



VIMM Newsletter

Summer 2016

Vancouver Island Military Museum

LT. GOV. JUDITH GUICHON DEDICATES VIMM WALL OF HONOUR



NATO campaign. Families of those remembered on the Wall brought photos of loved ones. Following the speeches, the guests toured the VIMM exhibits.

The VIMM welcomed:

Her Honour, the Honourable Judith Guichon
Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia
Leonard Krog MLA
Doug Routley, MLA
Acting Mayor of Nanaimo, Wendy Pratt
Nanaimo City Councillors Iain Thorpe & Diane Brennan
Chief John Wesley, Snuneymuxw First Nation
Superintendent Mark Fisher RCMP
Commander Darren Rich RCN, CF METR
Capt. Edward Dahlgren Harbour Master—
Nanaimo Port Authority
Representatives from RCL #10 and #257

Many families brought photos of the veterans who are remembered on the Wall of Honour.

Her Honour, the Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, dedicating the Wall of Honour at the VIMM.

On June 16, Her Honour, the Honourable Judith Guichon, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, dedicated our Wall of Honour. In her address Her Honour thanked the veterans and their families and reviewed the long history in Canada of military service – including her own family's role in defending against the Fenian Raids in the 1860s! In warm sunshine, the assembled families and sponsors of the memorial plaques also heard from Nanaimo's Acting Mayor, MLAs and City Councillors. VIMM President Roger Bird and Vice President Brian McFadden explained the history of the Wall, pointing out that there were names from the Boer War to Afghanistan





DEFENDING THE PACIFIC COAST 1942–1945

By Angus Scully

The VIMM's new display on the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers adds to the story of the role of Canada's military in the Pacific in the Second World War. The new display is next to the stories of the Canadian Rangers and Aboriginal Veterans.

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Hong Kong and Canadian troops stationed there. Hawaii, the Philippines, and other places around the Pacific were also attacked. Canada's west coast was unprepared and vulnerable. The whole war effort had been focused on Europe until December 1941. VIMM displays help to tell the story of the response.

SUBMARINE WARFARE ON THE WEST COAST

On December 7, 1941, the large Japanese submarine *I-25* was waiting at the mouth of the Strait of Juan de Fuca to attack American and Canadian shipping. It was one of 7 submarines off the west coast of North America under orders to sink ships and attack shore targets. There were only a few RCN ships and the *Fishermen's Volunteer Reserve (FVR)* to defend against the Japanese threat. The *I Class* subs were equipped with a 140mm gun and an aircraft, as well as torpedoes. In June 1942 the *I-26* sank the steamer *Coast Trader* off Port Renfrew and escaped after being hunted by the RCAF, the *FVR*, and the corvette, *HMCS Edmunston*. The *I-26* then surfaced off the Estevan Point Lighthouse and shelled the light station and the village of Nuu-chan-nulth. In September, the *I-25* launched its "*Glen*" aircraft off Cape Blanco, Oregon, to drop incendiary bombs to start forest fires. These were found and extinguished without much damage, but the Japanese would persist in trying to set forest fires later in the war with their balloon bomb campaign.

THE RCAF AND THE ALEUTIAN CAMPAIGN

In June 1942, 8500 Japanese troops invaded Alaska, taking the Aleutian islands of Attu and Kiska. RCAF 115 Squadron (flying Bristol Bolingbroke bombers) and 118 Squadron (Kittyhawk fighters) were sent to Annette Island, Alaska, 121 km north of Prince Rupert. Canada thus became the first and only Allied nation to have a military base on US soil. RCAF 8 Squadron (Bolingbrokes) was sent to Yakutat, Alaska and Anchorage. RCAF 111 Squadron (Kittyhawks) was sent to Umnak and then to Adak Island in the

Aleutians, 400km from Kiska. The RCAF engaged in maritime patrols, bombing Japanese bases, and escorting American bombers. Squadron Leader Ken Boomer from Ottawa had already shot down two German aircraft, and when he destroyed a Japanese aircraft he became the first Allied airman to shoot down both German and Japanese aircraft.

PACIFIC COMMAND

Pacific Command was an important part of Canadian defences, with two division headquarters, five infantry brigades, and the fortress troops of the Vancouver, Victoria, Esquimalt, and Prince Rupert. Most of the troops in the nearly 20 regiments from all over Canada were conscripted under the National Resources Mobilization Act. These NRMA draftees were required to serve only in defence of Canada and, in 1942 – 1943, were not to be sent overseas. As in the First World War, conscription was a sensitive and divisive topic in Canada.

