

North East Volunteer



The Reserve Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) for the North of England

Annual Review 2019

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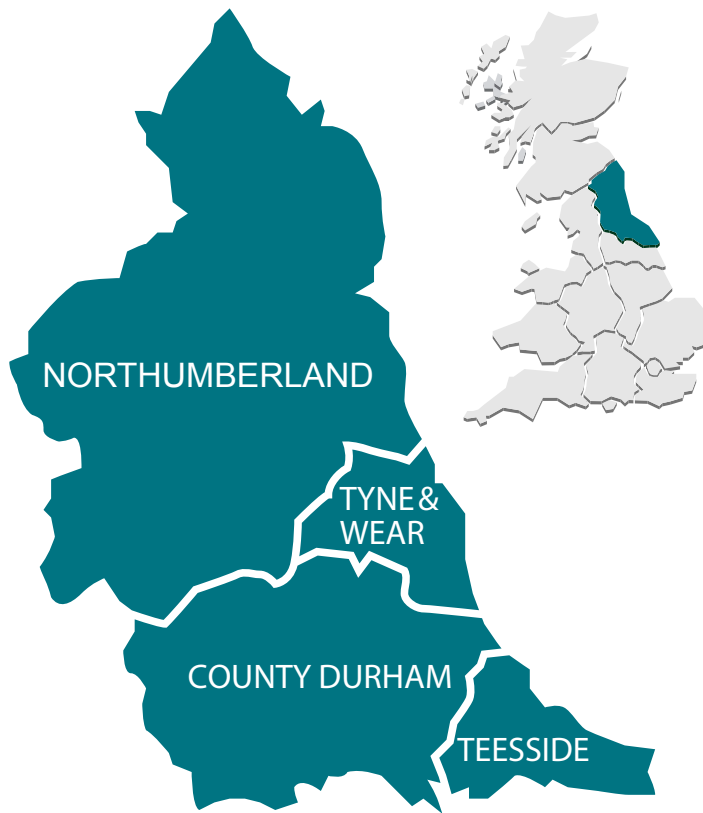
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Our region



The North of England Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association (RFCA) is one of 13 Associations covering the United Kingdom.

We provide a link between the military forces and the local community. Funded through the Ministry of Defence, we are responsible for the property and facilities management for the Reserve Forces, Army Cadet Force (ACF) and the Royal Air Force Air Cadets premises, and for administering the ACF. In addition, we support the employers of Reservists, support the recruiting of the Reserves and engage closely with local communities.

The Association has a voluntary membership of 130 people coming from a wide cross-section of society with an interest in Defence matters, an executive staff of 19 based in Durham, and a further 27 staff in the 3 ACF Counties based in Middlesbrough, Chester-le-Street and Cramlington.

North East Volunteer is produced by Act PR Ltd
www.actpr.co.uk
 Design: Integral Design and Media
www.integraldesignmedia.co.uk

Who are Reservists

There are around 40,000 Volunteer Reservists in the UK. Coming from all backgrounds, regions and jobs, these are ordinary men and women who give up their time to train and serve alongside the Regular Forces.

What do they do?

Volunteer Reservists are called out to supplement the Regular Forces whenever operational demands require it. If they're mobilised they'll carry out the same roles to the same high standards as their Regular counterparts. They also receive the same world-class training and develop the same skills.

Why they're so important

Reservists make up around 14% of the nation's total defence capacity which in turn makes them an essential part of our defence strategy. They are called upon as individuals for their specific skills or as ready-formed units to serve alongside the Regular Forces whenever required.

Regular Reservists

Regular Reservists are former full-time members of the Armed Forces. They may still be liable for call out for a number of years after their military service has ended, depending on their age, length of original service and the skills they have.

Contact us

For more information and details of Reserve and Cadet units, please visit:

www.rfca-ne.org.uk

Follow us on Twitter @[nerfca](https://twitter.com/nerfca) and Facebook @[North-of-England-RFCA](https://www.facebook.com/North-of-England-RFCA)

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Welcome from the Chairman

Welcome to the 2019 edition of the North East Volunteer Annual Review, which is also available online at www.rfca-ne.org.uk. In simple terms, the role of the North of England Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association is 'to support the Armed Forces in their work to ensure that Reserve Forces and Cadets thrive in the Region'. I hope that once you have read the Review you will see plenty of evidence that Reservists, Cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers are thriving, challenging themselves, achieving exceptional things and having fun at the same time.

Our Association President, Mrs Sue Snowdon, completes her 5 year tenure as President in March 2020. Please take a moment to read her insights. She has been a superb ambassador for the Reserve Forces and Cadets and her passion for supporting young people and creating opportunities for all is unquenchable. Fear not – she will continue to be the Lord Lieutenant of County Durham and one of our Vice Presidents for many years to come!

As Chairman of the North of England

Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association, I would ask you to indulge me by noting a few issues related to the work of the Executive. We have a short piece on our important role supporting injured Service Leavers by ensuring their homes are suitably adapted to meet their needs. I would also point out the superb lifetime of work that Major Boris Spence has given to our Country, initially as a Soldier and Officer and for the last 20 years as a member of our Professional Support Staff; leading our team supporting Northumbria Army Cadet Force. A man of many skills, after his retirement this year Boris intends to continue his work in support of the Cadet movement. You will find him continuing to inspire young people and expertly instructing them at a climbing wall near you in the future.

To demonstrate the breadth of our role, please take a look at the Employers' section to see the tremendous success of the Engagement Team in promoting the value to Employers of signing the Armed Forces Covenant and joining the Employer

Recognition Scheme. We had 'chart topping' success with the number of our Employers who achieved the prestigious Gold Award this year and another impressive haul of Silver recipients as well. These organisations are proud to support the whole Armed Forces' community, and they also realise the tremendous quality and skills that ex-Service personnel, Reservists and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers bring to their businesses.

If your unit or organisation is not mentioned in The Review, give your boss a 'nudge' – better still, write an article and take a picture. In that way we will capture even more of the great things that are done in 2020. Once you have read The Review, give it to a friend or leave it somewhere where it will be read with interest. Who knows, we might get a picture of it being read at the top of Mount Kilimanjaro next year. It's all about recycling!!

Finally, have a great 2020.

**Gordon Straughan OBE
Chairman**



Reserve Units p7-18



The region's employers p19-25



Cadets p26-36



Building a brighter future

During the last three years, Building Maintenance Officers from the North of England Reserve Forces and Cadets Association have managed the adaptation of the homes of 10 wounded, injured or sick Service personnel.

Through the WISSPA (Wounded, Injured, Sick, Service Personnel Adaptations) project, the team hires external contractors to

carry out any building work and improvements required to help people live independently. This could include anything from installing wheelchair ramps and building wet rooms, to refurbishing kitchens to make them wheelchair-accessible.

At any one time, the project team will typically have three or four different jobs on the go and they cover the area

from Berwick in the north to as far south as Loftus on the North Yorkshire border.

Building Maintenance Officer Liam Todd explained: "These days, most of the people we work with have been injured through Service training activities. From their occupational therapy report we get an insight into what their requirements are so that we know what kind of adaptations are needed in their home.

