



Brigadier Reginald Miles

CBE, DSO & Bar, MC

Reginald Miles served with distinction in both world wars. He began his service in Gallipoli as a forward observation officer and was wounded, but returned to duty just before the evacuation in December 1915.

Following his marriage in Egypt, he served on the Somme in 1916 in command of 15 Howitzer Battery and won a Military Cross (MC) for outstanding command under heavy shelling. In 1917, he took over command of 6 Howitzer Battery and in April 1918, during an attack at Ploegsteert Wood, Captain Miles fought alongside his men when the Germans almost overwhelmed them. The enemy were within 500 yards and his ammunition was exhausted. Miles rallied his men, including some infantry stragglers, and later made a reconnaissance into the wood; sending back valuable information. As he was trying to free one of his guns from the thick mud he was finally wounded by rifle-fire at close range. Recommended for a Victoria Cross, he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO).

From 1940, Brigadier Miles became Commander Royal Artillery and 'in charge' of the New Zealand Divisional Artillery. The "intelligent and forceful" Miles built up the strength and morale of the artillery, and his leadership throughout the Greek campaign was solid. He missed the battle of Crete due to ill health and exhaustion, but was soon back in command for the

Crusader Offensive. During this operation he was wounded and captured when 6 Field Regiment was overrun near Belhamed in December 1941. In the heat of the action he had joined his gunners, carrying a rifle "looking for all the world as though he were going duck-shooting".

Taken prisoner, he spent sixteen months incarcerated in Campo PG 12 near Florence, Italy, until he and five other officers (all brigadiers or above) got out through a 40 foot tunnel which had taken six months to dig. Only Brigadier Miles and Brigadier James Hargest reached neutral Switzerland, with both receiving a Bar to their DSOs for their exploits.

Aiming to rejoin the war effort, Miles crossed Vichy France in disguise with the help of the French Resistance and reached neutral Spain. On waiting to be transported to Gibraltar, he died in Spain on 20 October 1943 and was buried in the Figueras Municipal Cemetery. He was posthumously appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1944.

"Reggie Miles was an all-round gunner, interested and accomplished in every sphere of gunnery ... At all levels and in all units he was admired and respected and when he disappeared ... it was as if the Divisional Artillery had lost its father".
W E Murphy