

# Decades old mortar at Fort Rodd Hill removed by military

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A Second World War-era mortar found at Fort Rodd Hill has been safely destroyed by two Clearance Divers of Fleet Diving Unit Pacific.

The item was discovered by a ground-skeeper while clearing underbrush near the perimeter of the Parks Canada facility on the morning of June 28. The explosive device was in a wooded area near Fort Rodd Hill Road.

PO2 Benoît Leonard and S1 Andy O'Brien, Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technicians of the Maritime Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit, were dispatched by the Canadian Joint Operations Command. Members of Military Police Unit (Esquimalt) had cordoned off the area.

The item was later identified as a British 2-inch-high explosive mortar. It was half buried in soil when PO2 Léonard and S1 O'Brien came upon it.

"It looked like it may have been [accidentally] dropped there a long time ago, long before the site was a tourist attraction," said PO2 Léonard.



Today, Fort Rodd Hill is a Parks Canada site, but it once served as a coastal defence system during the First and Second World War. The artillery battery was originally built in the 1890s by the Royal Navy to protect the area from Spanish and Russian navy attack.

It took PO2 Leonard and S1 O'Brien about 30 minutes to identify the mortar.

"It's sometimes difficult when dealing with old ordnance," said PO2 Léonard. "When all the markings are gone, we resort to different means like key features to identify an item."

A closer inspection of the mortar revealed it was fitted with high explosives but had no fuse attached.

"It's a smaller type of mortar, used against personnel and light vehicles," said PO2 Léonard. "The main danger would be fragmentation from the steel casing."

After determining the item was safe for transport, it was taken to the Canadian Forces Ammunition Depot destruction range.

It is the mandate of FDU(P) and its Maritime Explosive Ordnance Disposal Unit to provide safe disposal of any military ordnance. Their area of responsibility includes all DND and Government of Canada property in the Province of British Columbia.