

Nelson Mandela has dominated our work over the 12 months since the last AGM, in what has been a very demanding and intensive year. This was due largely to the combined effects of his death occurring a year ago, and of the Commonwealth Games coming to Glasgow.

Celebrating Mandela: His death had been expected at some point but came suddenly in the end, causing a huge reaction across the world. In Scotland we had made some preliminary plans for the eventuality with the STUC and Glasgow City Council, and these made possible the calling of a substantial gathering in Nelson Mandela Place on 6th December, the day after his death. Some 600 people gathered on a cold, wet night to pay their respects, with a programme of speeches and music, and with strong media interest. All through this period and for the rest of the year the Scottish media in particular made much of Scotland's role in the anti-apartheid struggle, and especially of Glasgow's history as the first city in the world to give Mandela its Freedom at a time when that had been hugely controversial and politically very significant. Our Chair Brian Filling spent a great deal of time on media interviews.

Books of condolence were set up in the Scottish Parliament and a number of local authorities, and commemorative events were held over the following months.

On 4th April Aye Write!, Glasgow's book festival, billed its opening night event "Glasgow Celebrates Mandela!", a conversation between Bernard Ponsonby, Brian Filling and Marah Louw, plus performances by Marah and by Stanley Odd, a local hip-hop band who had been commissioned by Aye Write! to write and perform a special piece on Mandela. The event was the launch of a second edition of "The Glasgow Mandela Story" which Aye Write! kindly funded.

On May 10th we marked that day's 20th anniversary of Mandela's inauguration as President with a small celebration at the STUC's premises. Zola Zembe, one-time representative of the underground South African Congress of Trade Unions in apartheid days, came to speak alongside others.

Nelson Mandela International Day: In combination with the STUC and the Scottish Government we had marked Mandela Day in 2012 and 2013. With Mandela's death, the 20th anniversary of South Africa's first free elections, and especially with the Commonwealth Games due to come to Glasgow just days after Mandela Day, it was clear from early on that a much bigger celebration would be both possible and required this year, and planning began relatively early. The importance of this year's Day was also continually emphasised by successive South African delegations coming to Scotland in preparation for the Games, who made clear their enthusiasm for making the Day a major celebration of the historic links of Glasgow and Scotland with Mandela as well as a way of strengthening continuing links.

A wide range of organisations met regularly to make plans and preparations, and Brian Filling in particular was deeply involved in negotiating with agencies both in South Africa and nearer home. ACTSA Scotland more generally played a leading role in the actual detailed organisation of the Day, with substantial help from Glasgow City Council, both financially and in active co-operation from its Lord Provost and its officers, and the Scottish Government and STUC were also very supportive in every way.

The Day was very successful, and justified all the effort and expense. Some highlights were:

- The announcement of a Glasgow City Council competition to design a bust of Nelson Mandela, to be placed in the entrance hall of the City Chambers.
- A large video screen in George Square, showing footage all day of Mandela's visit in 1993.
- A celebration in Nelson Mandela Place, with music from the Mzansi Youth Choir, a series of speeches including one from Tukwini Mandela, a grand-daughter of Nelson, and then a quiet tying of ribbons in the South African colours to the railings of St. George's Tron church by all the several hundred people attending. A big contingent of South African athletes attended and played an active and enthusiastic part, and a large team of volunteers assisted. Good weather certainly helped. Both local and South African media again took serious interest in this event.
- A visit by Tukwini Mandela, Humza Yousaf and others to the Mitchell Library, to support the public appeal for books by Glasgow Libraries for ACTSA Scotland's Book Appeal.
- A public performance by the Mzansi Choir on the steps of Glasgow Royal Concert Hall.
- An evening concert in Kelvingrove Art Galleries, with the Mzansi Choir, Hugh Masekela and other South African and Scottish artists.
- A late-night club at The Arches, organised by the British Council and Creative Scotland as part of their programme of linking young musicians in South Africa and Scotland.