In September 1942, Major General George Pearkes took over Pacific Command. He was a regular officer of great experience and energy, having commanded the First Division in England. He worked hard at improving the Pacific defences and training the conscript units that formed the backbone of the Army's defence of the West Coast. He was also determined to have Canada take part in the planned American attacks to dislodge the Japanese from North America. Pearkes suggested to American generals that Washington formally request that Ottawa allow his troops to take part. Once that had been arranged, Pearkes was insistent that the NRMA units be used. He thought they were well trained and capable. But he knew they had a growing negative reputation in many parts of the country because they would not volunteer for overseas duty. They were often dismissed as "Zombies". Pearkes thought a successful operation against Kiska would improve their reputation and morale. Pearkes selected the 13th Infantry Brigade of the 8th Division.

NANAIMO MILITARY CAMP

In June 1943, the 13th Brigade was concentrated on Vancouver Island at Nanaimo Military Camp, with Combined Operations (amphibious landing) training at Courtney. Brigadier General Harry Foster, a young and capable officer, was brought over from the Canadian



Major General George Pearkes VC

GOC First Canadian Infantry Division, 1940 - 42

GOC Pacific Command 1942 - 45

MP Nanaimo 1945 -53

MP Esquimalt Saanich 1953 - 1960

Minister of National Defence 1957 - 60

Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia 1960 - 68

Army in England to command the brigade. Foster would later command the 4th Canadian Armoured division and the 1st Canadian Infantry Division in 1944 and 1945.

Training was taken very seriously because of the lessons learned from the American invasion of Attu earlier in May. The invading US division supported by a large naval force (including the corvettes *HMCS Dawson* and *HMCS Vancouver*) suffered over 4000 casualties including 549 dead. The entire Japanese defending force of 2351 died to a man. Kiska had more Japanese defenders than Attu.

At Nanaimo, the 13th Brigade was reorganized into American style combat teams (combining infantry, artillery, engineer and medical units). To simplify supply on the operation, Canadian units received

American uniforms and some American weapons. At the end of the intensive training, morale among the troops was considered high.

Boarding ships began at Nanaimo and Chemainus on 10 July 1943. Almost immediately there were reports of some conscripts throwing their rifles in the water, and the *Winnipeg Grenadiers* refused

VIMM Displays

The story of the defence of the Pacific coast is told in the following displays:

Camp Nanaimo | Kiska Operation | Pacific Coast | Militia Rangers | Canadian Rangers | War in the Pacific | Tommy Prince | Aboriginal Veterans | First Special Service Force

to board the ships. What the Army called “barrack room lawyers” were claiming the conscripts were not required to serve outside of Canada. There were also a few troops absent without leave (two were found hiding in a camp on nearby Mount Benson). Overnight talks with the troops resolved the matter - the trouble making leaders were removed, General Foster reported all was under control, and the force set sail for Alaska.

THE "KISKA KIDS"

The Kiska invasion consisted of 30 000 Americans and 5 300 Canadians. Also part of the invasion was the First Special Service Force; the famous combined US – Canadian regiment that went on to fame in fighting in Italy. After a preliminary bombardment the troops stormed ashore, only to find that the Japanese were gone. They had retreated in the fog after their defeat at Attu and Allied reconnaissance and intelligence services had not noticed. There has been a tendency to make fun of this operation, and the Official History of the Canadian Army calls it a fiasco. Surveying the abandoned Japanese defences, General Foster said, “We’re lucky to be alive.”

The drafted men of the NRMA army had performed well, and were admired by the American commanders for their skill and discipline. When the conscripts were later sent to Europe, those who had been to the Aleutians were dubbed, “The Kiska Kids.” They did well against the Germans.



WAR IN THE PACIFIC PACIFI



Abbreviation: P.C.M.R. **Headquarters:** Ottawa, ON
Organized: 1941 **Disbanded:** 1945
Motto: Vigilans **British Alliance:** None Listed
Perpetuated: Canadian Rangers

William Hampson, CD

Following the attack on Pearl Harbour the fear of a Japanese invasion of Canada was rife. Discussions were carried out regarding the creation of Coastal Defence Guard units, similar to the British Home Guard. These proposed units would comprise of ex-soldiers and civilians who could not serve in the regular forces due to age, physically unfit, or those who were needed to perform valuable war related activities but who also could play an important role in the defence of the British Columbia coastline should the Japanese plan to invade.

