I am delighted to write a forward to this edition of Somerset Army Cadets Insight magazine, the production of which I have supported for many years during my time as an adult volunteer. I was honoured to take over as the Commandant of Somerset Cadet Battalion in May this year. I enjoy a challenge, and I am determined to move the Battalion forward from the strong position it was handed over to me by my predecessor Colonel Peter.

The Cadet Battalion has continued inspiring young people in both individual and team successes across many areas: Shooting, Sports, Ten Tors, Duke of Edinburgh’s Award, community involvement, fundraising and performing at military events; you can read these for yourselves in this well edited and produced magazine.

2019 has had some low points with the passing of some ‘old and bold’: The Lord Lieutenant opened a newly refurbished accommodation at Yoxter Camp, the Richardson Lodge - dedicated to Col Paul Richardson, a well-liked and respected Commandant; the Battalion has sponsored a Shield to remember volunteers. I endorse and expect the Army Cadets Motto ‘To Inspire To Achieve’ to be fully embraced. By that, I mean I want everyone involved with the Battalion to understand what we do and why we do it. Reflection in action is key to continuous improvement, everything we do as volunteers reflects on how well those we support can maximise their cadet experience. I continue to be impressed with the buzz and the vibe from our junior and senior cadets. I have seen quality training delivered by amazing adult volunteers over many years, it takes experience, dedication, time and perseverance to get things done well. Our reward is clearly evidenced in the following pages. Please visit the website for regular updates and to follow our journey.

Finally, I would like to use this opportunity to thank the families of our adult volunteers for their selfless commitment in allowing our volunteers to inspire young people to achieve over many evenings, weekends and annual camp.

RJU Elliott
Colonel
Commandant

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Lt Col A Axten
Maj GP Ether
Maj CSI Angus
Capt (QM) SA Betty
SMI P Russell
Rev (Capt) D Hull CF RACd
Capt (BM) S Bunker
SMI (RSM) AP Godfrey
Pending
SMI (CSM) MJ O’Connor
Maj T Tatler
SMI (CSM) JJ Cullen
Maj JG Kitching
SMI (CSM) P McKenzie
Maj CJ Pearce
SMI (CSM) DJ Brown
Somerset Army Cadets is organised as a Battalion Headquarters, located in Taunton, and four companies:

Gibraltar Company (G Coy) is centred on Weston-super-Mare and covers the north-west of Somerset.

Normandy Company (N Coy) is centred on Shepton Mallet and covers the north-east of Somerset.

Jellalabad Company (J Coy) is centred on Taunton and covers the south-west of Somerset.

Salamanca Company (S Coy) is centred on Chard and covers the south-east of Somerset.

The Battalion Headquarters is the command and administrative nucleus for the county and has a small permanent staff.

The four Companies are each made up of 8-9 platoons dispersed within their area. With a total of 33 platoons within the county nobody is too far from a centre and all platoon locations can be readily found on Somerset Army Cadets’ web site.

The Silver Bugles Band is formed from two specialist Band platoons, one from Uphill in Gibraltar Company, and the other from Frome in Normandy Company. However the cadets in the Silver Bugles take great pride in not only being members of a very successful band but also taking a full part in all the other Army Cadets activities on offer.

The companies are named after the battle or campaign honours of our antecedents in our primary parent regiment, The Rifles.

The Rifles was formed in 2007 from an amalgamation of the Light Infantry, the Royal Green Jackets, the Devonshire & Dorset Light Infantry and the Royal Gloucestershire, Berkshire & Wiltshire Light Infantry. These, in turn, had been formed by other amalgamations over the centuries, adding an amazing wealth of history and tradition to our story.

Additionally, an Army Air Corps-affiliated Platoon is based at Wincanton, in Salamanca Company’s ORBAT.
The Army Proficiency Certificate (APC) is at the heart of Army Cadets training. It sets the standard of achievement against which cadets are assessed and progress is essential to move up the rank ladder.

Cadets work extremely hard to reach each star level by progressing through a syllabus consisting of Shooting, Fieldcraft, Physical Activity, Navigation, First Aid, Adventure Training, Citizenship, Skill At Arms, Drill, Turnout and Military Knowledge. In addition to the APC Syllabus, cadets can also enjoy a range of other military activities, such as Signals (i.e. modern communications) and advanced leadership and instructor courses.

