

Inkpen, Harold Clifford

Sapper

**11 (Lambton) Field Park Company
Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers
G/45452**



Personal Information: Harold Clifford Inkpen was born to Cecil and Nesta Inkpen on 26 April, 1920 in Cowbridge, South Wales. He was the oldest of one brother and two adopted sisters. The Baptist family moved to Marchbank, Kings County, New Brunswick when Harold was around seven years old and they started a farm. After having only completed school up to grade 6, he worked on the family farm for the next eleven years.

Military Movements: On 25 September, 1941, in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Harold, a twenty-one year old man, enlisted in the army and was appointed Private. He took a blacksmith's course in Woodstock, New Brunswick from October of 1941 until March of 1942. Once he passed his Blacksmith "C" trade test he became a sapper for the Corps of the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE). He then travelled to Petawawa, Ontario where he trained at the RCE Training Center for almost a month. Harold returned to the Atlantic Provinces and left from Halifax, Nova Scotia on 14 June, 1942 to go to the UK.¹

The day after he arrived at the UK, 26 June, 1942, he was assigned to the No 1 Canadian Engineer Reinforcement Unit (CERU). The main job of the RCE here was to prepare the United Kingdom for war if it made it that far west. They assembled beach obstacles, pill-boxes, anti-tank ditches, and minefields. Other jobs they did included fixing British roadways to improve

the progress of military traffic, as well as building military and air bases and hospitals. During Harold's time in the UK, he was a part of the No 1 CERU, 10 Field Squadron, 12 Field Company, and 11 Field Company. He was then transported to France and arrived there 9 July, 1944. By 25 February 1945, Harold was sent to Germany as the allied forces continued to push back the enemy.

The RCE was needed for the Battle of the Rhineland between 8 February and 11 March, 1945 especially (Operation Veritable). Because of all the bombing that the Royal Air Force (RAF), Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF), and United States Army Air Force (USAAF) had been doing – such as the bombing of Dresden – it was important for the RCE to make sure that there was a path for the ally tanks and troops to travel.

Final Days: It had been decided in December, 1944 that the Rhine would be taken control of in an effort to end the war by crossing the Rhine and taking control of Berlin. In early March, 1945, the allies captured Cologne which had been badly destroyed by their bombers, and so the RCE was there to help them make their way through to the Rhine.

Hitler wanted nothing more than to make sure that the allied forces did not cross the Rhine. All bridges were destroyed, except one, which was found and crossed by American soldiers. Once the RCE were at the Rhine, bridges were constructed while under heavy German air and artillery fire. While the infantries and pilots tried to hold off Germans and cross the Rhine, the engineers worked hard at making stable enough bridges to hold the tanks.

There were approximately 2, 700 soldiers of the airborne division and 2, 000 of the land forces who died during the preparation for and the actual crossing of the Rhine from February to April of 1945.

Medical Records: There are no clues as to what exactly happened to Harold on 18 March, 1945 that caused his death. The most that is known is that he was killed in action in Germany. He died a Sapper, fighting with the 11 (Lambton) Field Park Company for the Royal Canadian Engineers.

Lest We Forget: Harold Inkpen is now buried at Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery which is four miles south east of Nijmegen, Holland. The cemetery holds 2,331 Canadian soldiers who died during World War II. All Canadian soldiers who were killed in the battle of the Rhineland were first buried in German battlefields. General H.D.G. Crerar, commander of the Canadian land forces, insisted that fallen Canadian soldiers not be buried in German soil and so they were moved to Groesbeek, grave reference **V. D. 6.**, with the exception of one who was buried at the Reichswald Forest War Cemetery.

Harold left no will, but his mother was the recipient of his medals: 1939 – 1945 Star, France and Germany Star, Defence Medal, War Medal, as well as C.V.S.M and Clasp. He was killed at the age of 24 – a single man, a farmer, a blacksmith, a hero.

Biography by Angela McMillan. (Courtesy of the Lest We Forget initiative of Belleisle Regional High School, Springfield, N.B.).



Biography made available for Faces To Graves, with courtesy of Stephen Wilson, Belleisle Regional High School.

Video by a student at Belleisle Regional High School as part of the school's Lest We Forget initiative: <http://youtu.be/2dQRkleX9zc>

Endnotes:

Military service files of Sapper Harold Clifford Inkpen obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Canada in WWII – Juno Beach Centre. 18 May, 2009
<<http://www.junobeach.org/e/4/can-tac-rce-e.htm>>

Paul Reed. Groesbeek War Cemetery. Battlefields of WWII. 09 Oct. 2008, 18 May, 2009. http://battlefieldsw2.50megs.com/groesbeek_war_cemetery.htm

Archival Reference:

Military service files of Sapper Harold Clifford Inkpen obtained from Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Ontario.

Internet Sites:

Veterans Affairs Canada. 10, May, 2009. <<http://www.vac-acc.gc.ca>>

Legion Magazine. Terry Copp. 1 July, 2003. 15 May, 2009.
<<http://www.legionmagazine.com>>

Canada in WWII – Juno Beach Centre. 18 May, 2009.<<http://www.junobeach.org>>

World War II Database. Shire Books. 18 May, 2009.
<<http://ww2db.com>>

The History Place – World War II in Europe. 19 May, 2009.<<http://www.historyplace.com>>



GIVES HIS LIFE—According to word received by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Inkpen, Poosiac, their son, Spr. Harold C. Inkpen, (above), has been killed in action in the Western war front. Spr. Inkpen, who would have been 25 years old during this month, was born near Cardiff, Wales, and came with his family to Canada in 1927. He joined the armed forces in August, 1941, went overseas the following June and entered Normandy shortly after D-Day. He was expected home at an early date. Spr. Inkpen is survived by his parents and one brother, Gnr. Dellwyn Inkpen, now serving in Germany. The two brothers had been together many times in England and also while in France and Germany.

Source: Kings County Record, April, 1945. (From the collection of Connie Cripps)

Additional information Gary Silliker:

18 March 1945 11 Fld Coy RCE

After lunch on 18 March, 1945, a lieutenant, a sergeant and seven sappers of HQ platoon, 11 Field Company, Royal Canadian Engineers, were tasked with a munitions disposal job outside of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. There were two dumps of German anti-tank mines, that had been lifted the day before, that needed to be moved to an anti-tank ditch for destruction. Something happened at the first dump that caused the entire cache of AT mines to explode. There were no survivors in that group of sappers. They are all buried in graves found in plot 5 Row D of the Groesbeek Canadian War Cemetery.

The members of 11 Field Company, RCE, who perished in that explosion were :

Spr Erick Frederick Rask Anderson of Montreal, QC

Spr Albert Brown of Ponty Pool, ON

Spr Howard Clifford Inkpen of Marchbank, King's County, NB

Spr Urban Mayo of London, ON

Spr Donald Angus McLellan of Pipers Glen, Cape Breton, NS

Sgt Charles Valentine Richards of Sarnia ON

Spr Neil Truman Spongale of Boylston, Guysboro County, NS

Spr Alphonse Anthony John Steffler of Walkerton, ON

Lt Owen Howard Taylor of Bridgetown, NS