



NEWS

Canadian Naval Technical History Association

When Fleet Maintenance Group (Atlantic) moved ashore

CNTHA News

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In 1975 I was posted to Fleet Maintenance Group (Atlantic) as the Senior Repair Officer and Deputy Commanding Officer. I was also the project manager for the unit's move ashore from the decommissioned escort maintenance ship HMCS *Cape Scott* to a new facility adjacent to the submarine squadron in Halifax Dockyard. It was hard work moving all of the repair equipment, including a foundry, but six months later FMG was back in business.

The facility was designated as a NATO repair facility, which meant we provided mobile repair support to the Standing Naval Force Atlantic in Halifax, Bermuda, Puerto Rico and certain US ports whenever required. FMG also sent repair parties out for technical support during major exercises. With 280 FMG technicians and total support from the Admiral in Maritime Command, we were able to perform tasks that sailors had never done before – replacing the snort mast on a submarine, repairing main feed pumps in destroyers, rewinding electric motors, moulding new parts in the foundry to replace obsolete parts on pumps and motors, and even once making temporary superstructure repairs on an AOR after an accident in Puerto Rico. We also produced all of the ship badges and memorabilia that were presented to visiting ships and dignitaries.

The capabilities of our people were outstanding, and we received numerous commendations. My engineer officer, Lt(N) Duncan Leslie, was awarded the Order of Military Merit for his individual service. After three years FMG had proven that sailors could perform any repair required to keep the fleet operational, but there were complaints that FMG was taking jobs away from the Ship Repair Unit. Fleet Maintenance Group was eventually disbanded, and the personnel moved to the SRU. In July 1978 I left to become the DMCS 8 section head for electronic warfare engineering at National Defence Headquarters in Ottawa.

The CNTHA's UK-based founding member, Captain Rolfe Monteith, RCN (Ret.) (shown right), met with the rest of the Canadian Naval Technical History Association team during a visit to Ottawa on Oct. 6. The meeting was also attended by Mike Whitby, Senior Naval Historian with the Directorate of History and Heritage – our key contact for the Oral History Program. As expected, the 92-year-old Rolfe made good contributions to the discussions, especially concerning the association's roles and way forward. He also very kindly presented engraved mugs and tumblers to the other CNTHA members in recognition of their contribution to the committee.



Photo by Don Wilson

WANTED: Any available details regarding the conversion of the wartime River-class frigates to establish the new Prestonian class of ocean escort frigates. These two photos show HMCS *Beacon Hill* before (K407) and after (303) her 1954-57 conversion. You can contact us at info@cntha.ca

