

A SCARCE VICTORIA CROSS GREAT WAR PHOTO POSTCARD PORTRAYING RIFLEMAN ROBERT QUIGG. AWARDED THE VICTORIA CROSS FOR ACTIONS DURING THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME

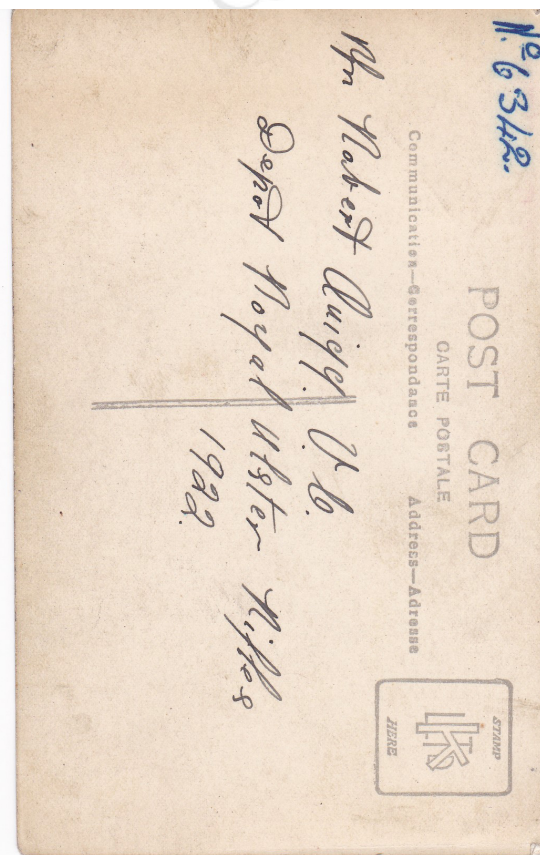


Robert Quigg (1885-1955) was born in Ardihennon, Carnkirk, near Bushmills, County Antrim, Ireland on 28th February 1885. His father, also called Robert, had a variety of professions including farm labourer, boatman and tourist guide on the Giant's Causeway. His mother was Matilda nee Blue, who was known as Tillie. His parents married on 2nd June 1862 at Billy Parish Church in County Antrim. Robert had five siblings – Alex, Matilda, Isabella, Elizabeth and Frances, all of whom outlived him.

Robert was educated at Giant's Causeway National School. He was employed as a farm labourer by David Forsyth of Turfahum and later on the MacNaghten estate at Bushmills. He was a member of the Orange Order, Aird LOL, and played in the flute band. Robert commanded the Bushmills Volunteers of the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1913.

Robert enlisted in September 1914 and volunteered to be Lieutenant Sir Edward Harry MacNaghten's servant. Sir Harry was commissioned into the 12th Royal Irish Rifles on 12th September 1914. On 4th May 1916, he was also appointed to the Black Watch, but remaining serving with the 12th Royal Irish Rifles. Robert went to England with the Division in July 1915 and to France on 6th October that year.

Prior to the major offensive on the Somme, their unit had been placed in the French village of Hamel, located on the north bank of the River Ancre. On 1st July 1916, the Mid-Antrim Volunteers were ordered to advance through the defenses towards the heavily defended German lines. During the advance, they encountered fierce resistance from heavy machine-gun and shell fire. Quigg's Platoon made three advances during the day, only to be beaten back on each occasion by German fire. The final evening assault left many hundreds of the 12th Battalion lying dead and wounded in "No Man's Land". In the early hours of the next morning, it was reported that Lieutenant Harry Macnaughten, the Platoon commander was missing; Robert Quigg volunteered to go out into "No Man's Land" to try and locate him. He went out seven times to search for the missing officer, without success. On each occasion, he came under machine-gun fire, but he managed to return with a wounded colleague. It was reported that, on one of his forays, he crawled within yards of the German position in order to rescue a wounded soldier, whom he dragged back on a waterproof groundsheet. After seven hours of trying, exhaustion got the better of him; Robert had to rest from his efforts. The body of Lieutenant Harry Macnaughten was never recovered.



After being gazetted for the VC on 9th September 1916, Robert received the medal from King George V at York Cottage, Sandringham, Norfolk on 8th January 1917. As the King pinned the VC to Robert's tunic, he remarked "You're a very brave man Quigg." Robert returned the compliment, and was then asked if he was married, to which he replied, "No, Sir, but after what has happened to me I suppose I soon will be."

On his return to Bushmills, he was given a huge reception, and he received a gold watch from Lady MacNaghten in recognition of his efforts to rescue her son. Unfortunately, he had to sell it for £100 when he suffered financial difficulties. On 15th February 1917, he was awarded the Russian Medal of St George 4th Class. Robert later served as a Sergeant in Mesopotamia and Egypt. He claimed to have been awarded the Croix de Guerre, but there was no evidence of this. Following the partition of Ireland, he served in the Royal Ulster Rifles, including in Iraq.

On 23rd May 1926, he fell 50 feet from a window of the Sandes Soldier's Home in Belfast and was very seriously injured. He was not expected to live, but beat the odds and survived. His injuries were so bad though he was medically discharged from the Army on 18th October 1926. He was then employed by the Regiment as a civilian at the Royal Ulster Rifles Depot in Armagh until he retired in 1934. He then then became a guide at the Giant's Causeway, following his father. Robert never married as he had told the King he was likely to do, and lived the rest of his life on the MacNaghten estate in a small cottage.

He died in Dalriada Hospital, Ballycastle, County Antrim on 14th May 1955 and was buried in Billy Parish Churchyard, Bushmills (where his parents had married). A granite headstone was erected by the British Legion in November 1958. In addition to his VC, he was awarded the 1914-15 Star, British War Medal 1914-20, Victory Medal 1914-19, General Service Medal 1918-62 with clasp "Iraq", George V Silver Jubilee Medal 1935, George VI Coronation Medal 1937, Elizabeth II Coronation Medal 1953 and the Russian Medal of St George 4th Class.

Postcard sized Approx 13.7 x 8.6 cm. The above taken from the fine vconline website:

<http://www.vconline.org.uk/robert-quigg-vc/4587953755.html>

A scarce original period VC recipient VC photo postcard