

# Remembering those victims who fought in the Civil War

"EVEN the olives are bleeding."

These are believed to be the last words of poet, Charlie Donnelly, an Irish member of the International Brigades, who fought in Spain during the Civil War.

Like many of his comrades in arms he was killed on February 27, 1937 on a hilltop during the battle of Jarama, east of Madrid.

I was visiting the battle sites of Jarama and Brunete with members of the Friends of the International Brigade to learn more about the young foreigners who came to Spain in 1936 to fight for the Republican



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**MEMORIAL: 32 stones represent each of the Irish counties. RIGHT: Juan Antonio Mayoral.**

cause. Over 53 different nationalities were engaged in the conflict including American, British, Irish, French, Italians and East Europeans.

They came of their own free will, alone or in groups as volunteers to fight in a



foreign land, driven by the ideal that fascism must not be allowed to prevail. And they paid a heavy price.

The battle of Jarama lasted through February 1937. The overgrown remains of trenches,



'Quinta del Biberon' (baby battalion). After the war he was interned in a camp in Salamanca, one of the Republicans who was not forced into exile but still bears the mental scars of a lost youth.

He was perhaps fortunate. These battles resulted in serious loss of life. Total Spanish losses on both sides are estimated to be over 40,000 at Brunete and 20-30,000 at Jarama although historians differ.

The International Brigades' losses were also substantial. In Jarama, the British Battalion lost 375 out of 600 men, including nearly every officer on a hilltop which became known as Suicide Hill, while the American Lincoln Battalion started with 400 men and ended with 120 dead and 170 wounded.

bunkers, concrete machine gun posts and a handful of makeshift stone monuments scattered over the wooded valleys, hills, agricultural fields and olive groves are the only signs to record what took place here during the winter of 1937.

Despite a month of fighting with both sides dug in their trenches and bunkers, the battle resulted in a stalemate with neither side making ground.

In July 1937 Franco's forces again threatened Madrid and a major battle was fought at Brunete, north west of the capital, in which the International Brigades played an important role.

Although it began with trench warfare, the battle is considered as the transition between the First and Second World Wars.

It was one of the first conflicts where air battles, night bombing, reconnaissance missions and tanks using blitzkrieg tactics took part. It ended in stalemate with both sides claiming success.

I walked slowly through the fields with 90-year-old Juan Antonio Mayoral who was just 15 when he was sent to Brunete with the

"Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." George Santayana (Spanish writer)

During the war the Irish contingent lost 59 out of an estimated 250 men including commander, Kit Conway and Charlie Donnelly at Jarama.

His memorial was inaugurated three years ago. It is made up of 32 stones, representing each of the Irish counties, and brought to Spain by members of the Irish Friends of the International Brigades.

The collection of his works, Life and Poems, was published in 1987. Gregorio Solcedo Diaz is one man who wants to keep the memory of the battle of Jarama alive. Over a lifetime he has collected artefacts from the battle site, documents, military equipment, arms, uniforms and photos, and created a private museum to display them. It is open to the public in the village of Morata de Tajuna.

## Is your pet really insured?

RECENTLY I wrote about my dog Boy Boy who, whilst at Cat and Dog World Kennels, suffered a stomach torsion also known as bloat.

When this occurs most dogs die. But the wonderful Amy who was on night duty noticed Boy Boy had a problem and he was rushed to the vet and immediately operated on. His life was saved.

Over the years, both in my columns and on my radio shows, I have always very strongly recommended pet insurance.

But now I know you have to be careful and read the small print.

I presented my claim and was informed that my dog was not covered whilst in kennels. I was lost for words.

Furthermore, I was informed that due to him being a large breed this condition was genetic.

The company does not pay-out for genetic conditions.

To me that means it need not pay for most illnesses since they can easily claim it was genetic and no payment will be made.

Do we read the small print? I think not. Obviously, being in the industry I am concerned not just that they do not give cover whilst a

**David THE Dogman**

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pet is in kennels but they also state that as your pet gets older you might not be paid.

They give no ages and guess what? You are not covered for older pets.

Nowhere could I find a graph giving an indication of what is the definition of the word 'older.'

I have cancelled my insurance with this company.

I am of the opinion that all pet owners should check out the terms and conditions, keeping in mind they may not be covered for injuries

**INSURANCE: Check the details.**

and 'illnesses' that the insurance company may call hereditary or congenital.

If you are lucky to get a pay out then you might not be covered for that illness in future, and they often knock off an excess of between €20 and €100.

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