

## Rankin, Harlow Dakin. Sapper.

**10-C-16**



Harlow William was born in Cardinal, Ontario, on September 20, 1908.

He is the son of Robert Clayton and Ida Mary Rankin.

Harlow had four sisters and two brothers.

Both brothers served in the Royal Canadian Air Force.

He married Kathleen Beulah White on September 25, 1937, and their son, Ronald Harlow, was born on April 16, 1938.

Harlow attended Jones and Crescent schools through Grade 9.

He then took a General Carpentry course. This was a program for those who wanted to pursue a career in wood construction or furniture making. Rankin Sr. was also a "Carpenter" by trade.



Cardinal circa 1920

To gain more technical knowledge, Harlow completed an additional six months of study.

He was athletic, enjoyed hunting, fishing, and swimming, and was well-known in Calgary baseball and hockey circles.

His medical report states that he had once broken his nose and left tibia.

Harlow aspired to join the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps.

When he enlisted on December 9, 1941, he was a foreman at Hurst Construction Company in Calgary. This was remarkable, as he gave up a permanent position earning \$40.00 a week for an uncertain future in the army.

Given his education and work experience, Harlow was assigned to the Royal Canadian Engineers (RCE).

In a later interview during his service, he expressed disappointment.

He had enlisted because he had been told the military desperately needed professionals with experience. He didn't find what he expected in the Engineers.

He subsequently applied for assignment to the Ordnance Corps.

*To clarify:*

*Engineers are responsible for providing support during combat, including tasks such as building bridges, clearing mines, laying pipelines, and keeping roads passable, etc. These tasks are essential for the movement and operations of other military units.*

*The Ordnance Corps, on the other hand, comprised not only over 35,000 military personnel but also thousands of civilians. The Corps handled the procurement, storage, and distribution of all materials and equipment an army needed, except for ammunition and food.*

However, Harlow was assigned to a reinforcement unit for the RCE in December 1941. In January 1942, he was transferred to the infantry training center in Calgary.

Two months later, in March 1942, Harlow was transferred to Camp Dundurn, the largest military base in Saskatchewan. He remained assigned to the RCE.

Another transfer followed at the end of April 1942.

While awaiting the arrival of a larger unit of Engineers, Harlow went to Sardis near Chilliwack, British Columbia.



His stay there was relatively short; he was granted a week's embarkation leave in mid-May 1942 before being transferred to Halifax for departure to the United Kingdom.

On June 13, 1942, Harlow arrived in Liverpool and was assigned to a reinforcement unit for the Engineers.

Harlow's file provides little information about the period until the end of 1943.

Some notes:

He was granted a week's leave in November 1942 and February 1943.

By then, Harlow had qualified as a Carpenter "B" and his pay was increased to \$2.50 per day. In December 1943, he was granted the "good conduct badge".

In March 1944, Harlow transferred to the Ordnance Corps.

He became shop manager of 4/CAB (Canadian Army Brigade).

After just two weeks, Harlow was assigned to the troops that would go to Normandy. He landed there on July 25, 1944.

His file is very vague on his assignment, but we can deduce that he was Taken on Strength again by the RCE.

Harlow must have witnessed the entire advance from Normandy.

Through northern France, Belgium, and the actions in the southwest part of the Netherlands.

The relatively quiet winter months of 1944/1945 were spent training, resting, and bringing equipment and personnel up to strength.

It is unknown when Harlow was assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> Field Squadron of the RCE.

He was certainly reintegrated into the force when the Engineers moved from Delden, (crossing Twente Canal in the Netherlands) towards Meppen and Sögel in Germany.

On April 10, 1945, the Engineers' headquarters was near Sögel.

The staff, the signal group and an Advanced Dressing Station had moved into several buildings just north of the town.

The Officer's Mess was setup in the yard of a house.

Just after 8:00 a.m., gunfire was heard.

Hindered by dense fog and accustomed to the sound of small arms fire, no adequate response was forthcoming.

When they realized they were under attack, only about twenty men managed to quickly seek cover and take up positions.

They managed to hold off the attack until reinforcements arrived with two tanks.

By noon, the casualties were: four dead and three wounded.  
(Two more of these died later.)

Among the dead was Sapper Harlow Dakin Rankin.



Sherman tanks in Sögel. Original photo.  
Archive of the Municipality of S.

He was given a temporary grave in Sögel.  
His final resting place: the CWGC Canadian War Cemetery in Holten.  
Reference: Plot 10, Row C, Grave 16.

He was awarded:  
*The 1939-1945 Star; the France-Germany Star; the Defence Medal; the 1939-1945 War Medal; and the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal with Clasp.*

