

# 39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION



Date 9 November 2021  
# 19 (#8/2021)

## IN THIS ISSUE

**President's Report**  
**Exercises**  
**Honours and Awards**  
**Obituary**  
**Museum**  
**Membership**  
**39 CER Association Contacts**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello all, as you will see in this newsletter that 39 CER had very challenging and exciting exercise at Haida Gwai. On another positive note, BC appears to be coming out of the COVID19 shutdown, which means that soon we will be able to see each other face to face other than over zoom meetings and phone calls. The next push for the Association will be to increase our membership, through contacting old friends and new retirees. Please take time to read this newsletter as it is a good read!

Chimo

Bill Wenman  
President

## EXERCISES

### EX HAIDA SAPPER

Army Engineer Reservists hone their skills on Haida Gwaii  
By Lt(N) Robert Fines 44 ES

During the last week of September 2021, members of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment (39CER) made the journey to the small village of Masset located in the Northern part of Haida Gwaii. Their mission objective, was the replacement of an old bridge and other infrastructure upgrades in support of Canadian Forces Detachment Masset, a remote communication site, which supports

Canadian Forces Station Leitrim in Ottawa. Along for the journey were a number of military units across the Western Region of Canada, including 12 Fd Ambulance, 39 Service Battalion and HMCS Discovery to name a few. This monumental tasking was known as Exercise Haida Sapper. While building bridges is nothing new for a Combat Engineer, in most cases exercises like Haida Sapper involved the construction and removal of a temporary structure. The ACROW Bridge that was built over the allotted 72 hour period will remain a fully functional bridge for years to come, which will serve as a lasting legacy of this exercise.

The arrival of the Sappers and other support trades to Masset, was a bit of a throwback to the “good ole days” when there was a much larger military presence on the Islands previously known as Queen Charlotte. Established initially as Naval Radio Station in 1942, there was nearly 300 serving members located at CFD Masset as recently as 1997. Now there is only a handful of Canadian Armed Forces members serving in the local area. Nevertheless, the detachment is still a strategically important base that provides signal intelligence to both the Canadian Forces Intelligence Branch and the Communications Security Establishment. Therefore, it is very important to maintain the infrastructure on the area, to keep CFS Masset strategically viable.

Given the geographical location of Masset, and the reduced military personnel on the island, you can imagine it can be difficult to readily address infrastructure concerns. With the dire need to replace a bridge on one of the main service roads of the detachment, and the necessity of a boardwalk in another site, the request was made out for outside support. Enter the Combat Engineers. Building bridges is one of the core skills of a Sapper, and this bridge replacement was an excellent opportunity for the Combat Engineers to practice and enhance their skills. Not to mention, it was a great chance to build up esprit de corps, within the Troops. Due to the pandemic, exercises like HAIDA SAPPER had been put on hold, or reduced in size or complexity. However, with stringent safety guards in place, and adherence to provincial, federal and military COVID-19 guidelines, the engineers were able to safely carry out their objectives.

Replacement of an old timber bridge was unquestionable the main effort of the exercise. But building this bridge was not without its challenges. Bridge Commander, MCpl Grasby from Chilliwack BC explained “this was not a usual build with lots of complications and restrictions including a narrow and complicated approach, limited personnel and a different model than the normal ACROW we are trained on. It went really well – we accomplished our goal within the time line and maintained safety.” Site Commander Captain Henry Helmer-Smith from Invermere BC echoed similar sentiments, while noting its significance to the area, “The task was successfully completed and I am extremely proud of the hard work and long hours of my troops. It was a particularly satisfying task as this is a permanent bridge with strategic importance.” A key part of this main effort included the construction and demolition of a bypass bridge at the new bridge site. This bypass bridge gave the young sappers a sense of realism of an operational setting, as such a bridge is vital in support of the main objective. Captain Helmer-Smith, stated “it was an interesting task as a timber bypass bridge had to be constructed prior to construction of the ACROW to allow for forward mobility of troops and supplies over the crossing.”

In addition, to the bridge building, a second troop was assigned the task of building a cedar board walk. This board walk was a much-needed addition to CFD Masset, as it will give members of the detachment better access to important service areas. With the bridge build nearing completion, the call was put out for all available soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen to assist in building of as many sections of the new boardwalk as possible before the conclusion of the exercise. This included the new and untrained privates, all the way to the seasoned veterans like

Commanding Officer of 39 CER LCol James Julien and Regimental Sergeant Major CWO Charles Rochlow. In the end more than 710 m of new boardwalk was constructed, much to the delight of the command team.

