

Ian Roger English

Ian English was born in June 1919 at Hebburn on Tyne, where his father, who had served as a Major in the 9th Battalion DLI during the First World War, was Managing Director of Hebburn Colliery.

After he left school in 1938, Ian began an agriculture course at Newcastle University and in January 1939 was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 8th Battalion DLI.

When 8 DLI went to France in January 1940 as part of the British Expeditionary Force, Second Lieutenant English was given command of the Carrier Platoon. On May 1940, he was in action at Arras and then on the long retreat to Dunkirk.

After Dunkirk, 8 DLI was first sent to the south coast of England on defence duties but, after the threat of a German invasion faded, the battalion sailed for the Middle East in May 1941.

Over the next two years, Captain English served in Egypt, Cyprus, Iraq and the North African Desert. He fought at Gazala and El Alamein and was awarded the Military Cross and Bar for his bravery. Then during the battle at Mareth in March 1943 he was taken prisoner and sent to a camp in Italy.

In September 1943, Ian English escaped and with a small group of other prisoners walked down the length of Italy to meet up with the advancing British forces. On his return to England, Captain English rejoined 8 DLI and on D-Day, he led 'D' Company ashore.

During the fighting in Normandy Ian English was awarded a second Bar to the Military Cross and so becoming one of only 24 soldiers who were awarded the Military Cross three times during the Second World War. Finally at Gheel in Belgium in September 1944, Major English was wounded and evacuated to England.

After the end of the war, Ian English continued to serve in the Territorial Army, only finally retiring in 1960 as Second in Command of 8 DLI. He died in March 2006.

Ian English was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1988 at his home near Leyburn.