

Thomas Lawton

Thomas Lawton was born in July 1906 at Birtley, County Durham, where his father worked in the local colliery as a winding engineer. After he left school, Thomas had a number of jobs, before he moved to London and found work at the Ford factory in Dagenham.

Thomas Lawton had joined the 8th Battalion DLI at Birtley in 1922. When he moved to Dagenham, he continued serving with the Territorial Army in Essex. When the Second World War began, 4441604 Platoon Sergeant Lawton was recalled to Birtley and 8 DLI. There his duties mainly involved training the young conscripts joining the battalion.

Thomas Lawton was transferred to the 11th Battalion DLI in April 1940, just before the unit was sent to France as part of the British Expeditionary Force. This battalion, neither fully trained nor equipped, was used on airfield construction until the German invasion in May 1940, when it was rushed into battle. In the confused fighting, Thomas Lawton was taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war in camps in Poland and Germany.

In early 1945, the Allied prisoners in Poland and eastern Germany were marched west away from the advancing Russian forces. Thomas Lawton was eventually freed by US forces and returned home.

Thomas Lawton was demobilised from the Army in 1946.

Thomas Lawton was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1996 at his home in Birtley.