



**New Zealand Defence Force
Te Ope Kaatua O Aotearoa**

Media Release

Friday 14 Aug, 2009

WAR HERO'S MEDALS GO TO MUSEUM

A highly decorated New Zealand war hero's medals have been donated to the National Army Museum.

Brigadier (Brig) Reginald Miles, a New Zealand Army Artillery Officer who served in WWI and WWII, where he received 15 decorations, had his medals donated by family in a ceremony held at the National Army Museum yesterday.

The ceremony marks the end of a 20 year quest to locate, replace and preserve Brig Miles Medals by his family.

"It is an honour and pleasure for the family to represent Brig Miles at the ceremony today. It has been our wish to have all his medals collated and on display for people to acknowledge the man, and his service to his country," said Brig Miles great grandson, Mr Peter Thorne-George, at the ceremony.

Chief of the New Zealand Army Major General Rhys Jones said, "Brig Miles was known to be a great leader and soldier by all servicemen he served with. Having the medals on display will allow all New Zealanders to recognise and celebrate the military career of a gallant senior Army officer.

We are honoured that the family have decided to gift the Medals to the Museum."

Brig Miles was nominated for the Victoria Cross and awarded the Distinguished Service Order (DSO) for his role in defending his Artillery Battery when the enemy was within 500 yards. During the action he conducted a dangerous reconnaissance mission during which he was wounded by sniper fire. Brig Miles was also awarded the Military Cross.

Brig Miles served with the NZ Field Artillery in Egypt, at Gallipoli, and in France during WWI and was twice wounded in action. During WWII Brig Miles was appointed as the first Commander Royal Artillery and served throughout Europe.

In December 1941 Brig Miles was interned in a high-security Prisoner of War Camp for senior Allied officers in a mountain fortress near Florence, Italy. In March 1943, after five months tunnelling under the castle walls with a kitchen knife and iron bars,



Brig Miles and another New Zealand Brigadier, James Hargest, made a dramatic escape. With help from the French Resistance he traversed half of Europe to Spain, which he reached in October 1943. Brig Miles received his second DSO for this daring escape.

On 20 October 1943 Brig Miles died in his hotel room at Figueras, near Barcelona whilst awaiting his evacuation to the United Kingdom.

Brig Miles' medal collection is one of the most significant and unique collection of medals to be donated to the National Army Museum, Waiouru.

Members of the Miles Family were present at the ceremony including Brig Miles' Great Great Grandson who currently serves in the Royal New Zealand Air Force.



Brig Miles daughter Joan Polybank and family inspect his medals.

ENDS

For more information about Brig Miles military history and the medals presentation ceremony please contact Major Kristian Dunne, Senior Media Adviser (Army) on 04 496 0285, or 021 478 574.