

Patron: Lord Cobbold DL  
Ivry, Lady Freyberg

## "TWO HUNDRED MILES" DEMPSEY

November 2016

Our family tree includes a number of people who have achieved great success in their lives but remained relatively unknown to the world at large. One such person is General Sir **Miles Christopher Dempsey** GBE KCB DSO MC who is #11336 on the tree.

By the start of the Second World War he had reached the rank of lieutenant colonel and was commanding officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Royal Berkshire Regiment. In November he was promoted to command the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade, attached to the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, itself part of the British Expeditionary Force in France. In common with other Allied units his brigade was forced back to Dunkirk, where it provided part of the rear-guard for the evacuation. For his part in the evacuation Dempsey was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. He had already been awarded a Military Cross on the Western Front in 1914.

In December 1942 he was promoted to lieutenant-general and commanded XIII Corps of the British Eighth Army during the North Africa Campaign. He subsequently helped to plan the invasion of Sicily and personally led the assault on Sicily in 1943. He later led the invasion of Italy across the Strait of Messina, in which his troops advanced more than 300 miles to the north before linking up with American troops at Salerno. In North Africa, Sicily and Italy, Dempsey had gained a reputation for his expertise in Combined Operations. This prompted Bernard Montgomery, his commanding officer, to select him to command the British Second Army in January 1944.

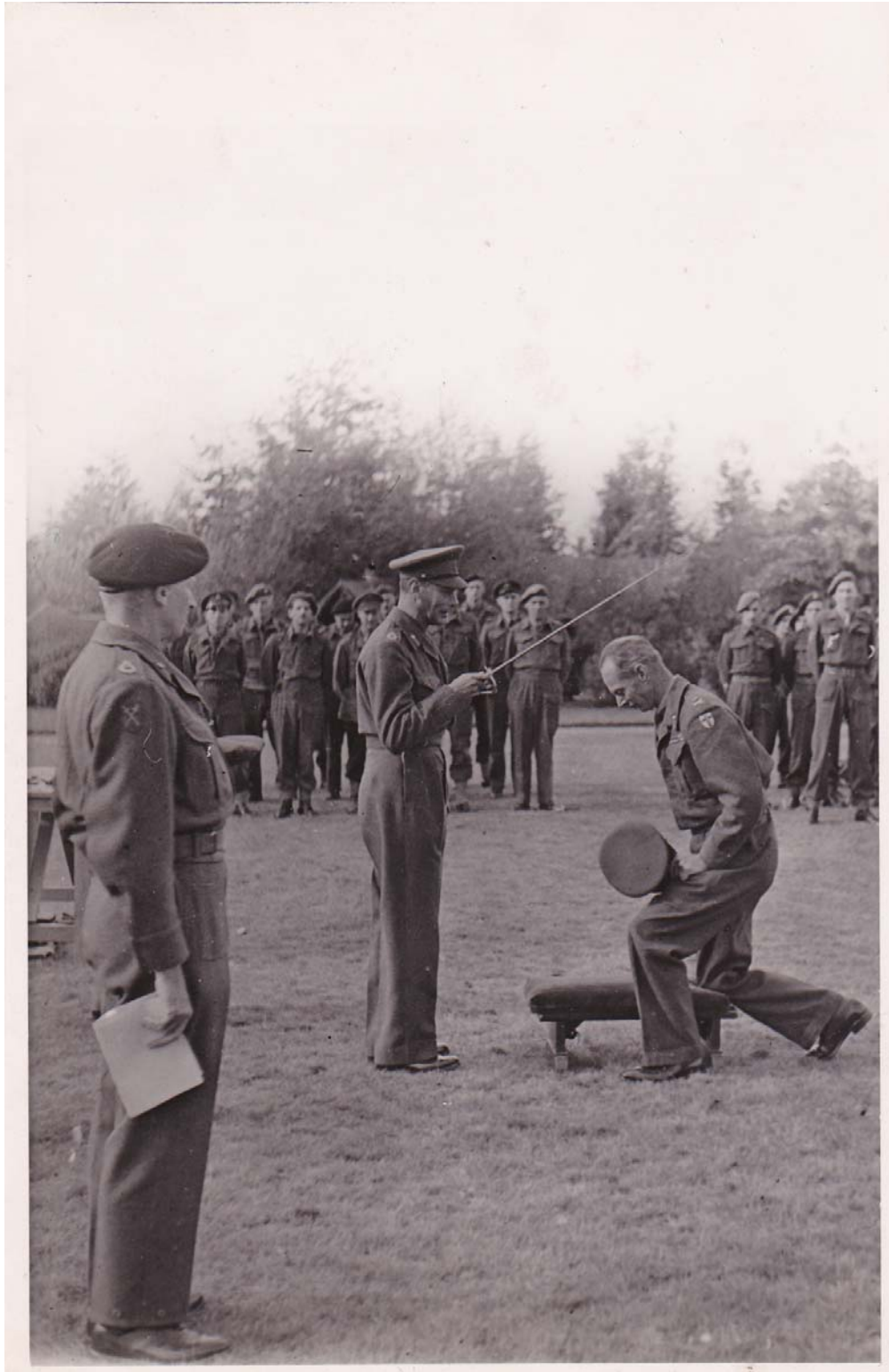
The Second Army was the main British force (although it also included Canadian Army units) involved in the D-Day landings, making successful assaults on Gold, Juno and Sword beaches on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944. Second Army made a rapid advance across France into Belgium, liberating Brussels and Antwerp in September. On 15<sup>th</sup> October 1944, during a visit to the Second Army, King George VI knighted Dempsey on the battlefield. It is thought he is the last person to have been so honoured by an English King on the battlefield. Because of the fast and successful advance of more than 200 miles in a week Dempsey got the nickname "Two Hundred Miles" Dempsey.



Lt. Gen. Miles Christopher Dempsey



Gen. Dempsey with Churchill, Alan Brooke, Montgomery and Smuts



Being knighted on the field of battle by King George VI