**George Fowler Bland**

George Bland was born in Sunderland in June 1923, where his father, who had served in the First World War, worked as a coal miner. Later George moved with his father to Seaham Harbour on the Durham coast.  When he was 14 years old, George left school and went to work in a local butcher's shop before he became an apprentice boiler maker.

In August 1941, after unsuccessfully trying to join the Royal Navy, George Bland joined the British Army in Sunderland was posted to the DLI's Depot at Brancepeth Castle. After basic training, he was posted to the 70th (Young Soldiers) Battalion DLI, then based at School Aycliffe, near Heighington, in County Durham.

In June 1942, 70 DLI moved to Westwick Camp near Barnard Castle, where it became the Demonstration Battalion at the Battle School.  There 4468884 Private George Bland joined 70 DLI's Carrier Platoon.

Posted to Tunisia as part of an overseas draft, he eventually joined the 16th Battalion DLI in Italy in September 1943, following the landings at Salerno.  George Bland was posted to 16 DLI's Carrier Platoon and served throughout the Italian Campaign, including the bitter fighting on the Gothic Line. 16 DLI also saw action from December 1944 in the Civil War in Greece.  At the end of the war, 16 DLI moved from Italy north into Austria as part of the Army of Occupation. In early 1946, George Bland was transferred to the 1st Battalion DLI then serving in northern Greece, before he was finally demobilised from the Army.

Back in Seaham, George Bland briefly returned to his old job before he moved to London to work on the railways. He later returned home to work as a miner.

*George Bland was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1997 at his home in Sunderland.*