

# Sources for the Study of Sheffield and the Spanish Civil War (1936 - 1939)



© Sheffield Libraries Archives and Information 2016-2023 (Version 1.4)

November 2023

Front cover illustrations (left to right):

Plaque in the Peace Gardens, Sheffield to commemorate the South Yorkshire men who fought (and died) in the Spanish Civil War  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library Picture Sheffield: v00403*)

Souvenir colour poster commemorating the International Brigade, 'Volunteers for Liberty' 1936 - 1939 [from the Bill Moore Collection]  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/16/13*)

Postcard from Joe Albaya of Woodseats sent from Spain during the Civil War (depicting Spanish Civil War propaganda image), 1937 [from the Bill Moore Collection]  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/1*)

Images can be copied for private or educational use without permission from us, though we ask that the following acknowledgement is included '[document reference number] from the collections of Sheffield Libraries Archives and Information'. Please contact us if you wish to publish, exhibit or broadcast any of the information within this *Guide*.

You can download a copy of this *Study Guide* from [www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives)

## Contents

<a href="#">Introduction</a>	4
<a href="#">Timeline showing key dates</a>	6
<a href="#">Selected images of documents relating to the Spanish Civil War (from the Bill Moore Collection at Sheffield City Archives)</a>	7
<a href="#">List of documents, books, photographs and other items available at Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information</a>	8
<a href="#">Sources Elsewhere</a>	11
<a href="#">Local Groups</a>	11
<a href="#">Sheffield Local Studies Library and Sheffield City Archives facilities</a>	13
<a href="#">Contact details</a>	14

## Introduction

This booklet lists sources available within Sheffield Libraries Archives and Information for the study of Sheffield's connection with the Spanish Civil War. It is not a detailed history of Sheffield's involvement in the conflict; it merely points researchers wishing to carry out their own research towards the key local sources available.

The Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936 after fascist 'Nationalist' forces commanded by a group of military generals (including General Franco) attempted to overthrow the democratically elected Republican government of Spain. The Nationalists sought assistance from the fascist regimes in Italy and Nazi Germany. With Mussolini and Hitler backing the Spanish Nationalists, the Spanish Government appealed for support from European democracies such as Britain to counter the rebellion. However, the British Government, pursuing a policy of 'non-intervention' and appeasement of Italy and Germany at the time, fearful of getting drawn into a wider European conflict, refused to sanction military assistance for the Spanish Republic.

Alarmed at the prospect of another European country falling into fascist hands, and dismayed at the inaction of their political leaders, volunteers (largely of Communist/left-wing political persuasion) from Britain and over 50 countries throughout the world joined the *International Brigade*, risking their lives to go out to Spain to fight against Franco and fascism.

In Sheffield, the Sheffield Peace Council (a local socialist group) established an aid programme for the Republican cause (appealing for food, milk, medical aid, etc.), and helped to instigate an underground recruitment drive for local International Brigade volunteers. The District Communist Party performed a similar function. At least 26 South Yorkshire men (including at least 15 men with Sheffield connections) took part in the conflict. Many never made it back home, falling in bloody battles such as the Battle of Jarama.

Men from (or closely associated with) Sheffield who responded to the call to arms included M. Aaronberg (killed at Jarama 1937), Joe Albaya (whose Spanish father ran a sweet-shop in Woodseats and whose bilingual skills secured him a valuable role as an interpreter in the conflict), Clem Beckett (killed at Jarama, 1937), A. Cooper, Tommy Degan, Fred Sykes (Frank Girling (Scots-born former Sheffield University lecturer), James McDonald, Arthur Newsum (from Pitsmoor who was killed at Cordoba, 1937), Walter Ryder, Alfred Stirling, Frederick Sykes (killed at Jarama, 1937), Herbert Tagg (killed at Jarama, 1937), George Turnhill (killed at Teruel, 1938), D. Weston, Sam Wild and H. Windle. Other recruits from the area, included men such as Tommy James from Rotherham, who later played a key role in welcoming Pablo Picasso to Sheffield for the 1950 World Peace Congress and was the only Communist to become a Freeman of Rotherham.

