaque in Caerphilly Visitors' Centre to four local volunteers. Unveiled June 2002.

**CARDIFF:** Memorial stone and plaques in Alexandra Gardens, Cathays Park, to Welsh volunteers killed in Spain. Erected by Mid & South Glamorgan County Councils & Cardiff City Council, 1 October 1992.

**LLANELLI:** Plaque outside Plaid Cymru offices, 11 John Street. Unveiled by Lance Rogers 1996.

**MAERDY BRIDGE:** Plaque to Frank Owen by bridge in

Maerdy Community Woodland Project. Unveiled 2000 by Lance Rogers and rededicated August 2009.

**MERTHYR:** Plaque in council offices. Erected 1996 and rededicated 27 May 2002.

**NEATH:** Memorial stone in Victoria Gardens. Erected 1996.

**RHONDDA:** Memorial plaque in Rhondda Council Chamber, Pentre, to Rhondda volunteers. Erected by Rhondda Borough Council and unveiled 2 September 1989 by Jack Jones.

**PENNYGROES:** Memorial plaque in village hall to George Ernest Fretwell (killed on 12 February 1937 at Jarama). Erected by Memorial Hall Committee, 7 January 1991.

**SWANSEA:** Welsh national memorial plaque in Miners' Library, Hendrefoilan House, Gower Road, to 33 volunteers from Wales killed in Spain. Erected by the South Wales Miners' Federation, 14 January 1976 and unveiled by Will Paynter.

## The Midlands

**BIRMINGHAM:** Plaque in St Thomas Peace Garden, Bath Row, to the Birmingham volunteers. Erected by Birmingham City Council & Diocese of Birmingham, 2 December 1992.

**CLOWNE:** Plaque to Tom Gaunt (killed in Aragón, March 1938), Parish House. Erected by Chesterfield & District Cooperative Party and unveiled by Dennis Skinner MP, 31 October 2009.

**LEICESTER:** Memorial plaque in Peace Walk, Victoria Park, University Road, to three Leicester volunteers killed in Spain. Erected by Leicester Socialist Centre, 15 February 1993.

**NOTTINGHAM:** Sculpted relief and three plaques in County Hall, West Bridgeford. Erected by Nottinghamshire County Council and unveiled by Jack Jones and Ambassador Alberto Aza, 24 September 1993.

**STOKE-ON-TRENT:** Memorial plaque in Town Hall, Glebe Street, to three volunteers killed in Spain. Erected by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, 7 September 1989.

## London

**BATTERSEA:** Plaque in entrance to PCS union offices, Falcon Road, SW11, to the International Brigade volunteers from Battersea.

**CAMDEN:** Plaque in Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, to volunteers and supporters from Camden. Erected by Camden Borough Council, 29 April 1995.

**CLAPHAM:** Plaque in Maritime House (RMT union offices), Old Town, SW4, to seafarers and railway workers who joined the International Brigades. Erected 8 June 2004.

**CLERKENWELL:** Statue and plaque to four print and media workers killed in Spain in Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, EC1. Unveiled 14 December 2009. Originally erected 1986 by printworkers' union SOGAT at convalescent home in Rottingdean, Sussex, then unveiled at GPMU union centre at Quorn, Leicestershire, by Jack Jones, November 2002.

**FOREST GATE:** Memorial seat to David Marshall in the Rose Garden, West Ham Park, E7.

**FULHAM:** Memorial in Fulham Palace Gardens to volunteers from Hammersmith and Fulham. Erected by Hammersmith & Fulham Borough Council and local trades council, 31 August 1997.

**HOLBORN:** Statue by Arthur Dooley and plaque erected in Unite union offices, 128 Theobalds Road,

WC1, to members who fought in Spain. Erected by the T&G union, 1 June 1990.

**LEWISHAM:** Plaque to Halcrow Verstage (killed at Brunete, July 1937) and local volunteers, in Town Hall, Catford Road, London SE6. Unveiled by Bill Alexander and Jack Jones, 13 February 1999.

**NOTTING HILL:** "Echoes of Spain" mosaic under Westway flyover, Portobello Road, W11, commemorating local volunteers and Spanish Republican refugees. Unveiled 18 October 2006 by Jack Jones and Ambassador Carlos Miranda.

**PECKHAM:** Ceremonial red stole in St Luke's Church, Farnborough Way, SE15. Provided by Brigadier Douglas Eggar and St Luke's Church.

**SOUTHWARK:** Plaque in Southwark Memorial Mayor's Parlour, Town Hall, Peckham Road, SE5. Erected by Southwark Borough Council, 1 November 1986.

**TOWER HAMLETS:** Plaque to local volunteers on front of the Old Town Hall, Cable Street.

**WATERLOO:** National memorial and sculpture by Ian Walters in Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, to the 526 killed in Spanish Civil War who went to Spain from Britain and Ireland. Erected by Greater London Council and International Brigade Association and unveiled by Michael Foot MP, 5 October 1985.

## The South & South West

**BRISTOL:** Memorial plaque in Castle Park to four Bristol volunteers killed in Spain. Erected by Bristol City Council, 11 December 1986.

Remounted and rededicated 14 April 2010.

