

Paul Armstrong

Paul Armstrong was born in February 1914 in Bishop Auckland. His father, who had served with the DLI during the First World War, died when he was a boy. After leaving the local grammar school when he was 16 years old, Paul began work in the town council's surveyor's office before moving to work for an estate agent.

In October 1938, Paul Armstrong joined the Territorial Army and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the 6th Battalion DLI, which had its Headquarters in Bishop Auckland.

After some months training recruits at the Regimental Depot at Brancepeth Castle, he was ordered in March 1940 to take a draft of soldiers to France to join the 151st Brigade, of which 6 DLI was part. He never reached the Brigade and, with the speed of the German advance in May 1940, was ordered back to England via Cherbourg.

In June 1940, he was transferred to 2 DLI – a Regular battalion - then based at Huddersfield. The battalion then moved to Bridlington as part of the Yorkshire coastal defences. Whilst there he fell ill and was sent to York Military Hospital. After he recovered, he was posted to the Depot at Brancepeth Castle and then to the newly-formed 16th Battalion DLI, serving on the south coast at Winchelsea and Rye.

In June 1942, Paul Armstrong was transferred to the Royal Engineers and, after training, worked as a bomb disposal officer at Plymouth. In June 1944, he helped recover an intact German V1 flying bomb that had crashed in a marsh in Kent.

After the invasion of Normandy, Lieutenant Armstrong was attached to the Canadians and remained with them during the long advance up the coast of France into Belgium. Part of his work involved clearing minefields at Boulogne and Calais.

After Paul Armstrong was demobilised, he returned to his civilian work but soon rejoined the Territorial Army and served as a Major with the Royal Engineers in Sunderland.

Paul Armstrong was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1993-94 at his home in Durham City.