Overall, the common feeling among the troops, was the exercise was a success. It may have rained here and there, but seeing what they accomplished undoubtedly gave the Sappers a sense of pride in their trade and abilities. This sense of accomplishment was further noted by the Commanding Officer. “The complexities and challenges of the ground, weather and two task sites working simultaneously while sharing one access road to both have made for excellent training at all levels” stated LCol Julien. “It was a hard push to the finish with the whole team pulling together in challenging conditions. I am extremely proud of my team and the augmentees from other units. They are highly motivated and have excelled in all the tasks assigned.” This exercise also gave the participants an opportunity to learn more about the Haida people, and give a little back to the communities by visiting local shops and the Gwaii Haanas culture centre. Having come together across BC, most notably from North Vancouver, Chilliwack and Trail, the respective home of 6, 54, and 44 Engineer Squadrons, the experiences gained in Haida Gwaii will not be easily forgotten.



Ex HS 21 – Photo 1: Master Corporal Grasby, from 39 Combat Engineer Regiment, Bridge Commander of the ACROW bridge build, where members of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment built a permanent ACROW bridge for Canadian Forces Detachment Masset, on Ex HAIDA SAPPER, in Masset British Columbia. 25 September 2021. Photo: Private Daniel Pereira, 39 CBG Public Affairs



Ex HS 21 – Photo 2: Members of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment construct a boardwalk through a swamp for Canadian Forces Detachment Masset, during Ex HAIDA SAPPER, in Masset British Columbia. 25 September 2021. Photo: Private Daniel Pereira, 39 CBG Public Affairs

## BC Army Reserves get to work in Haida Gwaii

Lt(N) Samantha Beckett, Training Officer, HMCS DISCOVERY

39 Combat Engineer Regiment (39 CER) deployed a team of 88 troops to Haida Gwaii to improve accessibility at Canadian Forces Detachment (CFD) Masset – a detachment of Canadian Forces Station Leitrim based out of Ottawa, ON. The team consisted of reservists from units all over BC including the Kootenays, Lower Mainland and Vancouver Island. Exercise HAIDA SAPPER spanned from September 23 to 28, 2021 and was led by the Commanding Officer of 39 CER Lieutenant-Colonel (LCol) Jim Julien.

The exercise utilized key military engineering and logistic skills to pull together the feat of completing multiple tasks within a 72 hour period. The team built a 15m ACROW bridge over a river to replace a degrading existing timber bridge; a cedar boardwalk to an equipment site and a temporary bypass bridge.

The main effort was the ACROW Bridge built by Bridge Commander Master Corporal (MCpl) Rick Grasby from Chilliwack, BC at 54 Engineer Squadron (ES). MCpl Grasby just completed his Sergeant's course where he learnt to be a bridge commander, how to design and execute demolition of bridges among other skills. MCpl Grasby explained "this was not a usual build with lots of complications and restrictions including a narrow and complicated approach, limited personnel and a different model than the normal ACROW we are trained on. It went really well – we accomplished our goal within the time line and maintained safety."

The ACROW Bridge and Bypass Bridge Site Commander, Captain Henry Helmer-Smith from Invermere, BC parading with 44 ES in Cranbrook and Trail, stated "it was an interesting task as a timber bypass bridge had to be constructed prior to construction of the ACROW to allow for forward mobility of troops and supplies over the crossing. Upon completion of the ACROW, the bypass bridge had to be deconstructed and materials returned. The task was successfully completed and I am extremely proud of the hard work and long hours of my troops. It was a particularly satisfying task as this is a permanent bridge with strategic importance."

The weather did not pay any favours to the team as they worked tirelessly through the sheets of rain which impacted the already rough terrain they were building upon. This was a special exercise for the team as reservists usually train by building and then having to remove their construction; to actually build two permanent structures is something that the team can be very proud of.

The cedar boardwalk was a secondary effort but still very important to the remote team that is posted to CFD Masset. Its strategic location provided access to ease maintenance of equipment in a marsh terrain. Troops worked tirelessly moving cedar from the base camp to the forward site and building the boardwalk. MCpl Trent Coombs, from Fruitvale, BC, was a Section Commander in charge of moving wood along to different drop sites as the boardwalk was established. "Overall the exercise was a good go - it was a neat experience to work with the whole regiment. We had a slow start but once we got rolling it went really well. It was hard work – by the end of the boardwalk, the planks were going over 800m by hand" stated MCpl Coombs. Confined by daylight, the troops of the secondary site were the first to leave camp at the crack of dawn. In a last surge, everyone available were called to help complete the task. The team went above and beyond the expected length originally set out for this exercise.

