



INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE
Memorial Trust



WIGAN SPANISH CIVIL WAR MEMORIAL UNVEILING

To honour the 12 people from the Wigan area
who volunteered to fight against Fascism in Spain 1936-39

Saturday 14th April 2018 at 12 -1 pm

Spain's día de Republica (Day of the Republic)

at Southside Gardens

(Library street Wigan, between Town Hall & swimming centre)



Followed by event at the
MUSEUM OF WIGAN LIFE
(Across Library Street) from 1pm including buffet, speakers,
exhibition and entertainment including
JOE SOLO & BOLTON CLARION CHOIR



MICHAEL
GALLAGHER



BERNARD
SWEENEY



TOMMY
DEGNAN



EDWIN
BLOOD



ARTHUR
DAVID EVANS



LILY
ROBINSON

WIGAN AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

DURING the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, over 35 thousand volunteers from 52 countries went to Spain, to fight on the side of the democratically elected republican government which had been attacked by an army coup in July 1936, and which was soon backed by the fascist armies of Hitler and Mussolini. Around 2,500 men and women from Britain and Ireland volunteered to fight for and support the Republicans, many enlisted into the INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE.

Despite Wigan's high unemployment in the 1930s and being one of the poorest areas in the UK, 11 men and 1 woman volunteered from the area to support an even poorer and mainly peasant population over a thousand miles away. 526 British volunteers were killed in action in Spain, including three men from Wigan. There are more than 150 memorials throughout the UK

and Ireland dedicated to these volunteers.

The memorial is dedicated to the heroism and sacrifice of these men from the Wigan area, who went because, "their open eyes could see no other way", of fighting the scourge of fascism. A few years ago, Ron Thompson of Wigan Trades Council started the campaign which we now see brought to fruition. Primarily of course, this memorial is to the men of Wigan who fought in Spain, but it is also a tribute to Ron Thompson's tireless work on their behalf, sadly he died in September 2014, and those who have followed in his footsteps would like to place on record his massive contribution to the realisation of his endeavors.

The three men connected to the Wigan area who died during the Spanish Civil War are; Michael Gallagher, Bernard Sweeney and Paul Dewhurst

WITH THANKS

IRENE THOMPSON, (Ron's wife), for unveiling the memorial, thanks to Ian Heyes and others who built the memorial. Thanks to all of the support of all of the relatives of those from the area who went to Spain. Thanks to Wigan Trades Council and generosity of NW Trades Unions, to Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, in particular Steve Thompson who assisted greatly with the planning approval and Councillor Lawrence Hunt who supported the project and suggested

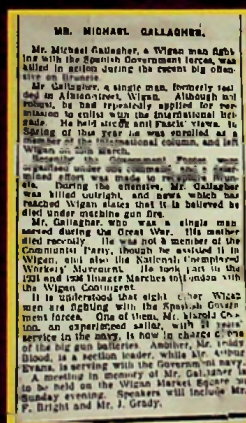
& approved the Brighter Borough Fund. Thanks To Wigan Diggers, particularly Janet Phillips. Thanks to Wigan Archives & Local Studies, particularly to Lynda Jackson for the use of the Museum of Wigan Life for the post unveiling event. Thanks to Joe Solo and Bolton Clarion Choir for the entertainment. many thanks to the support of the International Brigades Memorial Trust members.

Lisa Croft



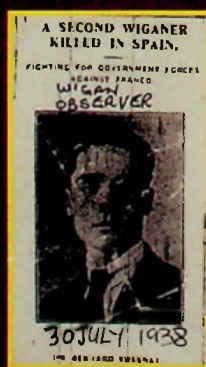
MICHAEL GALLAGHER was from Ashton Street, Scholes and was killed in the battle of Brunete. He was a miner and like many, suffered difficult times

of unemployment during the depression. He was an active member of the National Unemployed Workers Movement, taking part in the 1934 & 1936 Hunger Marches to London with the Wigan contingents. He was dedicated to supporting the underdog and joined the International Brigades, arriving in Spain on 16th May 1937. The battle of Brunete, in July was located 15 miles west of Madrid; it had been costly for the Republic, with losses of approximately 23,000 men and massive amounts of equipment. Michael was one of those killed in action.



