

## **Harold Sydney Sell**

Harold Sell was born in June 1910 in London but soon moved with his family to Gosforth in Newcastle upon Tyne. After he left school in 1926, Harold worked for an insurance company and he also joined his local Territorial Army unit, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion Northumberland Fusiliers and was soon promoted to Sergeant.

In 1933, Harold Sell was accepted for officer training and in July was commissioned into the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion DLI as a Second Lieutenant, attached to 'B' Company in Gateshead.

When the Second World War began in September 1939 and the Territorial Army was mobilised, Captain Sell was posted as Transport Officer with the 151<sup>st</sup> Brigade of the 50<sup>th</sup> Division. He served in this job throughout the fighting in France in May 1940 and during the long retreat to Dunkirk, when he was wounded.

Harold Sell continued with this staff job back in England and when the 50<sup>th</sup> Division was sent to the Middle East in May 1941, serving in Egypt, Cyprus, Iraq and the Western Desert.

In 1942 at Gazala Harold Sell was promoted to Major and given command of 'D' Company 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion DLI. In June, he was awarded the Military Cross for his bravery during the breakout from Gazala and the retreat eastwards towards El Alamein.

During the retreat, Major Sell was captured and sent first to an Italian prisoner of war camp near Capri and then to camps in Germany, where he attempted many unsuccessful escapes. In 1945 Harold Sell was freed by advancing US troops and flown home to England.

After the end of the Second World War and the revival of the Territorial Army, Harold Sell rejoined the DLI and rose to command the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion DLI as Colonel.

*Harold Sell was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum.*