**CANTERBURY:** Seat in grounds of Rutherford College, University of Kent, to Tony McLean. Erected by Tony McLean Memorial Fund, 1 October 1982.

**NEWHAVEN:** Memorial bench at Newhaven Fort commemorating return of British Battalion to Newhaven in December 1938. Unveiled by Jack Jones, 7 December 2008.

**PORTHLEVEN:** Plaque to Christopher Caudwell on Atlantic Inn. Erected 20 October 2007.

**PORTSMOUTH:** Headstone on grave of Jimmy Moore (died from wounds sustained in Battle of the Ebro) in Milton Cemetery. Erected 2006.

**READING:** Sculpture outside Civic Centre, Castle Street, to volunteers killed in Spain. Erected by Reading International Brigade Memorial Committee and Reading Borough Council, 5 May 1990.

**READING:** Silverthorne Room in regional office of Unison (10 Church Street), in memory of Thora Silverthorne.

**SOUTHAMPTON:** Plaque to four Southampton volunteers in front of the Cenotaph in the park opposite Civic Centre. Erected 28 October 2006.

**SWINDON:** Spanish chestnut tree in Coate Water Park to Percy Williams, killed at Caspe in 1938. Erected by Thamesdown Borough Council, 1 November 1986.

**SWINDON:** Memorial in Whitworth Road Cemetery to Percy Williams.

**WORTHING:** Plaque in Labour Hall, Lyndhurst Road, to five Worthing International Brigade volunteers. Unveiled by Jack Jones and Sam Lesser, 7 July 2007.

# Name that took me back over 70 years

Upon reading in "Antifascistas" the list of heroes who died in the Spanish Civil War, I was surprised, elated, not to say staggered, to see the name of Bernard George Winfield, who was killed at Teruel on 1 January 1938.

He and I met at 25 Wycliffe Grove, Mapperly, Nottingham in 1937. My father, Tom Parsons, was an organiser for the International Brigades in the East Midlands. Meetings were held in our small front room. There was no furniture and the future participants in the battle for freedom from the fascists leaned against the walls or sat or squatted on the floor of that tiny but historic room.

There were collecting boxes in the room, which my late brother Jack and my older sister Betty and I took round the poverty-stricken streets where we lived.

It was at one of these meetings that a man gave the three of us a few coppers each. As you can imagine, this was a small fortune then – and kept me in aniseed balls for a week.

The man's name was Mr Winfield. For over 70 years this name has stayed in my mind. But it was not until I read his name in the roll of honour in the glorious book "Antifascistas" that the details of this wonderful incident were confirmed.

*Ted Parsons*  
Nottingham

## Oldham memorials

I was pleased to see the Oldham memorial listed in your Autumn 2010 issue. I can add a couple more items of information about this memorial. It was unveiled in January 1986 and was made by



the ceramic artist Jim Robison. Sadly, it is not currently on public display but always viewable by appointment.

We also have another relevant item in our collections. This framed roll of honour (pic-

tured) was given to us in 1986, at the time of an exhibition about the local men who fought in Spain but is clearly a much older item.

*Sean Baggaley*

Exhibitions and Collections Coordinator  
Gallery Oldham

## Spanish Civil War songs

I have begun a thread on the Mudcat folksong discussion site trying to collect a list of people who currently perform Spanish Civil War songs. It is hoped that it might encourage the singing of these songs during 2011, the 75th anniversary of the outbreak of the war. Anyone can add a post to the thread as a guest on the site without hav-

ing to sign up as a Mudcat member, although they ask that you give a "pen name" so that posts are not completely anonymous.

The thread is called "Spanish Civil War Songs: Who Sings What?" and can be found using this link: [<http://mudcat.org/thread.cfm?threadid=133659&messages=15#3034581>].

*Geoff Lawes*  
Hull

## Gerda Taro

Your short article in the splendid Autumn 2010 *IBMT Newsletter* mentions Gerda Taro. I know you have limited space but it would have been of interest to your readers to have pointed out the following facts. Gerda's real name was Gerda Pohorylle(s) and she was the long-time lover/partner of the famous Spanish Civil War photographer Robert Capa, real name André Friedman, though she refused to actually marry him.

She was buried at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris and her tombstone was designed by Giacometti. There is a rumour that she was actually killed by Stalinist purgers, rather than by an accident when she was run over by a Republican tank, but there is no evidence for a murder and apparently an eyewitness account to the contrary.

*Martin Sugarman*

Ajex Jewish Military Museum Archivist  
London

## David Mackenzie

In your obituary of Bernard Knox (autumn issue) I notice that you quote him as saying that David [Mackenzie] was an "Oxford man who had been a medical student".

One David Mackenzie was an Edinburgh student who had been a medical student. He was an early volunteer who took part in the defence of Madrid and was at one time reported killed.

He returned home at the end of 1936. Jim Carmody [the IBMT's researcher] has told me over the phone that Mackenzie's father, an admiral, had been able to exert some pressure.

Later the David Mackenzie I'm thinking of became a farmer on the Isle of Mull after service in the Second World War and published two books, "Farmer in the Western Isles" and "Goat Husbandry".