The Wigan Observer reported his death and on a large & well attended memorial meeting, which was held in his honour on Wigan Market Square. It was organised by the Spanish Dependents' Aid

Committee. Speeches were made by the Council members and Wigan Trades Council. Councillor F. Droney said he knew Gallagher personally, adding that he was a: "Good and courageous comrade who was prepared to fight for his principles. His name as an anti-fascist class be remembered by the working class as a fighter for peace and democracy."



BERNARD SWEENEY was also a miner, from Crabtree Road, Pemberton and the Wallgate area. He fought on the Aragon Front and was killed aged 29 at the Battle of Belchite in 1937, located 300 kilometres west of Barcelona. It took two weeks

for the town to be destroyed in one of the Spanish Civil War's bloodiest battles with 3,000 people dying. There was originally some confusion with Bernard, as his name was not mentioned on the International Brigade roll of honour. His name was confused with Albert Sweeney, possibly his brother. Bernard Sweeney had in fact emigrated to Vancouver, Canada in 1928 through a church relocation scheme for British unemployed young men.

Michael Gallagher who died in Spain is remembered in the following song:

A Song to James Keogh words and music by Michael Burns: Feb 2012

Well his name was James Keogh, he was a son of Chartist Ashton, a thoughtful lad, apprenticed to a tailor in the town. As he studied in the library, read of better worlds and bolder, in many lands in Europe freedom's light was being turned down.

So don't forget the sacrifice of men like young James Keogh. Over 60 men left Manchester for freedom's fight in Spain. They were English, they were Irish, some were communists, some Jewish. nearly forty died on Spanish soil, well did they die in vain?

He watched as Mussolini's troops waged war in Ethiopia. Read how Hitler dealt with gays and communists and Jews when the newsreels showed the Condors raining death on Basque Guernica, James packed his case to head for Spain, - was the path he had to choose.

So don't forget the sacrifice of men like young James Keogh. Over 60 men left Manchester for freedom's fight in Spain. They were English, they were Irish, some were communists, some Jewish. nearly forty died on Spanish soil, well did they die in vain?

Well James sailed from Marseilles, in May of 1937 the Ciudad de Barcelona held 200 men or more a Francoist torpedo took the ship and fifty comrades but the Catalans looked after all the men who made the shore.

So don't forget the sacrifice of men like young James Keogh. Over 60 men left Manchester for freedom's fight in Spain. They were English, they were Irish, some were communists, some Jewish. nearly forty died on Spanish soil, well did they die in vain?

James was home for Christmas leave in 1937, but he died on St Patrick's Day at Calaciete, a credit to his town and to north western working people, shellfire from a fascist tank took his young life away.

So don't forget the sacrifice of men like young James Keogh. Over 60 men left Manchester for freedom's fight in Spain.

They were English, they were Irish, some were communists, some Jewish. nearly forty died on Spanish soil, well did they die in vain?

Clem Becket was a roughiey and a top notch speedway rider,*

George Brown of Kilkenny's name is one we won't forget Sydney Fink and Victor Shamma are included in this number, Michael Gallagher of Wigan yes and many others yet.

Well we've not forgot the sacrifice of men like young James Keogh and the men who gave their lives to fight for freedom out in Spain so speak out against injustice and stand up against oppression and the men who lie in Spanish soil will not have died in vain.

MR EDWIN BLOOD
Edwin Blood was born on 17/08/1900 in Stanley Street, Scholes and also lived in New Lodge in the 1950s. He was in Spain and fought at Jarama & Brunete with friend and fellow Wiganer, Michael Gallagher, he wrote to his brother Mr. J Cleary of 8 Palm Grove, Pemberton of his friend's death.

The following returned from fighting in the Spanish Civil War



Edwin Blood in 1960

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LETTER FROM WIGANER IN SPAIN.

