

ON THE BRINK

The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

PRO / ANTI HOME RULE

EASTER RISING & BATTLE OF THE SOMME

COMMEMORATION

ROBERT QUIGG

Robert Quigg worked as a labourer on the Macnaghten estate. At that time, Sir Harry Macnaghten was heir to Dunderave estate, Bushmills. When World War One broke out, both men joined up and were attached to the 12th Royal Irish Rifles. Sir Harry was Platoon Commander and Quigg was appointed his 'batman', or servant. A local story states that Lady Macnaghten, Harry's mother, told Quigg not to come back from the War without her son.

On 1st July 1916 - the first day of the Battle of the Somme - both men 'went over the top'. A survivor recalls that Harry was killed within minutes. Quigg, though involved in the heaviest of fighting, survived. The next day, Quigg heard that Harry was still alive and he 'went over the top' again to find him.

'... he went out seven times to look for him, under heavy shell and machine-gun fire, each time bringing back a wounded man. The last man he dragged on a waterproof sheet from within yards of the enemy's wire. He was seven hours engaged in this most gallant work, and was finally so exhausted that he had to give it up.

Extract from Robert Quigg's medal citation

Sir Harry was never found and his title passed to his brother, Arthur Douglas, who was killed in action September 1916, also at the Battle of the Somme. Robert Quigg received a Victoria Cross for his bravery, awarded to him by King George V on 7th January, 1917. Quigg retired from the Army in 1926 after an accident. He died in May 1955 and was buried with full military honour at Billy Parish Church.



Local interests have long been keen to commemorate Quigg's bravery. In 1919, at a public meeting in Bushmills, it was suggested to install a plaque dedicated to his memory using the Prisoner of War Fund. This was not supported at the time.

More recently, a local group, the Robert Quigg VC Commemoration Society, have been committed to raising awareness of Quigg's bravery. The group successfully raised the funds necessary to commission and install a bronze statue in Quigg's image. It was unveiled by the Queen in Bushmills on the 28th June 2016, shortly before the centenary commemorations of the beginning of the Battle of the Somme.

Robert Quigg
Courtesy of Robert Thompson