



On June 23, 1923, Harry Horace Pennell is born in Rutherglen, Ontario.

He is the son of Obadiah Pennell and Abigail Amanda Pennell, née Scobie. His father's less common first name is often spelled differently in official documents.

Harry has four brothers and two sisters. Three of his brothers also serve in the Canadian Army.

(His brother Kenneth Earlwood dies in an accident in Egypt in September 1957 while on a UN mission.)

Harry leaves school and starts working at the age of 16.

When he enlists for active service on August 1, 1940, in North Bay, he reports that he worked as a caddy at the golf club in North Bay for two years.

It is therefore not surprising that he states that he likes swimming, hockey, and golf.

Harry also visits the medical examiners. His file reads that he suffers from a mild bronchitis. The scars on his index and ring fingers of the left hand are listed separately. The standard physical characteristics are also noted. Harry is 5'3" tall and weighed 121 lbs. He has brown eyes and hair.

Harry's first introduction to the army is in North Bay, where he is assigned to the 1st Battalion Dufferin and Haldimand Regiment (D+HR)

This unit was mobilized for active duty on May 24, 1940. During World War II, the regiment was deployed to defend the homeland of Canada.

Before the end of 1940, Harry has already become acquainted with military locations in Portage la Prairie, Manitoba, and Niagara, Ontario. By then, he also had three entries on his record for being 'Absent Without Leave' (AWL).

The year 1941 his file reads only two entries.

The first: Harry is allowed a few weeks personal leave and subsequently has to report in Nanaimo, British Columbia.

The second: in July '41, an entry because he was found drunk at a Salvation Army location in Nanaimo.

In January 1942, after a few days leave, Harry has to report on return in Colwood, British Columbia.

Soldier Killed In Middle East

OTTAWA (CP) — Cpl. Kenneth Earlwood Pennell, 31 of Kingston Ont., was killed Sunday in a Middle East traffic accident, the army announced Tuesday.

Details of the accident which claimed the corporal's life were sketchy, but reports indicated it involved a 2½-ton truck returning to Rafah military camp from Sharm el Sheik, southernmost tip of the Sinai Peninsula.

Cpl. Pennell belonged to No. 56 Signals Squadron, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, and had been in Egypt since Jan. 11 with the United Nations Emergency Force.

There, too, he receives a punishment in early March '42, because he has 'slipped away' (AWL) for 24 hours.

When he is missing for three days in April 1942, Harry is dealt with severely. He is imprisoned for two weeks in the detention barracks at Nanaimo. By the end of March '42, he is back with the unit.

Harry's file is becoming monotonous. In July 1942, he is AWL for four days. Once again, 'Confined to Barracks' (CB) and a week's pay is withheld. Later, Harry gives an explanation for his repeated AWL's, particularly on Vancouver Island. He had met a girl there and wanted to be with her more often.

The next transfer for Harry brings him to the west coast of Vancouver Island, to Otter Point. After an interim posting at the brigade headquarters in late 1942, Harry is transferred to the infantry training center in Sussex, New Brunswick. 1943 starts for Harry with a week personal leave. In February, Harry ends up in the hospital for a few weeks.

Then, the crossing to the United Kingdom (UK) draws closer for him. After a week of embarkation leave, Harry boards a troop ship and on April 4, 1943, he sets foot on shore in the UK.

Harry is assigned to a reinforcement unit. For the year 1943 his file reads only a few entries. Personal leave in October and, on his return, he is taken on strength by the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada (QOR).

In January 1944, Harry is awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal, with the Clasp. D-Day is approaching, and the harsh reality of war draws closer. Harry, together with the QOR, board a troop ship and land on Juno Beach, Normandy, on June 6, 1944.

After the note of the landing there are only two more entries in his file:

- 9 days of leave, which he spent in the UK
- Killed in Action April 16, 1945.

In the meantime, Harry experienced many actions. To get a brief impression: The QOR fought through Normandy and Northern France to Belgium and continued in the Netherlands.

For instance: France July 1944: Fierce action during the deployment at Carpiquet Airfield. After that, many "smaller" skirmishes. A mention in the QOR diary regarding casualties in the regiment in July 1944.

VICTIMS SINCE "D-DAY".
Officers / Other ranks:

Killed in action & died from wounds: 7/162
Wounded: 17/278
Combat exhaustion: 0/39

In La Capelle, France, the regiment was allowed an extended rest period. Afterwards, they continued their advance north: Boulogne – Calais, with various actions. On October 4, 1944, the France-Belgian border was crossed.