In 1942 a Home Defence organization known as the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers was formed. Its formation was prompted by the following events: the undeclared attack on Pearl Harbor (December 07, 1941), the shelling of the Oil Refinery at Elwood, California, the Japanese submarine shelling of the lighthouse and Radio-Direction-Finding installation at Estevan Point on Vancouver Island, the torpedoing of US merchant shipping in the Straits of Juan de Fuca (June 1942), the invasion of Kiska Island in the Aleutians Island chain (June 7, 1942) and the launching of Fire Balloons by Japan along the western seaboard during World War Two.

These Hydrogen filled Balloons were an inexpensive form of terrorist weapon designed to carry either an incendiary or anti-personnel explosive device

which detonated on impact. The Japanese made use of the Gulf Stream current to deliver there payload and wreak havoc along the British Columbia and United States western seaboard. Over 9, 300 of these relatively ineffective terror weapon were launched by



Japan inflicting relatively minor damage. Members of the Canadian military were therefore faced with the problem of how to defend the pacific coastline from foreign invaders. Modern infiltration tactics suggested the B.C. interior was equally as venerable to attack as was the coastline the big question was how to defend over a quarter million square miles of some of the roughest terrain in the world.

The PCMR was a unique auxiliary Canadian volunteer Home Defence force comprised of ex-military personnel, woodsman, loggers, prospectors, the anglers who fished the streams, the hunters who travelled the mountains and ranchers who possessed knowledge of the local topography and terrain and who were willing to serve without pay but were also subject to the rules of military conduct (Kings Regulations). These volunteers were initially



PACIFIC COAST MILITIA RANGERS

tasked with patrolling both the coastlines and interiors of the Province of British Columbia and Yukon Territories and to conduct military surveillance in anticipation of possible Japanese invasion or fifth columnist attacks.

With the initial success of guerilla warfare campaigns in China and the possibility of a Japanese invasion of the British Columbia coastline required the formation of a local defence force trained in these concepts. These PMCR units were under the command of three major patrol areas, Vancouver Island, the Lower Fraser Valley and the Bridge Rivers area.

This initiative was highly supported by local inhabitants and as a result, thousands were eager to join up and to work without pay to defend their province or territory against possible invasion. By 1941, over 10,000 men had enlisted in the P.C.M.R.—companies and detachments found throughout the Fraser Valley, Kootenay's, Northern British Columbia Okanogan Valley, Queen Charlottes, Sunshine Coast, Vancouver Island & Gulf Islands and Yukon Territory, by wars end the PCMR was comprised of 138 companies.

For its part, the federal government was willing to arm and train these volunteers. These individuals received instruction and training in the following areas: anti-sabotage or fifth column strategies, coastal observation, guerilla warfare tactics, intelligence gathering, map and compass, military drill, patrolling and small arms training at the various PCMR Training Centres located across the province, in essence they became the eyes and ears of the Canadian Army. For those living in remote areas military instruction and guidance was provided by Travelling PCMR Instructors.

This particular training was also geared to teach “hit and run” tactics so that a small fighting patrol could swoop down under the cover of darkness and enact the role of the guerilla fighter on enemy concentrations. The various ranger units were also trained to neutralize or destroy enemy armoured units, supply columns and infantry formations under combat conditions. Rifles, carbines and sub machine guns, mortars and hand grenades became the P.C.M.R. weapons of choice.

As the above training progressed another of the tasking assigned to the various P.C.M.R. units



VP Brian McFadden showing PCMR display to Rona Ambrose.

was to acquire detailed knowledge of their own topographical area and to be in a position to supply the Canadian Army with that information upon demand. The second tasking was to report any unusual happenings that would suggest possible subversive or “fifth column” activities.

A fifth column is an organized group of sympathizers who perform overt or clandestine operations from within. They gather in secret to organize coordinated overt attacks or conduct clandestine acts of sabotage, dis-information campaigns, or espionage carried out by secret sympathizers within a given infrastructure whether military or civilian.

In 1944, PCMR Headquarters, Vancouver began publication of magazine entitled “The Ranger”. This magazine highlighted the role of the PMCR units and depicted the wide array of specialized training they received on a number of military related topics.

