

39 COMBAT ENGINEER REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION



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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hi all, the 75th anniversary of 44 Engineer was well attended. I would like to thank all the members of the 75th anniversary planning committee who worked many hours to ensure that all aspects of the weekend were covered.

It always great to see a Pukka Sapper recognition. Truly SSM Gagnon is a true sapper in all aspects and a well deserved recognition.

Chimo,

Bill Wenman
President

THE ORDER OF THE PUKKA SAPPER



MWO Mark Gagnon, flanked by past CO, LCol J. Julien, and current CO LCol S Piers moments after his induction to the order on Friday 4 October 2004.

Master Warrant Officer M.P. Gagnon has consistently demonstrated the qualities that exemplify the spirit of the Pukka Sapper—genuine, reliable, and of the highest quality. Over his 13 years of service with 39 Combat Engineer Regiment, MWO Gagnon has shown unwavering dedication to the Engineers, bringing unique strengths from his background as a finance clerk. In his role as Squadron Sergeant Major of 44 Engineer Squadron, he has provided critical leadership, successfully navigating numerous personnel and operational challenges. His planning of squadron activities, ranges, exercises, and individual training has been pivotal in maintaining unit readiness and operational effectiveness. MWO Gagnon's exceptional service extends to his role backfilling as the 44 ES RSS Operations Warrant Officer, further supporting the regiment's operations. His commitment and outstanding contributions to the Engineers make him a deserving candidate for induction into the Order of the Pukka Sapper, recognizing him as a valued member of the extended CME family.

44 ES 75th ANNIVERSARY

On May 8, 1989 the City of Trail conferred Freedom of the City to the 44th Field Engineer Squadron. On Saturday, October 5, 2024 we honoured 75 years of service and freedom in Trail.



The parade started at the cenotaph and proceeded along Pine Ave to City Hall, where Colleen Jones, Mayor of Trail conducted an inspection and reaffirmed the squadron's Freedom of the City. Soldiers were in combat attire with rifles and bayonets fixed. The Trail Pipe Band marched at the rear, and personnel then returned to the armoury for the open house.



OC 44 ES, Maj N. French knocking on the City Hall door requesting the right to exercise the Freedom of the City previously granted to Squadron.



Cpl Johnson explaining the workings of the mine detector

44 Engineer Squadron celebrates 75 years of service and community in Trail

Sheri Regnier Rossland News / Trail Times

The squadron's roots trace back to the 54th Kootenay Battalion, formed during World War I.

Earlier this month, under blue skies and warm sunshine, the 44 Engineer Squadron celebrated its 75th anniversary in Trail, setting the perfect stage for a memorable day.

"Everything came together perfectly," said Major Nils French, Commander of the 44 Engineer Squadron, in an email interview with the Trail Times.

"There are a lot of details to get right for an event like this, but everything fell into place."

Major French also expressed gratitude for the support from the City of Trail.

"We couldn't have asked for a better day for the parade and open house, and we couldn't have asked for better support from the city."

One of the highlights for French was reconnecting with past commanders, including Colonel (Retired) Brent Warne, who held French's position 25 years ago during the squadron's 50th anniversary celebration in 1999.

French also enjoyed mingling with former members of the squadron, some whose service dates back to 1961.



The Oct. 5 open house, which attracted around 300 members of the public, was another standout moment.

"It was great to host so many from our community, share what we do, and let them know about the opportunity to serve with the 44th," said French.

In a nod to tradition, this year's event closely mirrored the squadron's 50th anniversary celebration.

From the uniforms and sequence of events to the locations, the organizers recreated the atmosphere of 1999, even down to having one member in the same position in the parade.

“These events really reinforce how much we’re a part of this community,” French explained.

“Our members live and work here, we’ve completed dozens of projects in the area—from building bridges to demolishing old dams—and much of our logistics are locally sourced. This anniversary celebrates 75 years of that relationship.”

