



Fern Blodgett Sunde Commemoration 2020
c/o Cobourg Museum Foundation
55 King Street West, Cobourg, Ontario, K9A 2M2



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STATUE TO COMMEMORATE FERN BLODGETT SUNDE AND THE BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

A Canadian trailblazer, Fern Blodgett Sunde was the first woman to work as a wireless radio operator at sea, serving aboard an Allied merchant ship during the Battle of the Atlantic

For Immediate Release - November 5, 2019

COBOURG, Ontario, and OTTAWA – A volunteer steering committee, along with its community partner, the Cobourg Museum Foundation, will erect a life-sized bronze statue commemorating Fern Blodgett Sunde (1918-1991), the first Canadian woman to earn a professional radio operator's licence, and the first female radio operator - a "Sparks" - to work at sea. Breaking naval barriers, Fern served aboard the M/S Mosdale during the Second World War's Battle of the Atlantic, which was the long, deadly struggle between the Allied and Axis powers to control vital shipping lanes.

Educational materials, as well as an unveiling ceremony in October 2020, will pay tribute to Fern, and to all Canadian naval forces and merchant mariners who served at sea during the Battle. The statue and plaque will be located at the Cobourg, Ontario waterfront. Tyler Fauvelle, a Canadian professional sculptor whose public bronze monuments include three military commemorations, will create the artwork. (www.tylerfauvelle.ca)

How a young Canadian found herself the only woman on a Norwegian merchant vessel, serving her country as a radio operator during 78 dangerous transatlantic crossings in a theatre of war, breaking educational and maritime barriers to get there, is a fascinating story.

The Radio Amateurs of Canada (RAC) is committed to telling that story. A tribute to Fern Blodgett Sunde was published in the September/October 2019 issue of "The Canadian Amateur" magazine, and is freely available at www.rac.ca

"We are very happy to promote this exciting event," says RAC President Glenn MacDonell, call sign VE3XRA. "Many of us use skills developed in the Amateur Radio Service to provide communications support for community events, and in times of emergency. We are keenly interested in the history of communications, and we're proud to share the story of the first female Sparks at sea."

Next year marks the 75th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and of the Battle of the Atlantic. October, when the monument will be unveiled, is Women's History Month in Canada. "We need to see more notable Canadian women celebrated in our communities, with these types of public commemoration," says Leona Woods, Committee Chair. "This is also a story of remembrance - Canadians played an important role in the Battle of the Atlantic, and we must not forget."

For more information about the commemoration, contact Committee Chair Leona Woods at leonaewoods@gmail.com. Donations may be made online at the Cobourg Museum Foundation web site: www.cobourgmuseum.ca. Tax receipts will be issued for donations of \$20 or more.

For more information about Radio Amateurs of Canada, and to read the article, please visit www.rac.ca

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Fern Blodgett Sunde, first female "Sparks" at sea, Battle of the Atlantic



Fern Blodgett Sunde aboard ship, WW II Battle of the Atlantic