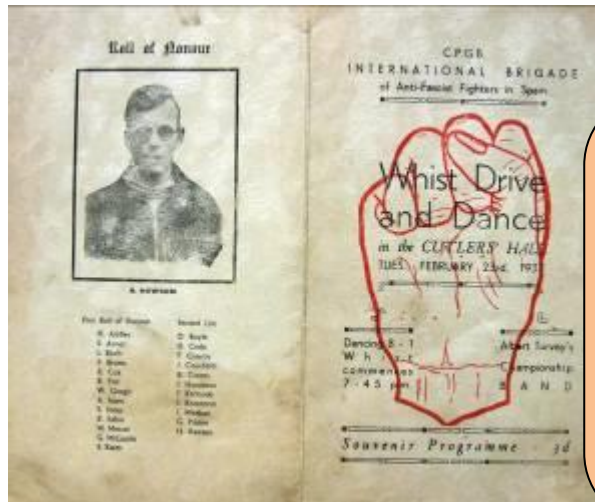
Because the volunteers went out to Spain illegally (in contravention of the Government's non-intervention agreement), there are few surviving records of the 'Brigadistas'. However, a variety of original source material can be found

at Sheffield City Archives within the Bill Moore Collection (records of the socialist historian and former Communist Party member) and there are various secondary sources at Sheffield Local Studies Library. These local sources ensure that, although ultimately the Republicans were defeated (with Franco's fascist regime recognised as the new Spanish Government in February 1939), the story survives of the bravery and sacrifice of the men from Sheffield who fought for the freedom of Spain.

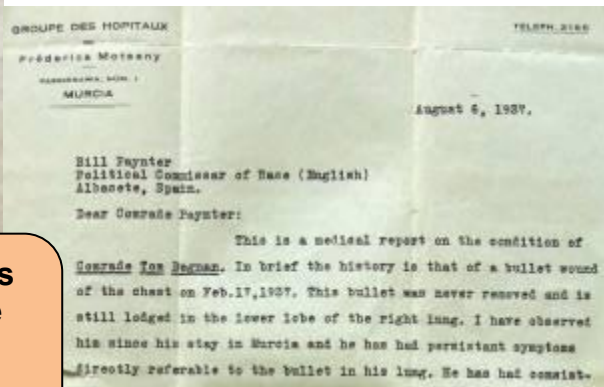
### Timeline showing key dates

Feb 1936	Popular Front (coalition of parties on the political left) win general election in Spain; Manuel Azana appointed president. Spain bitterly divided between right and left political wings.
Mar 1936	Right wing Falange Party banned.
Mar - May 1936	Street riots, strikes and anarchy in some parts of Spain.
Jul 1936	Assassination of Jose Calvo Sotelo, leader of the opposition. Military uprisings in Spanish Morocco and some parts of mainland Spain. Hitler agrees to help the fascist Nationalists led by military generals including Franco; Stalin agrees to back the Republicans. German and Italian planes transport General Franco's army from Morocco to Spanish mainland.
Aug 1936	First International Brigade volunteers arrive in Spain to help defend the Republic from the fascist uprising.
Sep 1936	Franco named as Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces of Spain by military junta.
Oct 1936	First aid from Russia arrives for the Republicans.
Nov 1936	Germany and Italy recognise Franco as head of Spain's government.
Feb - Mar 1937	Nationalists launch major offensive against Madrid (International Brigade play key role in resisting the attack at the Battles of Jarama in February and Guadalajara in March).
Apr 1937	Guernica destroyed by aerial bombing from Hitler's Luftwaffe.
Jun 1937	Bilbao falls to the Nationalists.
Aug 1937	The Vatican recognised Franco's regime.
Apr 1938	Republican Spain split in two by the Nationalists.
Jul 1938	Battle of the Ebro leads to collapse of Republican army.
Oct 1938	International Brigade leave Spain.
Jan - Mar 1939	Barcelona falls to Franco in January. Britain and France recognise Franco's government as legitimate in February. Madrid falls to Franco in March.
Apr 1939	Unconditional surrender of Republicans to Franco.

