

The J. Laurie Cormier Prisoner of War Park

The park project takes shape

After more than two years, a committee made up of representatives from the City and the Association was set up and agreed on a basic concept for the park. It would be dedicated to J. Laurie Cormier and would recognize the area's contribution to Canada's role in the air war during World War II.

A few designs were submitted to the committee. Its members saw great possibilities in a proposal from Heritage Memorials. The black and grey monument had four surfaces to work with and was topped by an obelisk.

The City prepared the site and picked up a large part of the cost of the monument. The Association raised \$28,600. The government of New Brunswick as well as local businesses were asked to contribute.

By November 2005, the new monument was in place but it was not unveiled until August 20, 2006.

For the first time since 1981, the annual commemorative ceremony for the Dieppe Raid was held at a location other than the Cenotaph.



About 200 veterans, officials, invited guests and local residents attended the unveiling under cloudy skies. A fly past by an Aurora aircraft from CFB Greenwood was cancelled due to the low cloud ceiling.

The monument impressed all those taking part in its unveiling. All agreed that it would be a lasting memorial to J. Laurie Cormier and to the area's contribution to the war effort in the air during the Second World War.

The threat of rain forced a shortened wreath laying ceremony immediately after the unveiling.



L to R: Col Perry R. Matte, CO of 14 Wing CFB Greenwood; Bill Church, V.-P., Air Force Assoc. of Canada Trust; BGen Owen Lockyer (Ret'd); Don McLeod, Pres., Air Force Assoc. of Canada; Mayor Achille Maillet of Dieppe; J. Laurie Cormier in whose honour the park is named; Dieppe city councillor Charles Cormier; Shirley Stiles who worked at Clarke-Ruse during World War II; Art Cuthbertson, Pres., Dieppe Military Veterans' Assoc.; WW II veteran Joseph Gautreau.



Col Perry R. Matte, Commanding Officer of 14 Wing CFB Greenwood, lays a wreath in remembrance of lost air force comrades.



The monument, an original design by George Nelson, measures 3.05 metres (10 feet) at the base and its obelisk rises to 3.66 metres (12 feet). It weighs more than nine tons. The grey granite is from Vermont and the black from South Africa.

The front bears the dedication: J. Laurie Cormier, Prisoner of War Park. Above the inscription, a granite slab relates the story of Laurie Cormier, a tail gunner on a Halifax bomber from No. 427 Squadron, RCAF, who was shot down during a raid on Frankfurt on December 20, 1943, and captured by the Germans two days later. Etched above the story are the crest of the RCAF, a photo of Laurie Cormier wearing his flying helmet and the crest of the Dieppe Military Veterans' Association.



The front of the monument.

On the left side of the monument is a tribute to the airmen who sacrificed their lives, were wounded or were taken prisoner. It also details the area's role in training pilots and aircrew under the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan from 1940 to 1945. The RCAF crest and a photo of a graduating class from No. 8

Service Flying Training School at the Moncton Airport are etched above the story.

Commonwealth airmen from the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa as well as those from Poland, Norway, Belgium, The Netherlands, Denmark, Czechoslovakia and Free France who trained in Canada entered through Moncton at No 31 Royal Air Force Personnel Depot and their last stop before their posting overseas was at No 10 Royal Air Force Release Depot.

Aero engine mechanics trained at the Moncton High School. No 5 Equipment Depot and an RCAF recruiting centre were also in Moncton. No 4 RCAF Repair Depot was located in Scoudouc.



The left side of the monument.

On the right side of the monument is a tribute to the workers, mostly women, at the Clarke-Ruse Aircraft Ltd. workshop located at the airport. They did major overhauls on various types of aircraft from the fall of 1942 until the end of the Second World War.

Engraved above the story is the Clarke-Ruse Aircraft company logo and a

photo of two women repairing a wing. Ann Dryden (left) and Shirley (Graves) Stiles are rivetting a section of wing. Mrs. Stiles took part in the unveiling.



The right side of the monument.

On the rear of the monument is an engraving of a Handley Page Halifax bomber bearing the call letters of the aircraft Laurie Cormier was flying in when shot down over Germany on December 20, 1943.



The rear of the monument.

The Year of the Veteran Monument

A second monument was also unveiled during the August 20, 2006, commemorative ceremonies at the J. Laurie Cormier Prisoner of War Park.

The round 1.84 metre (6 foot) grey granite monument with the words "Garden of Remembrance" and bearing the symbol of the Year of the Veteran was a special project undertaken by the Dieppe Military Veterans' Association in 2005.



Joseph Gautreau (L) and BGen Owen Lockyer (Ret'd), both World War II veterans and members of the Association, unveil the Year of the Veteran Monument.

The Province of New Brunswick, the City of Dieppe and businesses contributed to the creation of this memorial.

Donors' monument

Finally, a third monument stands in the J. Laurie Cormier Prisoner of War Park. It lists the donors who made the park a reality: City of Dieppe, Province of New Brunswick, Dieppe Military Veterans' Association, Air Force Veterans' Club, Air Force Association of Canada Trust, Royal Canadian Legion Branch 6, Heritage Memorials Ltd., Levesque Realty Ltd. Dieppe, Cadillac Fairview Corporation, Caisse populaire de Dieppe, Riverview Veterans' Association, Bank of Nova Scotia Dieppe, Greater Moncton International Airport, Atlantic Alarm Systems, Approach Navigation Systems, Nils Liljemark of Dieppe, Sports Rock Pub and Steak House, ADI Ltd. Moncton and M. R. Martin Construction Ltd., Wal-Mart and Medavie Blue Cross.



The monument was donated by George Nelson, president of Heritage Memorials of Windsor, Nova Scotia.

The J. Laurie Cormier Park is a permanent memorial to the sacrifices of so many young men who served in the Royal Canadian Air Force and to the area's contribution to Canada's war effort in the air during the Second World War.

A new plaque was added in 2007 to mark the contribution of the men who served in RAF Ferry Command whose task was to fly aircraft, mainly bombers, from Canada to the United Kingdom.

The Cenotaph: A New Place of Honour

The building of the new Dieppe City Hall beginning in the summer of 2005 necessitated the moving of the Cenotaph.

Since the creation of the Dieppe Military Veterans' Association more than 25 years ago, the municipality has recognized the contribution of those who served in time of war and in time of peace.

Again the veterans were not forgotten in the plans for the new City Hall. A place of honour was reserved for the Cenotaph. It is located on Veterans' Place.



The moving of the Cenotaph also provided the opportunity to undertake repairs and restoration. These were funded by the City of Dieppe.

It is in this new location that the major remembrance ceremonies will be held in the future.

Future Projects

For the past few years, the Dieppe Military Veterans' Association has been collecting personal items, memorabilia and military related objects from its members and others. All with the idea of creating a small museum honouring the citizens of Dieppe who served Canada in time war.

Shortly after the opening of the new City Hall at the end of 2006, representatives of the Association asked City Council to help set up such a museum. However, the City had a much broader vision.

Plans were already in the offing to create an interpretation centre including a military section. The centre would be located in the old City Hall.

Two representatives from the Association are members of the committee preparing the project. The centre should be open within two to three years.

Preliminary plans call for a large space to be dedicated to modern military history.