

John Leggett Allan

John Allan was born in July 1922 in Gateshead. His father worked on the railways on Tyneside but was from a fishing family on the island of Lindisfarne off the Northumbrian coast. When he was 14 years old, John left St Cuthbert's School in Gateshead and began work as a messenger boy, before gaining an apprenticeship with the Newcastle Printing Company.

In May 1940, not yet 18 years old, John Allan joined the newly-formed Local Defence Volunteers (later Home Guard) in Gateshead. Equipped with a First World War vintage rifle, he learnt basic drill and went on sentry duty at Low Fell colliery.

In August 1940, before being called up, John Allan volunteered for the Army and joined The Durham Light Infantry. In December 1940, after basic training at Ravensworth Castle near Gateshead, 4466472 Private Allan joined the newly-raised 70th (Young Soldiers) Battalion DLI at School Aycliffe near Darlington.

John Allan was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1997 at his home in Low Fell, Gateshead but his ill health prevented the interview from being completed.