William Marshall Ridley

William Ridley was born in February 1919 at Pelaw, County Durham. When William's father lost his job as a ship's carpenter, he found work in a colliery and the family moved to Felling. William left school when he was 14 years old and began work as an errand boy in a local shop. He also joined the Boy Scouts.

In May 1939, William Ridley joined his local Territorial Army unit and was still training with the 9th Battalion DLI, when the Second World War began. After war training in the Cotswolds, 9 DLI sailed to France in January 1940 with the 50th Division to join the British Expeditionary Force. In May 1940, 4455423 Private Ridley fought with his battalion at Arras to halt the German advance before retreating via Dunkirk to England.

On its return from Dunkirk, 9 DLI was first sent to the south coast of England on defence duties but, after the threat of German invasion faded, the battalion sailed for the Middle East in May 1941. Over the next year, William Ridley served in Egypt, Cyprus, Iraq and the Western Desert. During the fighting at Mersa Matruh in June 1942, he was severely wounded in the arm and evacuated to hospitals first in Suez and later in Scotland.

William Ridley finally left hospital in 1943 and, after a short time with 6 DLI in England was medically discharged from the Army and returned to his civilian work.

William Ridley was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1995-96 at his home in Peterlee.