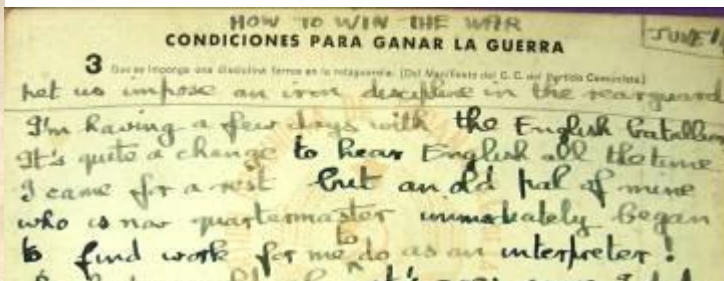
**Selected images of documents relating to the Spanish Civil War (from the Bill Moore Collection at Sheffield City Archives)**



**Souvenir programme for a whist drive and dance in aid of the Communist Party of Great Britain International Brigade, held at the Cutler's Hall Sheffield, Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1937 [featuring picture of Arthur Newsom of Pitsmoor who was killed at the Battle of Jarama] (Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/2)**



**Papers relating to Tommy Degnan's service in the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War (Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/5)**



**Postcards from Joe [Albaya] of Woodseats sent from Spain during the Civil War (depicting Spanish Civil War propaganda images) (Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/1)**

## List of documents, books, photographs and other items available at Sheffield Libraries, Archives and Information

### Sources at Sheffield City Archives

Records of Bill Moore (1911 - 2008), socialist historian and former Communist Party member (*Sheffield City Archives: X274*). This collection includes various documents relating to the Spanish Civil War:

Miscellaneous Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) fliers and material on the Peace Movement [including the International Brigade], c. 1930s - c. 1940s  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/5/5*)

Sheffield Youth Congress against Fascism and War and other miscellaneous material, 1930s [includes flier for 'Food Ship for Spain' competition]  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/11/10*)

Folder of correspondence and information concerning the Holberry Plaque; the Spanish Civil War Plaque and the Sharpeville Plaque, 1979 - 1997  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/8/2*)

Postcards from the Spanish Civil War (most depicting propaganda images sent by Joe [Albaya], 30 Mar - Jun 1937); souvenir programme for a whist drive and dance in aid of the CPGB International Brigade, held at the Cutler's Hall Sheffield, Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb 1937; Christmas card 'in honoured memory of the members of the International Brigade who died fighting for Democracy in Spain', 1937; token issued for the 'Milk for Spain' CPGB campaign and a related press cutting referring to a Joe Albaya, who served in Spain, the author of the above postcards) 1930s  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/1-4*)

Souvenir colour poster commemorating the International Brigade, 'Volunteers for Liberty', dated 27 May 1986  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/16/13*)

Video titled "*To Build the Just City*": *Recalling the Spanish Civil War in 1988* (featuring mainly interviews with South Yorkshire veterans involved with 'Aid for Spain', including contributions from Wyn Albaya, wife of International Brigader Joe Albaya of Woodseats, and reflections from International Brigaders Chris Smith, Abe Harris and Ray Hearne, understood to have been made at Rotherham Trades Club for Spanish Civil War 50th anniversary commemorations, 1988  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/8*)

Folder of correspondence relating to Tommy Degan, 1936 - 1979; includes notes in Bill Moore's handwriting on biographical information



gleaned during Degnan's funeral oration; copy of Degnan's funeral service at which Arthur Scargill made an address; Degnan's passport which shows his service with the International Brigade; a medical report describing his injuries sustained during the Spanish Civil War; a letter from his comrades at the Yorkshire Mine Workers' Association, 'Wharnccliffe Woodmoor A', lamenting his injury and wishing him a speedy recovery; miscellaneous correspondence from the late 1930s-1960, including many letters charting Degnan's involvement with the British-China Friendship Association  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X274/1/9/5*)

Oral history testimonies from various individuals recalling local involvement with the 'Aid for Spain' campaign in Sheffield in the 1930s. Interviewees include: Dora Pointer [secretary for Aid for Spain in Sheffield Committee], Wyn Albaya [widow of former International Brigader Joe Albaya], Elizabeth Hull, Harry Collett, Tom Crookes, Dave Jeffrey, Bill Keen [member of Young Communist League in Sheffield] and Sam Wagenheim, [1980s?]. (CD access copies available.)  
(*Sheffield Archives: X274/2*)

Diary kept by Joseph Peter Albaya of Sheffield during the Jarrow hunger march 1934 [including news-cutting and photographs concerning J. P. Albaya's part in the International Brigade and the Spanish Civil War, 1938, 1964].  
(*Sheffield City Archives: SY779/F1-F2*)

