John Leonard Brooker

John Brooker was born in November 1919 in Shepherds Bush, London. His father was a chimney sweep and an ex-Army boxer, who had been awarded the Military Medal in the First World War. After he left school aged 15 years, John first worked in a shop before he joined a firm making Vaseline as a sales representative. John Brooker was also in the Boys Brigade.

In December 1939, John Brooker was conscripted and, after basic training, joined the Royal Fusiliers. After further training, he joined the Signals Platoon and in February 1942 was part of seaborne support for the daring raid on German radar station at Bruneval on the French coast.

In November 1942, John Brooker was accepted for Officer Training and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in February 1943. He was then posted to the East Surrey Regiment and after some time spent at Shildon in County Durham, he took a draft of men out to Algeria and then on into Sicily.

In Sicily, the 9th Battalion DLI had just fought at Primosole Bridge and was in need of replacements. Lieutenant Brooker was sent to join 'A' Company. When 9 DLI returned home to England to prepare for the invasion of France, John Brooker was appointed as Battalion Signals Officer.

9 DLI landed in Normandy on D-Day and Lieutenant Brooker fought with the Durham across Normandy and on into Belgium. In November 1944, 9 DLI left the 50th Division and joined the 7th Armoured Division – the Desert Rats – and then fought on into Germany.

In April 1945, John Brooker was shot in the leg and was sent to a hospital in Belgium. He rejoined 9 DLI in June 1945, after the surrender of Germany, and served in Berlin.

After he left the Army, John Brooker studied for the ministry and was ordained a Methodist minister in 1975.

John Brooker was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1996 at his home in Driffield.