

A New Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack Memorial

by Jim Harris



The Saluting Base at CFB Chilliwack has now come back to life as a memorial. We can all be very proud of what has been achieved over the past year. Retired Sappers “Everywhere” can take a well-earned bow.

Only In November 2012, a request went out advising of our plan to create a memorial from the old saluting base. CME Branch Council gave us the go-ahead and, promised Sapper Support. Shortly thereafter, 192 Construction Engineering Flight (Aldergrove) 19 Wing, Comox and 54 Engineer Squadron, 39 Combat Engineer Regiment committed to support the project and were to be huge players, - providing expertise, knowledge, equipment, manpower and Engineer know-how. We could not have done it without their support – thank you family and friends.

Teamwork was key. Support from the community, donations from around the world and individual commitment have enabled the successful completion of the Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack Memorial consisting largely of the refurbishment of the existing saluting base originally constructed in July 1949.

Our project costs exceeded \$40,000.00 – met by generous donations, - mainly from Retired Sappers, ex-military, dependants and local service clubs – THANK YOU!

Costs were kept to a minimum by the twenty-four Chilliwack area Community Partners who provided their expertise and materials. Financially, we have just over \$2,000.00 remaining for the maintenance fund. New donations will go directly into that reserve. That fund shall be maintained by Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack Historical Society (CFBCHS) who will maintain and preserve the memorial in perpetuity.



As of today, over 300 donations for Engraved Bricks have been received.

Pete Somers came up with the fundraising idea of engraved bricks at \$100.00 each which raised over \$30,000.00 to date. The base plates were also his brilliant concept and design, and he arranged their preparation and painting through Mertin's GM, Chilliwack. Nice touch.

We will continue to accept engraved brick requests until end April 2014. These are being given a front row place of honour, left and right of the front steps. (Thanks to Retired Sapper Gord Hockridge and his two sons for all the bricklaying).

Behind the saluting base, we have installed five plinths with stone engraved plaques, and they honour:

1. History of the base;
2. Names of those military personnel that died on duty here;
3. Base Commanders and Base CWOs from 1942 to base closure;
4. The Units that served here; and
5. All Civilian Employees;

(Note: Plaques 2 & 3 are mounted in Bailey Bridge Base Plates - thanks Dennis Dwyer and Stoney for providing that Engineer connection with our bridging history).

Attached to the back wall of the saluting base is a plaque acknowledging the support organizations that designed and completed the project.

The CME Hat Badge featured on the front of the dais is the original badge as of base closure (donated thanks to Capt Pete Pitcher and 192 CEF).

Cpl Dave Low, a blacksmith and member of 192 CEF, fabricated and donated the two UBIQUE signs to replace the originals. Outstanding generosity and fantastic craftsmanship.

The special coating on the saluting base is exceptional quality and will last many years without needing a touch-up.

The memorial stands on grounds purchased by the University of the Fraser Valley. The University took a front seat in the design and in steering this committee - we thank them for their invaluable contribution and generosity in allowing this memorial on their lands. They have also agreed to maintain the grounds surrounding the memorial – we are indebted.

There are also two 1,000 lb basalt stone benches flanking the grounds. These stones were quarried near Squamish BC. Take a seat and reflect.

Over 3000 pictures were taken of the amazing work from day one, by ex-military and base photographer Don Schoenenberger. He then subjected each picture to between 15 mins and 3 hrs of editing. An enormous amount of his personal time was also spent at the site taking those pictures for CFBCHS - FREE of charge – huge commitment – Bravo Zulu. 800 of those pictures have been selected for archives. Additionally, in the New Year, they will be made available on the CFBCHS website link at: <http://cfbchs.com/>

Mike Boughner and Bob Ranger, straw bosses, were instrumental in holding the project together, literally at the grass roots level with their long arduous hours of supervising the work, and their physical involvement.

Dave Shavalier was our secretary and his city connections came in very handy, not to mention his diplomatic humour. Excellent floodlight by the way.

Bill Stone, who is extremely busy with so many 'Sapper' and Community Events, volunteered as our treasurer - BZ.

Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack Historical Society provided the history, fundraising and public relations.

