

Frederick Edward Cottier

Frederick Cottier was born in April 1920 in Dipton, County Durham, where his father worked as a coal miner. When Frederick was 14 years old he left school and went to work in the local colliery. After his father was injured in an accident underground, Frederick decided to leave the mines and join the Regular Army. He enlisted in The Durham Light Infantry in September 1938 and, after initial training at Fenham Barracks in Newcastle, 4453317 Private Cottier joined the 2nd Battalion DLI at Woking, where he was posted to the Regimental Police.

When the Second World War began in September 1939, 2 DLI moved to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. When German forces invaded in May 1940, 2 DLI was heavily involved in the fighting on the River Dyle. After taking a despatch to Brigade Headquarters, Frederick Cottier became separated from his battalion and made his own way back to Dunkirk and to safety in England. After Dunkirk, 2 DLI was reinforced and sent to Bridlington as part of the east coast defences.

In April 1942, Provost Sergeant Frederick Cottier sailed with his battalion from Glasgow to India. He then served in both the unsuccessful campaign against the Japanese Army in the Arakan in 1943 and in the successful relief of Kohima in 1944. After Kohima, 2 DLI took part in the long advance south through Burma to Rangoon. There Frederick Cottier was promoted to Company Sergeant Major and took over 'C' Company. With the end of the war, CSM Cottier helped guard Japanese prisoners accused of war crimes.

After Frederick Cottier returned to England in late 1945 and was demobilised in 1946, he returned to work underground as a miner.

Frederick Cottier was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1991.