“The complexities and challenges of the ground, weather and two task sites working simultaneously while sharing one access road to both have made for excellent training at all levels” stated LCol Julien. “It was a hard push to the finish with the whole team pulling together in challenging conditions. I am extremely proud of my team and the augmentees from other units. They are highly motivated and have excelled in all the tasks assigned.”

This Exercise was logistics heavy from pre-deployment to post-deployment. The different movements included a barge, flights, equipment, heavy duty vehicles, set up and tear down of camp. Support came from units outside of 39 CER to pull this together. Without all the support staff on the ground and behind the scenes, this exercise would not have been as successful as it was.

The exercise was extremely cognisant of the pandemic and diligently followed federal, provincial and military COVID-19 guidelines to keep the community and the team safe. The team set up a self-sufficient camp at CFS Masset with a mobile kitchen trailer and cooks to ease the hardship on the community and minimize engagement with the physical separation.

44 Engineer Squadron has armouries in Trail and Cranbrook. They are currently accepting applications for part-time positions with guaranteed full-time summer employment for the first four years. More information is available at [www.forces.ca](http://www.forces.ca) or by calling the Squadron directly at 250-368-2129.



Ex HS 21 – Photo 3: Members of 39 Combat Engineer Regiment construct a permanent ACROW bridge for Canadian Forces Detachment Masset, in Masset British Columbia. 24 September 2021. Photo: Private Daniel Pereira, 39 CBG Public Affairs

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### Promotion – Sgt Irvine

On 23 October MCpl Irvine was promoted to Sgt by the CO accompanied by the RSM.



CO, LCol Julien presenting the newly promoted Sgt Irvine with his rank alongside a proud RSM, CWO Rochlow.

## OBITUARY

**Major (Ray) R. O. Lange CD**  
**03 November 1931 – 06 October 2021**



Major Ray Lange was born in Saskatchewan on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1931. He attended the local Cadet unit from 1941 until 1947 at which time he began a career as a steeplejack in the construction industry.

In May 1953 Major Lange joined the Regular Force Army and was posted to the RCSME at Chilliwack where he attended the Basic and Corps training prior to being shipped to 3 Field Engineer Squadron RCE in Korea in February of 1954. By this time the truce was in effect and 3 Fd Engr Sqn was tasked with mine clearance, bridge building, road building, water supply and the numerous taskings that befall an Engineer unit. Much of this work was carried out in close proximity to the DMZ where Communist North Koreans with their Chinese allies fielded a million troops who looked prepared to break the ceasefire at any time.

Ray returned to BC in December of 1954 where he served with 3 Fd Engr Sqn in Victoria prior to being posted as a Lance Corporal to the 1

Airborne Troop RCE in Calgary in February of 1955. He was promoted to Corporal in January 1956 and Lance Sergeant on 01 May 1957. During this period he attended many courses including Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Warfare (NBCW) courses in preparation to his appointment to Unit NBCW Trg Sgt.

In August 1958 his airborne unit was disbanded and Ray transferred to 1 Fd Engr Sqn in Petawawa as Recce Sgt of a 90 personnel Fd Tp. During the summer of 1959 his troop was tasked with fortifying a building to withstand an NBCW attack. This involved reinforcing the floor beams and placing over one million sand bags to beef up the walls.

In September 1959 Sergeant Lange was posted to 4 Fd Engr Sqn as a Fd Tp Recce Sgt. After a year at this position he was appointed to be the Troop Sergeant, still with responsibility as the NBCW Instructor, but now also, owing to his ability to speak German, as the unit interpreter. This was the cold war period and Ray recounted, “The Berlin Wall was being built and this created a need for increased security. Red Alerts were the order of the day and when the sirens sounded we all had to disperse immediately, even in the middle of a mess dinner”

On his return to Canada in 1962, Ray was posted to RCSME as an Instructor in Field Engineering subjects. He also completed his Fd Engr Course Group 4A.



Ray was then posted as a Sgt to I Staff Eastern Ontario, District of Ottawa in September 1964 and was promoted to WO in March 1969. While at this posting he was responsible for, amongst other things, monitoring the training at 3 Fd Engr Sqn RCE (Militia) and Armouries Security at Cornwall, Pembroke and Kingston.

It should be noted that during this period Quebec Separatists were attacking Federal Government facilities and the armouries were prime targets, necessitating all Sgts and WO's to be armed with live ammunition.