"We work with each individual over quite a lengthy period of time, liaising closely with their support officer. People tend to be very grateful for the improvements we carry out in their homes and some are actually amazed."

Liam added: "It's about so much more than just installing grab rails – it's about dignity, and making sure that people have as much help and support as they possibly can."



President looks back on highlights of her tenure

Cadets are 'wonderful ambassadors' for the area and for young people.

With just a few months of her term of office as President of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for the North of England left, Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of County Durham, Susan Snowdon, is determined to maintain the strong links that she has established during the last five years.

Mrs Snowdon explained: "As Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant, one of my key duties has been to liaise with the local units of the Armed Forces and their associated Cadet Forces. In my former life, I was familiar with the work of the Scout and Guide movements but didn't have so much awareness of the work of the Cadets and Reservists.

"Five years on, I am totally amazed and impressed by what they do. I have tried to visit as many of the units and squadrons as I can and that's definitely something that I'll continue to do, even after my term as President ends."

When asked to name some of the highlights of her five-years as President, Susan fondly recalls spending two nights at a camp in East Sussex with young people from Durham Army Cadet Force earlier this year, adding: "I like to see what the young people do and to chat with them, as well as meeting their instructors - what they do is incredible!

"My visits to camps have been particularly memorable; I once went sea canoeing with cadets and got so wet, you have no idea!"

"During my first year as President, I went to the Lake



District with about 400 young people and that was a first for me. I was astounded by the diversity of the things they did; they're learning transferable skills and gaining life experience. It teaches them discipline, independence and resilience – all skills that they need for this strange world that we live in. It's astonishing to think that some of the young RAF cadets will be flying before they're even old enough to have a driving license!"

Susan continued: "I remember talking to army cadets after they'd completed one of the 100 mile Nijmegen Marches' in Holland in just 48 hours. It was incredibly physically challenging and there were young people from all over the world taking part. Those experiences will stay with them and equip them for the future."

A recent highlight for Susan was seeing young cadets taking part in the annual Festival of Remembrance at Durham Cathedral and helping to raise money for the Army Benevolent Fund.

She said: "I was in awe when I saw them all on parade; they looked immaculate."

Although Susan only has a few more months left in the role, she will be as busy as ever

until her term of office officially ends in March. As North East Volunteer went to print, she was preparing to attend an Air Cadets meeting, where she was due to address more than 100 parents.

She said: "These young people are our future; they're wonderful ambassadors for my area and for our youth – their parents should be very proud. Young people sometimes get a bad press, but when I meet the cadets I see the energy and achievements of young people. Our future depends on inspiring young people; we have to value and support them, but also be prepared to challenge them."

The nation's very first Lord Lieutenants were appointed by Henry VIII in 1550. In those days, a key part of the role was to suppress rebellions against the king and, if required, raise an army to defend him.

Susan, who has been Lord Lieutenant for the last seven years and is the first female to hold the role in County Durham, explained: "There has always been that link with the military services, but the role of a Lord Lieutenant is largely ceremonial these days. The whole experience of being President of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association has been brilliant."



Farewell, but not goodbye

He may be due to retire from his role as Cadet Executive Officer of Northumbria Army Cadet Force (NAFC) in April 2020, but that certainly doesn't mean Major Boris Spence will be saying goodbye.

Having started his own military career as an Army Cadet and then 22-years as a member of its Professional Support Staff, Major Spence has every intention of maintaining his links with the Army Cadet Force as an unpaid volunteer.

He was an Army Cadet at Blyth for two years before enlisting in the Army (Junior Service) in 1969. In 1971, he moved into Regular service with the 1st Battalion of The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, initially serving with Y Company in Gibraltar. The Battalion then headed to Londonderry for a two-year tour before returning to the mainland. Following a number of Battalion deployments, Major Spence was posted to the depot of the Queen's Division as a Corporal Instructor, later returning to the Battalion as a Platoon Sergeant, during which time he went on to complete numerous tours of Northern Ireland.

In 1980 he was posted to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) as a Colour Sergeant Instructor for two years, where he helped to establish the Academy's Orienteering Club. Returning to the 1st Battalion as Company Sergeant Major, he was subsequently posted to the 6th Battalion of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers as Senior Permanent Staff Instructor (SPSI), returning to the Battalion to take over the appointment of Regimental Quartermaster Sergeant (RQMS) before moving to the 2nd Battalion as Regimental



Sergeant Major (RSM) in the Allied Command Europe Mobile Force (AMF) role. After a two-year tour as RSM, he returned to the 1st Battalion on commissioning and took over the role of Unit Families Officer before being appointed Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Platoon Commander as part of the Battalion's role as Demonstration Battalion at Warminster. When the Battalion moved to Catterick, Major Spence became Quartermaster (T) and continued with the Battalion until his retirement.



In May 1997, he became Cadet Executive Officer of Durham Army Cadet Force, before moving to Northumbria Army Cadet Force as CEO, a role in which he has been responsible for between 700 and 800 young Army Cadets each year.

He explained: "Having started out as an Army Cadet and then spending more than 20 years in the Army and going all the way through the ranks, you could say I went full circle when I went back to the Army Cadet Force."

Orienteering has always been one of Major Spence's passions and, in his role as Army Reserves Orienteering Secretary, he has worked hard to promote and encourage it within the Divisional area and among Army Cadets. Major Spence also enjoys walking and travelling, and is Chairman of the Escape Lines Memorial Society (ELMS). In his retirement, he's looking forward to spending time mountain walking in Europe and beyond.

Maj Boris Spence, left, and, above, instructing a would-be climber

HMS CALLIOPE

Bringing Tyneside garden back to life



Reservists from Tyneside loaned a helping hand to help restore a local urban park hit by vandals.

The team from HMS CALLIOPE in Gateshead weighed in at the town's new 'Buzzing Garden', only dedicated in the summer, in Saltwell Park.

The garden, a couple of miles from the RNR base on the south bank of the Tyne, was inspired by Swedish horticultural students in Västra Götaland (West Sweden) and created as part of the National Garden Scheme.

National service for seafarers

The Annual National Service for Seafarers was started in 1905 and has been developed to reflect the full range of the maritime activities of the nation, with the Royal Navy, Royal National Lifeboat Institution, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, the Merchant Navy Association, Sea Cadets and Sea Scouts, to name a few, taking part.

In addition, this year two Royal Naval Reservists from the

Gateshead based unit, HMS CALLIOPE, were selected to attend the ceremony on the 9th October at St Paul's Cathedral.

Midshipman Ellie Coleman and AB Yvonne Golightly made the journey from the North East to London to attend the service and pay respects to current seafarers and veterans, as well as learn about the diversity of seafaring services around the UK.

After the ceremony, the pair



were introduced to the First Sea Lord, Admiral Sir Tony Radakin, to talk about the future of the Maritime Reserves and the importance of Reserves within the wider Royal Navy.

Medals finally received

More than 60 years after his young son lost them, sailor Tommy Watson was finally reunited with the medals



he earned for his service in World War 2.

Now 94, the former able seaman from Hexham saw service in the Atlantic and Far East theatres of war between 1943 and 1945 – service which was recognised at the war's end with the Atlantic, Burma and Pacific Stars, plus the 1939-45 War Medal.

