

Friday July 16, 1926

TRAGIC DEATH OF ADMIRAL MILLER.

FATAL MOTOR ACCIDENT



Rear-Admiral Charles Blois Miller CB., of Brixton Lodge, Crowmarsh Battle (Benson), met his death in tragic circumstances at Berrick Cross-roads on Wednesday afternoon. Unaccompanied, he was driving his motor-car from Benson in the direction of Watlington, and at the Berrick Cross-roads a collision took place between his car and a motor-cycle ridden by Mr. H. Wells, of Roke Marsh. As a result of the impact and the sudden pulling up of the car, the Admiral received severe blow, although he was not thrown out of his seat. Dr. Birch of Dorchester, was summoned, and he, together with P.C. Gray of Benson, removed the Admiral to his home. Dr. G. McMullan, his medical attendant, was also sent for, but he died shortly afterwards. The motor-cyclist was conveyed by the Wallingford motor ambulance to the Cottage Hospital, where he was detained suffering from severe cuts and bruises about the head and face. Both the car and the motor-cycle were badly damaged.

Vice-Admiral Miller, who was born in March, 1807, was a son of Sir Alexander Edward Miller, K.C., of Bailycastle, Co. Antrim, and was educated at Lockers Park, Hemel Hempstead. He entered the Britannia in 1880, and served in his Majesty's ship Northumberland during the Egyptian Campaign of 1882, when he received the medal and Bronze Star. He was promoted Commander in 1903, and Captain in 1908. He was engaged in the Great War, and for his services at the Battle of Jutland he received the Companionship of the Order of the Bath, as well as a number of foreign decorations and distinctions. He was Captain of the Nottingham at the Dogger Bank Action and at the Battle of Jutland he "commanded the Nottingham with great skill and gallantry" and was decorated as Officer of the Legion of Honour by the French President. When the Nottingham was sunk by a submarine in August, 1916, Admiral, (then Captain) Miller was transferred to the new cruiser, the Glorious. He was promoted to Rear-Admiral in 1920 while commanding officer in the Plymouth Naval area, and in 1921-2 he was Rear-Admiral of the Reserve Fleet at Rosyth and was placed on the retired List in 1924. For some time he was Naval-Aid-de-Camp to the King. In 1919 he married Elhel Margaret, daughter of the late Rt. Hon. John Young.

Admiral Miller was a very familiar and popular figure in Wallingford and district. And threw himself whole-heartedly into many of its activities. He was District Commissioner of the North Chilterns Association of the Boy Scouts, and stimulated immense interest in the movement. Old Comrades' associations and clubs found a warm corner in his heart, whilst he interested himself in everything that improved the amenities of village life. His loss will be keenly felt at Benson, which parish he represented on the Board of Guardians and Crowmarsh Rural District Council. Only on the morning before his death he attended a meeting of the Joint Fire Brigade Committee at Wallingford. The

Admiral looked young for his 59 years; he was a typical man of the sea, and his kindly and genial disposition endeared him to all.

THE INQUEST

Mr. Cooper, Coroner for South Oxfordshire, sitting with a jury, held the inquest at the residence of Mr. R. Vaisey, Preston Crowmarsh, on Thursday evening.

P.C. Gray, of Benson produced a plan of Berrick Cross-roads end gave certain measurements indicating that the deceased's car was 7ft 6in from the side of the road at the time of the impact, whilst the road was 17ft 6in. wide. Two tyres had burst, and the marks showed that the car travelled 30 yards after the impact. In his opinion, Mr. H. Wells, who was riding a motor-bicycle, was travelling from the direction of Brook street Benson, and met the car practically in the centre of the road.

In reply to Mr. P. C. A. Slade, who represented Mrs. Miller, witness said the Admiral was travelling on his proper side of the road.

Mr. John McNeil Miller, of Brighton, identified the deceased as his brother, whom he last saw alive about three weeks ago.

Alfred Budwell, of Roke, farm labourer, said he was working in a field near Berrick Cross-roads when the Admiral passed in his car at about 1220 p.m., and shortly afterwards he heard a loud report, as if a tyre had burst. He ran to the cross-roads and saw Harry Wells lying in the centre of the road, and his machine about 10ft. away. The Admiral was lying across the left seat of his car and was unconscious. Having done all he could for the injured, he sent for the police and Dr. Birch.

Dr. Birch of Dorchester, said he was at Benson at the time of the accident, and arrived at the spot as quickly as he could. He found the Admiral huddled up on the left side of the steering-wheel. He was unconscious and showed signs of a fractured skull. Witness conveyed him to his home and telephoned for Dr. McMullen.

Dr. McMullen said that on his arrival he found deceased in bed with a very serious fracture at the base of the skull, and he died about three o'clock the same afternoon, without re-gaining consciousness. The cause of death was laceration of the brain and hemorrhage. There was evidence to show that the Admiral was struck on the head with great force; it was quite possible that Wells' head might have struck him. The present condition Wells was satisfactory, but he seemed to have lost his memory, and it was doubtful if he would be able to give evidence on his recovery.

Alfred Halliday, motor mechanic, Benson said both tyres on the near side of the car had burst, which he attributed to something heavy colliding with the car at high speed. There were no signs of the hand brake of the car having been used. It was impossible to say whether the foot brake was used or not, There were marks on the car indicating that the motor-cycle collided with it.

The jury agreed that no useful purpose would be served by adjourning the inquest for the attendance of the motor-cyclist, and brought in a verdict of death from misadventure in a collision.

Mr. R. Vasey, foreman of the jury, expressed sympathy with Mrs. Miller in her bereavement. The Admiral, he said, was a most kind and considerate neighbour, and was never happier than when he was doing somebody a good turn. The Coroner associated himself with these remarks.