Finally, Our Project Manager Ed Ashley, Retired Sappers (Chilliwack), who took a concept and a dream and moulded it into something very special. Long, long hours and dedication to this project will be his legacy - thank you Ed - you done us proud.

The Dedication was officiated by Brigadier-General R.W. (Des) DesLauriers, OMM, CD (Ret'd) Colonel Commandant, Canadian Military Engineers (CME). He was accompanied by his wife Judy and CME Branch CWO K.A. Patterson, MMM, CD.



The dedication ceremony was held under gorgeous sunny skies on 12 Oct 2013 and attended by over 300 spectators and several hundred parade participants.



"Wings" was played beautifully by ex-RCE Bandsman Charlie Young, now 94 years of age and still a most accomplished, active musician.

The Colonel Commandant, with kind words of praise, singled out our special guest, Sapper Charlie Q. Lee – WWII Special Operations Executive Force 136, Burma Star Veteran, who trained here in Chilliwack prior to going overseas during WWII.

BGen DesLauriers spoke from the heart after the dedication. He was clearly moved by the event as were we moved by his emotional and heartfelt remarks.

6 Field Squadron Pipes and Drums provided the marching music. 280 Vedder Golden Legion had an outstanding Colour Party that delighted the crowd. A large contingent of retired military, dependants and former base employees were on parade and spectating.



Master of Ceremonies, Colonel Sam Dunbar (Ret'd), former Base Commander and Project Advisor, kept everyone well informed with his commentary.



In attendance as well were Major-General Ed Fitch (Ret'd), and Brigadier-General Archie Brown (Ret'd).

The City of Chilliwack was represented by her Worship, Mayor of Chilliwack, Sharon Gaetz.

Many other dignitaries, too many to name here were also in attendance and were treated to an excellent parade and dedication.

Thanks go to MCpl Jarrod Feasby (192 CEF) who, on his own initiative completed a big cleanup and lawn care of the area prior to parade – Sapper pride.



Following the parade and dedication by Padre Fred Tassinari, a reception was held in the former Officers Mess - now the Canada Lands Company (CLC) Presentation Centre. CLC were very kind, donating the use of their facility for over 300 visitors.



The Chilliwack Harmony Chorus who not only sang O Canada and God Save the Queen at the dedication, entertained at the reception also – they were brilliant.

In reflecting back over the year preceding the dedication, pride in this accomplishment is the overwhelming feeling by all committee members – well done to the committee that took an entire year out of their lives for this amazing tribute to Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack and to all who served here, military, civilians and dependents. The new occupants will not forget their accomplishments, sacrifice and dedication to Canada, as we too will remember them in our hearts.

CHIMO – UBIQUE







THANK YOU COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- UNIVERSITY OF FRASER VALLEY
- 192 CONSTRUCTION ENGINEERING FLIGHT (ALDERGROVE) OF 19 WING COMOX
- 54 ENGINEER SQUADRON OF 39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENT
- CANADIAN FORCES BASE CHILLIWACK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
- LAFARGE CANADA
- KEL MOR INDUSTRIES
- HOME DEPOT
- SCHOOL DISTRICT No.33 (CHILLIWACK)
- DON SCHOENENBERGER, PHOTOGRAPHER
- BPOE ELKS LODGE # 48 CHILLIWACK
- RON RIDDOCH P ENG
- KEN HOLMES - CANADIAN MILITARY ENGINEER ASSOCIATION
- PACIFIC SPIRIT STONE DESIGN
- RETIRED SAPPER'S REUNION COMMITTEE
- CANADIAN MILITARY ENGINEER MUSEUM
- GIDNEY SIGNS
- MERTIN PAINT & COLLISION
- CANEX BLDG SUPPLIES MASONARY DIVISION
- KIWANIS CLUB OF SARDIS
- NORTHWEST LANDSCAPING & SUPPLIES
- CANADA LANDS COMPANY
- JOHN GUNTNER - DRAUGHTSMAN
- HUB INTERNATIONAL

CFB CHILLIWACK MEMORIAL DEDICATION



**12 OCTOBER 2013
13:00 HOURS**

**Reception to follow
At Canada Lands Presentation Center**