Tommy joined the RN in 1943 as an 18-year-old, serving in HM Ships Quebec and Nubian, notably on convoy duties.

Exchange programme

Three Royal Naval Reservists joined the world's biggest maritime war game when they spent a fortnight attached to the US Navy.

Lieutenant Commander Simon Cook and Sub Lieutenants Jamie Hayhurst and Tom Hillier seized the opportunity afforded them by an exchange programme for reservists to witness RIMPAC – the RIM of Pacific Exercise.

Some 50 warships and supporting vessels and two dozen nations were involved in the vast exercise, hosted by the US Navy every two years and split between its bases at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and San Diego in California.

The trio flew to San Diego where they were hosted by Commander Suzanna Brugler of the US Navy's Third Fleet.



101st (Northumbrian) Regiment Royal Artillery

MARAUDING MAGPIE

Getting to grips with how to operate multiple launch rocket systems was just one of the challenges on



a two-week training exercise for Reservists from 101st (Northumbrian) Regiment Royal Artillery.

The Reservists spent part of their summer holidays at Salisbury Plain Training Area taking part in Exercise MARAUDING MAGPIE, a development and field training exercise.

The Exercise tested the team's ability to live fire Multiple Launch Rocket Systems with a total of 55 rockets being fired.

Highlights of the trip included a visit from members of 1st Artillery Brigade and the opportunity to take part in activities at the Defence Academy Shrivenham.

They also tried out the sinking ship experience and helicopter dunk tank at HMS RALEIGH.



Important visit

A visit by General Officer Commanding Major General Swift and Command Sergeant Major Mills gave the regiment the opportunity to demonstrate their skills.

The commanding officers received detailed briefs on the activities of the regiment and followed a fire mission within the multiple launch rocket systems. Major General Swift also offered his congratulations to Bombardier Ellis, formally promoting him to Sergeant.



Royal gun salute

Her Majesty the Queen's Birthday was celebrated by a simultaneous firing of a Royal gun salute by 12 stations around the UK. North of England Reservists, 101 (N)

Regt RA joined in with a 21-gun Royal salute in York on 8 June. Hundreds of people watched on as the Regiment fired three Light Guns in the city's Museum Gardens.

boosts skills



Royal Artillery Insight course

Cadets from across the North East were awarded Royal Artillery Badges by Major Noah Gamp after completing the Royal Artillery Insight Course.

The course, run by the Regimental Training Team, included an insight into the roles and responsibilities of the Royal Artillery.



New CO starts

Out with the old, in with the new Commanding Officer.

Farewell and best wishes to Lieutenant Colonel Ben Crookes and a very warm welcome to Lieutenant Colonel Peter Winton who assumed command in November 2019.



Exercise MINI STRETCH

Local companies were once again invited to participate in a day of team building activities as part of Exercise MINI STRETCH. If you are interested in taking part next year, please get in touch with 101 (N) Regt RA.



Master Gunner visits 101



Master Gunner Lieutenant General Sir AR Gregory took time out from his busy schedule to visit 101 (N) Regt RA and hear all about their activities. He lunched with civilian, regular and reserve staff before presenting a 4th Clasp of the Volunteer Reserve Service Medal to WO Holliday on his last day of service.

Northumbrian Universities Officers' Training Corps (NUOTC)

Taking on the world

During the summer, a team from NUOTC went to Tallinn to compete in the Interallied Confederation of Reserve Officers (CIOR) Military Pentathlon competition, under the experienced leadership of Lt Kris Smith.

There, the Officer Cadets and Junior Officers competed alongside their counterparts from across Europe, the Americas and Africa. The most exciting event was undoubtedly the water and land obstacle course. Captain Jamie Carrahar taught in the CIOR Language Academy (CLA) and hosted UK Reserve employers visiting the competition.

Marches

Officer Cadets took part in the 104th Nijmegen Marches. The challenging, 100-mile march across the Netherlands is a truly international event. As well as mixing with teams from around the world, they also had the chance to get to know colleagues from other Officers' Training Corps from around the UK.

Mountain adventure

A team of 14 Officer Cadets and NUOTC instructors spent two weeks trekking through Morocco's Atlas Mountains with soldiers and officers of the Royal Moroccan Armed Forces. The culmination of the trip was reaching the summit of Mount Toubkal, the highest peak in North Africa.

Endurance test

16 Officer Cadets took part in the Exercise NORTHERN ENDURO, in Morzine, France. The Exercise developed their mountain biking skills, as well as their mental and physical robustness as they took on some seriously challenging, downhill courses built into the alpine terrain.



Meanwhile, Exercise NORTHERN CRAGS saw a team of Officer Cadets led by Second Lieutenant Pete Dewhurst head to Capel Curig for a week of mountaineering and climbing in Snowdonia National Park.

Second Lieutenant Dewhurst has since reverted to Officer Cadet to train as a Regular Officer at Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS). The Regular Army will gain a fantastic officer, who is already qualified and experienced in planning and executing his own adventurous training exercises.

Making waves

Junior Under Officer Ross has continued to build the NUOTC's kayaking team. Having qualified as an instructor in Cyprus earlier this year, she organised Exercise NORTHERN BLADE at Castle Martin in Wales. It was the first ever kayaking exercise and resulted in six Officer Cadets qualifying as foundation level kayakers.



A year of adventures for students

Croatia exchange



Eight Officer Cadets joined the Queens Own Yeomanry (QOY) for their Annual Training Exercise in Croatia. Led by the newly-commissioned Second Lt Jen Smith and Staff Sergeant Pacey, they teamed up with the Croatian Army during their exercise.

As well as taking part in the Army Reserve Unit's build-up training and final test exercise, members of the NUOTC were also able to experience Croatia's culture and sights during some structured downtime.

Meanwhile, NUOTC's Annual Training Exercise took place in Sennelager, Germany, where 137 Officer Cadets and staff were deployed on the Exercise. They completed their annual training requirements, as well as live firing at pistol, rifle and machine gun ranges.

The main field exercise involved a mix of urban and rural training, which was conducted in the early hours of the morning and late evening to avoid the heat of the German summer. After the training, the Officer Cadets completed a military study of SS (Schutzstaffel) morality at Wewelsburg Castle, went mountain biking and climbing in the Hartz Mountains, and were the last troops to use the Möhnese See Sailing Training Centre.



201 (Northern) Field Hospital

Alex strikes silver

Nurse Alexandra Cairns has become the first female Reservist from the Army Medical Service to complete the toughest exercise of the British Army. At just 5ft tall, she carried 88% of her bodyweight in kit and equipment for 37 miles as part of the team from 201 Field Hospital completing Exercise CAMBRIAN PATROL. Here Corporal Cairns, an Emergency Nurse Practitioner with South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust, tells how she helped her team pick up a silver award for completing the Exercise.

She said: "My initial reaction was, to be perfectly blunt, 'There is absolutely no way I can do this... but a small part of me wants to'.

Participating in the competition was, she admitted, never something she had entertained.

However, watching the teams persistently achieve Silver medals each year inspired her to have a go.

