

RCAF Station Ferrer Point

12 September 1942 - 19 September 1945

Formation of the Radio Direction Finder (RDF) detachment at Ferrer Point was authorized by Org. Order No. 91 effective 23 July 1942. Building and general construction were undertaken by Marwell Construction Company of Vancouver. Work on site preparation by #9 CMU began 12 September and was completed in May 1943. Installation of technical apparatus commenced 20 March. The necessary documents and maps were brought in by aircraft on 10 June 1943 and the detachment became operational that day.

The radar array was constructed on Northwest Cone which rises above a relatively flat area of Nootka Island. The operations site was approximately 1 ½ miles from the main detachment. It included a guard house, operations building, and winch house. A 380 foot inclined railway was used to move supplies and people up the final steep incline to the Ops Site. The generators supplying power for the entire detachment were situated 500 feet up the railway. The Ops Site and main camp were connected by a plank road going past the main camp and terminating at the dock on Louie Bay. The main camp consisted of four barrack blocks (one for each crew), the administration building, housing, offices, WT Section, Officers quarters, recreation hall, mess hall, MT Section, and hospital. Crews and supplies were moved between the two sites in the back of a dump truck. There were also boat and aircraft mooring buoys at Louie Bay.



The detachment's supplies and rations were delivered by boat from Zeballos, approximately 20 miles distance. Personnel were often transferred by the Stranraers of No 4 BR Sqn from RCAF Stn Ucluelet, which was also the support base for RCAF Ferrer Point. Supplies came in every eleven days, but bad weather often made resupply challenging and the use of emergency rations was not uncommon. Station strength started at eighty personnel but gradually declined to about fifty on closure. The original plan had been to supply the detachment with coal for heating and cooking, but getting it there was so difficult, and driftwood so abundant on the beaches, that burning wood made more sense. This worked well but meant frequent wood cutting details to keep the wood sheds full.

At 1600 hrs on 18 December 1943, personnel at the Detachment observed shell splashes close to their unit and reported they were under attack. Aircraft from Coal Harbour and Tofino investigated, hoping to illuminate something using their navigation lights, but found only two small fishing vessels. It was learned six hours later that the SS Maquina, passing five miles away, had undertaken some 12-pounder gunnery practice, firing towards what the crew took to be an uninhabited shore. The ship's captain claimed his gun crew had fired only two heavy rounds; those on the receiving end claimed there had been anywhere between nine and twenty shell splashes. The presence of a radar site was, of course, a closely guarded secret, apparently even to the Maquina.

Operations went on round the clock, 24/7, except when high winds forced the crew to lock the radar array to prevent damage. This effectively put the radar off the air, but, for the majority of the time, the radar performed well. It had a maximum detection range of 185 miles. A lot of air traffic transited the area and the detachment set a record for the number of aircraft tracks plotted with 319 in a single week.. Another record was established on 15 August 1944 when 83 tracks were plotted and identified in a single day.

Visitors, ranging from padres, to doctors, to various educators appeared regularly and films were available, as well as sports. They even held a dance, inviting the ladies from CeePeeCee Village to visit the Station. The daily routine was interrupted when the occasional Japanese Fire Balloon was spotted, and the crews were called out on a few occasions to fight forest fires. Overall it was a pretty quiet life, except for the weather.



On 25 August 1945, the station was instructed to prepare for closing down. Operation hours were reduced to 0800 to 2000 hrs daily and on 14 September at 1300 hrs, under WAC authority, radar operations ceased. The next day, the station was advised to proceed with dismantling the radar equipment. On 19 September, RCAF Stn Ferrer Point was disbanded by Western Air Command Operational Order No. 83. The electronic gear and some of the more valuable items were removed and the remainder was left in place to disintegrate. Later on, the main camp site near Tongue Point was used as a Christian Camp by the Esperanza Mission. One can still find numerous bits and pieces of the old station around showing where the various buildings and roads used to be.

