



Donald Dean VC

Terry Crowdy, Susan Bavin

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Donald Dean lied about his age to enlist in the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment and serve on the Western Front, where he worked his way up from Private to acting Captain. It was in the last weeks of the war, late in September 1918, that he won his VC for leading a platoon in the determined defense of a recently captured and isolated trench against repeated German counterattacks. In one of these attacks, the Germans actually broke into the trench, forcing Dean to break off a radio call for artillery support with the words 'The Germans are here, goodbye!' Refusing to be overrun, he personally killed four of the Germans before they were finally evicted.

Dean also served in World War II, witnessing the fall of France in 1940 and claiming to be the last Brit to get out of Boulogne. His frank account of the evacuation challenges some cherished conceptions and is very critical of the conduct of the Irish Guards in particular. He went on to fight in Madagascar, Sicily and the Italian mainland. Donald Dean died in 1985.

Military historian Terry Crowdy has edited Dean's letters and diaries, never previously published, adding additional notes and material from official reports to give the reader context. The result is a moving, often amusing and inspiring portrait of a little-known hero of two world wars.

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