



Simon Martinez at the Association stall and Prof Peter Crome talking about his father

Len Crome Annual Lecture, IBMT
Edinburgh, Scotland
19 March 2022

The IBMT was pleased to welcome back a live audience to its annual Len Crome lecture in Edinburgh on the 19 March 2022 and I was delighted to be invited to attend with our BCA stall and display about the Colony at Montrose. Len Crome was the Medical Director of the Medical Unit for the International Brigade. After a distinguished career in Spain he was called up to the British Army Medical Corps in December 1942 where he served in North Africa, Italy and Austria before returning to become a pathologist in the NHS. The lecture this year focussed on those volunteers who went from Scotland to Spain to fight fascism. The three main speakers were historian Dr Fraser Raeburn, Spanish Democratic Memory Campaigner Maximo Molino and IBMT secretary Mike Arnott. The context, for the day of talks, was set by Prof Peter Crome the son of Len Crome.

Len Crome started his medical career in Edinburgh and joined the Scottish Ambulance Unit in January 1937. He became Assistant Medical Director to the 35th Brigade and then temporary director when his predecessor 'Dubois' (Dr Mieczslaw Domanski) was injured in the bombardments at Brunete. Crome was further promoted to the post of Medical Director to the XI (German speaking) and XV Brigades (English speaking) before returning to England in 1938. An excellent obituary by Prof Paul Preston appears at www.theguardian/lencrome/news

The Scots were proportionately the largest contingent in the British Brigade, Fraser Raeburn explained, and this was due to the closeness of the working class communities in Scotland and the comradely company men found within the Communist Party. At the same time as the 500+ volunteers and Len Crome were setting off to Spain the Roman Catholic church in Scotland was making very clear its support for Franco. I was pleased to meet with descendants of some of these volunteers and discuss with them their family's adoption of Basque Children. I would be pleased to hear from families of any Niños who were given homes by the families of International Brigaders in any of the three nations where the Colonies of Basque Children were to be found. The only Scottish Colony was at Montrose.

Our Association stall and display about the colony at Montrose was very well received.

Simon Martinez, March 2022