

John Coster Miles

Sergeant (Sgt) 3416 John Coster Miles enlisted in the 58th Infantry Battalion in the 15th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Australian Division in Melbourne on 16 February 1917. He embarked overseas on 16 July and disembarked in Liverpool on 16 September, where he was admitted to the 1st Western General Hospital in Liverpool with mumps later the same day.

He was discharged on 8 October and joined the 15th (Brigade) Training Battalion at Hurdcott Camp. He left England on 4 December and landed in France the next day, where he was taken on strength of the 58th Battalion, in the field near Wytschaete, on 11 December 1917.

On 23 March 1918, news of the German Spring Offensive on the Somme came through. All leave was cancelled, and the battalion was placed on standby to move at 24 hours' notice. They commenced their move south on 25 March and reached Bonnay on 30 March, where they were placed in reserve for the defence of the Somme Canal near Corbie.

On the night of 24 April, the 58th Battalion participated in the daring Australian night counterattack that re-captured Villers-Bretonneux two days later, at the cost of 69 casualties – 14 killed – one of whom was Sgt Miles who was killed in action on 26 April 1918.

He was initially buried at the Chalk Pits British Cemetery near Corbie, but his remains were later re-interred in the Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Fouilloy, France in April 1920.



Sgt John Coster Miles' grave at Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Fouilloy, France

Name: Miles, John Coster	
Service Number	3416
Date enlisted	16 February 1917
Place enlisted	Melbourne, Victoria
Rank on enlistment	Sergeant
Initial Unit	58 th Infantry Battalion
Previous military service	Instructional Staff (PMF) – serving Australian Garrison Artillery – 15 years
Date and ship embarked for overseas	16 July 1917 HMAT A16 <i>Port Melbourne</i>
Stated age/DOB (if known)	37 years 2 months (1/12/1879)
Place of birth	Buangor, Victoria
Marital status	Married
Occupation	Professional soldier
Religion	Church of England
Next of kin and address	Miles, Mrs Annie, wife, 3 Loch Street, East Geelong, Victoria
Permanent address	3 Loch Street, East Geelong, Victoria
Appearance	Fresh complexion, fair hair, blue eyes, height – 5 feet 9 inches, weight – 9 stone, 10 lbs, chest measurement – 36 inches
Final Rank	Sergeant
Final Unit	58 th Infantry Battalion
Theatres of war served in	France, Belgium
Fate	Killed in action
Date and place died	26 April 1918 Villers-Bretonneux, France
Cemetery details	Villers-Bretonneux Military Cemetery, Fouilloy, France. Plot XI, Row A, Grave 8
Honours/medals	British War Medal, Victory Medal
Notes	Father was President of the Leopold Hall Committee 1911 – 1912. Brother in law of Reginald Emerson Sims (SN 998), KIA 10 August 1918. Also remembered on the Leopold State School Honor Roll, Leopold & District Honor Roll, Leopold War Memorial, East Geelong St Albans & Moolap War Memorial, St Matthews Church Roll of Honor and Geelong & District Peace Memorial.