Another Wiganer, Edwin Blood, who is fighting with the Government Forces in Spain, has written to his brother-in-law, Mr. J Cleary, of 8 Palm Grove, Pemberton, and in his letter says: "We are having a short rest after three weeks fighting, and believe me it was pretty tough. Gallagher was killed the first day in action. I was talking to him a few minutes before he was killed along with others. He previously said to me that rather than get an ordinary wound he hoped it would be one that would put him right out. It happened as he wished, poor Mick. Gallagher was a gallant anti-Fascist fighter, with a burning hatred of Fascism to the last."

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Edwin Blood was repatriated in April 1938.

Tommy Dewhurst
Dewhurst is not the most brilliant man I know - and a big one too to be better than them - moments of ignorance - fear that I'll not wrap humanity from being human.
What is he working now, though he is strong as to work he has, troubled by sleeping before against the coming power that do as wrong, unless he knows to stand side with his neighbour.
Died as Tom has, with his wife and child, stood out to me a better way of living - not only a special story they did not just but stillborn advance towards the noble world.
He puts his pick down in the pit today, but with the dust he has there tell off, the people in the world to work their way - a man like such, a work that should be with laughter.

in London signed by Charlotte Haldane, secretary of the Dependents and Wounded Aid Committee, she wrote: "your brother was one of the finest comrades in the Battalion and the offices of the Brigade wish us to convey to you their deep personal regret on your sad loss."

SWEENEY Bernard - English - 29 Ver of Gen. Inflow - 11 - 36

PAUL FRANCIS CHRISTOPHER DEWHURST His family were from Lowton, near Wigan, but Paul (known as Francis) was born in Barnet, London 28th May 1914. He was a musician and an Oxford Graduate; he arrived in Spain December 1936 and became part of a Cartography Unit created by Edward Been (Bean?).

Paul was injured at the battle of Jarama yet went on to fight at Brunete but was killed in July, 1937.

According to Jason Gurney's book 'Crusade in Spain' he says 'Francis became a very close friend of mine and was later co-opted into the Battalion scouts. He was the first man wounded at Jarama'. Paul Dewhurst's name is on a plaque the erected by Southwark Council at the John Harvard Library, unveiled in 1986. His name is on the recently unveiled memorial in Oxford.

Paul Francis Dewhurst was very musical and composed a musical score for a ballet named Toy Soldier. He visited Germany and was horrified by Nazism and on return joined the Hackney Communist Party before joining the International Brigades. News of Paul's death didn't reach his father until the September and this dreadful event led to his own death, just over a month later.

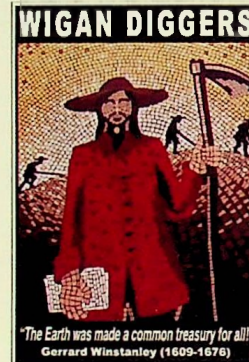
Paul's parents, William and Beatrice were accomplished actors and his grandfather Jonathan Dewhurst was a well-known Victorian Shakespearian actor who managed the Theatre Royal in Leigh for 18 years. The Dewhurst family ran their own touring company, performing at first in the north of England, with later success throughout the country, appearing in London's West End and touring Australia and India.

He was a dedicated socialist and volunteered to join the International Brigades, setting sail for Spain in

Wigan Trades Council, Wigan Diggers Festival Committee, Bakers Union & Unite the Union

SALUTE THE BRAVE PEOPLE WHO LEFT WIGAN TO FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY AGAINST
FACISM AND TYRANNY IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR 1936-1939

THEIR COURAGE CONTINUES TO INSPIRE US



BAKERS
FOOD
AND ALLIED
WORKERS
UNION



"My mind was not at rest because nothing
was acted, and thoughts ran in me that
**Words and Writings were
Nothing and must Die,**
for **Action is the Life of all,**
and If thou dost not **Act**
thou does nothing."
Gerrard Winstanley
"Digger" and "True Leveller"
(1609-1676)

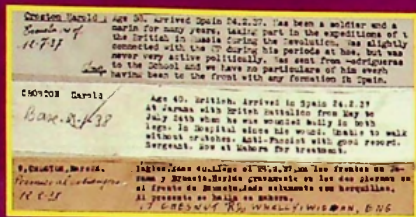
December 1936, he arrived in Albacete, 20th December. This location was where the headquarters for the International Brigade was located and its main depot. Tommy's number was 1023 and he fought in the battle of Jarama in February 1937 as Political Commissar of No. 3 Company. He was wounded with a piece of shrapnel in his the lungs for the rest of his life. He was Political Commissar for the hospital group in Murcia and was repatriated to the UK due to his wounds 7th September 1937. He had taken a leading part in the national miners' strike of 1921 and General Strike of 1926.