Stamina

She said: "In truth, it was a large amount of self-doubt from the beginning right until the fourth hour into the patrol itself. I could not fathom how someone of my build, height and stature could possibly have the physical stamina to complete this. I always knew my mental attitude would be my strength. Therefore,

I rationalised that it would come down to physical grit.

"I could not believe I had agreed as I would be the first and only female in my unit to do it."

Despite lots of doubt and many sleepless nights in the run up to the competition, she was determined not to let her team down.

"The weather was going to be terrible. Upon weighing my kit the night before, we calculated I would be carrying 44kg. Reality at that point hit me very hard but the team was excellent, reassuring me and telling me they would take some of my kit to reduce the load if required.

Barbed wire

"Then before we even made it to the start point, I had managed to fall into a bog, cut my hands open on a barbed wire fence and soaked my boots to the socks, only then to be faced with a mammoth hill at the start line, in heavy rain."

She pressed on with the team over the tough terrain and was amazed to start overtaking some of the other teams.

"This truly was a turning point for me because it was at this point I finally found my morale and sense of humour. We had this kit on our backs for four hours, I was still carrying all of it, still keeping up and our team had smashed the first stand. I actually thought for the first time in six months-maybe I CAN do this!



"I must have fallen over more times than I can count but I still managed to stand up with a smile on my face.

"That was until we reached what I can only describe as the most wretched terrain we would ever encounter on the patrol. I sank to my knees in a boggy field that was on a steep incline, lost my boots and got to the stage where I literally could not move."

She was dragged out by her colleagues but still did not give up. Even when she started to hallucinate due to sleep deprivation, she did not stop.

Pain

Just five miles from the finish, the end was in sight. "Everyone was on a high – but for me this was the second hardest part of the Exercise because

on tough Exercise



my feet, shoulders and body had little left to give. The hallucinations, emotions and physical pain were worse than ever, and the miles just did not seem to end. When I realised that the white fleet vehicles marking the finishing line were not a hallucination and that it was truly the end...

"I still cannot put into words how I felt. I cried at the finishing line and at that stage was so exhausted I could not comprehend what we had all achieved.

"Overall, this is the hardest task I have ever faced in my life. I kept asking myself, why on earth would I put myself through this?"

"To finish, was all I wanted to achieve, but to get a Silver medal was beyond my expectations."

EX NORTHERN WINTER SOLDIER

An off-piste skiing expedition in the Canadian Rocky Mountains saw temperatures plummet to minus 27 degrees for a group of Reservists from 201 FdHosp.

Developing their leadership and navigational skills as they negotiated potential avalanches and different types of snow, the Reservists said they certainly felt out of their comfort zone. The one-in-a-lifetime experience took place during Exercise NORTHERN WINTER SOLDIER, a 12-day Ski Touring Expedition based at the Trail Ends Military



Camp in Alberta, Canada.

Ski touring is skiing on unmarked areas, typically off-piste and outside ski resorts, when the skier's heels are not bound in skis.

Carrying weighted avalanche backpacks, the group skied through the bear-occupied backcountry and visited Lake Louise to stand on the frozen lake.

216 Transport Squadron

Reserves add touch of colour to family centre

An Army Family Centre got help from members of 216 Transport Squadron as they helped transport pallets of paint to get the centre up and running.

The Reserves were supporting The Clervaux Trust with its new project in Darlington.

Lance Corporal Clay explained: "We were able to help the Trust by working alongside a local Tynemouth Decorator, Stephen Hull, who had donated pallets of paint to support their new adventure – The Ford, in Croft on Tees, Darlington.

"We transported the paint to Darlington and met the people who work there, including some of the adults that are supported by the Trust."

The paint will be used for the Army Family Centre, to support



parents and children facing loss, injury and loneliness. The project hopes to be up and running shortly to aid their work within Catterick Garrison.



First Aid in practice

An incident during a first aid course meant Reservists had to deliver on the spot first aid to one of their team. Nine members of 216 Transport Squadron took part in a First Aid at Work and a three day

Outdoor First Aid course which covered how to deal with Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, bandages, dressing, burns and catastrophic injuries. New skills also included learning how and when to use a

defibrillator machine

When one of the team straightened his leg whilst being a pretend casualty, he caught the thumb of one of his colleagues, which caused a real-life injury which had to be treated on the spot.

103 (TEE) Field Squadron

More than £1000 was raised by Reservists for the ABF The Solders' Charity by taking part in this year's Great North Run

Joe and Theresa Carroll, both from 103 Field Squadron Royal Engineers,

and their son Joseph, from Northumbria Army Cadet Force, took part in the senior and junior races, raising a combined total of £1165.00.

The family has raised thousands for the charity in recent years.



607 County of Durham Squadron

A warm welcome from the Lord Mayor



Members of 607 (County of Durham) Squadron, Royal Auxiliary Air Force enjoyed meeting the Mayor of Durham on a visit to the City's historic Town Hall earlier this year.

They even got the chance to meet the mayor's bodyguards, learning about their roles, experiences and traditions.

The visit, organised by Commanding Officer Mike Shuttleworth, included a town hall tour with tea and biscuits in the picturesque main hall.

The Squadron has had a good relationship with the City of Durham since reforming in 2015 and was granted the Freedom of the City in 2018.

Formation lunch



A lunch to celebrate the formation of 607 Squadron in 1930 was also an opportunity to mark an eventful year for the Squadron with a number of award presentations.

Guests joined members of the Squadron

for the celebratory lunch in the Sergeant's mess at RAF Leeming. Those invited included the Mayor of Durham, Councillor John Lethbridge alongside 607 Squadron's Honorary Air Commodore, the Countess Peel.

5th Fusiliers

EXERCISE PRAIRIE

The largest deployment of Reservists in its history arrived at Canada's British Army Training Unit in Suffield to train alongside their counterparts in the Regular Army.

Members of 5th Fusiliers got the chance to support the Regulars in Canada this summer on Exercise PRAIRIE

STORM when soldiers enjoyed improving their shooting capabilities.

Training with their Regular counterparts, Reservists got to a standard they hadn't previously experienced in their Reserve careers, with some qualifying to carry out live grenade throwing.



AIRIE STORM



ESTONIA EVENT

Four junior officers from 5th Fusiliers were chosen to compete as part of the UK team for an international military skills competition in Estonia.

The event saw 2Lts George, Greaves, Ruxton and Scarsi compete as a team in five military disciplines over three days.

The competition was preceded by a week of training and familiarisation in Estonia before the team took part in what is regularly described as a military pentathlon which included five main events - rifle shooting, pistol shooting, land and water obstacle courses, and an orienteering march.

Medals were presented to the team by the Estonian prime minister at the final gala ball held in an original sea plane hangar in the Estonian capital, Tallinn.



MINDEN DIVE 2019

The first of many scuba expeditions for members of 5 Fusiliers took them to Cyprus this year.

The team of 12 took a flight from Newcastle to Cyprus to complete the Ocean Diver scuba qualification during a five day diving expedition with the Dembali Dive School at RAF Akrotiri.

Starting with learning the basic skills and drills in the shallow, calm, warm waters of Pistol Bay, the soldiers then spent time at Cynthiana Beech Hotel complex.

