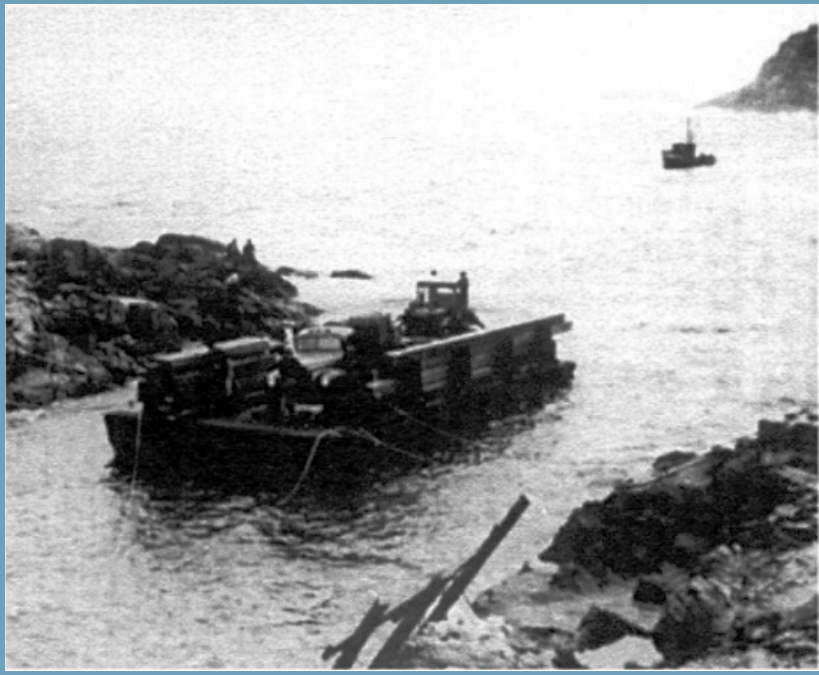


RCAF Station Langara Point

17 June 1943 - 06 August 1945

The Department of Marine and Fisheries recognized that a major landfall light was needed on the northern end of the Queen Charlotte Islands to mark Dixon Entrance. A site on top of the plateau at Langara Point on the island's north shore was chosen. Work began in 1912 on a thirty-foot, hexagonal tower, built of reinforced concrete with lighting apparatus, fog signal equipment and a double dwelling. Several methods were tried to get supplies to the light house until they settled on a derrick which was installed in 1915 followed by an aerial tramway constructed in 1917 to facilitate unloading.



In WWII a chain of radars was needed on the west coast to detect a Japanese invasion. One of the sites chosen was Langara Island. From a technical point of view the location appeared entirely satisfactory - one could see well into Dixon Entrance and straight down the West Coast of Graham Island from the Ops Sites radar. The camp site was located in a natural hollow close to the operations site. There was fresh water and a good supply of firewood for heating and cooking and the terrain was suitable for building on. The only drawback was a location to unload construction materials and supplies that had protection from the fierce west coast weather. There was a great harbour at Henslung Bay on the south end of the island but it was too far away, so the RCAF faced the same problems as the Department of Marine and Fisheries had, with similar solutions.



On 17 July 1942, #9 Construction and Maintenance Unit (CMU) arrived and started to work on improving the harbour and inserting a plug into the "gut" to help hold back the surf during unloading operations. Landing at Langara remained a dangerous operation. A row boat from a supply vessel would enter the "gut," hook up to a line that would raise the rowboat, with its occupants and cargo, straight up out of the water, then pull it horizontally along a highline, then set it down on a flat rock. Numerous accidents and two deaths occurred during these operations. Every now and then the station crews enjoyed giving visiting senior officers a "roller coaster" ride.



By 1 September 1942, the ramp and dock were completed, and the road between the dock and the Lighthouse was close to complete. At the same time another #9 CMU crew established a tent work camp on Raff Bay on the opposite side of the island. Their project was to construct a pole line which would provide about five circuits to connect the new radiotelephone transmitter site which was located close to the #9 CMU camp to the Radar site. By 3 September, construction of the trail from the Lighthouse to the Camp site began. Soon an area large enough to permit construction of the campsite was cleared and the footings for the Mess Hall and No 1 & 2 Barracks were poured. Construction work on the Hospital, the administration building, the ablution hut, and recreation hall started, followed by barrack blocks #3 and #4, the garage, the canteen hut, and the mess hall. By 11 January, all personnel and equipment had moved to the camp site. The Ops site was completed on 15 April. The Ensign was raised for the first time on 16 May 1943, and the diesel generators were started the next day. At 2000 hrs 23 May, the radar equipment was on the air. The transition to No. 26 Radar Unit(RU) had started.

No. 26 RU at Langara Island did experience something out of the ordinary - submarines. On the 2 August 1943 and again on the 6 August 1943 subs were sighted near the dock accompanied by "jamming" on the R/T. On 8 August "jamming" was experienced again. Security was enhanced and on 8 August a gun crew from the army arrived with a gun and equipment, however, they were not very effective and left on the 2 October. On the 19 August word was received from 4 Group that a submarine was sighted approximately 100 miles NE of Langara heading south, and not spotted again.

The other thing that made RCAF Stn Langara different from most of the other RUs was the close proximity of the lighthouse to the campsite and the strong relationship the Station had with the lightkeeper and his family who were frequent guests at the Mess for dinners and special occasions. The local newspaper "*Bah Wilderness*" gave the personnel a way of keeping current on what was happening on the station and around the world. This station seemed to be very adept at obtaining films and short clips in spite of their supply problems and they organized all sorts of tournaments such as horseshoe, bridge, ping-pong and floor hockey to relieve the boredom.



The news of the German surrender on 7 May 45 signalled the end was drawing near so it was no surprise when the signal arrived telling No 26 Radio Unit to cease operations effective 0900 hours, 6 Aug 45 and to disband on 10 Aug 45. All the signal and radar equipment, gantries, towers and aerials, together with all relative spares, were returned to Prince Rupert along with the other valuable equipment. The generation equipment was left for the lighthouse's use. Strangely, the Mess Hall burned to the ground the night before everything had to be moved.

