

FIRST & SECOND WORLD WARS

**Captured thirty
of the enemy**

SLIGO MAN AWARDED VC

PRIVATE Martin Moffatt, 2nd Battalion Leinster Regiment, son of Mr. and Mrs. Martin Moffatt, Knappagh Road, Sligo, was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1918—one of only three to be awarded the honour in Ireland.

On 14, 1918, near Ledechem when, advancing with five comrades across the open, the party suddenly came under heavy rifle fire at close range from a strongly held house. Rushing towards the house through a hail of bullets, Private Moffatt threw bombs, and then, working to the back of the house, rushed the door single-handed killing two and capturing thirty of the enemy. He displayed the greatest valour and initiative throughout.

After being presented with the V.C. by King George V, at Buckingham Palace, Private Moffatt arrived in Sligo to a reception in his honour. He was met by a huge crowd at Sligo Station. A guard of honour draws from military stationed in Sligo and headed by a brass band escorted him to Sligo Courthouse where a presentation was made. Flags were hung from houses and a huge banner was strung across Wine Street. The presentation was made on the Courthouse steps by Major O'Hara.

A testimonial for the war hero had been organised in Sligo which amounted to £134. Contributions were received from many parts of the country. Moffatt was presented with a £100 War Bond, £20 in cash, an inscribed gold watch from the 2nd Leinster, a silver cigarette case bearing the Regiment's crest, and a gold-centred silver medal by Mr. and Mrs. McHugh, George's Street.



Private Moffatt receiving a presentation at Sligo Courthouse.

Picture courtesy Ennis Distillery, Sligo

Martin Moffatt awarded the Victoria Cross



War medals



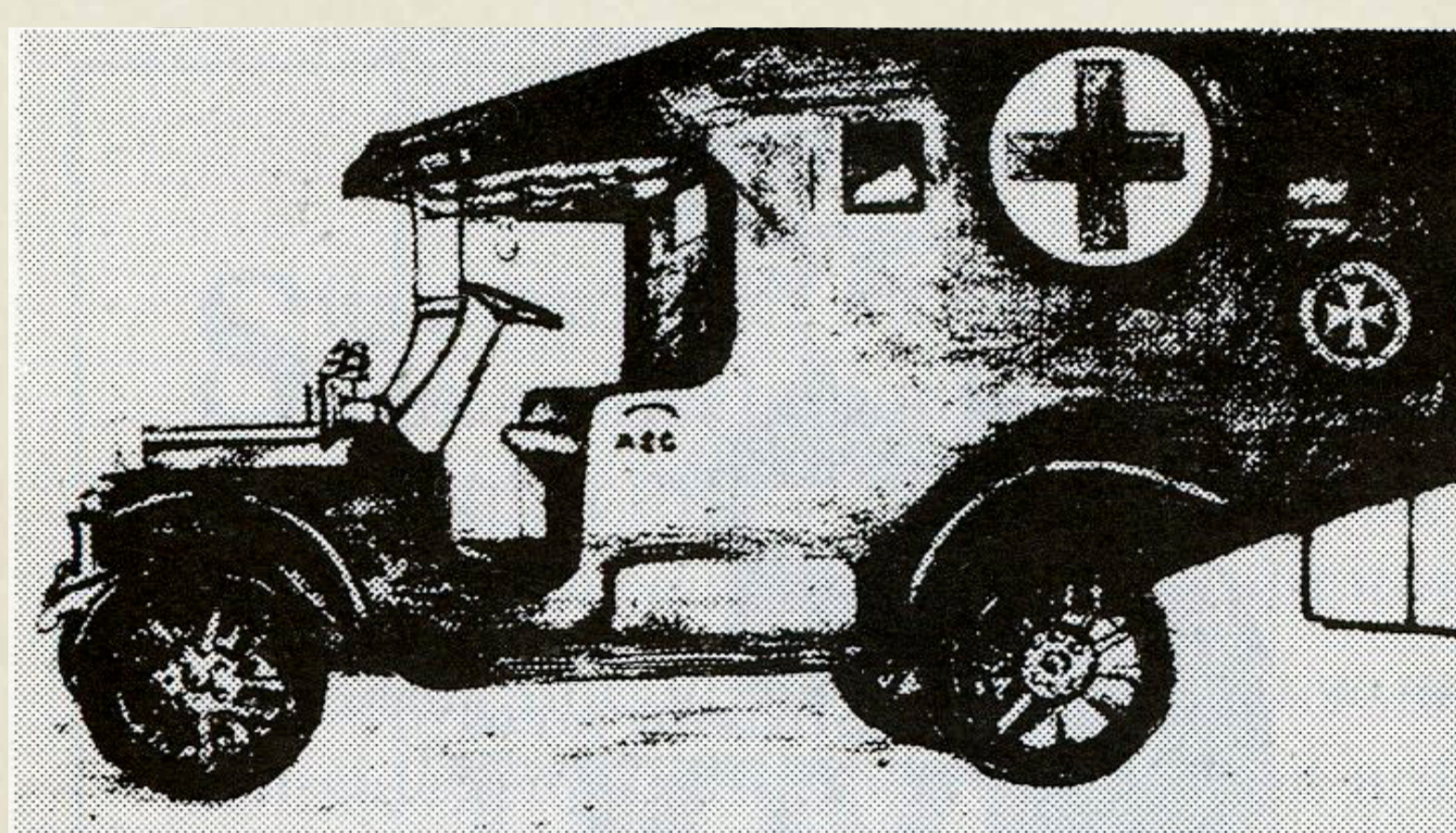
World War I Death Plaque ('Dead Man's Penny') struck in memory of the fallen, Michael O'Connor, Sapper Royal Engineers, killed in France on 2nd July 1917.

