

BIGGLESWADE UNIT (T.S. DUCHESS) CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

This is my report as Chairman of the Biggleswade Unit Management Committee for the year 2024/25.

For those of you that are new to the Sea Cadet organisation I will give a brief explanation as to how the Unit Management Committee fits into the Unit's organisation. The UMC consists of local people, parents, ex cadets and interested others, elected at these AGM's, and is responsible for the management of the Unit and all its financial, legal, regulatory and charity aspects. We help the Unit staff that you see working with your cadets run the Unit, although most of our work is carried out in the background as we deal with matters such as making sure that the Unit is compliant with legal matters, licences etc, that the facilities are kept maintained and health and safety such as fire checks are complied with.

The main person that you will all see running the parade nights and activities is the Unit's Commanding Officer, Chief PO Charlotte Warren, and it is very much a partnership between Chief and myself with keeping TS Duchess on an even keel.

Chief PO Warren and all the instructional staff, both in uniform and not, put far more hours into the running of the activities for the cadets, than any of us can imagine, or they probably signed up for as volunteers. I would like us to take a moment to demonstrate our thanks to them all for the many hours of unpaid time that they give to the Corps every week, week in week out for parade nights and events and also the time that they give to become qualified to do what they do. Without them, the cadets and therefore the Unit would not achieve what it does.

This year has been the first full year with Chief PO Warren as the Commanding Officer of the Unit and I think that you, Charlie, have done a marvellous job. Well done.

The Ship's Company has been averaging around the 40 cadet mark for this past year, and now with the instructional staff at the optimal level to do so, we are embarking on another recruitment exercise by PO Jason Barratt with our next Open Evening planned for 24th June.

This year has also been our first year within the new Western District which has meant that we have been parading, working and competing with our 'new' District Units, Market Harborough, Broughton Astley, Bedford, Wellingborough, Rushden, Hinckley, Northampton and Kettering. This has meant that the competitions that we have entered such as drill and rowing have been a little more competitive particularly with the bigger units such as Northampton, but we have shown that we can hold our own! Also we have paraded with the other Units in a couple of events through the town's of Market Harborough and, just this last Sunday, Kettering. Both being fantastic experiences for the cadets, particularly for those that are not part of our Unit band and do not usually get those experiences.

Regarding our financial status, the Treasurer Colin will present the finer details to you in a while; but I would like to talk about the grant funding that we have been very successful in accessing this last year with the purpose of giving the Unit building some very much needed TLC. The monies that we were able to obtain have enabled us to complete the painting needed on the front Grade II Listed building façade and also to repair the gutting and the various building roofs and this has meant that we are now watertight and it is planned to complete some internal decoration soon. However, first, we will be replacing the Main Deck roof this summer which will sort out some leaks but also give more insulation to that area which we hope will assist with our heating costs in the coming winter.

Due to the loss at the end of May last year with the Emily Thornton School of Dance ending their rental of our building, we have needed to look to find other means by which to make

use of our main asset, the Unit building. It was concluded that we could hire out again to other businesses/organisations but this time just the offices at the front of the building which would mean less disruption to any cadet activities, which when the dance school was in the building did at times.

With the grant monies we have made the two front offices suitable for office hire and I am pleased to report that we have two regular hires which nearly cover our outgoings together with other ad hoc hire fees. It would be good to get another regular business hire to ensure that we have got our utilities, insurance and bus costs covered and we will continue to work towards this.

In conclusion I bring us back to the subject of the committees and the requirement for volunteers to be part of them. They are essential to the running of this Unit, to ensure that it is an effective and safe environment for the cadets and staff to use. Currently we have a small Unit Management committee and we would welcome anyone who would like to be part of it. We are running on the barest minimum of numbers and we do struggle at times to hold effective meetings because of this. Therefore if anyone would be interested in joining this committee, come and talk to either myself or Chief Warren as you would be very welcome.

Finally, thank you all for taking time to attend tonight, and this concludes my report.

Mandy Holmes
Chairman
10th June 2025