While officially established in 1949, the squadron’s roots trace back to the 54th Kootenay Battalion, formed during World War I.



Early photo of the armoury shortly after construction.



The armory today

Over its 75-year history, the 44 Engineer Squadron has been involved in national defense, crisis response, and countless community projects throughout the region.

The squadron has deployed members to more than a dozen international operations in countries like Ukraine, Afghanistan, Latvia, Bosnia, and Cyprus, and responded to domestic emergencies such as wildfires, floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

Members also supported major events like the 2010 Vancouver Olympics.

Locally, the squadron has completed projects ranging from bridge construction to wetland restoration across the East and West Kootenays, with over 1,000 residents serving in its ranks throughout its history.



Mayor C. Jones inspecting 44th Engineers Field Squadron

“(Oct. 5) I attended the 75th Anniversary celebration of the 44th Engineers Field Squadron on behalf of the City of Trail, feeling deeply honored,” Mayor Colleen Jones posted to Facebook. “The Scroll I read from and then signed with Councillor Hanson as my witness stated: By virtue of Section 213 of the Municipal Act and a unanimous council vote on October 5, 2024, the 44th Engineer Squadron, part of 39 combat Engineer Regiment, is reaffirmed the Freedom of the City of Trail. We attest to this by affixing our signatures and the City Seal,” she added. “It was a memorable day shared with Councillors Butler, Cashol, and Hanson.”



A sampling of the table centre pieces



Over 100 members, former members, and guests were in attendance at the squadron's dinner



Current and former OCs (L-R) Nils French, Achim von Wiedner, Andrew McQuilkin, Al Moreau, Brent Warne, Bill Wenman



Current and former Sqn Sargeant Majors (L-R) Vern Blair , Terry McKimmie, David McTeer, Sharman Thomas, Shane Granger, Shane Batch, Mark Gagnon



Three generations of the Thomas family who have served in the unit, Maj Thomas, Pte Thomas, and CWO Thomas.



The naval contingent: PO1 Kim Morrison – 39 CER Chief Human Resource Administrator, Lt(N) Dave Cherrington and Lt(N) Melissa Townsend from RCSCC 81 Hampton Gray V.C. in Nelson & Lt(N) Robert Fines HMCS Discovery and 44 ES Trail.



The newly enrolled members of the Squadron forming a strong bond along with Cpl Laura Matern and Capt Henry Helmer-Smith. Back Row – Pte(B) Nick Tait (Trl), Pte Shane Wesman (Crbk), Pte Kirk Wagg (Trl), Pte Elizabeth McLeod(Crbk), Pte(B) Hue Anderson (Trl) Front Row – Pte Logan Doll (Crbk)

VETERAN AFFAIRS

Our Board member David Blake-Knox Maj (Ret'd) (blake_knoxd@hotmail.com) has offered his services to assist individuals in submitting claims to Veterans Affairs. David has had success in navigating the bureaucracy in submitting his own claims and those of others.

MEMBERSHIP

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

39 CER ASSOCIATION CONTACTS

President: Bill Wenman LCol (Ret'd)	wenman_39@telus.net
Past-President – Bill White Col (Ret'd)	president@39cer.ca
Vice-President – Bill Diamond	Bill@39cer.ca
Treasurer – Roli Krueger Capt (Ret'd)	roland_krueger@telus.net
Secretary – Grant Acheson Maj (Ret'd)	secretary@39cer.ca
Membership – Grant Acheson Maj (Ret'd)	secretary@39cer.ca
Newsletter Editor – Achim von Wiedner Maj (Ret'd)	avonwiedner@shaw.ca
Veteran Affairs Advisor – David Blake-Knox Maj (Ret'd)	blake_knoxd@hotmail.com

Board Members

Bill Diamond
Cameron McLean LCol

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

Recent editions of the 39 CER Newsletter can be accessed at: [39 CER Association \(39cer-museum.net\)](http://www.39cer-museum.net/). Earlier editions can be obtained from the Secretary or Editor.

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