

This has been another very strange year, dominated throughout by the Covid pandemic both through the varying levels of legal restrictions on activity and through the less formal self-imposed limitations resulting from the sensible caution of most people over and above the legal strictures. Physical events and meetings have been few and far between, with much activity carried out online and other things just suspended meantime. We have certainly kept going in one way or another, and some very positive things happened.

Keeping our regular contacts with supporters has been important, in the absence of most in-person events.

Stalls: These were again almost wiped out for the time being. We did have 10 days in Castle Street in Edinburgh for Fair Trade on the Fringe, which was quite productive. There were many fewer international visitors but a lot of UK ones, and some useful contacts. A gazebo outdoors in August is manageable, though one day was lost due to high winds, and allows for effective Covid precautions, but the same thing in December is a different proposition and we will be missing the Christmas Fair again. Most of the other usual events where we run stalls were cancelled or moved online, so we had no other physical stalls. We did have an online "virtual stall" at the STUC, which didn't really work at all well despite the best efforts of STUC staff and their contractors, and the excellent video produced for the stall by John Stevenson. That experience did bring home the value of our usual physical stalls at such events, where the crafts on sale do attract folk to come and talk, and informal contacts are so much easier. Intercepting people on their way to coffee or toilet breaks is rather more difficult online. The primary purpose of selling the crafts is, of course, to assist the community producer groups in Southern Africa, but that has to be on hold at the moment.

Small scale sales of some of our material via the NMSMF Ebay site continue, and during this year, after the sad demise of Community HEART, Bob Bruce very kindly transferred his efforts and his stock of reproduction AAM posters to that Ebay site, and hopes to work on promoting it publicly towards Christmas. We had been handling the 1993 Mandela Glasgow visit posters already, but his collection is much wider than that.

Events: Our marking of Mandela Day had to be online again this year, and the video produced by Brian Filling and John Stevenson again turned out well and ensured that Mandela Day was not forgotten. Marah Louw spoke, and recordings were played of her performing in South Africa, as well as of an excerpt from the Mzansi Youth Choir's performance in Mandela Place on Mandela Day 2018, and the other now usual contributions from the High Commissioner and Glasgow's Lord Provost. The Scottish Government again provided funding, which paid for Marah, for a contribution to the House of Hope as thanks for a clip of Denis Goldberg, and for payment to the NMSMF for making the video. The continuing involvement of the Scottish Government and Glasgow's Lord Provost in the Day are now well-established and have continued without pause through changes of personnel over time, for which we are grateful.

In this year of anniversaries several others were also marked with online presentations, and John Stevenson worked very hard to find formats and material to differentiate the rapid succession of videos. The anniversary of the renaming of Mandela Place drew an especially wide response from the Press and media, and the 40th anniversary of Glasgow's original Freedom of the City ceremony in 1981 was an important landmark that was used as the focus for the NMSMF's special appeal to trade unions as well as more widely. The anniversaries of Mandela's visit to Scotland and the birthday of Oliver Tambo were also marked, and linked to Black History Month.

The other anniversary which we noted internally rather than more widely was the 45th of the formal constitution of the Anti-Apartheid Movement Scottish Committee.

One physical event which we did not organise but in which we assisted in the person of Brian Filling speaking was a meeting at Arlington Baths to celebrate the anniversaries both of the Mandela Freedom of Glasgow and of the foundation of the Baths (150th), as well as marking the historic link of the Baths with Lex Soga. The numbers attending were limited by Covid restrictions, and the quota of seats was fully booked.

Links: Maintaining links with Southern Africa has been especially difficult in these Covid times. Brian Filling, through his consular function and using ACTSAS connections, was able to facilitate links between aquaculture projects in South Africa and Scotland. Iain Whyte has brought about a productive link between Kronendal Music Academy and an American musician with links to Iona. Our role in that was very indirect, but we are pleased it is happening.

We had hoped we might make some Southern Africa connections through the COP climate conference in Glasgow, but did not succeed in this. We did have the ACTSAS banner on the main large demonstration in Glasgow, since climate is clearly a major issue for Southern Africa, and did meet some South African participants in that.

History: Our involvement in preserving and promoting the history of the Southern African struggle and Scotland's links with this have continued despite the constraints. Our symbiotic relationship with the Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation has been the biggest part of this, of course. All the anniversary celebrations mentioned above as well as specific fundraising initiatives were used to support the Foundation's efforts to fund the Mandela statue and teach the present and future generations about the history and the lessons to be learned from it. With the help of our supporters and activists the Foundation has raised about £30,000 this year, bringing the total funds to £110,000, and is now in a position to establish the mechanism for the sculptor competition and the eventual installation of the statue. Fundraising has to continue, both to meet any unforeseen extra costs but also to pay for the development and production of education material into the long term, including making the Scottish AAM archives at GCU more accessible through digitisation.

The smaller of the Dundee exhibitions mentioned last year, to which we had contributed information and material, has now taken place. The other is still waiting for venues to reopen.

The Banner Tales seminar held at GCU in 2018, based on the Sechaba Festival banner and Jim Cathcart's Freeman of Glasgow one, has now led to a section in the very recent publication of "Diverse Voices, Challenging Injustice – Banner Tales from Glasgow", which includes two other events in the series organised by Glasgow Museums and Glasgow University.

Membership and Affiliations: Individual ACTSAS membership was established last year, and the first renewal date has seen most of those continuing. We moved on this year to establishing affiliation by organisations. Brian Filling and Annie Shanahan had a meeting with Roz Foyer, new General Secretary of the STUC, and asked for support in inviting affiliations from trade unions at all levels to ACTSA Scotland, and also for a supporting letter for the 40th anniversary appeal for the Mandela Scottish Memorial. Both of these were agreed and implemented and produced responses. The appeal letter in particular generated a very substantial result. Both the STUC support and the positive responses had a lot to do with persistent work over many years on nurturing contacts and connections.

Our new relationship with ACTSA UK is strengthened by sharing a mutual Vice-Chair, David Kenvyn. Covid has affected their activities and they are undergoing major staff changes.

We are grateful to all our friends and supporters in every field for their assistance in encouraging support for our work, and to all who have helped us in any way. We very much hope that the coming year will allow for a greater range of activity but how the Covid situation will develop is still very uncertain and, of course, largely outwith our control. We will need to make the best we can of whatever circumstances develop.

John C. Nelson