He was one of the founders of the Unemployed Workers Movement and participated on the hunger marches in the 1930's. He went to Moscow for a year, studying at the Lenin school. When George Orwell wrote 'The Road to Wigan Pier' he turned to Tommy for guidance, resulting into many powerful arguments with Orwell. After the war and Nationalisation of the mines, he played a leading role in the N.U.M until retirement. He died aged 81, Arthur Scargill, President of the N.U.M gave the eulogy at Tommy's funeral, he said "Tommy was formidable in debate, magnetic in conversation and captivating as a person, he was an outstanding leader and a legend in his own lifetime." A recording of the song

'Joe Hill' sung by Paul Robeson was played.

HAROLD CROSTON was a Soldier and Mariner with the Royal Navy with 21 years' service, he was in charge of one of the big gun batteries, he had previously taking part in expeditions in Russia during the revolution.



He was older than many of his comrades in Spain, arriving there 24th February 1937. He fought at the Battle of Jarama, it was reported from Spain that he was badly wounded at Brunete in both legs. It is thought that on return to England he became a Trawler man.

THOMAS CONNOLLY was born 6th August 1898 in Wigan (or Ince) and lived at 7, Upper Morris Street, Wigan. He worked as a catering worker and miner and was an active member of the National Union of Miners. He was one of the earliest to leave for Spain, leaving Dover for Calais in early December 1936, arriving at Albacete on the 10th of December. He fought with the No.1 Company of the XIV International Brigade a newly formed company that was sent to the Andujar front to retake the town of Lopera. The attack failed and after two days the Brigade suffered Appalling casualties, he was wounded and hospitalised after 2 days on the front. He survived and was well enough to fight at Jarama, but was wounded again. He was repatriated on 9th August 1938. His battalion number was No.498.



ARTHUR DAVID EVANS from 8, Swinley Lane, Wigan. He was a miner and a member of the NUM, T&GWU & CPGB (Communist Party), was about 26 when he went to Spain on 22nd January, 1938, arriving at Albacete on the 27th. He joined the British Battalion, number 457 and took part in the Battle of Jarama, south of Madrid, where he lost

a finger. He was repatriated 13th October 1937. He served with the British Army and returned to Wigan area, lived at various addresses including, Newtown, Greenwood Avenue, Almond Grove, Green Hey, Kitt Green. He was a long time member of Newtown Working Men's club, during the late 1970s he had painful legs and both were removed, he died 12th December 1992 aged 81.

PATRICK (PAT) DEIGNAN was born in Ireland in 1884 but moved to work in Wigan as a Collier/Labourer. He was a member of the CPGB and ex British Army. He sailed from Dover 30/11/36 arriving in Spain in December 1936. His Battalion number was number 563. He fought at the battle of Jarama in February 1937. He had been in hospital several times with sickness, one time staying in the hospital Grand Hotel at Albacete on 19/6/37. He was repatriated to the UK on 13th October 1937.

HECTOR COOP lived in Leigh for a while and also Bury St Edmonds, where his family had moved to, but he was born in Liverpool. He went to Liverpool to enlist with the International Brigade in case his family tried to stop him, as he was only 17. He ended up fighting at the Aragon front but deserted during the retreat and ended up on a ship going to Greece. He and a Canadian deserter swam ashore and contacted the British Consul who repatriated Hector back to Britain in July 1938.

BENNY HOATH He was a bus driver for Wigan Corporation, it is understood that he went to fight in Spain but I have been unable to find any further information regarding this.