The APC Syllabus is a progressive training tool for which Star Pass badges (One to Four Star) are awarded for each level achieved, with Master Cadet being the ultimate cadet goal. The Star Badges worn with pride by the cadets are testament to their sustained effort.

First Aid training forms a vital - many would argue the single most vital - part of the APC Syllabus. Somerset Army Cadets has enjoyed excellent results in this area thanks to a dedicated training staff, who have been rewarded by examples of our cadets going on to save lives in genuine emergencies. (All our adult volunteers are also strongly encouraged to become proficient in First Aid to ensure the welfare of the cadets in their charge.)

Training for the APC Syllabus in Somerset is mainly conducted at platoon level, with testing taking place at Company weekends.

WIDER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

The Rifles National Cadet Competition, held in September, enables senior cadets to pit their hard won skills against other Rifles’ badged cadets from across the country. The event consists of two days of intense exercises - both indoors and outdoors - on military training areas. Somerset have been in the top three spots for the last three years.

In a similar vein the mentally challenging competition of Exercise Rolling Thunder, an annual national signals competition at Blandford Camp in Dorset, brings together the best ACF & CCF signals contingents nationwide to compete in a multitude of challenging tasks. Somerset teams regularly achieve a top placing against the best teams in the country.

Senior cadets also have the opportunity to come together with cadets of other counties to test their advanced fieldcraft skills in specially designed weekends jointly organised by the Army Reserve and other Army Cadets counties, using the most modern equipment available. On a desolate Dartmoor landscape, training, self-discipline and commitment can be sorely tested, but our cadets invariably rise to the challenge and return exhausted, fulfilled and smiling.
The Silver Bugles Band is often seen as the public face of Somerset Army Cadets.

It is made up of cadets from two Platoons, Uphill and Frome, supported by a handful of adult volunteers. The majority of band members arrive with little or no musical background and are instructed by volunteer adults who themselves often have no formal music training. It is testament to their self-discipline and tenacity that the cadets learn quickly to produce quality music whilst marching in complex sequences, often at 140 paces per minute - in line with our Light Infantry traditions.

The band members manage to combine their band training with the regular APC Syllabus whilst finding time to perform at events. This is only made possible by a dedicated staff and supportive parents, whose tailoring skills have proved invaluable over the years.

The Silver Bugles are an example of what 'modern youth' can achieve with the right support and encouragement, performing at many events. They have performed at Military Tattoos, Armed Forces Day celebrations, escorted the Queen’s Medallist at Bisley, appeared at the Royal Albert Hall and performed with The Massed Bands & Bugles of The Rifles, Sounding Retreat at dusk on Horse Guards Parade in London.

They have played at the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing in Ypres - a moving dusk display in Belgium.

This year they covered two Armed Forces Day Parades; Salisbury in the morning on the hottest day of the year and Weston-super-Mare in the afternoon!

The music of The Rifles has a distinctive and unique sound. From the timeless ‘High On A Hill’ to the haunting ‘Last Post’, the sound of the bugle is at the very heart of Somerset Army Cadets.

The Rifles pioneered the use of the bugle more than 200 years ago as a way of communicating on the battlefields of the Peninsula War. Today that symbol is worn as The Rifles cap badge.
Shooting in Somerset Army Cadets is broken down into four primary disciplines - Air Rifle, small bore Target Rifle, L98A2 Cadet GP Rifle and full bore Target Rifle. LaserTag rifles are used when blank is not needed or available.

All cadets, regardless of ambition and ability, start their initial training and handling skills on the Scorpion .177 inch Air Rifle where the basic skills and attention to safety are carefully nurtured. Cadets progress to the L14A1 Cadet Small Bore Target Rifle .22 inch before moving to the L98A2 Cadet GP Rifle 5.56 mm, modelled on the standard rifle of the UK armed forces and the LaserTag rifle to enhance their fieldcraft skills where blank ammunition is not required.

In all rifle training, safety, concentration and self-discipline are paramount; traits that are not perhaps readily associated with teenagers but which serve them well in everyday life.