Tourists looked on with

amazement as the soldiers waddled past them in 80 degree temperatures in full scuba diving gear.

They then all traveled to Coral Bay, a picturesque location for some amazing diving, finishing off at a natural amphitheatre carved out of the rocks by the waves over thousands of years.

Everyone completed the qualification and the Fusiliers are now looking forward to progressing into sports diver qualifications, with another team going back to Cyprus for a week's adventure training.

The Queen's Own Yeomanry (QOY)

Extreme mountain biking



A 170km mountain bike excursion to Iceland pushed members of The Queen's Own Yeomanry Regiment to their limits.

Described as "five days of adrenaline-spiked, gut-wrenching and mettle-testing mountain biking", the trip to Iceland's stunning volcanic terrain, exposed the group of Reserves to plenty of tough challenges.

'Team Fox' pushed themselves to, and occasionally beyond, their limits during the adventure in the Icelandic highlands.

"With exposure to risk at

every turn, riders strengthened their nerve and developed skills along the way, surpassing the initial aims of Adventure Training," said Staff Sergeant Claire Norton.

During the second day members climbed 27km up Landmannalaugar, a spectacular single track trail in the country, including summiting and battling high crosswinds to circumnavigate the narrow ridge of the Brennisteinsalda volcano crater, before ending the day in a natural geothermal hot pool."

Towards the end of the trip, they got the chance to

visit the remarkable Icelandic countryside, by soaking their aching muscles in the world-famous Blue Lagoon, visiting Strokkur Geyser and Gullfoss waterfalls.

"Iceland is an amazing country – the terrain perfect for pushing mountain bike skills to the limit. It was a far cry from my usual biking experience and I was constantly outside my comfort zone in a real test of mental and physical courage. We finished each day with a great sense of achievement and sometimes disbelief as to the day's accomplishment," said Staff Sergeant Norton.

Building relationships in the community

The North of England RFCA's local footprint and standing means that we are ideally situated to promote the Armed Forces and the Cadet movement.

One way of doing this is by organising, supporting and publicising events that bring the military and civilian populations together. This engagement enables us to foster a wider and increased understanding of the Armed Forces within our local communities.

It also provides a greater appreciation of Service personnel and the regional cadet forces. We simply see ourselves as the enabling voice of Reserves and Cadets within the North East.

In practical terms there are many ways in which the military can engage with the local community and employers within our region: the Service Presentation Teams regularly visit the North East supported by both our Association and the local chain of command; we encourage Service Unit Commanders to attend our Association key events such as Award Dinners and Lord Lieutenants Ceremonies and representatives of the civilian population are frequently invited to attend local military and cadet events.

Alongside these regional events the Association Engagement Team invites our most supportive employer organisations to attend national military events such as the Queen's Birthday Parade and Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo as a gesture of thanks for their continued support. Our Employer Engagement team promotes Defence's Employer Recognition Scheme and the Armed Forces Covenant



NE RFCA Engagement staff with Jessica May, Sunderland City Council

and more recently we have been encouraging 'Group Covenant signings' by gathering supportive sector, SME, or industry employers together. Over the past year the team has also established Armed Forces' Business Forums to spread supportive best practice and promote industry-led events, and our website signposts visitors to Reserve and Cadet recruitment alongside all the important work we do for the Armed Forces; running the Volunteer Estate, supporting the 3 Services regional chains

of command, delivering the 'cadet experience' and raising awareness of veterans issues across the North East.



Gary McLafferty, Director of Engagement, NE RFCA



Group Armed Forces Covenant signing which took place at SME Centre of Excellence, Ponteland

Armed Forces Covenant



South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust

South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust has reaffirmed its commitment to supporting British military personnel.

The Trust, which currently employs eight army Reservists and an adult volunteer with the RAF Air Cadets, has once again signed The Armed Forces Covenant. As an Armed Forces-friendly employer, it holds the Ministry of Defence's Employer Recognition Gold Award - the highest level available to organisations that employ and support those who serve, veterans and their families.

Trust's Chief Executive, Ken Bremner, said: "The Reserve Forces are crucial to protecting the nation's security at home and overseas, and their capability in specialist areas, such as medicine, is particularly important. We are very proud of our own Reservists, who have to balance their civilian and military lives and give up their spare time to serve. We owe

them a huge debt of gratitude and wanted to show them that we recognise the valuable contribution that they make."

Along with other NHS employers across the North East, the Trust is working together to give Service leavers, veterans and their families an opportunity to gain a better understanding of the wide range of jobs available within the NHS.

Earlier this year it hosted 'Step Into Health' at Sunderland Royal Hospital. This was the first event of its kind aimed at highlighting the many skills Armed Forces personnel have developed which are transferable and compatible within the NHS. The event also presented the many career opportunities available within the NHS.

Mr Bremner added: "We are proud to consider ourselves a Forces-friendly organisation and it is very important to us that we support those who have put their lives on the line for the country. Service leavers have many transferable skills and are experienced in working in a dynamic and diverse environment, which make them ideal candidates for roles with NHS employers in our region."

Kath Griffin, South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust's Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development, and executive lead for the Armed Forces, is pictured with Lieutenant Colonel Stef Alexander, Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC), Commanding Officer of the Defence School of Healthcare Education (centre). They're holding the Armed Forces Covenant and Step Into Health certificate, and surrounded by Trust representatives and reservists, and Ministry of Defence personnel.

Focus on Armed Forces Covenant

- **Businesses, charitable and public sector organisations across the North East can benefit from signing up for the Armed Forces Covenant, showing their support to the Armed Forces.**
- **By signing up to the Covenant, organisations can make their own promises and commitment and decide how they want to support the armed forces community through the covenant promise.**

Celebrating with the business community

Our employer engagement team joined North East business leaders to celebrate their achievements at this year's Chamber of Commerce dinner.

More than 800 guests dined inside Durham Cathedral, raising over £150,000 towards the building's restoration.

The Dean of Durham, Rev Andrew Tremlett, said: "It was my pleasure to welcome our friends from the North East England Chamber of Commerce back to our magnificent cathedral for their annual dinner. The event offered the opportunity for us to share the rich heritage of the cathedral with the North East business community, colleagues and partners alike.

"It also provided an unrivalled occasion for businesses in the region to come together in aid of Foundation 2020,



our campaign to create a £10 million endowment fund to support the annual programme of conservation work that is required to maintain this world famous architectural treasure."



"It provided an occasion for businesses in the region to come together in aid of Foundation 2020"

Building relationships

One of the main functions of the RFCAs Engagement team is to actively engage with employers within the region, offer advice and assistance to those organisations that support the Defence community and be an advocate for the supportive work they undertake.

The support that employers make can take many forms, from fundraising for Veterans' charities to providing time off for their Reservists' employees to conduct mandatory annual training. The team is keen to build open, strategic relationships that tailor partnering opportunities to mutual needs and business goals

and then recognise that with the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards.

