

Charles Herbert Bray

Charles Bray was born in Buckingham in November 1919. After leaving school he went to work in a solicitor's office and also served as a volunteer fireman. When war began in 1939, he hoped to join the Royal Navy, but ended up in the 6th Battalion Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Regiment. In July 1940, 5950691 Lance Corporal Charles Bray was transferred to the newly-formed 16th Battalion DLI and, during the next two years, helped train the new recruits for war.

In December 1942, 16 DLI finally sailed from Liverpool for active service in North Africa and, at the beginning of March 1943, the inexperienced soldiers went into battle at Sedjenane, south of Tunis. After a failed counter-attack and much confused fighting, Sergeant Bray, along with many other soldiers from the battalion, was taken prisoner. Their German captors soon passed the prisoners over to the Italian Army and they were transferred to a camp in Italy.

After the surrender of Italy in 1943, the Germans took over the prisoner of war camps and Charles Bray was moved north by rail to a new camp in Bavaria and then on to Gorlitz. By early 1945, as the Russian Army advanced west, so the prisoners of war were forcibly marched west. Finally Charles Bray was liberated by British troops and flown home to England.

After time spent in hospital, Charles Bray returned to active duties before he was finally demobilised in 1946 and returned to civilian life.

Charles Bray was interviewed for the Imperial War Museum in 2000.