Those cadets who excel in shooting can look forward to moving onto county, national and even international full bore shooting, using the L81A2 Cadet Target Rifle 7.62 mm. Firing at ranges from 200 m to 1000 m, in all weather conditions, really allows cadets to find their limits.

The year starts with the 1 (Artillery) Brigade Skill At Arms Meeting (SAAM) before moving on to the Army Cadets Coaching Course, Bisley V Club and Inter-Services Cadet Rifle Meeting (ISCRM) at Bisley, the home of British shooting.

2018-19 was not quite on a par to 2017, but our shooting has still been highly successful with 4x Silver and 4x Bronze medals in The Marling at the HOSW GP CADSAM in September with S Coy taking both 1st place with 4x Golds; a trophy and the 1st Place Grand Aggregate Team Score and 2nd place in the Grand Aggregate Individual Score in the Montgomery of Alamein Competition.

The team were one of the top 26 teams in the UK; qualifying for the Cadet Inter-Services Skill At Arms Meeting (CISSAAM).

A team of cadets went to the Pre-Bisley Target Rifle Coaching Course, then entering the Inter-Services Cadet Rifle Meeting (ISCRM) where Cpl Farr, LCpl Pye, Cpl Nichols, LCpl Leech-Luxton and Sgt Chambers excelled.

Cpl Farr goes to Canada on a six week Exchange Cadet Marksmanship Course (CLIM), before taking part in the Canadian National Shooting Competition. Cpl Kez Nichols then shoots the Imperial Competition before going to Canada as an Atheling. She will compete in two Rifle Meetings at Connaught Ranges, Ottawa, against the Royal Canadian Army Cadet National Rifle Team for the Rex Goddard Trophy and the Michael Faraday Cup.

The successful ISCRM in July 2019 added the icing to the cake - a year to be proud of.
Train hard, fight easy. A familiar mantra, proved right on so many occasions. The Ten Tors Challenge, the RAF WARMA Cosford 2 Day Marches and the Nijmegen 4 Day Marches demand everything - and more - from cadets.

Unsupported teams endeavour to cover 35 or 45 mile routes across the vastness of Dartmoor, carrying everything that they need to survive and navigate over a period of 36 hours whilst visiting ten nominated tors - peaks to those not familiar with Devon.

Somerset’s selection and training began in earnest late in 2018, with great emphasis placed on the cadets’ safety and survival. This year Somerset entered two 35 mile teams, and could not be accused of skimping on their training. They took everything that Dartmoor threw at them and came back for more. They trained hard on Dartmoor and Salisbury Plain and arrived at Okehampton Camp raring to go.

The teams attacked the exhausting endurance event with gusto in well-nigh perfect walking conditions. Sadly one team encountered lots of niggly problems which conspired to put the out of the event on Day 2, but the other team’s confidence was not misplaced and they hit all their targets on both days, proving that hard training is always worthwhile.

In a similar vein road endurance marching is singularly tough - on the mind and the body. The Cosford 2 Day Marches around Shropshire spends most of the trek away from the gaze and support of spectators so cadets need to dig deep into their own teamwork and self-confidence in order to maintain a steady pace. As the mandatory pre-qualifier for the Nijmegen 4 Day Marches in late July cadets have to complete it if they wish to travel to the Netherlands. This year Somerset combined with the City & County of Bristol ACF to enter two teams and finished comfortably despite gale force winds, only dropping two cadets on the second day because of exhaustion.

Somerset ACF
Cadets love competing, whether in sports events or against themselves and the elements.

Sport and Adventurous Training supports the physical and mental well-being of our cadets with adults also participating and engaging with the cadets in a wide range of activities.

Cadets have an amazing choice when thinking about extending themselves, with sport being only one of the possibilities open to them.

Kayaking and climbing have become very popular recently, with regular kayaking training taking place and climbing, initially on Dartmoor, beginning to take a strong hold across the county. Cadets spent six months training hard to compete in the recent Exercise Irish Spirit, an eight day, self-supporting, wild camping canoe trip through Lough Erne in northern Ireland. Fighting terrible unseasonable conditions and strong winds the cadets shrugged off the discomfort and discovered a great deal about themselves and their ability to attain what they previously thought to be unattainable.