Next, the regiment prepared for actions to liberate the port of Antwerp, "Operation Switchback". This was a personal order from General Eisenhower to Field Marshal Montgomery, following the partial failure of Operation Market-Garden.

On October 10, 1944, the regiment moved again. It began an advance towards Sluiskil in Zeelandic Flanders.

Harry's file still has no entry although in the Southwest Netherlands, the QOR paid a heavy toll.

On November 3, 1944, Westkapelle was reached. The QOR were given a brief rest; they went to Ledeborg, a district of Ghent in Belgium. They would remain there until November 8, 1944.

In mid-November 1944, they were moved to the area Groesbeek/Berg en Dal.

The diary begins almost every day with: 'cloudy-cold-foggy-night frost'. The winter months are often described as relatively quiet; the Canadians guard the so-called river Maas Front on the Dutch side.

Nevertheless, patrols are conducted daily. The Canadians lost more than 50 men between mid-November 1944 and February 1945 (the start of the Rhineland Offensive).

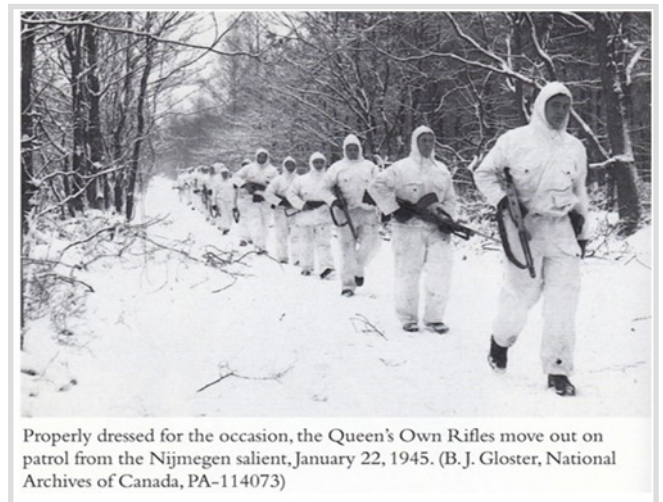
Following the largely unsuccessful Operation Market Garden, a massive Canadian/British force was assembled in the Nijmegen region during the winter of 1944/1945. Approximately 400,000 men and nearly 35,000 vehicles. A similar American force gathered near Roermond. The objective was to push the German units back behind the Rhine.

On February 8, 1945, the Canadians and British launched their attack with Operation "Veritable." They encountered fierce resistance in the Reichswald. It became the bloodiest battle ever fought on German soil. By March 10, the western bank of the Rhine had been virtually cleared of German troops.

After the start of Operation Veritable, the QOR took up defensive positions in and around Millingen aan de Rijn on February 9, 1945. They remained there until the crossing of the Rhine by the Allies was realized.

Harry Horace Pennell must have endured these actions without major problems. Otherwise, it would have been recorded in his file.

Then that final entry for him: 'Killed in Action April 16, 1945'.



Where were the QOR in April '45?
After crossing the German-Dutch border, they advanced to the city of Doetinchem.

They saw action at Laagkeppel from April 3 to 5, '45; at Deventer from April 9 to 11, '45; and from April 16 to 18, '45, at Wons and Witmarsum in Friesland.



The Canadians wanted to prevent the Germans from further reinforcing in the western part of the Netherlands. For that, they had to control the Afsluitdijk. Starting April 16, 1945, they launched an attack on the east side of the Afsluitdijk. The QOR was one of the units involved in this.

They departed from Bolsward towards the Afsluitdijk. As is customary during an advance, the Bren carriers took the lead.

The Germans had set up heavy artillery and allowed the Canadians to get quite close before opening fire.

The lead carrier was hit immediately, and all five occupants were killed instantly.

One of them was Rifleman Harry Horace Pennell. He was given a temporary grave at the General Cemetery in Sneek.

His final resting place, on March 26, 1946, is at the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten. The grave reference is: plot 12, row D, grave 15.

He is awarded:

1939-1945 Star; France-Germany Star; War Medal 1939-1945 and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.

The battles at Wons and Pingjum were the last in which soldiers of the Queen's Own Rifles of Canada fell in the Netherlands. It was therefore the explicit wish of the veterans to place their monument in Wons.

This Honour Roll bears the names of their comrades who lost their lives from D-Day until the liberation.



Monument Wons © Wouter Gerbscheid

Sources:

www.cwgc.org; www.ancestry.com; www.canada.ca/library-archives; wikipedia, project '44, War Diaries Queen's Own Rifles of Canada.