

Henry Robert Bell

Henry Bell was born in August 1915 in Gateshead. His father, who worked as a timekeeper in a local chemical works, had been disabled whilst serving in the 9th Battalion DLI during the First World War. Henry won a scholarship to the grammar school and, after he left, began work in a shop in Newcastle, rising to branch manager.

In April 1940, just three days after his marriage, Henry Bell received his call-up papers. After basic training at Belfast in Northern Ireland, 4460976 Private Henry Bell was trained as a Signaller and posted to the 2nd Battalion DLI, then on coastal defence duties at Bridlington.

In April 1942, 2 DLI sailed for India as part of the 2nd Infantry Division. Over the next three years, Henry Bell saw action in the ill-fated Arakan Campaign, in the battle at Kohima in 1944, and in the re-conquest of Burma from the Japanese Army.

In late 1944, Henry Bell collapsed with battle fatigue and was sent to hospital in India. After his recovery, he was posted to the East India Command Headquarters at Calcutta before being sent home to England to be demobilised.

Back in Gateshead, Henry Bell returned to working in a shop before he became a civil service messenger.

Henry Bell was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1996 at his home in Gateshead.