

Ciaran Walsh

The Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee has lost one of its most steadfast supporters. Ciaran Walsh, who was 57, died on 21st May at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford after a short illness. Ciaran and his partner, Tracy, joined our local International Brigade committee in 2020 but Ciaran has been a key figure in Oxford's radical politics for many years. He chaired the East Oxford Community Association that provides education, leisure, recreation and social welfare for socially disadvantaged people in the community. He was active member of Oxford Unite Against Fascism and Oxford Stand Up To Racism. His horizons were international and he was a long-standing campaigner for freedom and justice for Palestinians, long before the present Israeli genocide in Gaza. He fought for freedom and democratic rights in West Papua, Kurdistan, Kashmir, Balochistan, Latin America and Africa. Ciaran and Tracy worked tirelessly for one of Oxford's food banks and were regular participants at the Oxford Trades Union Council events.

Outside of his immediate community, Ciaran was perhaps best known for the Radical Oxford History Walking Tours that he ran from time to time. Oxford has long had a social divide between Town and Gown. Town, represented by East Oxford's industrial community centred on the Cowley car plant, and Gown, of course, represented by Oxford's world famous university. Ciaran embraced both strands with stories of class struggle at Cowley and solidarity amongst university students who joined the International Brigades in support of the Spanish Republic during its three years long battle against fascism. He would tell stories of the two Oxfordshire William Morrises, one the right-wing anti-trade union car manufacturer, and the other the champion of the dignity of craftsmanship and socialist values. He told of Oxford's connections with the Levellers and the infamous Cutteslowe Wall dividing Oxford's social classes. Ciaran spoke with a natural eloquence and oratorical flair and he never disguised his anger at those who stood in the way of progressive change. But he had a sense of humour and fun too and was an enthusiastic participant in the Red Kites socialist choir. If not always in musical tune he was always in political tune.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and indeed by the wider East Oxford community.

Colin Carritt – Chair, Oxford International Brigade Memorial Committee
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