The resulting support offered by many of our North East organisations in 2019 has been amazing and has been duly captured in the outstanding achievements of 15 North East employers gaining the highly prestigious ERS Gold Award which was presented to them by the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter, at an event in the National Army Museum in November; this was the highest regional awards total and was supported by an equally impressive 14 Silver

Awards, presented by Major General Mitch Mitchell at a Dinner night at the Ramside Hall Hotel later in the year.

Darren Rhodes, the RFCA's Regional Employer Engagement Director said "Any organisation that takes positive action to make their workplace more Armed Forces friendly and supports the wider Defence community requirements may be eligible for a Defence ERS Award.

"These Awards are a public recognition by the MOD of an employer's efforts to pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to the armed forces community".

GOLD AWARDS



*BELOW: Caterpillar,
Peterlee*



*RIGHT:
Hartlepool
Borough
Council*



*LEFT:
G&A
Security*



*ABOVE: North
Tyneside Council*



*LEFT:
Northumbria
Healthcare NHS
Foundation
Trust*

*RIGHT: South
Tyneside Homes,
Focus7 International
Ltd, Ascot Care,
AmmarMUKLimited
& CDS*



Ryder ride coast to coast for charity

Colleagues from Newcastle-based architectural practice, Ryder Architecture, showed their commitment to the Armed Forces by cycling 140 miles from coast to coast.

The team of 12 cycled from Whitehaven to Tynemouth in one day, raising more than £2,000 for three worthy charities, including Walking With The Wounded.

Ryder was the first UK



architectural practice to be honoured with the Armed Forces Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Award in 2018.

The company currently employs two ex-service personnel, Michael Anderson and David Stabler, supporting them with the transition from military to civilian life, including help with

professional development, flexible learning for architectural engineering and management qualifications.

2019 proved to be a bumper year for the number of Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards presented nationally, and North of England RFCA was top of the list with 15 employers receiving these prestigious Awards for their support to the Armed Forces. Chief of the Defence Staff, General Sir Nick Carter GCB, CBE DSO ADC Gen, made the presentations at a ceremony held at the National Army Museum, London on 12 November 2019.

RIGHT:
Finchale
Group



LEFT:
Sunderland
Clinical
Commissioning
Group



LEFT: County
Durham and
Darlington
Fire and
Rescue



LEFT: TSG
Marine Ltd



ABOVE: Sunderland
City Council



ABOVE: All of the award winners

Pete takes part in US exchange

Business development manager Pete Eadon jumped at the chance to spend two weeks military training with the US Army in Virginia as part of his Reserve Forces training.

Pete, who works for Pearson Engineering in Newcastle, is a Reservist with the Queen's Own Yeomanry (QOY). He was selected to attend the US Military Reserve Exchange Programme (MREP) which



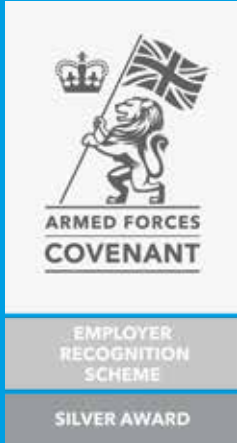
places reserve soldiers into units across the globe, helping to integrate and strengthen relationships across the world.

Pete's two weeks were spent with a US Cavalry Regiment in

Fort Pickett, Virginia, conducting a wide variety of military training activities in harsh conditions, including operational and logistical planning, rifle training and Reconnaissance Troop operations.

As a Pearson Engineering employee, Pete was also given the opportunity to spend the day with a US company, equipped with a number of Pearson products.

SILVER AWARDS



CHOICE



Cleveland Fire Brigade

Forfusion



IoSCM – Institute of Supply Chain Management



MGL Group

Newcastle Building Society



Operation Veteran



North of England RFCA

Employers from our region were presented with Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Awards in appreciation of their support to the Armed Forces and their families. Maj Gen Mitch Mitchell QVS, MBE, Director Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (DCDC), presented the Awards at a Silver Awards Dinner, held at the Ramside Hall Hotel, Durham on 7 November 2019.

Ramside Hall Hotel



TDR Training



Teesside University



TORUS



Protector Group



Veterans at Ease



Employers

Combined Cadet Force

25 young people sign up at Academy



More than 25 young people have already signed up to a Combined Cadet Force at a secondary school in Middleborough.

The scheme at Unity City Academy is one of four set up at schools across the city as part of the Cadet Expansion Programme (CEP), which was launched by the government in 2012 with an initial aim of creating 100 new cadet units in English state-funded schools by 2015. When that target was met ahead of schedule, an extra £50 million was allocated to bring the total number of cadet units in schools across the UK up to 500 by 2020*.

Stephen Wells, curriculum lead for PE and Sport, said: "It's open to children in Years 8 to 11, so towards the end of their time in Year 7 we start staging taster days to try to generate interest

and build it up from there.

"We have 26 young people signed up already and more than 20 of them are regular attendees. We offer them the same syllabus they would follow if they were in the Army Cadet Force, but it's run through the school.

"They parade for two hours on a Wednesday night and we have strong links with local army cadet forces.

"We're really pleased with the take-up given that it's a deprived area. We're raising the aspirations of these young people and taking them out of their comfort zone, so to have more than 20 attending regularly is very good. Some of these young people might want to join the Yorkshire Regiment because that's what their fathers did and we're saying to them go ahead and do that but why not think

about joining as an officer?"

Stephen added: "Traditionally cadet forces were only in public schools, so the Cadet Expansion Programme was about trying to take them into state schools. The head here at Unity City Academy is very supportive and has even allocated extra funding."

Following recent changes to the inspection framework applied by Ofsted (the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills), Stephen believes that the school's Combined Cadet Force will play an even more valuable role: "Ofsted look at the whole person, not just their academic success, so this is a wonderful enrichment opportunity for our young people."

** The target was met in 2019, 5 months early*

Cadet's sailing triumph

Cadet Samuel Bratton picked up his competent crew certificate after a week on a 50ft sailing ship as part of a Royal Navy Combined Cadet Force expedition.

Arriving in Portsmouth, he joined 11 other cadets to board the ship *Bellerophon* to set sail for the Isle of Wight.

Despite the motor failing, the teams managed to pull through and learn how to sail through the adventure.

"The journey was calm so we had to use the engine for most of the journey. Unfortunately, when going into the Isle of Wight the engine failed, forcing us to harbour at Cowes," he said.



Samuel said: "We saw a dolphin and we were able to get the small motorised dinghy out for a spin, draining both the batteries. Being in the ribeye allowed us

to get very close to the dolphin, it even followed us for a while."

After four days sailing, they managed to fix the motor and continue the trip.

Going from strength to strength

A Durham school now has 43 cadets in its Combined Cadet Force, just four years after setting up.

Wolsingham School's Combined Cadet Force has certainly been busy this year. Cadets spent a week at Wathgill Catterick Garrison for their summer camp. This was followed by a three-day navigation expedition near Hadrian's Wall, a fieldcraft camp at Gandale, Catterick and a skills and leadership training camp at

Albermarle Barracks in Northumberland.

Cadets can also look forward to five further weekend camps in 2020 leading up to the weeklong CCF central camp in July.

