

## **John Robert Douglas**

John Douglas was born in August 1916 in Stanley, County Durham. After he left school, John went to work at East Tanfield colliery but he also found time to join the Boy Scouts. In 1933, aged 17 years, John Douglas enlisted in his local Territorial Army unit – 'C' Company 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion DLI.

After the start of the Second World War, 4450985 Private Douglas moved with 8 DLI to the Cotswolds for war training before sailing for France in January 1940. In May, John Douglas saw action in both the fighting around Arras and on the long retreat to the Channel coast. Back in England after Dunkirk, as 8 DLI was reformed and sent to the south coast on defence duties, John Douglas was posted to the newly-formed 16<sup>th</sup> Battalion DLI.

On Christmas Day 1942, 16 DLI sailed from Liverpool to Algiers to join the campaign in Tunisia. At Sedjenane on 2 March 1942, a failed counter attack against the German positions led to the loss of 'D' Company. John Douglas was one of the soldiers taken prisoner.

Moved first by sea to Sicily, John Douglas remained in Italian hands until August 1943. After Italy's surrender, prisoners of war were moved north to camps in Germany. In 1945 as Russian forces advanced in to Poland and Germany, the prisoners of war were marched west. Finally American soldiers freed John Douglas.

On his return to England, John Douglas was demobilised from the Army and returned to his civilian life.

*John Douglas was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 2003.*