

2nd Lieutenant Charles James Ervine[©]

Regimental number: -

27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish), Northumberland Fusiliers

born: 4 April 1894 - died: 6 April 1916

2nd Lieutenant Charles James Ervine was the eldest child of Robert Ervine and Mary Ervine (née Glendinning). Robert and Minnie, as she was known, were married on 19 May 1893¹ at the Dundela Presbyterian Church in the Parish of Holywood, a district of Belfast, Ireland. Their families were neighbours: the Ervines lived at 8 Upper Frank Street and the Glendinnings at number 11. Robert's father, Abraham (known as Abram) Ervine was a carpentry joiner while Minnie's father, Alexander Glendinning, was a linen merchant. Robert's occupation at the time of his marriage was described simply as a clerk.

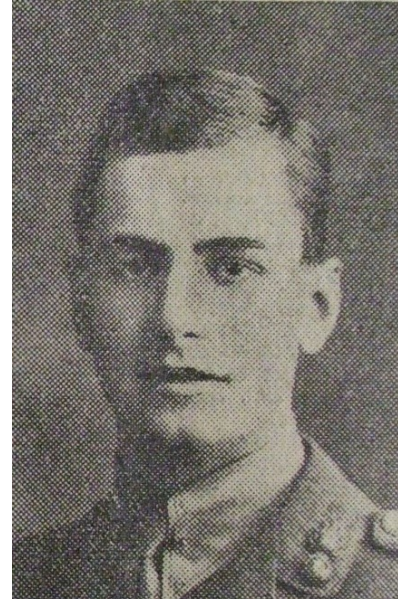
The young couple moved in with Minnie's parents where Charles was born on 4 April 1894.² The growing family soon moved to 32 Castlereagh Place, where their next three children were born: Alexander Glendinning (1895)³, Henry Lawrence (1898)⁴ and Robert Maurice (1901)⁵. By the time William Frederick came along in 1905,⁶ and finally a daughter, Annie Margaret, in 1907,^{7 8 9} the family were living on Cregagh Road.

The family attended McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church, where "Charlie" faithfully attended Bible Class. He joined the 19th Belfast Company of the Boys' Brigade that was associated with the Church and played both cricket and football.¹⁰ In 1909 Charlie won the Squad Challenge trophy, an event commemorated in a history of the McQuiston Boys' Brigade.¹¹

By 1911 Charlie had finished school and was apprenticed to the linen trade.

When Charlie died of his wounds on 6 April 1916 at No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station, he was a 2nd Lieutenant in the 27th Battalion of the Northumberland Fusiliers (4th Tyneside Irish).¹² The Northumberland Fusiliers had a long and distinguished history dating back to 1674. During World War I, the regiment raised 52 battalions, of which 29 served overseas. It was awarded 67 Battle Honours and 5 Victoria Crosses, losing 16,000 men over the course of the war.¹³ Four battalions, the 24th–27th (inclusive), were known as the 1st to the 4th Tyneside Irish. These battalions were "Pals battalions": specially constituted battalions of the British Army comprised of men who enlisted together in local recruiting drives, with the promise that they would be able to serve together rather than being dispersed to battalions arbitrarily.¹⁴ The 27th Battalion was raised by the Lord Mayor and City of Newcastle in January 1915,¹⁵ suggesting that Charlie may have moved to England.

The four battalions became the 103rd (Tyneside Irish) Brigade of the 34th Division of the British Army, arriving in France in January 1916.¹⁶ According to a blog about the County of Durham during World War I, after some weeks of training, on 10 February 1916 the 27th Battalion moved forward to join the 10th Battalion, Sherwood Foresters and the 8th Battalion of the York and Lancaster



2nd Lieutenant C. J. Ervine
Source: McQuiston Memorial
Presbyterian Church Magazine

Regiment.¹⁷ The blog also includes the following specific story providing great insight into Charlie's character and determination:

"By the middle of March the 27th Battalion (4th Tyneside Irish), Northumberland Fusiliers, were holding the line once more. On the night of the 15/16 March, a German patrol planted a German flag in front of them. During the day, the battalion snipers shot at the pole, eventually bringing the flag down. Plans were made to try and recover it during the night, and the company commander, Captain Davey, had no shortage of volunteers to go out and capture the flag. He therefore chose the best man for the job, Lieutenant CJ Ervine, together with two more men of his platoon but after an hour or so, the party returned without the flag. The enemy were too alert and waiting, and had a patrol covering the flag on one side and a machine gun covering the other. When the three Tyneside Irishmen got to within twenty-five yards of the German flag there was such an outburst of firing that they had to return to the British lines. In the early hours of St. Patrick's Day, Lieutenant Ervine set out again, this time alone and for half-an-hour those in the British trenches waited, until Lieutenant Ervine's platoon sergeant went out to the wire to look for him. At 2:45pm (sic) the Germans fired a star shell and those in the trench could see the dark shape of Lieutenant Ervine making his way slowly back to the British lines having managed to recover the prize, but on the way having fallen into a ditch full of muddy water. While Ervine dried himself, Captain Davey and another officer erected a stout pole with the German ensign nailed to it, and above the ensign the green flag with the golden harp, which had been presented to the Company prior to leaving England. As day broke the Germans started to shoot at the pole in a vain attempt to bring it down, but there it hung throughout St. Patrick's Day, attracting admiring visitors to the Tyneside Irish trenches from other parts of the line. Unfortunately, shortly after this episode, Lieutenant Ervine, who hailed from Belfast, was badly wounded and succumbed to his wounds soon afterwards."¹⁸