On October 27, 1945, the PCMR units were disbanded by the Department of National Defence, Headquarters, Pacific Command, Vancouver, B.C. following Japan's surrender thus officially ending World War Two. The current Canadian Rangers organization of the Canadian Forces continued to perpetuate the traditions and heritage of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers to date.

Continued next page



SOUTH VANCOUVER ISLAND RANGERS

Unit: No. 1 Company Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (S.V.I)

Authorized: 1943—1945

AOR: Victoria, Goldstream, Sooke, the Jordan River Area

Motto: Ready To Serve

Jacket Crest



The No. 1 Company/ Pacific Coast Militia Rangers/ (South Vancouver Island) was formed in 1943-1945 as part of the defense of the British Columbia coastline during World War Two. Following the suasions of hostilities the unit was disbanded and later reformed as the South Vancouver Island Rangers Inc. by local members from the above disbanded Ranger unit. In 1947 it was re-activated as the Ranger Emergency Services organization. At present it's a day club which still serves the community in emergency situations. The S.V.I Rangers Inc. are also serves as an Outdoors Recreational club, Social club, and Trap and Skeet club.

CANADIAN RANGERS UNITS 1992—2002

Authorized: May 23, 1947 (Canadian Rangers)

Authorized: May 31, 1996 (Junior Rangers)

Motto: Vigilans "The Watchers"

**Headquarters: Canadian Rangers National Authority,
Canadian Land Forces Staff, Ottawa, ON**

**Command: CRPG No. 1 Joint Task Force North Northern,
Yellowknife, NWT**

Command: CRPG No. 2 Land Forces Quebec Area, St. Jean, PQ

**Command: CRPG No. 3 Land Forces Central Area, Borden, ON
(Francis Pegahmagabow Headquarters Building)**

Command: CRPG No. 4 Land Forces Western Area, Victoria, BC

Command: CRPG No. 5 Land Forces Atlantic Area, Gander, NL

The Canadian Rangers are a modern day version of the Pacific Coast Militia Rangers. The Canadian Rangers were organized on May 23, 1947 following the disbandment of the PCMR on October 27th, 1945. Like

the P.C.M.R. their role is to ensure territorial security by providing surveillance patrols of the Canadian coastlines and remote regions of Canada.

Another primary task is to detect, report, and prevent possible hostile elements from penetrating Canadian territory. Like its predecessor, Canadian Ranger units comprise of local volunteers who are willing to take military training and who reside in sparsely settled northern settlements, coastal and other isolated areas throughout Canada. The Canadian Rangers are designed to provide a military presence in regions which can't conveniently or economically be covered by other Canadian armed forces elements. Some Canadian Rangers are even called upon to inspect the North Warning System as well as, act as guides, scouts, and provide instruction on wilderness survival to member of the Regular and Reserve Forces in their area of responsibility.



Some Canadian Rangers are paid appropriate rates of reserve forces pay when present during Canadian Forces Winter Indoctrination exercises in the region and or during specialized training events. The Canadian Rangers have been known to assist the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and or Provincial Police in the discovery, reporting and apprehension of enemy agents, terrorist or saboteurs.

At present there are an estimated 5,000 Canadian Rangers on strength located in 178 communities across Canada. Divided into 5 geographic areas called Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups, They are as follows:

- 1 CRPG-located in northern Canada with a total of 58 patrols in the Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northern British Columbia**
- 2 CRPG-located in the Province of Quebec with 23 patrols**
- 3 CRPG-located in Northern Ontario with 15 patrols**
- 4 CRPG-located on the Pacific west coast and Prairies with 38 patrols**
- 5 CRPG located in Newfoundland & Labrador with 29 patrols**



Note: There are no Canadian Ranger Patrol Groups found in Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick. All existing Canadian Ranger groups belong either to one of the five Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (CRPG) listed above.

JUNIOR CANADIAN RANGERS

The Junior Canadian Ranger program was authorized on May 31, 1996 and organization with links to the Canadian Rangers. The JCR program offers men



& women ages 12-18 years of age in remote areas of Canada an opportunity to participate in a range of organized formal activities, within the community and Summer Camp environment. (For more information visit Junior Canadian Rangers Website)

See TV program Guardians of the North, regarding training of Canadian Rangers Companies in the Northern Regions of Canada by the Department of National Defence.