LILY ROBINSON Lily was brought up by her father and grandparents at 17 The Wiend, Wigan - now demolished to accommodate the new Wigan Life Centre. On leaving school and starting work at age 14 she soon became aware of the plight of the working classes particularly in the towns of the North West where poverty was rife. She was known to have sold "The Daily Workman" in Wigan market



place and around that time joined the Communist Party. She became politically active and was instrumental in setting up trade unions at Leyland Rubber Works and Woolworths in the Isle of Man. Around 1934 she was persuaded by her father to go to London to train as a nurse at Epsom General Hospital. In October 1936 she took part in "The Battle of Cable Street" and spent a night in a cell at Bow Street Police Station for climbing up a lamp post during the street fighting and knocking a mounted policeman off his horse with a large, blunt, instrument! Whilst in London she lived with a Jewish family in the East End and it was here that she met Paul Robeson and his son Pauley who she looked after at times when his father was appearing in concerts or political meetings in various parts of GB.

During this period she became involved with the recruitment and organisation of volunteers to join The International Brigade to fight in the Spanish Civil War and was herself covertly flown out to Spain from an unknown small airfield in the south of England to take an active part in the war. We do not know if this was in a fighting role or as a nurse tending to the injured or even both. On returning to England and Wigan she took up her nursing career at Billinge Hospital.



Her grandfather, John Robinson was a world famous strong man called 'Ajax' the one time champion weight lifter in the world was also a Trapeze artist.

With thanks to Charles Jepson for the historical details of the Battles of Jarama and Brunete

AID FOR SPAIN & SUPPORT

THE Aid Spain Movement was based on hundreds of local committees and labour movement organisations, on the initiative of the Communist Party of Great Britain. Medical Aid Committees were set up in towns and cities from August 1936. One of the most successful was in Manchester and Lancashire which saw eight fully equipped ambulances going to Spain with cash to support their work. The Aid Spain Movement not only raised thousands of pounds for the Republican cause, but sent over 200 medical personnel, 29 food ships and in May 1937 organised the reception in Britain of 4,000 Basque refugee children. Wigan and District Trades Council and the Labour Party organised a number of rallies and Flag Days to collect funds for an ambulance to be sent from Wigan as shown in the cutting from the Wigan Observer.



NON-INTERVENTION COMMITTEE

AFTER the outbreak of the war, a Non-Intervention Committee was set up by Britain and France, which denied to the republican government the arms they needed to fight against the military uprising, Germany and Italy however sent arms and men in abundance, while the democratically elected government was denied the backing it needed. The Germans and Italians poured in men, arms, and airplanes to help the rebels, who were now led by General Franco. The most notorious of their acts was the destruction of the Basque town of Gernika in April 1937, which was later that year immortalised in Picasso's massive mural, Guernica, which was first shown at the international exhibition in Paris in 1937. The International Brigades, were eventually withdrawn in September 1938, in the hopes that Germany and Italy would reciprocate, of course that did not happen.

Despite the efforts of the International Brigades, the republic could not withstand the combined strength of Franco and his fascist allies and the republic was to fall in

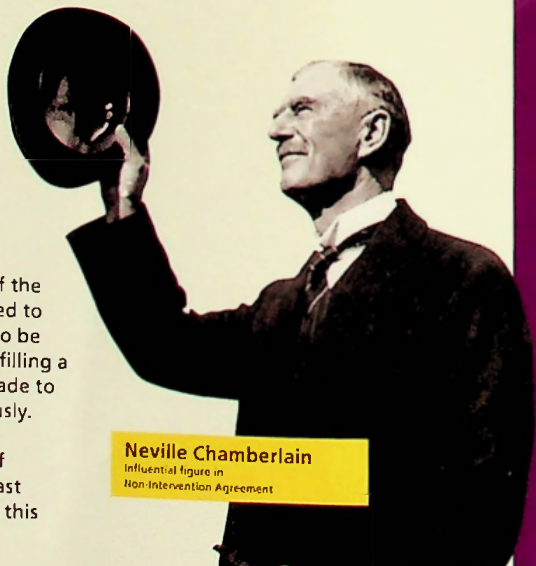
April 1939. After his victory, Franco continued his war on his own people, and hundreds of thousands were to die 'after' the end of the war. An estimated 500,000 were to flee the country in the wake of his victory. His dictatorship was to last until his death in 1975.

Many believe that if the republic had been supported, as was its right, the much greater slaughter of the Second World War would have been avoided, it is to the credit of these 11 men and 1 woman from Wigan, and the others of the International Brigades, that they saw this clearly, and so their tragedy was to become the worlds.

