

# The Pacific Coast Militia Rangers (PCMR)

By Curt Smecher

In the second World War, after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in December of 1941, there was fear that the West Coast could be attacked. On 12 August, 1942, General Order 320 created the PCMR as a corps of the Canadian Army. They were disbanded immediately after the war, on 30 September, 1945, but were reformed Canada-wide as the Canadian Rangers on May 23, 1947.

The PCMR were formed as a "Home Guard". These were not regular forces, but the people who lived and worked in the area. They were often too old, physically unfit, or more urgently needed for other roles at home to join the regular forces. In many ways, they were more like the Partisans of Italy, or the French Resistance fighters. They were familiar with the local terrain and were often experienced outdoorsmen. They were often recruited from loggers, trappers, prospectors, and fishermen.

In Bamfield, the Cable Station was a critical component of the Commonwealth's worldwide communications system. During the early years of the war, the station was shelled by a Japanese submarine from Barkley Sound. There was no major damage, but the government did send a company of troops to Bamfield for the duration of the war.

No. 14 Company of the PCMR was also put in place to help protect the area. It was under the command of Captain G. Wellburn (Sept 9, 1942 - Feb 1, 1943) and Sid Fry (the Customs Agent) subsequently. They were issued helmets, respirators, armbands, first aid kits and possibly .303 Lee Enfield Rifles or 30-30 lever action rifles.

Their roles included forming a coastal watch, watching for signs of a marine invasion, watching for any sabotage, protecting the lines of communication and Transportation.

There is a possible mortar placement still evident at 100 Mathers Lane, in West Bamfield.