Audio interview with Dr Frank Girling, anthropologist, former Sheffield University lecturer and veteran of the Spanish Civil War (note: this is one of 17 oral history interviews conducted by Tony Tingle, Community Development Worker on the Manor Estate, Sheffield, centred around Betty Holden [born 1926] who was formerly a trades union convenor at Footprint Tools, Sheffield, and those who knew her. Dr Girling only makes a very fleeting reference to going out to Spain in 1938 and returning in 1939 on side A of the tape and does not go into any specific detail about his service in the Spanish Civil War), 2 Nov 1992.  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X450/17*)

Minute book of the Amalgamated Engineering Union Sheffield District Shop Stewards Committee, 1937 - 1943. Includes references to 'Aid for Spain Collections'.  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X53/3/1*)

Committee and quarterly general meeting minutes of the National Union of Foundry Workers Sheffield Branch, 1938 - 1940. Includes references to the Spanish Relief Fund and collections for the International Brigade.  
(*Sheffield City Archives: X53/8/7*)

## Sources at Sheffield Local Studies Library

Barker, Bas, and Straker, Lynda, *Free But Not Easy* [includes article on the Spanish Civil War, chapter 18, pp. 63 - 65] (Derbyshire County Council Libraries and Heritage Department, 1989)  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 331.88S*)

Brannen, Alex, "The Response of the British Labour Movement to the Spanish Civil War with particular reference to Sheffield" (1988) [dissertation as part of degree of B.A. Hons in Economic and Social History at the University of Sheffield]  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 946.081 SSTQ*)

Communist Party of Great Britain, International Brigade of Anti-Fascist Fighters in Spain: whist drive and dance in the Cutlers' Hall, February 23, 1937: souvenir programme; [prepared by the Daily Worker Bazaar Committee] (1937)  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 327.172 SSTQ*)

Flannery, Martin, "Dedication of the plaque for the veterans of the Spanish Civil War, 22 Jan 1999" (1999)  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 5805 M*)

Lewis, Brian and Gledhill, Bill, *Tommy James a Lion of a Man* (Yorkshire Art Circus: Pontefract, 1985) [includes personal account of Tommy James' experiences fighting in the Spanish Civil War]  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: B.JAM S*)

Martinez, Simon, *Basque children in Sheffield 1937 : the story of the colony at Froggatt, Derbyshire and the support given to child refugees of the Spanish Civil War by the people of Sheffield*, 2016  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 325.21 SQ*)

Moore, Bill, *Behind the Clenched Fist: Sheffield's "Aid to Spain" 1936 - 1939* (Holberry Society, 1986) [collection of essays by Bill Moore, Wyn Albaya and John Baxter on the contribution made by the people of Sheffield to the national effort to save Spain from fascism]  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 946 081 SQ*)

Moore, Bill, "Some Anti-War Movements in a World Arsenal" [includes reference to anti-fascist movements and Spanish Civil War]  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: 327.172 SSTQ*)

Murphy, Molly, *Suffragette and Socialist* (Institute of Social Research, University of Salford: Salford, 1998) [autobiography includes chapter on "Behind the lines of battle in Spain, pp. 132-152]  
(*Sheffield Local Studies Library: B. MURP SST*)

Sheffield City Council, Programme of events [to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the] Spanish Civil War: 1936 - 1986 (1986)

*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 3883 S)*

Sheffield Popular Theatre, "Sheffield Popular Theatre presents Deepest Red : from the streets of South Yorkshire to the Spanish Civil War - a tribute to Tommy James" (1986)

*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP 5804 M)*

Williams, Colin, [Details of Sheffield's involvement in the Spanish Civil War and memorial plaque in the Peace Gardens] from Colin Williams, Bill Alexander and John Gorman, *Memorials of the Spanish Civil War: the official publication of the International Brigade Association* (Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1996)

*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: MP3408 M)*

## **Pictures/Photographs**

Over 100,000 images from the Sheffield Local Studies Library picture collection are available to search online at [www.picturesheffield.com](http://www.picturesheffield.com)

Images relating to the Spanish Civil War include a photograph of plaque to commemorate the South Yorkshire men who fought (and died) in the Spanish Civil War, which stands in the Peace Gardens, Sheffield