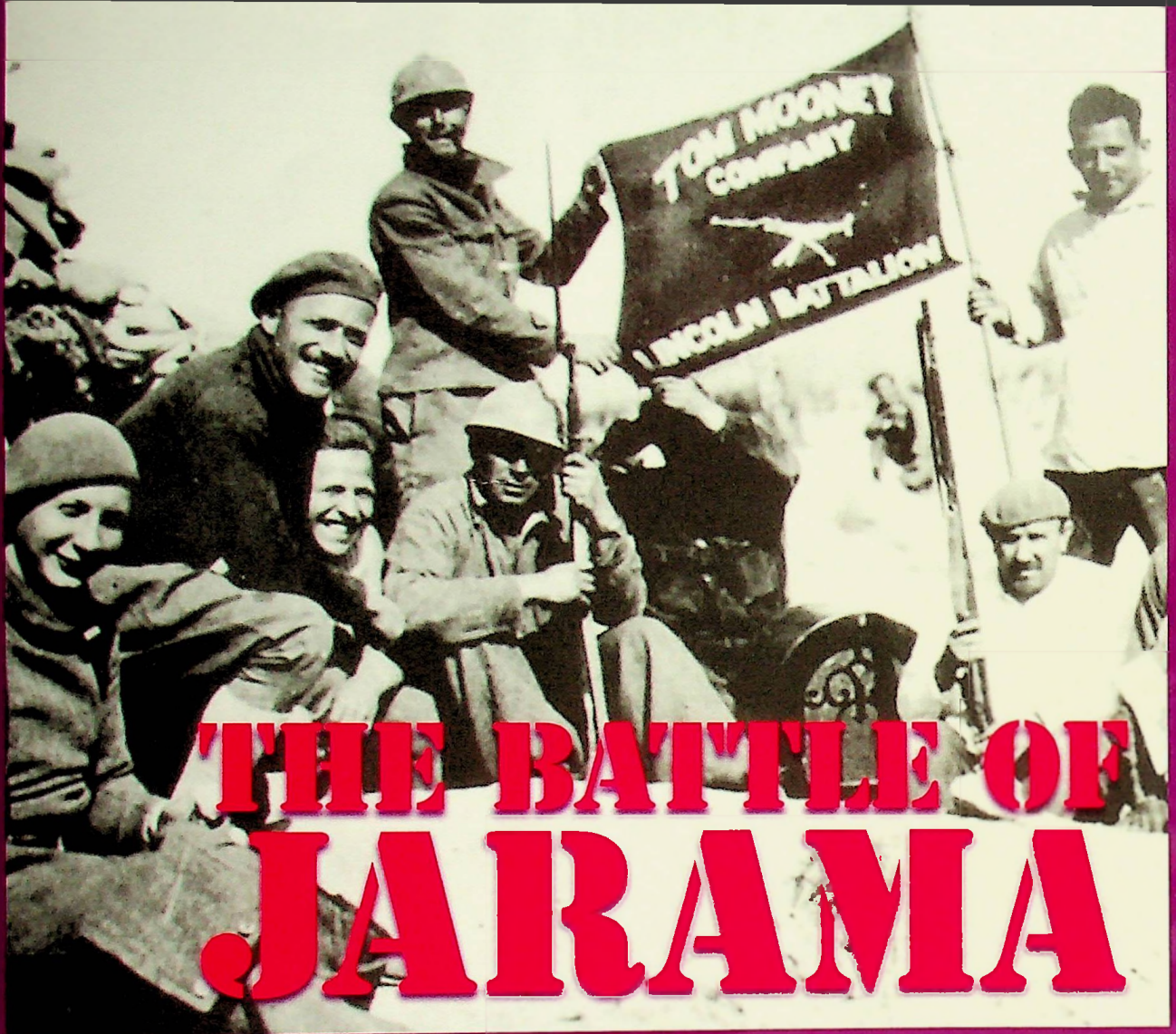
After Franco's death in 1975, democracy was restored in Spain and in June 2009, the veterans of the International Brigade were invited to the Spanish Embassy in London to be awarded Spanish Citizenship, fulfilling a promise that the republic had made to them more than 70 years previously.

