

MARTINS RIVER BRIDGE "Damn all that eagerness"

On 17 June members of 143 AEF Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia, under the leadership of MWO Clayton, arrived at the Martins River Railway Bridge to start the task of decking the bridge for safe pedestrian use. The Martins River Bridge is located in Lunenburg County NS between the towns of Mahone Bay and Chester. It is part of Phase II of the Trans-Canada Trail and was included in the CME2003 Bridges For Canada Program for renovations. The abandoned railway trestle/double span bridge crosses a gap of 77 M over Martins River. The Dynamite Trail Association with support from the NS Department of Natural resources and the NS Trails Association sponsored the project. The plan was to complete the project during the 17-21 June timeframe with the posts and side panels being pre-fabricated at the 143 AEF building, outside of Bridgewater, the previous week.

The bridge crew of ten individuals left the unit at 0730 17 June with three trucks full of materials and equipment for the bridge site located 22 Km away. Captain Gary Silliker, OC 143 AEF, went to the job-site at 1300 that day to see how the project was proceeding. After viewing the progress he was heard to paraphrase a military commander from the Crimean War when he remarked, "143, damn all that eagerness - slow down, you have 5 days to complete this job!" The reason that OC 143 AEF felt like that CO of yore was brought on by the rapid progress that had been made that morning. The small, but very eager, crew had installed 75% of the posts, 50 % of the side panels and 30 % of the decking - they were well ahead of schedule!



By the end of day two the crew had all posts in place, 95% of the side panels up and 70% of the decking completed. They would have had all the decking completed if they had not run out of lumber on the job-site. Day three saw the crew on site working on the approach "cow catchers" and installing the last side panels and decking. The bridge was completed at 1630 that day.

At 1200 20 June the bridge builders and other members of 14 AES, along with some of the local community, met on the bridge for a Bridge Opening BBQ. Local politicians retired CME members, Mr Steven Vines the President of the NS Trails Association, and members of the sponsoring Dynamite Trail Association were in attendance. Mr Vines presented all members of 143 AEF, who had worked on any of the "Bridges for Canada" projects, with NS Trails Association "Builder" pins and certificates of appreciation. Major Carlos Marques, CO 14 AES, used this fine sapper setting to induct three new recruits into the CF by conducting the "swearing in ceremony" on the bridge in the shadow of the CME flag.

This is the third bridge project completed by 143 AEF as part of the Bridges for Canada project, bringing the 14 AES total to 8 bridges repaired/renovated along the TCT.

Capt Gary Silliker, OC 143 AEF Lunenburg County

