

P57/224(1)

26 Dec 1917

My dear John,

I got your letters of 16th
and 19th inst.

Well Xmas is over now, and it may
interest you to know how we spent it.
We got a barrel of beer for the men,
& there was plenty of plum-pudding
for ourselves, our dinner consisted of
soup, tinned lobster, tinned
rabbit and peas, plum-pudding,
and cheese savoury. Not so bad
for this place, eh? We have done
no work of any description for the
past 3 days. We lie in bed
until 10 or 11 a.m., and spend
the day & evening playing

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cards, between meals. There is a little excitement now & then when a German plane comes over. I saw one brought down in flames the other day.

So you see though the war is all around us we are fairly comfortable & cheerful. Of course the tremendous business obtrudes itself into all our thoughts and talk, but apart from that one begins after a time to look upon it with some degree of philosophy.

We have seen no newspapers for over a week, & do not know how the world is going. All sorts of rumours reach us in

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consequence, great naval battles,
peace negotiations, or &c.

The country about here is a
howling wilderness. Ruin reigns
supreme; imagination cannot
picture this spectacle of levelled
masonry, shattered cemetery, &
blasted trees, with the great shells
always sighing & shrieking on
their fell mission. And in the
midst of it all men are living
and eating and working, & it
seems like the normal and
established way of life.

I wish you a happy &
prosperous New Year.

Mutual

UCD Archives**Archival Code:** P57/224**Archival Collection:** Michael Moynihan Papers**Document title:** Letter from Michael Moynihan, on the Western Front in north-east France, to his brother, John, in Springmount, Ballyard, Co Kerry, 28 December 1917.

Background: Born on 3 February 1891, the eldest son of Maurice and Mary Moynihan, he was educated at the Christian Brothers' School in Tralee where he won many academic prizes and awards. In 1908 he went to Dublin to study at what subsequently became University College Dublin, one of the constituent colleges of the new National University of Ireland. He won a number of major scholarships and exhibitions and in January 1910, after successfully sitting the competitive exams for the Inland Revenue, he joined the civil service. He worked in Dublin until 1913 when he was promoted and moved to the Inland Revenue offices at Croydon, near London.

In March 1914 he joined the Civil Service Rifles, a unit of the British Territorial Army. When war broke out, he remained with this unit and did not return to the civil service. As a territorial unit, the Civil Service Rifles were restricted to home duties within the United Kingdom. But in 1916 Moynihan decided to sign up for foreign service despite his mother's opposition; and he went to France at the end of June 1916 as a private in the London Regiment.

In 1917 he received a commission as a second lieutenant and joined the 8th (Irish) Battalion of the King's Liverpool Regiment which was fighting in north-east France around Ypres. He was killed on 3 June 1918 and is buried in Doullens cemetery, just north of Amiens. His father had died just six months before him, in January 1918. Michael Moynihan was survived by his mother Mary, his younger brothers John (to whom he was especially close), Maurice, Denis, Thomas, and by his sister Johanna.¹

Transcription:

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² 'instant': a convention in letter-writing indicating the same month as the date of the letter, abbreviated 'inst.'

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I wish you a happy & prosperous New Year.
Michael