- The opening the following day at the Mitchell Library of their display of the Robben Island Bible, which was to be on show there until October. The event included a staged reading of a short play based on the experiences of Sonny Venkatrathnam, owner of the Bible, who was also present.

Other celebratory events that weekend included the opening concert of the Edinburgh Jazz Festival, a celebration at Glasgow Hidden Garden, the Jabulani Project's annual celebration of the Day, and a fundraising barbecue in Fife for Community HEART. There were probably more.

For the month of July we had a special promotion of our ongoing Book Appeal, based on the 67 minutes of voluntary service that is at the heart of the Mandela Day idea. Glasgow Libraries in particular promoted the Appeal very strongly and had a good response, as did Cathy Jamieson MP in an appeal to the voluntary sector in her Kilmarnock constituency. Edinburgh, Midlothian, Dundee and Renfrewshire libraries also participated. There has been a lasting effect on the supply of books coming in as our leaflets and other publicity around Mandela Day continue to circulate. An offer of space for back-up storage if needed made it possible to appeal more widely than we would otherwise have dared.

SCVO gave a lot of publicity through the voluntary sector to the idea of the 67 minutes of volunteering for Mandela Day, though things did not quite reach the stage of an organised programme of specific opportunities from different sources that had been envisaged.

A website for the Day and an ongoing Twitter account were kindly set up for us by supporters.

The official opening of the Commonwealth Games a few days later made prominent mention of the Mandela connections, and an exhibition on the Commonwealth had a panel on Scotland's anti-apartheid history. The Ekhaya, South Africa's hospitality house for the Games, included an exhibition on Sport in the Struggle, and we inherited a large supply of a very informative newspaper-style publication of material on that subject which could be useful in schools and other contexts.

Glasgow's bust of Mandela by sculptor Deirdre Nicholls was unveiled at a ceremony on 9th October, the 20th anniversary of Mandela's visit, and it is now on permanent display in the City Chambers.

Albie Sachs: The other major event of the year was just this week, and also looked at South Africa's past as well as its present and future. Our Mandela-Tambo lecture took the form of a joint event with Strathclyde University, with a new film about Albie Sachs and then a Question and Answer session with Albie himself. He made a huge impression as always, both on film and in person, and introduced many to South Africa's past for the first time. We sold a lot of copies of his "Soft Vengeance" book.

Other Work: As well as the high profile events described above, our normal day-to-day work also continued throughout the year.

The Book Appeal is offered donated books at all times of the year, which need to be fetched from donors across a wide area of Scotland, and then sorted and packed for storage until the next send-off. Recruiting more volunteers to help with this is a task for the new year.

We had 23 stalls over the course of the year, at events ranging from a two hour meeting to two nine-day fair trade events in Edinburgh. Venues include trade union and other conferences, schools, churches and fair-trade bazaars as well as our own events.

Our links with trade unions have continued, especially our strong partnership with the STUC who helped us very substantially with the December gathering and Mandela Day in particular. We continued to promote the campaign for justice for South African miners suing over silicosis.

For the first time in a while we had no visit to Scotland by Denis Goldberg in 2014 – Even Denis has had to make some concession to a hip replacement. However, the English version of his birthday celebration book was published this year, with some ACTSA involvement, and we have copies on sale.

Our annual ANC anniversary social took place again in January, with a very good attendance and with the usual fantastic contribution from George Reid and his ceilidh band.

We have continued to supply speakers to a variety of organisations, with probably more demand than usual because of the media focus this year on the Mandela connection and our history.

Finally, there was some more recognition of the work of AAM and ACTSA in the awarding of an honorary doctorate from Glasgow Caledonian University to our Chair, and an MBE to the Secretary.

ACTSA Scotland was created out of the Anti-Apartheid Movement 20 years ago this week. We thought at the time that there was work for us to do, and our particular blend of reminding people of the apartheid past while working for solidarity in the present and future still seems to be of use.

John C. Nelson (Secretary)