Charlie's obituary in his church magazine describes him as: "one of the noblest specimens of young Christian manhood . . . His unassuming manner endeared him to all his chums, and we have lost . . . one of nature's gentlemen to whom success meant no estrangement and whose character time could not sully. . . . Charlie lives first in the circle of his home where his cheery manner left a charm, next in the hearts of his chums as an inspiration to do nobler things, and, best of all, on the other side where long-lost friends are saying, "Charlie's come."¹⁹

Charlie is buried in the Bailleul Communal Cemetery Extension, Plot II D 58, in the Pas-de-Calais region of northern France.²⁰ His father had his headstone inscribed with the words "Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away."²¹ Charlie was awarded the British War Medal (for service overseas between 1914 and 1918) and the Victory Medal (for service in an operational theater).²² He is also commemorated on his father and mother's gravestone in the Dundonald Cemetery in Belfast²³; his father passed away in 1934²⁴, his mother in 1956.²⁵



Ervine Family Gravestone
Source: Militaryimages.net

Charlie's younger brother Alexander also served in World War I as a Company Quartermaster Sergeant in the Royal Irish Rifles.

He was awarded the same medals as his brother, as well as the 1914–15 Star (for service in the war against Germany between 5 August 1914 and 31 December 1915).²⁶ Alexander survived the war; he was discharged on 10 February 1919.²⁷

Another of Charlie's brothers, Henry, who was married when he passed away, stayed close to home: his last address was 40 Cregagh Park, Belfast.²⁸

Robert Maurice Ervine was not married when he died in 1963, as he left his estate to his brother Henry.²⁹ He was interred with his parents in Dundonald Cemetery³⁰ and commemorated with Charlie on the family headstone.

The youngest Ervine brother, William, emigrated to South Africa in 1929.³¹ In 1939 he was a farmer in Southern Rhodesia with a wife, two daughters and two sons.³²

No records could be found as to what happened to Charlie's only sister, Annie.

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¹ "Civil Records–Marriage," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Robert Ervine

² "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine

³ "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Alexander Glendinning Ervine

⁴ "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Henry Lawrence Ervine

⁵ "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Robert Maurice Ervine

⁶ "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for William Frederick Ervine

⁷ "Civil Records–Birth," *Irish Genealogy* (www.irishgenealogy.ie: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Annie Margaret Ervine

⁸ "The Belfast Newsletter (Birth, Marriage and Death Notices), 1738–1925," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019)

⁹ "1901 Ireland Census," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Robert Ervine, County: Down, District: Ormeau, Townland/Street: Castlerea Place

¹⁰ "M'Quiston Magazine," *McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church* (www.mcquistonpc.org: accessed 16 July 2019), Volume IX, May 1916, No. 5

¹¹ "19th Belfast Company Boys' Brigade: A History of the First One Hundred Years," *McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church* (www.mcquistonpc.org: accessed 16 July 2019), p. 3

¹² "No. 1 Canadian Casualty Clearing Station," *British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa* (www.bifhsgo.ca: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Ervine, C. J.

¹³ "Unit History: Northumberland Fusiliers," *Forces War Records* (www.forces-war-records.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2019)

¹⁴ "Pals Battalion," *Wikipedia* (www.wikipedia.org: accessed 16 July 2019)

¹⁵ "Unit History: Northumberland Fusiliers," *Forces War Records* (www.forces-war-records.co.uk: accessed 16 July 2019)

¹⁶ "The Tyneside Irish Brigade," *Tyneside Irish Brigade Association* (www.tynesideirishbrigade.com: accessed 16 July 2019)

¹⁷ "The Tyneside Irish and the Somme Part 2: Training and Trenches," *Durham at War* (www1countydurham.blogspot.com: accessed 16 July 2019)

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- ¹⁸ "The Tyneside Irish and the Somme Part 3: Flags at the Front", *Durham at War* (www.1countydurham.blogspot.com: accessed 16 July 2019)
- ¹⁹ "M'Quiston Magazine," *McQuiston Memorial Presbyterian Church* (www.mcquistonpc.org: accessed 16 July 2019), Volume IX, May 1916, No. 5
- ²⁰ "Global, Find a Grave Index for Burials at Sea and Other Select Burial Locations, 1300s–Current," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for 2nd Lt C J Ervine
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- ²² "British Army WWI Medal Rolls Index Cards, 1914–1920," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine
- ²³ *Militaryimages.net* (www.militaryimages.net: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Charles James Ervine
- ²⁴ "Community: Burial Records," *Belfast City Council* (<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk>: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Robert Ervine
- ²⁵ "Community: Burial Records," *Belfast City Council* (<http://www.belfastcity.gov.uk>: accessed 10 March 2019), entry for Mary Ervine
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- ³¹ "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for W F Ervine
- ³² "UK, Outward Passenger Lists, 1890–1960," *Ancestry* (www.ancestry.com: accessed 16 July 2019), entry for W F Ervine