

Sergeant Conrad Leadbeater DCM (with two bars)



Sergeant Conrad Leadbeater. Document reference: Regimental Collection.

Conrad Leadbeater was born in Wheathampstead in Hertfordshire in 1891, but later lived in Louth where he worked as a railway signal painter. When war broke out he enlisted in the Lincolnshire Regiment and by the autumn of 1915 he was serving with the 1/5th Battalion in the trenches near Zillebeke.

At just before 7 o'clock on the evening of 30th September 1915 the Germans exploded a mine under the position occupied by the 1/5th Lincolns, which was known as Trench 47. The explosion caused 16 casualties and Conrad Leadbeater was blown over the trench parapet by the force of the blast. Although badly injured, Leadbeater crawled back to his trench, collected his men and directed heavy fire on the enemy, which prevented them from mounting an attack. Leadbeater remained at his post until he was ordered to go to a casualty dressing station and for his bravery he was later awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal.

On 13th October 1915 Conrad Leadbeater took part in the attack on the Hohenzollern Redoubt. When the officers of his section became casualties, he took charge of a captured trench in the Redoubt and held the position through the night by building a barricade and throwing grenades at the advancing Germans. In the morning he acted as a stretcher bearer with complete disregard for his personal safety and his conduct was rewarded with a bar to his DCM.

On 1st July 1917 the 1/5th Battalion was ordered to take part in an attack on Lens. In the sector where Leadbeater was serving the advance was stalled by an enemy machine gun post and, on his own initiative, he dashed forwards to attack the position with grenades. The Germans fled, but Leadbeater's small party was soon attacked by a much larger enemy force. Leadbeater fought off this attack with a Lewis gun and he was subsequently recommended by his divisional commander for the Victoria Cross. After due consideration, Leadbeater was not given the highest award for bravery, but instead was awarded a second bar to his DCM. He was one of only ten men who were awarded a second bar to the Distinguished Conduct Medal during the First World War.