MUSEUM DIRECTORS AND STAFF

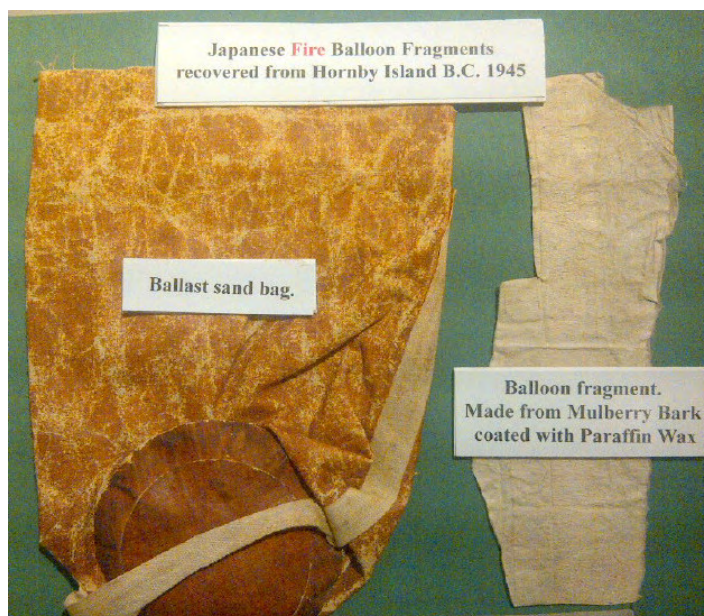
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On Display

JAPANESE BALLOON BOMBS

In May 1945 at Bly Oregon, a woman and five children on a church picnic were killed when they found a Japanese balloon bomb. These were the only deaths caused by the Japanese balloon offensive launched against North America. Over 9 000 were launched from Japan to float across the Pacific and start fires – and spread fear. However, until the Oregon deaths, Canadian and American authorities kept the attacks secret so that the Japanese Army would not know what happened to their unguided missiles. The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers were heavily involved in tracking down the bombs that landed.



The Museum's fragments from a Japanese Fire Balloon found on Hornby Island.

The balloon bombs, "Fu Go," were 21 meters high, 10 m in diameter and carried four 5 kg incendiary bombs, a 15 kg anti-personnel bomb, instruments, and ballast. Never meant to be accurate, they travelled at altitudes up to 10 km and at speeds up to 450 km/hr on their 8 000 km voyage. A few made it as far east as Manitoba. 300 balloon bombs or parts have been recovered in North America, as recently as 2014. In British Columbia, 54 were shot down or recovered on the ground. The last was shot down by a RCAF P-40 Kittyhawk fighter in April 1945.

Vice President's Message

The first Alaska cruise ship of the season visited Nanaimo in May. This year the *Explorer of the Sea*, one of the largest cruise ships ever built, berthed at the Nanaimo Cruise Ship facility. During the ship's visit a great many international visitors, including many American veterans, took time to visit the Military Museum. During the stop-over they were greeted with a new and unique display in the U.S. Allied Exhibit.

The display honours the First Special Service Force (FSSF), a combat unit created to counter the Japanese invasion of the Aleutians, a chain of islands off the coast of Alaska. The Force was the brainchild of Britain's wartime leader Winston Churchill who visualized the creation of a combined Canadian/US infantry brigade. The brigade's first deployment was as part of an



amphibious assault on the Island of Kiska, occupied by the Japanese in June 1942.

After the Aleutian campaign the force was reorganized and retrained for special operations more in line with Churchill's idea of a commando unit designed to take on the most hazardous missions. The First Special Service Force (FSSF) was attached to the American 5th Army for operations in Italy where they became the military's first *special forces*.

The Force gained fame and notoriety for their skill and daring in the assault at Anzio and later in the mountainous terrain of central Italy. The First Special Service Force earned the nickname, "The Devil's Brigade," for their night attacks behind enemy lines when the men blackened their faces to aid in concealment. The unit's exploits were made famous in a Hollywood movie of the late 60's.

In February 2015, the First Special Service Force was honoured with the Congressional Gold Medal at a ceremony in Washington, D.C., attended by Canadian and US Government Officials along with many FSSF veterans.

Brian McFadden



VIMM President Roger Bird described the history and purpose of the Wall, with VP Brian McFadden looking on.



Her Honour toured the Museum and met VIMM volunteer John Pierce.



All veterans are equal on the Wall – no ranks are given, only branch or unit names.



Volunteers Clynt Pringle and Betty Fennell greeted dignitaries touring the museum.