“I had such a great time this past week! It was such an amazing experience. Thanks too to all the adults who organised it and the cadets who made it so much fun.”

Every year interest in some activities wanes but immediately another takes its place, energising and testing youngsters in ways that they never imagined.

Athletics and track events have seen Somerset cadets compete for the highest honours whilst rugby, football and hockey have all thrown up new young stars.

Whether sports events or adventurous training, what these activities all have in common is the single-minded desire to do better, to stretch the envelope of experiences that is sometimes only possible with Army Cadets because of the low costs attached - something that usually can’t be matched by schools or other youth organisations. Everyone, whatever their home situation, is able to compete on an equal footing.

Somerset’s strong presence in Tug of War continues apace too, with cadets regularly beating adult teams, including those from the regular Army!

In 2019 Somerset won convincingly in the South West Regional Athletics Championships at Yeovil Olympiad Arena, demonstrating outstanding strength and determination in the face of strong opposition whilst securing many places in the National team.
It’s easy to forget that for the cadets to have fun, be challenged, be trained efficiently and safely there has to be an ongoing training programme for the Adult Instructors.

The bedrock of Army Cadets is the Cadet Force Adult Volunteer. Without their dedication, skills and enthusiasm, Army Cadets would not exist.

Once volunteers have had their Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check to ensure that they have nothing that would preclude them from working with youngsters they can apply to join, first attending a Familiarisation and Assessment weekend. If they pass they will be appointed as a Probationary Instructor (PI) and start taking an active role in a platoon.

They will begin a progressive training programme - the Adult Induction Training Package - to learn how to train cadets. The package has five parts comprising three induction courses: basic, intermediate and advanced, plus two short courses in First Aid and basic shooting and coaching. Most complete this within their first 18-24 months of service.

The range of courses open to them is vast, with all extending the range of knowledge and skills that will allow them to run training that challenges the cadets.

The ALM Course, for example, trains them to run a platoon, giving them a full understanding of the ever growing range of paperwork that is required to do the job efficiently.

Everything from Exercise Conducting Officers (ECO) courses, Drill Instruction, Range qualifications, Ammunition Handling, safe use of Pyrotechnics and more are available for the enterprising instructor who wishes to learn new skills.

Many courses, such as the Training In Built Up Areas/Training In Woods And Forests (TIBUA and TIWAF), are also physically demanding, taking a great deal of time and effort to master. However all require adult volunteers to give up a great deal of their spare time.

Volunteers might then wish to develop leadership and management skills. They may also want to undergo additional specialist training. Many of our adult training courses lead to nationally recognised qualifications of real value in life outside cadets.

Adventurous Training at the Cadet Centre for Adventurous Training in Wales ensures we have enough qualified instructors to deliver a full range of adventurous training to cadets. The Expedition Leadership Management workshop covers the organisation of expeditions to far-flung destinations, visa applications, respecting local customs and even acclimatising to altitude.

The UK Level 2 Award in Community Sports Leadership provides the foundation for those wishing to lead groups in sporting and recreational activities.

The First Aid at Work HSE-approved course covers the practical skills needed by a first aider in the modern workplace.

The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award is the leading development programme for young people, whilst the Army Cadets PR Training Team trains adults in public relations and promotional skills, to help them draw attention to the cadets’ activities in the local community.

But as any of our adults will point out, it is watching the cadets grow and develop and knowing that they have helped them along the way which is the most rewarding part of being in Army Cadets.
Army Cadets plays an active role in our local community as well as engaging on a broader field. A major part of the training for any cadet is citizenship training and the topic forms part of the APC syllabus. Through participating in community projects cadets build an understanding of how a community functions and the difference that can be made now or in the future.

At the very basic level it may involve cadets attending the annual Festival of Remembrance Parade, involvement with the national Armed Forces Day and supporting the Royal British Legion (RBL) and ABF The Soldiers’ Charity, formerly known as the Army Benevolent Fund.

