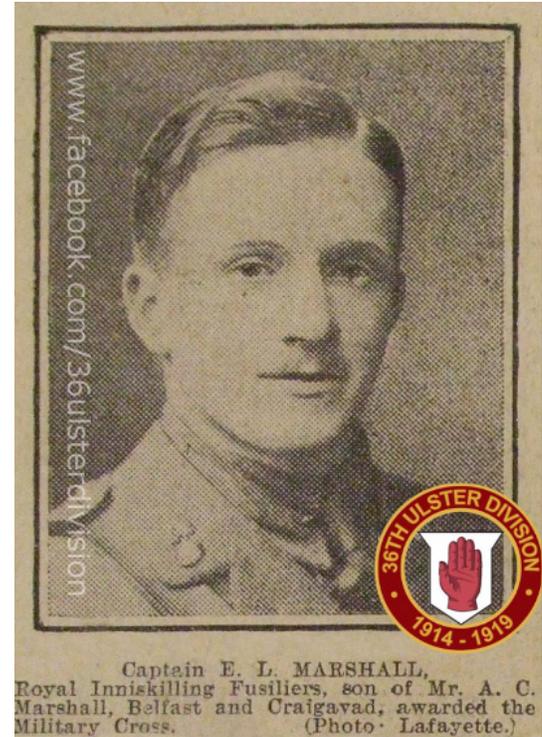


## Soldier Profile – Captain Edward Leslie Marshall

Commemorated by Stephanie Crosbie



Edward Leslie Marshall was born in Belfast, County Down, to Chambers and Annie Marshall on March 13, 1892. The Marshalls were prominent merchants in Belfast, and Leslie was their firstborn son. His brother, my great-grandfather Chambers, would follow three years later.

Leslie attended the Bangor Grammar School and the Methodist College in Belfast prior to enlisting. He was working for his father's business and was well-known in golf circles in Belfast at the time of his enlistment in September 1914.

He trained at Clandeboye (Clannaboy) outside of Belfast and quickly received a commission to Second Lieutenant with the 9th Battalion of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers in October of 1914. His division went overseas to mainland Europe in October 1915.

Leslie received his first Military Cross, a medal awarded to officers and other ranks of the British Armed Forces in recognition of "an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land," in June 1917. He was honored for his actions during an attack on Wytshaete-Messines Ridge in West Flanders.

During the Battle of Messines, the British Second Army objective was to capture German defences on the Messines ridge, which had allowed the Germans the high ground. Using a combination of creeping and standing artillery barrages, the Germans were successfully removed from the ridge on June 7. It was a politically interesting battle for Ireland, as men from the Ulster Division and the

16th Irish Division were fighting against a common enemy. Troubles and conflicts occurred at home, where the men would have been on opposite sides.

Medals were announced in The London Gazette, which on September 17 printed the following:

*“When his company was held up by machine gun fire he ran across an open and fire-swept zone and attracted the attention of a tank, which was the means of wiping out the gun. By this gallant act he saved very many casualties, and his fine leadership inspired his men and largely contributed to the successful gaining of the objective.”*

Shortly after, Leslie was promoted to the rank of Captain.

In November 1917, the 9th Battalion joined the Battle of Cambrai in northern France. Leslie is listed in the War Diary of the Battalion as being second-in-command under Major Crawford. According to the War Diary, Leslie would be injured during the battle on December 6. He would also receive a bar to his Military Cross for his actions.

On July 2, 1918, the London Gazette published:

*“When the advance was held up owing to the supply of bombs failing, he rapidly collected a party and carried forward a further supply under heavy fire, thereby ensuring the progress of the attack. Throughout the day he worked with tireless energy, moving about fearlessly and inspiring those around him by his calm and courageous bearing. In the advance of the following day he carried out very arduous duties in the most cheerful and thorough manner.”*

At some point during his recovery, he was able to return home to Northern Ireland on leave. He returned to his battalion in August 1918.

On September 1, 1918, the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers advanced on Ravelsburg Ridge during the Hundred Days Offensive near Neuve Eglise. Germans once held this area in early 1914, but it was in British hands from late 1914 to April 1918. The British would retake it in this September advance.

Leslie was wounded and died of his wounds that day in Bailleul. He was buried at Meteren Military Cemetery at 26 years old. The Northern Wig newspaper reported his death on September 4, 1918, describing him as a “splendid young officer.”

Leslie’s legacy would live on through his nephew, my great-uncle Leslie, also named Edward Leslie Marshall. The younger Leslie would go on to join the Royal Air Force during the Second World War and was such a talented pilot that he would eventually teach new Spitfire pilots. The younger Leslie would gift his daughter Angela the middle name Leslie in honour of his uncle.

Captain Marshall is also commemorated at the Holywood and District War Memorials, at both of his schools (Bangor Grammar School and Methodist College Belfast), and in the Journey of Remembering Belfast Book of Honour.