

Corporal (Lance-Sergeant) Obadiah Waddington, DCM and Bar, MM

1st Battalion Welsh Guards.

It must be a feat to have won not one, as most soldiers do, but two Gallantry awards, namely the Distinguished Conduct Medal, and also a Military Cross, and below is recorded a summary of these actions.

DCM 12th October 1917

On 12th October 1917 the 1st Battalion of the Welsh Guards were dug in below Houlthurst Forest near Ypres, in Belgium, and were holding the line there. In this length of trench-work the left part was held by Acting-Captain Percy Battye in charge of the Prince of Wales Company, with Captain Arthur Gibbs in charge of the right-hand part. The 8th French infantry battalion was holding a length of trench to the left.

Battye had joined up with the French, and assuming all was quiet, thought that the enemy on his front had retired. He then sent out a party of four men, led by 2169 Lance-Corporal E.S.Davies MM (from Denbigh) in charge of Privates 859 J R Wallace MM (Rhondda) 2849 H E Smith (Cardiff) who was killed in action in WW1, and 2259 O.F Waddington (Pontypridd) to examine the ground up to the forest.

It was daylight and the men were armed with rifles and each had a couple of bombs. After about 200 yards, Corporal Davies' party located a trench which seemed unoccupied. On approaching this trench, he discovered it was full of Germans. On seeing the British party, the first German held up his hands, but Davies' party lobbed a few bombs in. On this, the shouts came from the enemy group who immediately threw their hands up, but one German in the group realised that there were only 4 in Davies' party and decided to shoot it out, wounding Smith. With this, a large number of the Germans climbed out and tried to capture Davies' party who were trying to attend to Smith. Davies then made a wise decision to leave Smith where he was and he and two remaining men made their way back to the British lines. On the way back Davies was hit, and the two remaining (Wallace and Waddington) carried on, arriving safely back to the lines.

Subsequently, the Germans were dealt with by a French machine-gun which drove them back to their trench, and losing a number of men. Waddington then went back alone and retrieved Corporal Davies. He and Private Wallace, in the failing evening light went back out and tried to rescue Smith, but the Germans had taken him along with their own wounded back to the German lines. The advance was made with no opposition, but the 1st Welsh Guards came under severe shell-fire and sustained heavy casualties until relieved by 2nd Coldstream Guards on the 13th.

DCM Citation London Gazette, 6th Feb. 1918:

2259 Pte. O.F.Waddington, Welsh Guards (Llantrisant.)

"For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty. He went out in daylight with a party in an attempt to destroy an enemy strong point. On reaching the enemy's lines he stood on the parapet and tried to take them prisoners, but his party were outnumbered, and fired on by

the enemy, and were forced to withdraw. Two of his party were wounded, and he went out in daylight to search for them, and succeeded in bringing one of them in, though under fire from enemy snipers the whole time. At night he went out with a party to find the other wounded man, and went right up to and along the enemy's trench. He set a splendid example of courage and determination".

MM March 30th 1918

On March 30th at Boyelles, France, the 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards were in the line when at 8 am the enemy located at Boyelles, opened fire on the British front line trenches, and fire soon increased and spread to the back area. It seems that from Battalion headquarters some distance away Boyelles was hidden by a rise in the ground. At 10.20 am machine gun fire from the enemy added to their artillery and the British responded with an artillery barrage on Boyelles.

At 10.45 am the enemy relaxed their artillery fire on the British front line trenches and this was replaced by intense machine gun fire from the ridge north of Boiry Bacquerelle and at the same time fourteen aircraft were seen to drop bombs and firing at the front line. A German attack two Battalions with one in support was launched against the 1st Grenadiers battalion, and No. 4 Company 1st of the Welsh Guards, who were on the British right flank. After this had subsided the rest of the day went quiet except that hedges in front of No. 4 Company were still occupied by the enemy, who spent their time shooting at stretcher-bearers, killing two of them. Patrols searching the ground were also fired at and did not succeed in bringing in enemy information, but the next day, the 31st, after carefully watching the hedges, Sergeant Waddington took out a patrol of 12 men and a Lewis gun and searched the ground, but with orders not to become involved with the enemy at Boyelles. He counted and searched nineteen dead on the near side of the hedge about 500 yards away, and reported many more on the far side of it. He was also responsible for bringing in two wounded Germans and a machine gun. All this was seen by the enemy artillery which opened fire and as there was no object in holding the line of the hedge Waddington returned without casualties.

For this action Sergeant Waddington was awarded a Military medal.

DCM 12th September 1918

On 12th September 1918, after resting at Lagnincourt, the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards went back into the line in the Moevres Sector to the north of the Bapaume-Cambrai Road. The enemy shelled the line on 16th September all day and night and used a great deal of gas. The next day No. 4 company came under attack just as the 1st was being relieved by the 2nd Coldstream Guards. The extreme left post was held by a platoon under the command of Sergeant Waddington and this position was being targeted by the enemy. Here the Germans attempted a bombing raid down an old communication trench which connected the British and German lines, but Waddington, who's platoon was located in the British part, escaped down the trench with his men behind and ran along the parapet to bomb the Germans who came out to meet Waddington and his men in the open but they successfully drove the enemy back.

Source: History of the Welsh Guards. Dudley Ward.

DCM Citation London Gazette, 16th Jan. 1919:

2259 Corporal (Lance-Sergeant O.F Waddington DCM, MM, Welsh Guards (Llantrisant, Glam.)

“For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty on 17th September 1918 at Moevres. When the enemy attack opened after a heavy bombardment during which he visited all the posts of his platoon and got up an extra supply of bombs and ammunition, he was wounded almost at once. He remained, however, with his men and beat off the enemy, throwing many bombs himself. The successful and immediate repulse of the attack at an important point was largely due to the gallant and determined leadership of this NCO, who in spite of his injuries, left the line only in an order of his Company Commander. His splendid example of devotion to duty and endurance greatly encouraged the men under his command.

Other Information

Waddington survived the war. He is believed to have lived at 41 Brynhyfryd, Penygawsi, Llantrisant near Pontypridd. The Census return for 1911 gives a Fred Waddington with his wife living at Brynhyfryd, Penygawsi, Llantrisant and was a coal hewer and was born at Salford, Lancs. Also, a Fred Waddington died in 1945/6 at St. Albans. No children are recorded.

The Medal index card for Obediah Frederick Waddington records a DCM 26/11/17, Bar to DCM 16/1/19) and gives a reference to the Beddau and Tynant British Legion Club, a few miles from Llantrisant.