As cadets gain more experience and move through the progressive training syllabus they move on to bigger and better projects including recruiting in towns, villages and at the Royal Bath & West Show for example, planting trees, both for environmental support and, as recently, helping plant 11,281 trees in Somerset Wood near Taunton - each tree representing one of Somerset’s dead of the Great War – visiting elderly residents in rest homes to tease memories from them, with cadets being responsible for recording Great War memories and having their findings published in A Century’s Memories’ by Bath Council.

The community involvement element of the Army Cadets syllabus also sits well with the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award service section. Here cadets can combine their community interest projects to gain a pass in both areas.

As an adjunct to that Somerset’s cadets have been the first to take part in a Cadet Engagement visit to 1 Army Training Regiment at Army Training Centre Pirbright, where their skills allowed them to parade in front of families at a regular recruits’ Pass Off Parade.

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Do loads of things that you wouldn’t normally do!
2018 and 2019 have been historic years for the cadets, as well as for the country.

2018 saw the centenary of the Armistice, signalling the end of the Great War, whilst in 2019 the country remembered the greatest invasion ever mounted, when allied forces thrust into occupied France to free Europe from the Nazi tyranny.

In October 2018 Somerset cadets were traveled to the Somme to take part in the centenary Armistice Day celebrations, joining 5000 other cadets throughout the week.

Cadets visited Sunken Lane near Beaumont-Hamel, the site of one of the most documented tragedies on the first day of the Battle of the Somme, Hawthorn Ridge Redoubt, Sheffield Memorial Park near Serre-les-Puisieux remembering the men of the Pals Battalions of the 31st Division killed there, the Serre Road Cemetery, containing 2434 graves and nearby, the Caribou Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial Park, remembering the men of 1st Bn The Newfoundland Regiment killed there, before finally ending with a moving drumhead service at the Thiepval Memorial that really brought home to all the real cost of the Great War.

In 2019 52 cadets and instructors went to Normandy to commemorate the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the allied landings in France that paved the way for the liberation of Europe and the eventual end of WW2 in Europe.

First stop was GOLD Beach, one of two British beaches assaulted on the morning of 6th June 1944 where the only Victoria Cross awarded for actions on D-Day itself was won by CSM Stanley Hollis of the 6th Bn The Green Howards for his gallant actions clearing German bunkers and around the beachhead. The cadets then visited the German Battery at Longues-sur-Mer, that was pounded into submission by both air and naval bombardments, before visiting Vierville-sur-Mer and OMAHA Beach, the scene of the only significant setback on D-Day for the US forces. They then visited Point du Hoc, overlooking war in a way that few could have foreseen, with many of the graves containing bodies of soldiers of a very similar age to the older cadets.

Sheffield Memorial Park near Serre-les-Puisieux remembering the men of the Pals Battalions of the 31st Division killed there, the Serre Road Cemetery, containing 2434 graves and nearby, the Caribou Memorial at Beaumont-Hamel (Newfoundland) Memorial Park, remembering the men of 1st Bn The Newfoundland Regiment killed there, before finally ending with a moving drumhead service at the Thiepval Memorial that really brought home to all the real cost of the Great War.

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Finally all the separate cadet parties arrived at Arromanches-les-Bains for a drumhead service overlooking GOLD Beach and the remains of one of the Mulberry Harbours.
Our new Commandant has reinforced the ethos of his predecessor, making it clear that he wants the Battalion to push forward, with every Company continuing to do what they do best, whilst aiming to do it even better and with additional fervour; the future looks busy and rosy.

Additional recruiting of the right Adult Volunteers, who are going to really add value to everything the battalion does, and the continued recruiting, retaining and up-skilling of all cadets will be of paramount importance. All this and a well balanced, properly resourced and exciting training programme is what we want to strive for over the next 12 months. So too will we be exploring the opportunities of working closer with Regular and Reserve units based in Somerset.

Strong ties are beginning to form with 1 Regiment Army Air Corps (1 Regt AAC) and an official affiliation is on the cards.

There are countless ways in which we can work to produce quality training and fun opportunities for all members of Somerset Cadet Battalion (The Rifles) ACF.

This publication demonstrates how well we are currently performing and also acts as a platform from which we can advance further, as we inspire to Achieve.