I met his daughter by his first marriage, his late son-in-law and their three sons, the eldest of whom, Richard Hunter, was recently the archivist at Edinburgh City Council.

Was there another David Mackenzie who was an Oxford man?

*John Manson*  
Castle-Douglas

● *Bernard obviously got his universities mixed up. Our inquiries confirm that there was only one other David (Marshall) in Spain at the time, and he was not an ex-medical student. – Editor*

# Events to mark 75th anniversary of formation of International Brigades...

## Plans for daughter Rosa's tribute to be shown alongside Clive Branson's art

There are plans to make a new painting on the International Brigades by artist Rosa Branson the centrepiece of a special exhibition at the Marx Memorial Library in London in the autumn.

It would be shown alongside paintings and sketches by her father and Brigader, Clive Branson, a renowned artist and poet.

The two-week exhibition would comprise one of several events commemorating the 75th anniversary of the creation of the International Brigades in October 1936.

The IBMT and MML hope to organise the exhibition at the same time as the Trust's annual general meeting in London on 1 October, allowing people attending the AGM to see the exhibition.

Clive Branson survived the Spanish Civil War but was killed in action while serving with the British Army in Burma on 25 February 1944.



**PAINTING:** Rosa Branson in her studio in Highgate, north London, with her unfinished version of her tribute to the International Brigades.

Several of his works are held in public collections, including five by the Tate. One painting, "Portrait of a Worker" is currently on display at the Tate Britain in London. Another, "Selling the 'Daily Worker' outside Projectile Engineering Works" is in the "Restless Times: Art in Britain 1914-1945" exhibition at Sheffield's Millennium Gallery until the end of January.

## Unveiling of new Madrid memorial is proposed for commemoration in Spain

A programme to mark the 75th anniversary of the creation of the International Brigades at a series of events in Spain in October is being drawn up in consultation with IB associations around the world.

There are likely to be gatherings in Madrid, Albacete (site of the main International Brigade base) and Barcelona during the week of 23-29 October.

In Madrid, it is hoped that a new memorial to the Brigaders will be unveiled in the University City, where the international volunteers played an important part in checking Franco's attempt to take the capital in November and December 1936. The Madrid-based AABI (Association of Friends of the International Brigades) is seeking to raise an estimated €15,000 to fund the project.

The programme is expected to be confirmed at a meeting in Toulouse on 22 January convened by the Coordination Internationale, the Paris-based body formed last year to coordinate activities between the International Brigade associations.

The AABI also plans this year to put up plaques in Madrid's Fuencarral Cemetery to the Argentine and Cypriot volunteers.

# To Cable Street, via Scotland, Ireland and Wales

## Cyclists will visit IB memorials on the way

A cycle ride is planned for this autumn that will take riders to International Brigade memorials in Scotland, Ireland, Wales and southern England. They will arrive in London in time for the IBMT's annual general meeting on 1 October and the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Cable Street on the following day.

The ride is being organised by the National Clarion Cycling Club 1895 (NCCC), which traces its roots back to the heyday of the socialist cycling clubs of the Victorian age.

It is scheduled to set off from the International Brigade memorial at The Mound in Edinburgh on Monday 19 September, with the NCCC offering a choice of accommodation along the route. There will be a back-up vehicle to take luggage.

The itinerary takes the cyclists to Glasgow, then by ferry to Belfast, south to Dublin and on another ferry to South Wales, with the riders visiting Cardiff, Bristol, Swindon and Reading on route to London. They will reach the capital on Friday 30 September.

"The aim will be to promote the IBMT and highlight the relevance of the anti-fascist struggle

today," says NCCC secretary Charles Jepson.

In 2008 the club staged a Glasgow to Barcelona cycle ride to re-enact the trip made in 1938 by two Clarion Cycling Club members, Ted Ward and Geoff Jackson, who biked through Britain and France and over the Pyrenees to raise money for Spanish children who had become victims of the civil war.

Backed by the IBMT, the 70th anniversary ride also remembered Ray Cox and Roy Watts, two Clarion members who died in Spain with the International Brigades.

The trip received extensive coverage in regional and national TV, radio and newspapers in Spain.

On Sunday 4 October 1936, Clarion Cycling Club groups in London cancelled their normal Sunday runs in order to confront Sir Oswald Mosely's British Union of Fascists as they tried to march through the working class heart of the East End, where many Jews lived. The anti-fascists adopted the slogan of the defenders of Madrid – No pasarán / They shall not pass – in the violent confrontation that became known as the Battle of Cable Street. Many of those who stopped Mosely's Blackshirts afterwards joined the International Brigades.

For more information about this year's planned cycle ride contact [clarionccc@yahoo.co.uk], tel: 01254-51302.



**CYCLING SHIRT:** The National Clarion Cycling Club 1895 has produced this cycling shirt in the colours of the Spanish Republic and bearing the legend "No Pasaran" on the sleeve. The shirts cost £35 each, including p&p, and sizes are small (40), medium (42), large (44) and extra large (48). They can be ordered from club secretary Charles Jepson on 01254-51302 or [clarionccc@yahoo.co.uk]. Optional club membership costs £2 a year.