

This has been another year of steady work for ACTSA Scotland, with nothing terribly spectacular but continuing effort to maintain and strengthen our network of contacts. There has again been a strong emphasis on the history and education side of our remit, especially in conjunction with the Nelson Mandela Scottish Memorial Foundation, but we have not entirely lost sight of our interest in solidarity links with Southern Africa.

**Links:** We have kept up our long-standing connection with Kronendal Music Academy in Hout Bay, corresponding from time to time and providing some advice on setting up a UK charity.

Brian Filling with his Consul's hat as well as his ACTSAS and other contacts, organised a visit of several days in Scotland for the fairly new South African High Commissioner to the U.K., Kingsley Mamabolo, introducing him to a wide range of people here – business, academic, political and civic – and the High Commissioner was keen to build these into connections with South Africa. He has also committed to deliver our Mandela/Tambo lecture in Glasgow next month, to mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mandela's death. The University of the West of Scotland continues its own interest in Southern Africa, with a speech this year to their conference in June by South Africa's Minister for Small Business Development, Stella Abrahams.

**Stalls:** Our stalls serve a double purpose. They are primarily intended to maintain and strengthen contacts and to bring our work and concerns to the attention of new people, through publications and speaking to folk. Their other purpose is to provide an outlet for craft goods from community groups in Southern Africa with which we have connections, either directly or through intermediaries. The goods do also serve to attract people to the stall whose eyes are caught when they come in sight of the "shiny things" in the surrounding sea of information stalls. This dual purpose is clearest in our stalls at trade union events which play a serious role in maintaining our long-standing links with the trade union movement which continue to be of great value to us. This year we have again been at the STUC's full Congress and their sectoral conferences for Black Workers and for Women, in Dundee, Clydebank and Glasgow respectively. We also had one again at a World Fair Trade Day celebration event in Edinburgh, but had to miss the Fair Trade street markets in August and December, where the craft sales aspect is foremost.

Not all our longstanding sources of crafts have restarted after the Covid hiatus, so there have been some delays in restocking.

David Kenwyn with his ACTSA UK hat staffed a stall at the NAS/UWT's U.K. conference in Glasgow.

**History:** We have continued to work very closely with NMSMF. At last year's AGM we reported on the frustrating long delay in having the trial trenches dug at the intended statue site in Mandela Place. Those trenches were eventually dug in January this year and, unfortunately, found the pipes or cables of three utility companies which had not been entered in the official register or underground installations and had not shown up in our earlier radar survey. Our expert advisors have designed what they believe is a practical solution to this, but consent from the three utility companies concerned has to be obtained to proceed and that has caused many more months of frustration, which are continuing. As soon as this is resolved we will be able to move forward with the Building Warrant and then the sculpture competition and then on to the casting and installation. Meantime, we have formally ordered the 15 tonne block of granite for the plinth at a contracted price.

Work has continued on the long-term online educational material to be linked to the statue site. There is discussion with WOSDEC (West of Scotland Development Education Centre) about involving school users of "When Mandela Danced in the Square" (our existing school resource). Glasgow Caledonian University is willing to host the educational material on its website long-term,

but this does involve some restrictions on the software used in order to ensure compatibility with the site. Discussions are being held with a prospective designer.

NMSMF's own website now has a page for memories and anecdotes about anti-apartheid campaigning by folk involved. It has started with some pieces about Mandela's 1993 visit, but the intention is to expand the scope and ensure that these stories are written down and preserved.

Brian Filling has been our contact with some other history and education initiatives which complement our own. The AAM Archives Committee, which runs an excellent website about AAM history, now includes not only Brian but also Matt Graham and Chris Fevre who have been researching AAM history through interviews with activists.

The redevelopment of the Penton St. premises in London, once the home of the ANC's UK office in apartheid days, into a centre for education on the history has been very successful in attracting major funding and hopes to open fully in 2024. It is already undertaking a lot of work in communities, and there are conversations about linking up schools in Islington (near Penton St.) with those in Scotland using "When Mandela Danced in the Square".

Brian co-chaired the committee organising a memorial event for George Johannes, held this September in the London High Commission. The ACTSAS Committee agreed a donation of £500 to this, given George's strong links with AAM in Scotland, and assisted with handling the funds.

**Events:** Nelson Mandela International Day was celebrated again with a reception in Merchants House hosted by Glasgow City Council and with funding again from the Scottish Government. The mixture of speeches and musical contributions was much appreciated by a good audience, and the proceedings were recorded on video.

As mentioned last year, this October saw the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Mandela's visit to Scotland to receive the Freedom of Glasgow and eight other U.K. local authorities. We marked the anniversary with a celebration night in Oran Mor, organised by Stephen Wright and Fairpley, and featuring a strong cast of performers.

The other 2023 anniversary foreshadowed at last year's AGM was this December 5<sup>th</sup>, which will be 10 years on from Mandela's death, and we will be marking that occasion with the Mandela-Tambo lecture on Mandela's life and legacy, to be delivered by the South African High Commissioner in St. George's-Tron church in Nelson Mandela Place.

Once again we are indebted to all who have helped our work in any way, large or small, over the course of the past year, whether with organising activity, promoting our cause through their networks, contributing time or assisting with funds. Very little could happen without this wide support.

John C. Nelson