

THE SALUTING BASE IS A MEMORIAL

A restored Saluting Base at the former Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack was unveiled as a memorial and dedicated in October 2013. This project represented a coordinated community, military, and heritage preservation effort that unfolded from late 2012 to October 2013.



The project began in November 2012, when the CFB Chilliwack Historical Society and the Retired Sappers Reunion Committee proposed transforming the long unused 1949 saluting base into a permanent memorial honouring the military presence in Chilliwack. The CME Branch Council approved the plan, and military engineering units - including 192 Construction Engineering Flight (Aldergrove), 19 Wing Comox, and 54 Engineer Squadron, 39 Combat Engineer Regiment - committed personnel, equipment, and technical expertise to support the restoration.

The saluting base itself was originally built in July 1949 but had fallen into disrepair after the closure of CFB Chilliwack in 1998. Although the surrounding land was redeveloped, the University of the Fraser Valley preserved the structure and granted permission for its refurbishment.

Restoration plans were developed that included reinstalling historic engineering symbols such as the wrought iron “UBIQUE” inserts that had been preserved by the Canadian Military Engineers Museum and the cast CME Badge that had been salvaged years earlier. These elements re-establish the memorial’s connection to its Canadian Military Engineer heritage.

Fundraising was achieved largely through donations from retired sappers, veterans, families, and local service clubs. Many community partners contributed materials, labour, and professional services, significantly reducing expenses. A particularly successful initiative was the sale of engraved bricks, with over 300 purchased and installed in places of honour flanking the memorial’s front steps.

By summer 2013, engineering units and volunteers began the on-site work. The scope of work included structural refurbishment, landscaping, and the installation of five engraved stone plinths. The plaques on these plinths commemorate five aspects of the base’s history: honouring those personnel who died on duty, recognizing the Base Commander and Base Chief Warrant Officer leadership, recognizing the units that were stationed there, and acknowledging the contributions of the civilian employees. A plaque on the rear wall credits the organizations and individuals who made the project possible.



The restored memorial was rededicated on 12 October 2013, officiated by Brigadier-General R.W. DesLauriers, OMM, CD (Ret’d), Colonel Commandant of the Canadian Military Engineers. This restoration and rededication symbolically reconnected the community with its military past. The Saluting Base helps preserve the legacy of the Canadian Military Engineers for future generations. It reminds us of when Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack was the “Home of the Canadian Military Engineers” from 1942 to 1997. (420 Words)