

THE STATE PORT PILOT

OUR TOWN



Visitors tour the rifle range pit after a ceremony last year. (File photo by Lee Hinnant)

Fort Caswell Rifle Range

Veterans Day event planned

By Lee Hinnant
Staff Writer

Preservationists, history buffs and historic reenactors will join forces on Veterans Day for public ceremonies at the Fort Caswell Rifle Range.

The range, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, turned 100 this year, and played a significant role in training for the Great War.

Members of Southport Historical Society and Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range will dedicate a monument to the 723 men and women from Brunswick County who served in World War I. Donors, many of whom are descendants of soldiers, made the project possible. The rifle pit supporters have labored for years to preserve and restore the training area and to build a lasting, local monument to those who served.

The rifle pit was used for long-range target practice by troops headed to Europe. It is now in the Caswell Dunes subdivision, just off Oak Island Golf Course.

Rifle pit supporters have an "Honor a Brunswick County Veteran" project that highlights service members from World War I, including online profiles. Profilers have featured more than 350 vet-



Hurricane Florence brought downed trees, three feet of water and a large alligator to the rifle pit at Caswell Beach. The historic structure has since been cleared, and dried. (Photo supplied)

erans thus far. The project has raised more than \$6,000, enough for the monument next to the rifle pit.

The rifle pit is among the best preserved physical relics of its type, according to professional historians. It is a long, low trench with concrete walls that once also had enclosed sheds for storing targets, the poles attached to them and associated gear.

Six National Guard units

trained at Fort Caswell before taking ships to Europe to fight in the trenches. Speakers will recite the names of 100 local veterans, their ranks, hometowns and whether they were killed in action, wounded, succumbed to wounds or died of disease. During future events, organizers plan to continue reading names until all 723 veterans are remembered.

Southport Historical So-

ciety members will fire their cannon "Thor" during the events, set for 11 a.m. at the rifle pit, off Foxfire Trace. The public is invited to the ceremony, and nearby parking is available.

Other participants will include residents of Caswell Dunes and the Arboretum; Caswell Beach Mayor Deborah Ahlers; Jim McKee, manager of Brunswick Town/Fort Anderson State Historic Site; Moore's Creek Battlefield Association president Connie Hendrix; members of Daughters of the American Revolution; Dave Lewis of Brunswick County Historical Society; Marvin Johnson of Southport Historical Society and Carl Mauny, Great War reenactor.

The non-profit will continue to encourage the public to honor veterans by sending a donation to Friends of Fort Caswell Rifle Range, 5 Foxfire Trace, Caswell Beach, NC 28465.

Rifle pit supporters are also working on a book detailing the exploits of Brunswick County veterans, which they expect to publish next year.

The list of 723 veterans and other information on the site is available at www.caswellrifle.com.