

James Joseph Drake

Joseph Drake was born in October 1913 at Hemsworth, near Pontefract in Yorkshire, where his father worked as a coal miner. Though Joseph gained a scholarship to go to the grammar school, his family were unable to afford this and he left school to do odd jobs for a local doctor before working in a butcher's shop. By 1939, he was married with two children and working as a driver for the local council.

In 1940, Joseph Drake was conscripted and, after initial training, was posted to the newly-formed 16th Battalion DLI at Edinburgh. Soon promoted to Lance Corporal, he ultimately became Sergeant with the Carrier Platoon.

On Christmas Day 1942, 16 DLI sailed from Liverpool to Algeria to join the 1st Army's campaign in Tunisia. At the Battle of Sedjenane on 3 March 1943, 4464742 Lance Sergeant Drake was in command of two Bren guns and helped beat off a German attack. For his bravery he was awarded the Military Medal, which he later received from the King at Buckingham Palace.

After the battle, Joseph Drake fell ill and after hospitalisation in Algiers was sent home for treatment. He was then medically downgraded as fit for home service only and given various administrative jobs in military hospitals until the end of the war.

Joseph Drake was demobilised from the Army in 1946 and went into the decorating business in Blackpool with one of his brothers.

Joseph Drake was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 2000.