

CAF engineers repair Bonaventure Memorial

By Ryan Melanson – Trident

In March, a group of Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) engineers repaired the HMCS Bonaventure Anchor Memorial which has sat at Point Pleasant Park in Halifax, N.S., since 1973.

The memorial is made up of the anchor and chain from Canada's last aircraft carrier, serving as a monument to sailors who lost their lives during peacetime. Over the last decade, it became clear the memorial needed repairs.

CAF engineers assessed the condition of the Anchor Memorial, and made the necessary repairs, ensuring the piece of Royal Canadian Navy history will continue to be visible to all ships traversing Halifax Harbour, and to honour those who died.

The work was carried out predominantly by Royal Canadian Air Force Reservists from 144 and 143 Construction Engineering Flight (CEF) in Pictou and Bridgewater. Captain Marc Lukaszczyk-Therien was the lead on the project. He said the main issue was with the anchor's metal mounts, which were rusted from years of exposure.

Members of 144 and 143 Construction Engineering Flight, based out of Pictou and Bridgewater, conducted the repair work on the Bonaventure Memorial, and used a crane on March 19 to connect the anchor to the newly built metal mounts.

Photo: Ryan Melanson, Trident



“We came in, moved a lot of the rocks out of the way, disconnected the ship's cable, and freed the anchor from the original mounts and set it off to the side,” Capt Therien said. The team rebuilt the metal supporting structures, replaced the rocks surrounding the monument, and on March 19, moved the anchor back to its original position to be secured to the new mounts.

“Later on this spring we'll hopefully be doing some aesthetic types of work,” Capt Therien added. “This was a great project for us to take on and I think everyone enjoyed it.”

The CAF members weren't the only ones happy to see the anchor back in place. A group of retired sailors came to the site to observe as a crane lowered the anchor back into position.

Able Seaman (Retired) Allan “Dinger” Bell, a survivor of the 1969 HMCS Kootenay explosion that killed nine of his shipmates, has been advocating for repairs to the monument, part of which includes the names of those who lost their lives in the explosion.

“I wasn't sure I'd ever see it happen, so I'm happy today,” he said.

Others included Brian Lapierre, a member of the Submariners Association of Canada who also sailed in HMCS Bonaventure in 1967 when a Sea King crashed during an exercise, killing two members of the crew. He was especially pleased by news that the memorial will be incorporated into this year's Battle of the Atlantic commemoration, with the Lieutenant Governor and Commander MARLANT/JTFA set to stop and lay wreaths following the ceremony at the larger Sailors' Memorial.

“To a sailor, this anchor, this memorial really means something. I think it will be a big moment on Battle of the Atlantic Sunday this year,” he said.

12 Wing Honorary Colonel Tom Birchall said credit was due to MARLANT and JTFA, CFB Halifax Base Commander Captain (Navy) Paul Forget, his predecessor Commodore Chris Sutherland, AB (Ret'd) Bell, all three levels of government and others who've lobbied for the repairs to take place, along with the CAF members who carried out the work.

"We're happy to see the work get done now and it's a win-win for everyone involved," said Hon Col Birchall.



Front row from left, Elspie and Charles Caterer, Brian Lapierre, Jim Mosley. Middle row from left, Patti Christie, Dinger Bell, Valerie Griffin and Dick Tilley. Back row from left, CAF members from 144 and 143 CEF – Corporal (Cpl) Rob White, Captain Marc Lukaszczyk-Therien, Sgt Joe Wynands, Avr Travis Decker, Cpl Clarence Parnell, and Avr Joshua McKay.

Photo: Mona Ghiz, MARLANT PA