Like that long delayed grant of citizenship, Wigan now at long last recognises these brave men with this memorial.

Thanks to:
WIGAN TRADES COUNCIL, WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL, WIGAN DIGGER'S, INTERNATIONAL BRIGADE MEMORIAL TRUST, WIGAN ARCHIVES & LOCAL STUDIES



Neville Chamberlain
Influential figure in
Non-Intervention Agreement



THE BATTLE OF JARAMA

ON JULY 1936 elements of the Spanish army led by Fascist generals launched a military coup to capture of the capital Madrid and overthrow the democratically elected Republican government. By November the seemingly unstoppable rebel forces were within a few miles of the city and the government fled to Valencia. The citizens of Madrid rather than except their fate rallied to the anti-fascist battle cry 'No Pasaran' and under the leadership of Trade Union militias began to defend the city by digging trenches and building barricades. The heroic workers of Madrid, supported by the newly arrived units of the International Brigades, were able to halt the rebel's advance in the grounds of University City on the outer suburbs.

Thwarted by the resolute defenders of Madrid, General Franco decided to break the impasse by launching a massive onslaught to the south west of the city. The objective was to cut the road between Madrid and Valencia. This road was a vital gateway for supplies of food and raw materials to the besieged city. A successful attack across the Jarama River would also rupture effective communications with the government and leave the city in an untenable position.

In the early hours of February 12th 1937 the 15th International Brigade made up of the Dimitrovs, the Franco-Belge and the British battalions were moved up to the front. The 500 men of the British Battalion, made up of three infantry companies and a machine-gun company assembled at a farm house on the edge of the Jarama Valley. Little did they know that in less than 72 hours more than half of them would be dead or badly wounded.

For the largely inexperienced men of the British battalion the day started badly when it was discovered that the machine gun company had been issued with the wrong ammunition, now the infantry would have to advance into battle without the support of their precious machine guns. They were also unaware that a formidable section of the fascist army with cavalry, artillery and supplies had already managed to cross the Jarama River and were now preparing to continue their advance up to the Pingarron plateau and Valencia road.

The three British infantry companies of raw recruits moved down off the plateau and over three small hills where upon they were confronted by the advancing highly trained soldiers of the Army of Africa and the Spanish Foreign Legion

supported by machine guns and artillery. Eventually after suffering great losses in hand to hand fighting the battalion was forced to retreat back towards the plateau pursued by the fascist hordes. Just when all seemed lost the British machine gun company at last were able to open fire and annihilated one of the finest units of the fascist army in a few minutes. The Battalion had suffered horrific casualties with over 130 dead and as many wounded.

The second day of the battle also began disastrously for the British Battalion when the machine gun company was outflanked and captured. By mid afternoon the fascists artillery was shelling the British positions with increasing accuracy. Finally, the International Brigade volunteers were forced to withdraw from the plateau to a sunken road where the survivors, now down to less than 150 men, were able to hold the line as night fell.

On 14th February as dawn broke it seemed almost impossible that the exhausted and traumatized volunteers of the British Battalion would be able to hold out much longer and when the fascist brought up tanks up the sunken road they were forced to retreat back towards the farmhouse they had left just two days earlier.

Just when all seemed lost two Brigaders Frank Ryan and Jock Cunningham stepped forward and called on the men to rally. The rout was halted, spirits rose, rifles were reloaded and readied for action. Men who had been fleeing for their lives were now pulled together into a makeshift fighting force and urged by Frank Ryan to sing the Internationale, the 'Great Rally' marched back up the road to meet the rebels advance head-on.

This make-shift force, a mixture of men from various battalions and different nationalities poured fire into the advancing fascists plunging them into panic. So determined was the resistance that the enemy believed new Republican reinforcements had arrived. Their attempt to cut off Madrid had failed, and the unbreakable spirit of worker resistance had secured a decisive victory. The Republican line was secure; Madrid Valencia road was still open and remained so until the very end of the war.

