

Henry Cecil Watson

Henry Watson was born in November 1918 in Haydon Bridge, where his father owned a garage. After he left school, Henry went to work for his father.

Henry Watson was conscripted into the Army in October 1939 and was sent to Aldershot for his basic training. 7615007 Private Watson was then posted to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and joined the 151st Brigade Headquarters in January 1940 at Chipping Norton.

When 151 Brigade moved to France in late January 1940, Henry Watson served with the Brigade Motor Transport. After Dunkirk, he was transferred to the 9th Battalion DLI, then rebuilding on the south coast of England, and was soon promoted to Sergeant.

In May 1941, the 50th Division, including 9 DLI, was sent to the Middle East and Sergeant Watson served with the battalion's motor transport in Egypt, Cyprus, Iraq and North Africa. In June 1942, after the breakout from Gazala, Henry Watson was taken prisoner near Mersa Matruh.

First held in a prisoner of war camp in Italy near Bari, Henry Watson built a radio, which he kept hidden from the Italian guards. When he was later moved to a camp in Germany, he made another secret radio, which was vital in keeping the prisoners informed of the war's progress.

In early 1945, as the Russians advanced into Poland and Germany, the prisoners were marched westwards. Henry Watson was eventually freed by US forces and flown home to England. He later worked at workshops in Northumberland, before he was demobilised from the Army in 1946.

Henry Watson was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 1997 at his home in Haydon Bridge.