Wolsingham School's Combined Cadet Force was established in 2015 and has expanded rapidly this year. Contingent Commander Lt Chris Misiak said she was delighted in the progress, enthusiasm and comradeship of the cadets and looks forward to future activities and expansion of the Contingent.



Tri-Service activities



Shooting competition



Triathlon

Cadets from every Service can take advantage of sporting activities and competitions all year round



Duathlon



Climbing

Sea Cadets



Sea Cadets in the region have fun with their friends while learning to sail

Left: Hartlepool Sea Cadets

Below: Boldon Sea Cadets



Jarrow TS RALEIGH



Army Cadets: Cleveland ACF

Adventures at annual camp



The Lord Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, Mrs Jo Ropner, visiting and taking part in training exercises at Cleveland ACF's Annual Camp.



Congratulations to Second Lieutenant Heslop, seen here being promoted by Cleveland ACF Commandant, Lt Col Steve Ramsey, following 2Lt Heslop's recent success at the Cadet Force Commissioning Board, Westbury.

Cpl Jacob Daly was awarded Cadet of the Week during the Argonaut Cadet Exchange, a six week exchange visit to Canada, held this summer. Well done Jacob.



Army Cadets: Durham ACF

Music display impresses special guest



Cadet musicians got to perform in front of an audience of 300 Army veterans, including a very special celebrity guest.

The Durham ACF Band & Bugles wowed the large audience at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, the first time a band had played in the historic setting for 30 years.

More impressively, they got to play in front of 2019 Britain's Got Talent winner and veteran, Colin Thackery,

who even posed for a photograph.

The band and bugles can now add the Royal Hospital to a long list of high-profile venues they have performed at over the years.

Cadet James Thompson, 15, from Stanley said: "The day was just breath-taking; I cannot describe the honour it was to perform the Rifles' Anthem 'High on a Hill' as a soloist at the venue! I was overwhelmed by the response from the veteran

soldiers. And to meet Colin and other veteran heroes was something I will never forget".

Cadet Bugler Major James Watson, 16, from Chester le Street said: "This experience has been amazing, the atmosphere was outstanding. As we played Sunset and the Last Post, you could hear a pin drop - this is one of the highlights of my time in the Army Cadet Force."

Nicholas named as a young hero

Seventeen-year-old Cadet Nicholas Robinson has been named Durham Constabulary's Young Hero and since that award has also received a Commander's Coin for Life after helping people in distress on three separate occasions.

Nick has been a Durham Army Cadet for five years and in the space of five months, he stopped three times to help someone in distress, possibly saving a life on the third occasion.

In February he was able to help calm a woman who was upset on a bus and wait with her until the police arrived.

A few months later, he was able to help the same woman by calling the police when she became severely distressed.

Later in the year he came across a man unconscious as he walked through Consett Park. Nick dialled 999 and gave the man first aid until the police arrived.

He said: "I was shocked to receive this award, but honoured. I didn't expect all of this fuss after just doing what I was trained to do. I



Nicholas Robinson receiving his Young Heroes Award from Consett Neighbourhood Inspector Keith Wardle



Nick with his Commander's Coin for Life, presented by Commander 4 Brigade

hope it inspires others to learn this important skill and potentially save someone's life."

Colonel Brian Kitching, former Commandant Durham ACF said: "This is an outstanding accolade and testament to the confidence of Nicholas dealing with three very different and difficult situations."

Citizen Youth Award for cadet

TWENTY SIX inspiring youngsters from across the UK were recognised at this year's British Citizen Youth Award.

Amongst them was Durham Army Cadet Benjamin Harbottle who received his award at the Palace of Westminster in front of 120 guests and presenter Kimberly Wyatt.

Now in its fourth year, the youth award highlights individual acts of bravery, kindness and compassion in young people across the UK.

Ben was unable to speak properly until he was nine-years-old, despite undergoing speech and language therapy from the age of two.

Ben started to read and



write at the age of eight and by the age of 10 was integrated back into regular school life with his peers. His dedication to rise above his issues saw him cram 12 years

of learning into just five.

In 2015 he joined Durham Army Cadet Force and his confidence developed as he became an army officer.

Speaking of his achievement, Ben said: "I am still overwhelmed that I was even nominated to receive a youth award, never mind be chosen to receive one. I was determined not to let my speech and education difficulties stop me achieving my goals, but the Army Cadet Force inspired me to aim even higher.

"My motto since being young has been 'attitude determines altitude' and I really feel that with hard work, dedication and good support the sky really can be the limit."

Seven cadets in Lithuanian adventure

Cadets from County Durham and South Tyneside jetted off to Lithuania to represent the North of England for a nine-day exercise with the Baltic Guard Army Cadets.

The seven cadets were selected from over 100 army cadets to take part in the first ever UK Army Cadet exchange visit to Lithuania, where they joined 33 Army Cadets from across the UK.

Cadet Callum Anderson said: "To have the opportunity to attend one of these exchanges is fantastic, but to take part for a second year in a different country as a Staff Cadet is outstanding. This has added another country to my places to visit worldwide courtesy of the Army Cadet Force".



Colonel Brian Kitching, former Commandant Durham ACF said: "This was another wonderful example of the opportunities on offer to hard working

Army Cadets in Durham."

Each cadet was presented with a medallion from Headquarters Regional Command before they departed from London.

Army Cadets: Northumbria ACF

Fundraising champions



Lt Col Barney Barnbrook, ABF Regional Director presents the Revision Cadet Challenge Trophy to Hexham Detachment in front of their Y Company colleagues.

Hexham Detachment were declared leading fundraisers for ABF The Soldiers' Charity this year, raising just under £4,000.

Their sustained effort earned them the coveted Revision Cadet Challenge Trophy, presented at their Autumn training weekend in Otterburn.

Band's Italy tour

A ten-day tour of Italy saw the Cassino Band attract plenty of attention from local residents during their various parades and concerts.

The band performed for walkers completing the four-day Tenna Valley freedom trail which covered the routes and terrain of World War Two escapers. They were welcomed at the finish each day with the sound of the band playing.

In Monte San Martino they performed at a dedication of a small piazza in memory of Keith Killby, a prisoner of war who managed to escape and seek refuge with local people.

D-Day commemoration

Cadets from Northumbria ACF were among the 2,000 cadets visiting the beaches of Normandy to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day this June.

The 52-strong group visited Omaha and Gold Beaches, the American Cemetery, Pegasus Bridge and Longues

Battery, before culminating in a service high on the cliffs overlooking Arromanches.

Northumbria ACF visiting Gold Beach as part of Army Cadet D-Day 75



Award for first aid heroes

Three boys who helped free the trapped driver of a crashed vehicle they were in, received an award for bravery.

Cadets Jack Bell and Kenzie Ringwood and school friend, Daniel, were given the Royal Humane Society (RHS) award for bravery, granted to those who have put their own lives at risk to save or attempt to save someone else.

The three boys had been travelling to school by taxi in rural Northumberland when the vehicle came off the road and crashed into a wood.

It rolled over several times before hitting a tree with the driver's door jammed shut. The boys managed to get out of the wreckage and although they had sustained some minor injuries stayed calm and immediately



Cadets Bell and Ringwood

set about freeing the driver, who was injured and trapped behind the steering wheel.

