

Martin McLane

Martin McLane was born in April 1912 at Byker in Newcastle upon Tyne, where his father worked in a shipyard. After he left school, Martin first began work in a foundry before he became an apprentice fitter in a factory in Gateshead.

In 1929, Martin McLane joined his local Territorial Army unit – 5th Battalion Royal Northumberland Fusiliers – at Walker Drill Hall in Newcastle. In September 1932, he decided to join the Regular Army and was sent to the DLI's Depot at Fenham Barracks in Newcastle.

After basic training, 4267469 Private McLane was posted to the 1st Battalion DLI at Catterick, later transferring to the 2nd Battalion DLI. In September 1939, 2 DLI was sent to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force and fought on the River Dyle and at St Venant in May 1940.

Back in England after Dunkirk, the remnants of 2 DLI was rebuilt and re-equipped and Company Sergeant Major McLane was involved in this task to prepare the battalion for active service again.

In June 1942, 2 DLI landed in India. After training in jungle fighting and seaborne landings, 2 DLI took part in both the unsuccessful Arakan campaign against the Japanese in 1943 and in the successful relief of Kohima in April and May 1944. During the fighting at Kohima, Martin McLane was badly burned by a phosphorus bomb and was evacuated to hospital.

In December 1945, Martin McLane returned home and continued to serve as a Regular soldier, rising to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major with the 8th Battalion DLI in Durham.

Martin McLane finally left the Army in 1957 and began work with the Post Office in Newcastle. After he retired, he became a Chelsea Pensioner in 1999. He died at Chelsea Hospital in July 2004.

Martin McLane was interviewed twice for the Imperial Museum in 1988 and 1999.