1914

On 24th August 1914 Joe Leydon from Collooney became the first Sligo casualty when he was killed.

Seven Conlon brothers from Sligo town went to the war.

It took only two weeks to collect £420.00 in Sligo to provide an ambulance at the front. The inscription on the ambulance read as follows: "Presented by The Town and County of Sligo, Ireland."



World War I ambulance, donated by the people of County Sligo

There were shortages of basic foodstuffs in Sligo as a result of the war and the items available increased in price. In order to help, a War Distress Fund was set up in order to alleviate the hardship.

In November five families of Belgian refugees arrived in Sligo, a total of twenty four people.

Patrick Jinks, the eldest son of the Mayor of Sligo, John Jinks, enlisted and went to the front.

1915

Two members of the Wood Martin family were killed in the war. Captain F.W. in February and Captain James in March.

1916

Private P. Keely and Corporal McSharry, both members of Sligo Corporation, serving at the front, were allowed home on leave to vote for John Jinks in the Mayoral contest. Jinks won the contest by two votes.

In March 1916 it was estimated that there were approximately 1,300 Sligo men serving at the front.

Between the 15th October 1916 and the 15th January 1917, only 30 men joined up.

1917

Between January and July 1917, only 44 men from the county volunteered for service.

1918

Between January and June only 31 men from the county were recruited.

The Red Cross collection in Co. Sligo quadrupled. In 1917 the collection reached £308.00 but in 1918 it jumped to £1,224.00.

In October 1918 Martin Moffatt from Sligo won the Victoria Cross whilst fighting in France.

A total of 64 prisoners from Sligo town and county were listed as prisoners of war in Germany and Turkey during the war.

James Cunnane from Sligo was killed the day after the war ended.

About 1,000 from Sligo town and 500 from Co. Sligo served in the First World War. Over 400 were killed.



Memorial Plaque, Calry Parish Church

World War Two – The Emergency

About 1,000 men from Co. Sligo served in the British armed forces during the Second World War while thousands more left for Britain to work in factories producing war material.

Among those at Dunkirk were 2nd Lt. J.W. Lyons from Thornhill, G. Mitchell of Holborn St. (wounded) and Guardsman D. Smyllie from Knappagh Road (missing) all hailing from Sligo.

Sligo port was very badly affected by the Emergency and fewer vessels entered the port.

In April 1941 anti-invasion exercises carried out in Sligo-Leitrim. That same month saw the arrival of bombed out refugees from Belfast, that city having suffered Luftwaffe air attacks.

In March 1941 a Catalina Flying Boat from 240 Squadron, Castle Archdale crashed into the side of the mountain near Glenade, Co. Leitrim, nine bodies were later recovered from wreckage.

On 5th December 1942 a Flying Fortress was forced to land on Mullaghmore beach. The crew and aircraft later returned to Northern Ireland.

In December 1943 a Flying Fortress B-24 bomber crashed into the side of Truskmore Mountain near Ballintrillick, Co. Sligo. Three men died in the crash. However, local people and the Local Defence Force saved seven injured survivors.

