

Leslie was born on 26th March 1896 at Tingha, NSW, the son of James Samuel Benjamin and Agnes Morier Browning, nee Turnbull. On 11th August he enlisted in A Company, N&MEF stating that he was a bank clerk (at the Royal Bank of Australia), single and nominated his mother at Llewellyn St, Rhodes, NSW, as his next of kin.

He returned from Rabaul and was discharged, end of engagement, on 4th March 1915.

Shortly after his return, on 24th March, he enlisted in the 20th Battalion, regimental number 827, and was allocated to C Company. On 21st April he was promoted sergeant and sailed with the battalion aboard the BERRIMA, departing Sydney on 25th June 1915.

Leslie, along with the rest of the battalion landed on ANZAC Cove on 22nd August and remained on the peninsular until their withdrawal on 20th December 1915.

The battalion moved to France in early 1916 and Leslie joined the No.9 Officer Cadet Battalion in the UK on 2nd August 1916, completing his officer training and returning to his battalion on 13th December 1916, a newly appointed 2nd Lieutenant. He was promoted Lieutenant on 23rd Jan 1917.



Leslie c 1917 after he received his commission.

After his appointment as a commissioned officer he married Margaret Caldwell Caird McFarlane in Glasgow on 20th November 1916.

Leslie was awarded the Military Cross: -

“For conspicuous bravery on the night of 24th/25th February (1917) near WARLENCOURT.

He had a reconnoitring patrol up to the tank trap on the BAPAUME ROAD. There with three other ranks he engaged a force of the enemy successfully and did not withdraw until he had gained some very valuable and accurate information. His party was at one time in imminent danger of being surrounded and cut off but he persisted till he had accomplished his task.”



Officers of the 20th Battalion. Leslie is in row 3, third from the right. Arques Belgium 1917

On 20th September 1917, Leslie was badly wounded, and for his actions on that day he received a Bar to his Military Cross. The recommendation from his commanding officer reads as follows: -

“At HANEBEKE on 20/9/17 this officer was badly wounded in the thigh before the Bn. reached its first objective. Notwithstanding this he insisted on continuing and he was then in command of “C” Company, his Coy. Commander having being killed. When the objective had been gained, he superintended the work of consolidation until the pain and loss of blood caused by his wound forced him to lie down. He still refused to be taken out and continued to receive and send messages. The Bn. then moved forward and re-consolidated 150 yards ahead and he insisted on being carried up to the new point and again supervised as far as possible, the work of consolidation. The whole of his work was carried out under very heavy enemy shell fire and it was not until he was completely overcome by weakness that he allowed the stretcher bearers to carry him out. His wonderful grit and determination and devotion to duty was a fine example to all ranks.”

Leslie was eventually evacuated to hospital in Glasgow, not rejoining his unit again until 10th April 1918. He served out the war with his Battalion, returning to Australia aboard the MANTURA, arriving in Sydney on 19th Feb 1920. His permanent appointment was terminated on 19th April 1920.



Leslie and Margaret and their two children, c1922.

Leslie spent most of his time between the wars in the USA and Canada, returning to Australia in 1949 to enlist again.

On 4th Jan 1942 Leslie signed up, initially with the CMF full time and transferring to the AIF on 9th September 1942, with the rank of Major, service number NX123628. He was placed on the Reserve of Officers on 22nd Feb 1942 having sustained an injury to his back.

Leslie died in Melbourne on 24th November 1956.