*(Sheffield Local Studies Library Picture Sheffield: v00403)*

## **Newspapers**

The two main Sheffield newspapers are the *Sheffield Morning Telegraph* (later *Sheffield Telegraph*) and *The Star*, and these are available on microfilm at Sheffield Local Studies Library. They may include contemporary reports on the conflict. More recent articles include: victims of Spanish Civil War remembered in *Sheffield Telegraph*, 14 July 2011 [p.18]; article on 'Freedom fighters in war on Fascism', in *The Star*, 9 Mar 2011

*(Sheffield Local Studies Library: Newspaper Collection)*

## **Secondary Sources held at other Sheffield Libraries**

Various Spanish Civil War titles are held at other Sheffield Libraries - see Sheffield Libraries [online catalogue](#) for more details

## **Sources Elsewhere**

Online blog relating to Frank Girling (former veteran of the Spanish Civil War and Sheffield University lecturer) and his wife Elizabeth, compiled by their granddaughter and based on letters and papers Frank and Elizabeth left

behind which include items relating to the Spanish Civil War and the International Brigade: <https://redthirties.wordpress.com/>.

The National Archives (TNA) holds records of central government departments and agencies. These include Security Service (KV) files relating to the Spanish Civil War, including: The International Brigade Association and Friends of Republican Spain: list of persons who fought in Spain, 1936 - 1939; annotated list of people who fought in the Spanish Civil War, includes a Roll of Honour of those killed (*The National Archives: KV5/112*). You can search the TNA catalogue online at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/>.

The National Archives' online database (Discovery) contains catalogues describing archives held locally in England and Wales <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/> .

The Archives Hub contains catalogues describing archives held in universities and colleges in the UK [www.archiveshub.ac.uk](http://www.archiveshub.ac.uk) .

## **Local Groups**

Sheffield Group of the International Brigade Memorial Trust (Secretary Mike Wild, email: [mikesamwild@fsmail.net](mailto:mikesamwild@fsmail.net)).

## Local Studies Library and Sheffield City Archives Facilities

Sheffield Archives and Local Studies services collect and preserve original records and printed material relating to Sheffield and the surrounding area.

The information dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century to the present and relates to Sheffield, South Yorkshire and north Derbyshire.

Included are extensive collections of books • pamphlets • photographs • church registers • newspapers • census records • minutes • diaries • films • maps • deeds • records from schools • hospitals • businesses and charities • family estates • personal papers etc.

Our facilities include:

- Study areas
- Expert staff on hand to help you make the most of your visit
- Library of reference books
- Photocopying and digitisation services
- Free Wi-Fi
- Free access to Ancestry and FindMyPast
- Microform machines and printers
- Catalogues and indexes
- CD-ROM library
- On-line image library

### Adding to our collections

Sheffield Libraries and Archives seeks to preserve information about events in our city's history. If you have photographs or personal papers that may be worth preserving please consider safeguarding them for current and future generations by placing them in the care of Sheffield Libraries and Archives. It is only through the generosity of individuals and organisations that we are able to have a complete record of important events in the history of Sheffield and the nation. We are interested in photographs, flyers and posters, minutes of meetings etc. For advice on record keeping and the facilities we offer please email us ([archives@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:archives@sheffield.gov.uk) or telephone 0114 203 9395).

## Contact Details

### Sheffield City Archives

52 Shoreham Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4SP

Tel: 0114 203 9395

Email: [archives@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:archives@sheffield.gov.uk)

Website: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives)

### Sheffield Local Studies Library

1<sup>st</sup> floor  
Central Library  
Surrey Street  
Sheffield  
S1 1XZ

Tel: 0114 203 9395

Email: [archives@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:archives@sheffield.gov.uk)

Website: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/archives)

Search our catalogues:

*(not all of the collections are fully catalogued so if you can't find what you are looking for please contact us for further advice)*

City Archives catalogue: <http://www.calmview.eu/SheffieldArchives/CalmView/>

Local Studies Library catalogue:

[https://library.sheffield.gov.uk/client/en\\_GB/default](https://library.sheffield.gov.uk/client/en_GB/default)

For 100,000+ images of Sheffield visit [www.picturesheffield.com](http://www.picturesheffield.com)

Follow us on Twitter [www.twitter.com/sheffarchives](http://www.twitter.com/sheffarchives)

Follow us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/shefflibraries](http://www.facebook.com/shefflibraries)

Watch our YouTube videos [www.youtube.com/user/SheffieldArchives1](http://www.youtube.com/user/SheffieldArchives1)

Read our blogs <http://shefflibraries.blogspot.co.uk/>