The driver shouted to the boys to move away as the vehicle was smoking, but they persisted and released the man and called the emergency services.

Ministerial visit



Cadets came face to face with VIP Anne-Marie Trevelyan, during a recent visit.

The MP and Minister of State for Defence Procurement, saw the 43 cadets on parade when she visited the Berwick detachment of the Northumbria Army Cadet Force.

She outlined her position in the Ministry of Defence and praised the senior cadets on their progression through their star levels.

A team of 12 cadets showed their poppy installation, dedicated to the 480 men whose names are on the Berwick War Memorial and the minister was delighted to attach some of the poppies onto the 'Weeping Window' display.

She was so impressed with the project that she presented Cadet Eldessouky, the leader of the group, with a special Minister's coin for her commitment and dedication.

Horseback expedition is first for Northumbria

The first ever mounted Duke of Edinburgh expedition on horseback took place on the Northumberland coast.

The vision and inspiration of former Northumbria Army Cadet Commandant Colonel Sue Haughie, Exercise NORTHUMBRIAN PEGASUS saw five cadets spend two weekends on the North Northumberland coast putting their skills and



knowledge into practice.

They took turns to navigate and be responsible for Daisy, the pack pony.

The Pegasus Team and their steeds are pictured on the North Northumberland Coast.



Band mentor receives award

Band instructor George Morrison was recognised by the British Citizens Awards for "exceptional contribution to society and being an inspiration to other British citizens." His award comes as the Cassino Band approaches its 20th anniversary in 2020.

Starting up the band is just part of the Sergeant Major Instructor's service to young people which spans 48 years.

In the above picture, George Morrison displays his award, seen here with daughter and fellow cadet force adult volunteer, SSI Victoria Morrison.

Baltic honour for Holly

Since 2016 there has been an annual exchange visit with the Baltic States. This year Cadet Holly Nixon was selected as one of 30 cadets from the UK to travel to Lithuania.

The exchange involves cadets from not only the UK and Lithuania, but also Latvia and Estonia. It is the Army Cadets' main contribution to International Defence Engagement between the UK and the Baltic States.

Air Cadets



Cameron

Cadets earn wings

Three Air Cadets from Longbenton – James Douglas, 18, Harry Dixon, 17 and Cameron McDonald, 17. – are on cloud nine after earning their flying wings

The youngsters from 2344 (Longbenton) Squadron earned themselves a prestigious flying scholarship after a two week course and a tough selection day to test their flying skills.

Cameron described flying solo as “by far, one of the best experiences I have ever had.

“I was really nervous, at first, when I flew my first sortie.

“I had a bad landing on my final practice flight but the pilot told me to relax and offered some final tips before getting out.”

James said: “It offered an amazing experience; learning to fly was incredible.

“Once I spoke with air traffic, to get permission to take-off, I was away and loved every minute of it.

Squadron Officer Commanding, Flight Lieutenant Gary Richardson said; “We are all extremely proud of the cadets’ achievements and it is an example to all of what can be attained through hard work, ambition and courage.”



James

Lucy is flying solo



Flight Sergeant Lucy Tickell with Piper Warrior G-EVIE

Blaydon Air Cadet, Lucy Tickell is flying high after picking up a scholarship for being one of the most promising air cadets in the country.

Flight Sergeant Tickell, a member of 1509 Blaydon Squadron, has just completed her Air Cadet Pilot Scheme and can now fly solo at the age of 17.

Before receiving the accolade this year, Lucy spent most of her summer holidays at Tayside Aviation, Dundee, where she successfully passed all of the mandatory exams. The course ended with a solo cross-country flight and a flying skills test before she gained her licence.

Flying the Piper PA28 Warrior, Lucy has already amassed an impressive 45 flying hours, of which 10 were solo. The EASA Private Pilots Licence, which she now holds, allows Lucy to fly solo and carry passengers.

Lucy said: “The Air Cadets has given me some amazing opportunities, but nothing beats flying. I love the sense of freedom when you take to the skies on your own.”

Lucy must first complete her A Levels before joining the Royal Air Force. In the meantime she has joined Eden Flight Training at Teesside Airport where she continues to build her flying time.

Golden age for Cadets

Air Cadets were rewarded with gold after their toughest ever challenge in Northumberland’s Cheviot Hills.

A group of 24 cadets and staff from across Durham and Northumberland completed the expedition section of their

Gold Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

They spent four days walking across Northumberland’s Cheviot Hills from Wooler on the northern side of the hills, to Alwinton in the south. The group of 16 to 24-year-olds were entirely self-sufficient throughout, carrying all their own equipment and food, camping out in tents, and even collecting and purifying their drinking water.



100km Alpine adventure

Fresh back from trekking more than 100km in five days through the Swiss Valleys, Longbenton Air Cadets gave an account of their adventures as they competed in the RAF Air Cadets Shackleton Trophy, awarded to the best overseas expedition.

The youngsters had trekked from Arolla to Zermatt, taking in the magnificent sights of Lac Bleu, 2090m above sea level, before visiting Geneva and Zermatt.

On their return they created a short film about their Alpine journey, entitled *Alpine Rose: This Is Your Adventure*, and were shortlisted to attend the finals to compete for the Shackleton Trophy.

"It was really nerve-wracking," explained 15-year old Will McDonald, the youngest member of the team.



Harry Dixon, 17, further explained, "We decided to continue with our *This Is Your Life* theme from our initial entry and we looked at how the expedition impacted on us personally.

"It made us all think and reflect and for some of us it helped forge our future paths, whether that be in the outdoors, engineering or sports and it made us think about the environment too," said Harry.

Sunderland Squadron named best in UK

Commanding Officer of 111 (Sunderland) Squadron was lost for words after his Squadron was named the best in the UK.

Following a formal parade and inspection by Air Commodore Dawn McCafferty, Commandant RAF Air Cadets, they competed with five other squadrons from across the country to pick up the Sir Alan Lees Trophy.

After the formal parade, the Air Commodore was invited back to the Squadron HQ in Thorney Close to see the cadets in action, enjoying activities such as climbing, and radio communication, as well demonstrating the flight simulator.

She said: "It was the toughest competition I've encountered in

years and I am very proud of all of the six squadrons who made it to the final inspections. They were all worthy contenders and should be so proud of themselves; they were all outstanding examples of the Air Training Corps at its best. Congratulations of course to 111 (Sunderland) Squadron who were fantastic in every way."

Flight Lieutenant James Yeo, Officer Commanding 111 Squadron, added: "Words cannot describe how proud I am that we have brought the Lees trophy back to the North East. The staff and cadets at the Squadron have worked so hard and to be recognised as the best of the best is simply amazing.

Cadet Oliver Mileham, 15, leads the Squadron Band



Lara's impressive medal haul

Getting stung in the face by jelly fish didn't stop Air Cadet Lara Greggs from picking up a bundle of medals this year.

The young corporal who represents the Durham and Northumberland wing of 607 Wearmouth Squadron, has represented Great Britain four times in the last year competing in a series of tough Aquathlon and Triathlon events all over the world. Her aim now is to become a pilot.





Contact details for Cadets

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