

Frederick Thomas Bedlington

Frederick Bedlington, one of family of fourteen children, was born in June 1918 at Shiney Row, near Houghton le Spring, in County Durham. His father worked at Penshaw Foundry and, when Frederick left school, he started work, aged 14 years, in the local colliery. He later worked at a coke works.

In 1933, Frederick Bedlington volunteered for the Territorial Army and joined 'D' Company 8th Battalion DLI at Houghton le Spring Drill Hall. When the Second World War began he was posted to the newly-formed 11th Battalion DLI, and, because of his colliery first aid training, became a Medical Orderly.

In April 1940, 11 DLI was sent to join the rest of the British Expeditionary Force in France. At first the battalion was used on the lines of communication building air strips near Abbeville. When the Germans invaded in early May 1940, 11 DLI moved first to the Belgian border and then back to positions near Arras, as the German Army rapidly advanced. There 4452911 Private Frederick Bedlington, along with many other 11 DLI soldiers, was taken prisoner.

These prisoners of war then began a long march east before being put into cattle trucks at Trier and then by train to a camp at Thorn in Poland. Frederick Bedlington spent the rest of the war as a POW working on farms and later in a factory.

In early 1945, as the Russians advanced into Poland, the prisoners were forced to march west. Finally in Bavaria, Frederick Bedlington was freed by advancing US troops and was flown home to England.

After he was demobilised, Frederick Bedlington worked for ICI.

Frederick Bedlington was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1998 at his home in Durham City.