In June 1969 WO Lange was sent to 4 Fd Engr Sqn, Germany for his second posting in that country, this time as the Support Troop WO. After Canadian Government cut-backs WO Lange moved to Lahr where he was appointed as an Fd Tp WO under US Army Command.

In 1972 Ray was posted back to RCSME as a Standards Writer and in 1973 he was promoted to the rank of MWO and posted to 1CER as a Tp MWO.

In August of 1974 he was sent on a 3 month French language Immersion course in St. Jean, Quebec, followed by a posting to 5 Fd Engr Sqn in Valcartier as Sp Tp MWO after which he served as the commander of the Engr Eqpt Tp.

In 1977 MWO Lange was posted back to CFSME as the Sgt Major of the Heavy Equipment Sqn for a year, followed by a move to Sgt Major of Fd Engr Trg which was followed by another year back in Standards.

In early 1981 Ray was posted to 1CER as a Training MWO in RHQ. While there, Ray took advantage of the offer to take a commission and extend his compulsory retirement age.

Ray passed all the necessary prerequisites for commissioning and was posted to 6 Fd Engr Sqn (Militia) in the rank of Captain to serve as the Unit Regular Support Staff Officer (RSSO). In his words, "My terms of reference were to do what I could to help the Militia and if I did my job well, the Militia would also do well". As those who served with Captain Ray Lange RSSO can attest, both did do well.

Ray transferred to the Supplementary Reserve in December of 1986. In May 1987 he was called out to serve as OC of the Reserve Engineer Training Squadron at CFSME in the rank of Major. Major Lange finally retired from the Canadian Armed Forces at the completion of this appointment later in that year.

Whilst in Saskatchewan in 1959, Ray met Aline and they were married the following year. They have three daughters, Karla (Fortin), Amber (Chung) and Margo (Frank), all of whom attended the 1982 Military Ball as debutantes where they were presented to the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

## MUSEUM

### History Book is Coming in Installments

It has long been a wish of 6 Engineer Squadron and its predecessors to publish a history book. There was a book published in the 50's that told the story of the unit's participation in World War II and it also very briefly covered the years 1912 to 1939.

In 1989 the Commanding Officer at the time, Col Bill White, suggested in the unit Newsletter that the whole of the unit's history should be told and solicited writers to come forward -- several answered the call. Fast forward to the present and we are able to announce some results.

Over the years many people and many committees have met, deliberated and contributed but the end goal was always elusive – until now. Although many people have, at one time or another, made significant contributions it has been one person who has persevered the most and the longest.

LCol (Ret'd) Vince Larocque has painstakingly done the research and gathered voluminous reference material. In addition, he has produced drafts of many of the chapters that are required to tell the story from 1911 through to 2010.

Rather than wait for all the chapters to be completed and also to avoid the long process of formatting and preparation for printing, Vince and the Museum are taking a different approach:

### **We will publish installments on the internet**

We are starting with one completed chapter, two “beta” chapters and two Annexes. Additional installments will be added as they are finalized. We eventually hope to be able to offer a printed book but in the meantime it is our hope that you will enjoy the history as it unfolds on the website.

Although this is a history of 6 ES, we will be working on a history beyond 2010 which will describe 39 Combat Engineer Regiment and include the roots of 44 ES and 54 ES.

View the book at [Untitled \(39cer-museum.net\)](http://Untitled(39cer-museum.net))

## **MEMBERSHIP**

For those wishing to become members of 39 CER Association, a membership form can be acquired from: [membership@39cer.ca](mailto:membership@39cer.ca)

### **39 CER Association Contacts**

President: Bill Wenman LCol (Ret'd)	<a href="mailto:wenman_39@telus.net">wenman_39@telus.net</a>
Vice-President – Bill White Col (Ret'd)	<a href="mailto:president@39cer.ca">president@39cer.ca</a>
Treasurer – Roli Krueger Capt (Ret'd)	<a href="mailto:roland_krueger@telus.net">roland_krueger@telus.net</a>
Secretary – Grant Acheson Maj (Ret'd)	<a href="mailto:secretary@39cer.ca">secretary@39cer.ca</a>
Newsletter Editor – Achim von Wiedner Maj (Ret'd)	<a href="mailto:avonwiedner@shaw.ca">avonwiedner@shaw.ca</a>

### **Board Members**

Bill Diamond  
Cameron McLean (LCol)  
John MacPherson

The 39 CER website can be accessed at: <http://www.39cer-museum.net/>

For more Engineer news please visit the Canadian Military Engineer Association website at: <https://cmea-agmc.ca>