



The First World War in Sittingbourne 1914-1918



The Story of Donald Dean VC



The Victoria Cross Medal

Who was Donald Dean?

Donald Dean was born in Surrey, in 1897, but his family had lived in Sittingbourne for generations. By the time the First World War broke out he was living with his parents and brothers at Waldene House Tunstall, a village near Sittingbourne. His family were linked to the well know local brick making business **Smeed Dean**.

Donald Dean was just 17 when the First World War started and too young to enlist. Donald lied about his age and volunteered to join the army. He was a private in the 28th London Regiment until October 1916 when he was promoted to second lieutenant in the Royal West Kent Regiment.

Donald Dean was well known in the Sittingbourne area throughout his long life. He worked hard for his local community but was probably best know as a local war hero. He fought in both World Wars 1 and 2. He died in 1985.

So why was Donald Dean known as a local hero?

Take a look at the two special letters at the end of his name., **VC** and this will give you a clue.

What does VC stand for?

VC stands for **Victoria Cross**. A picture of the medal can be found on the front of this sheet. The Victoria Cross is a very special military medal. It is the highest military decoration awarded for valour "in the face of the enemy" to members of the armed forces. The VC was introduced in 1856 by Queen Victoria, to honour acts of valour during the Crimean War.

The word **valour** means, courage or bravery, especially in battle.

So why was Donald Dean awarded this medal?

On 24th September 1918 Donald Dean and half his platoon from D company were holding an advance post in a newly captured German position known as Canary Trench. The Germans attacked repeatedly and between attacks Dean got his men to repair the defences. By the following morning they were isolated but continued to fight. The second half of the platoon arrived to relieve their comrades but Dean insisted on remaining in charge.

On the 26th the Germans forced them back 50 yards and retook the position. Lieutenant Dean rallied his troops and to the surprise of the Germans attacked over exposed open land. The Germans bolted and Dean and his men retook the position.

For his '*most conspicuous bravery, skilful command and devotion to duty*' Dean was awarded the Victoria Cross. Five other men in the group were awarded lesser medals. During the war Dean was wounded four times.