The funeral will take place at Benson on Monday, at three o'clock.

FUNERAL OF ADMIRAL MILLER.

The remains of the late Vice-Admiral Charles B. Miller, C.B., were laid to rest in Benson churchyard on Monday afternoon. amidst many manifestations of sympathy. Not only was the Navy well represented, but the associations with which deceased was connected sent striking floral tributes and representatives to pay a last tribute of respect to him whom they revered so much.

The villagers too attended in large numbers and before the funeral cortege arrived the church was filled to overflowing. The coffin was draped with the Admiral's own white ensign.

The officiating clergy were the vicar of the parish (Rev. Roland Pryce) and the Rev. John Penrose, of Wimbledon, a cousin of the deceased, whilst other surpliced clergy were the Rev. AH Caldicott (vicar of Warborough), Rev. JD Dale (Crowmarsh) and Rev CAK Irwin (Swyncombe). The chief mourners were Mr. John McNeil Miller (brother), Miss Mary Miller (sister), Dr. Miller (brother) and Mrs. Miller, Mr. John Young and Mr. George Young (brothers-in-law). Mr. William Fisher, the Right Hon Ronald McNeill, MP (cousin), Mrs Wells Miss Flora Stevenson, Mr. HB Napier, Mrs Preston and Mrs. Jameson. Amongst the congregation were Sir Montague Burrows (representing Lord Jellicoe, Sir Robert Baden-Powell and the County Scout Council) and Lady Burrows, Admiral Ruck-Keene, Colonel Croton (representing the British Legion) Admiral Sir Martyn Jerram, General Godley, Colonel Wyndham Mr. and Mrs. Burkitt, Admiral Reeves, Mr. John Murray, Lt. General Sir George Kemball and Lady Kemball, Sir Charles Cottier, Captain Cottier Major RW Cooper MC, Rev. HG Nind Major Hankey, Major St John, Captain Oakes, Colonel Brooke Lieut L Dodd, Captain RC Hatt and Mrs Hatt, Mr R Vaisey (representing Lord and Lady Wittenham), Commander H M Howard RNVR Mr. Volne-Seymour, Miss Quin, Miss. Jervis, Captain D Gale, Mr. Harold Gale, Mr. H Hyslop, Mr. WH Hunt Mr. Frank Shrubbs, Colonel F Gosset, Major and Mrs. Gosset, Mrs. Bousfield, Captain E Cooper-Key RN, Mr. Wainwright, Mr. WG Ross, Mr. WJ Joel, Mr. T Ritchie, Mr. A G Gray, Dr. G. McMullen, Mr. and Mrs. CT Rogerson, Mr. PCA Slade, Mr. JD Rowden, Admiral Gurner Mr. FP Chamberlain, Rev AT Humphreys, Mr. JP Franklin, Nurse Smedley, Mrs. Healing and Miss FH healing, Mr. HW Orpwood, Mr. and Mrs. A G Weller and Miss Weller, Mr. FJ Bennett, Mr J. Longhurst, Mr. Atkinson, Mr. GA Evans and Mr. S Wilder. Detachments of Girl Guides and Boy Scouts with their respective officers were also present and the last named lined each side of the footpath leading to the church, and as the cortege passed, they rested on their staves.

The principal hymn sung in the church was "Lead Kindly Light" and as the procession moved out, Miss Cooper, who presided at the organ, played "O rest in the Lord". Colonel Brooke an old friend of deceased, decorated the grave with crimson rambler roses and amongst the flowers was an imposing a wreath of poppies sent by the British legion and made up at their special factory for that purpose. Turner's Court Scouts, in which the late Admiral was specially interested were unable to be present owing to

NB. This document was incomplete and not very clear so some of the names could be incorrect

Other Information Regarding Admiral Miller

1. **Gillian Pether BB article.**

In 1924 Admiral Miller who was very interested in the Scout movement built the Scout hut at Littleworth, and his widow who is now an octogenarian still helps to keep the Scout hut in its good condition.)

2. **Benson Old Churchyard Records.** MILLER Charles Blois 1926; Ethel Margaret 1962

3. **BB Article John Aldridges Walks.**

At the western end of Castle Square stands the War Memorial. This is a grey Cornish granite column with Celtic Cross resting on three tapered slabs. It was erected by public subscription in 1920 at a cost of £205 and was unveiled by Rear-Admiral Charles Bois Miller, CB, of Brixton Lodge, Preston Crowmarsh, in memory of those men of the village who fell in the 1914/18 Great War. Their names, together with those who were lost in the 1935/45 War, are inscribed on the column. ()

4. **From West Memoirs of Benson**

Rear Admiral Miller came to Preston Crowmarsh after the war and married Mrs Stevenson. Father frequently carried out work at her home and I had met her many times but not the Admiral though I recall his portly figure clearly. There was an occasion; it may have been to do with the cricket club when a men only supper was held in their coach house with the Admiral as host. I do not know how I was able to attend for I could have been only about thirteen years old at the time. A long trestle table was set up through the middle of the coach house laden with food of a basic type, mostly cottage loaves, large slabs of cheese and most memorable of all, several huge ribs of beef. Never before had I seen such vast hunks of meat for little at all had been available in the war years, so the time of this event was about the winter of 1920 - 1921 for that was when meat rationing ended. I was not allowed to carve my own meat as the men were doing, but have gained much satisfaction ever since in carving whenever opportunities arose as I have in recollecting the rare redness of those coach house ribs and my continuing enjoyment of the succulence of beef cooked only to a proper British blue. I feel gratitude to the Admiral for educating me to the joy of blue beef but had no appreciation of the advice he gave my father "don't let the boy join the Royal Navy".