THE BATTLE OF BRUNETE

By the summer of 1937 the Civil War in Spain had dragged on for much longer than anyone had anticipated. There had been no breakthrough by either side and there was still no end in sight. The Republican commanders decided to break the deadlock by launching a massive offensive with 80,000 troops on the Nationalist positions to the west of Madrid in the hope of turning the war against General Franco and his fascist hordes. The focal point of the Republican attack was to be a small sleepy village called Brunete some 20 miles west of the capital. The Battle of Brunete last for three weeks in the searing heat of the Spanish summer. At first the battle went well for the Republicans who were able to push the fascist back and gain a considerable amount of ground. Eventually the rebels were able to halt the Republican advance and a period of stalemate followed before the rebels were able to counter-attack and regain the ground they had lost resulting in a war of attrition all along the front which last right up until the end of the war in



April 1939.

For the Republican strategy to succeed three villages had to be quickly captured, Brunete at the spearhead of the attack, Quijorna on the right flank and Villanueva de la Canada on the left flank. At first the plan seemed to be working, Brunete, the objective furthest from the Republican lines was quickly taken by the Republic's 5th Regiment with few losses. Enrique Lister, commander of the 5th Regiment fearing he was in danger of advancing too far too fast order his men to dig in just south of Brunete and hold the position until reinforcements arrived. This proved to be a costly mistake as it gave the retreating fascists time to reinforce their line between Brunete and Quijorna.

The Republican plan had been to attack and capture the poorly defended village of Quijorna within a few hours on the 6th July. When the initial attack failed the Republicans decided to try and shell the village into surrender but bringing up tanks and artillery caused delay and when the Republicans eventually attacked they were easily repelled. To make matter worse the Republican troops despite having the village almost surrounded failed to seal off the road into Quijorna which enable fresh rebel troops to move into the village under the cover of darkness. When the Republicans renewed their attack the following day they faced a much larger and stronger enemy than the preceding day.

Eventually the village was taken by the Republicans but some three days later than planned.

On the left flank the Republicans fared no better, the village of Villanueva de la Canada sat astride the only road to the

south and its capture was essential to secure the Republican supply lines before the offensive could continue. At 5.30am the Republicans shelled and bombed the village reducing it to rubble yet when the infantry charged the village they were easily repelled. A second and third assault also failed to dislodge the rebels from their defensive positions.

The British Battalion of the International Brigade had been ordered to by-pass Villanueva de la Canada and to secure the high ground beyond the village but this battle-plan was changed and the British found themselves thrown into the thick of the fighting to capture Villanueva de la Canada.

Ordered to advance across a rough plain where the ground was hard and dry the volunteers soon came under intense fire from machine guns that the fascists had located in a church tower which dominated the plain, the attack soon fizzled out. The village was finally taken at the fifth attempt under the cover of darkness.

The delays encountered in taking Villanueva de la Canada and Quijorna meant the Republican offensive had lost momentum. Hundreds were dead or wounded, the British Battalion had been diverted to assist in the assault on the village and valuable time had been lost in the advance to the next objective of Boadilla del Monte to the advantage of the rebels. What had looked a simple operation on the map had turned into an irretrievable fiasco.

The 15th International Brigade which included the British Battalion had been designated make a rapid and direct assault on the rebel garrison at Boadilla del Monte but any element of surprise had been lost and the Fascists were able to reinforce their lines. A range of low hills stood between the Republicans and the village. The battle for one particular hill Mosquito Ridge was to take ten bloody days. Days when the volunteers were left exposed to the withering heat, constant machine guns fire and ever increasing air attacks by the German Condor Legion. Of the 331 British volunteers who went into action at Brunete just 42 were in a condition to fight 3 weeks later.



These men were members of the 15th machine gun brigade captured at the battle of Jarama, the 3rd man from the left was Archie Williams from Portsmouth, the grandfather of Lisa Croft.

Archie was imprisoned with others in February 1937 and released in May 1937 in a swap with Italian P.O.W's. Whilst in prison Lisa's mum was born, and believing Archie had been killed, they named her Rosemary, the flower of remembrance. Lisa and her mum visited the battle site a few years ago, and smelling the herb Thyme, her mum said "that's why he wouldn't have them in the garden, too many painful memories."