

History of The Durham Light Infantry

During the Second World War, 9 battalions of the DLI fought with distinction in every major theatre of the war, from the Western Front in 1940, to North Africa, Malta, Sicily, Italy, Burma and, in Europe, from D-Day to the end of Nazi Germany in 1945. Casualties during WW2 were far lower than in the Great War but were high at Arras, Mareth, Primosole Bridge and Kohima, the Durhams suffered heavy losses.

In Belgium in May 1940, Richard Annand, 2nd Battalion DLI, became the very first soldier of the Second World War to gain the Victoria Cross.

Whilst in June 1942 in North Africa, Adam Wakenshaw of Newcastle upon Tyne was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross fighting with the 9th Battalion DLI in North Africa.

His Victoria Cross and 2lb anti-tank gun are on display in the **DLI Museum & Gallery**.



Meanwhile, whilst the soldiers of The Durham Light Infantry fought their battles overseas, the people of County Durham fought their own war on the Home Front not simply against bombers but against hunger, cold and fear. This war was fought by Air Raid Wardens, Land Girls, Munitions Workers, Bevan Boys, Home Guards, Auxiliary Firemen, plus mothers and children and all the other people who lived and fought on County Durham's Home Front, 1939-45.

After 1945, The Durham Light Infantry was reduced in size until only the 1st Battalion DLI remained.

In 1952-53, 1 DLI fought as part of the United Nations forces in **Korea** (where this photograph was taken) in conditions almost like those of the trenches of the Western Front. Many of these young Durhams were National Servicemen.



1 DLI later served in Cyprus and was based in Berlin in 1961, the time when the Berlin Wall was built. In 1966, the Durhams fought their last campaign and suffered their last casualties in the jungles and mountains of Borneo. Finally in 1968, whilst the battalion was serving in Cyprus, it was announced that The Durham Light Infantry would join with three other county light infantry regiments to form one large Regiment - The Light Infantry.

Information from durham.gov.uk