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High-Light

THE TRI-SERVICE MAGAZINE OF HIGHLAND RESERVE FORCES' AND CADETS' ASSOCIATION



The ice man of 205
— Pages 4 & 5

Keeping the flame alive

Welcome to a special, electronic edition of High-Light which is produced to keep the flame alive while we are in lockdown and the Armed Forces are supporting or on standby to support the National Health Service and other government departments as they deal with Covid-19 and its consequences.

I am pleased to report that at this stage we have no confirmed cases of coronavirus. Most staff, with the exception of a very small number of administrative staff who do not have access to mobile IT and communications, are now successfully working from home.

Cadet weapons have been safely secured and are being checked on a monthly basis. Vehicles have been centralised and are on standby to be loaned to the Army if required. 50 beds have been loaned from Lochgilphead Cadet Training Centre to the local hospital to increase capacity.

Professional Support Staff are continuing to plan for the summer camp season as well as looking at alternatives should the closure of the cadet organisations continue into the summer. Wherever possible huts are being checked to see that they are wind and watertight and secure.

The Engagement team have suspended the normal round of engagement activity with employers and are standing by to assist with the Employer Support role for firms with mobilised reservists where that is required.

Those of you who check the website or follow us on social media will have seen a distinct increase in activity in these areas as we try to keep members, followers and employees informed on what is going on and what it is safe to do, so as to keep interest in the cadet organisations going.

A halt to building work means that work to install a new cadet hut at Bo'ness is on hold, as is the work to begin the rebuilding of the Army Reserve Centre in Dunfermline.

Statutory and Mandatory Inspections and Tests continue wherever contractors are able to function, which seems to be in most areas, and Estates Officers are doing all the preliminary planning to complete the betterment work across the cadet estate once that activity is permitted by the Government.

I wish to thank all HRFC staff for the very positive and helpful way in which they have adjusted their working practises and their ongoing commitment to keep essential services going for our reserve and cadet customers during these difficult times.

Mark Dodson

Highland Cadet Forces Trust



If you wish to make a charitable donation to the Highland Cadet Forces Trust, the bank details are:
A/C no: 30401028
Sort code: 83-91-46
(VAF Bank)

Providing employer support

**By Head of Engagement
Michelle McKearnon**

There is no denying that these are challenging times for everyone, and the focus of the Employer Engagement team here at HRFC has changed dramatically.

Our once full diary of events, training days and networking activities has been wiped out, and our attention switches to the Employer Support side of our work, providing advice and assistance to those employers who have had reservists mobilised to assist in the battle against Covid-19. With personnel from the Royal Navy, the Army and the Royal Air Force being called up across the Central

and Highland Region, our team is busy supporting employers both large and small who may have had staff called up.

Our own Regional Employer Engagement Director Jim Dickie – a Flight Lieutenant with 6122 Sqn RAuxAF in Leuchars – has been mobilised to assist the Scottish Ambulance Service and the RAF, and some of you will have received similar mobilisation notifications for your staff. We know this can be a little unsettling, especially if you have not had staff mobilised before, but there is a huge amount of support and guidance in place to assist you. You will find lots of information here <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/defence-relationship-management> and please don't hesitate to email us (hi-engagement@rfca.mod.uk) if you have any queries at all or even if you just want a chat!

It is often said that reservists are “twice the citizen” in recognition of the work they do both for Defence and for their civilian employers. However, they, and we, rely absolutely on you the employers who support the Service Personnel and allow them time to deliver their military commitment in times of need.

Defence acknowledges that “Employers of reservists make a greater contribution to national security than others” and we certainly agree with this sentiment! Please know that your efforts are greatly appreciated and not unnoticed. While we can't thank you all in person at the moment for fulfilling your Armed Forces Covenant pledges, we certainly plan to at the first opportunity when we can all come together to celebrate better times.

Employers – we applaud you!



Cadets (left and right) taking part in the campaigns to recognise the hard work and dedication of the nation's healthcare workers.



Cadets remaining positive

Although the current circumstances are challenging, there has been lots of positivity on show right across the HRFA area and, indeed, the whole UK.

In particular, our cadets have stepped up in their battalions and communities by supporting and helping where they can.

The 13 RFCAs came together recently to create a new campaign called #ClapInUniform in which cadets joined the #ClapForCarers movement by clapping and saluting the NHS and healthcare workers in their uniforms. The response from cadets was excellent, with many taking part in thanking the people at the frontline.

Although cadet activities have been suspended due to the lockdown, they are still continuing their training from home. The ACF has set up effective virtual training online. This allows for certain activities such as virtual parade nights. Battalions are also continuing kit inspections remotely through videos and photos.

Captain Paul Feltham, a Cadet Force Officer within Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF, delivered a Virtual Detachment

experience with interactive polls to Stobswell Blackwatch and the Royal Signals detachments. The lesson on March 23 was on Fire Control Orders. Captain Feltham also took part in the #ClapInUniform movement.

Another remarkable UK cadet effort was highlighted on Good Morning Britain. Cheshire ACF cadet Chris Johnson (15) is using a 3D printer at home to design, produce and distribute Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) visors and face shields to NHS UK staff across the North West.

Meanwhile, Royal Air Force Cadet, Sergeant Sam Mason, has been helping with the assembly of 40,000 masks at a local company. The masks will help support the NHS and retail staff. He has also delivered food and medical parcels to those in lockdown in his local village in Leicestershire.

ACF Battalions have also been continuing the positive messaging on social media, including 2 NI Battalion ACF: "Staying strong is key to getting through this isolation period. Stay Safe, Stay At Home, Save Lives."

#CadetForceResilience and #KeepTheFlameAlive movements by the Army Cadet Force also highlight positive cadet activities.



Cadets from 1 Highlanders have been taking part in online kit inspections.

Positive messages from cadets during lockdown.

The ice man



The steep final climb at Haugsfossen.

**205 (Scottish) Field Hospital
Ex Tiger Rjukan
By 2nd Lieutenant Matthew Bye**

From my first experience of climbing I have been hooked. I love nothing more than the adventure of going out for a big day in the mountains and climbing a challenging route with friends.

Until recently, this was something I had saved for the warmer months of the year, heading to the indoor climbing gym at the first sight of snow. However, early last year the Army Mountaineering Association (AMA) advertised places for an expedition to the ice-climbing mecca of Rjukan, Norway for their members. I was captivated instantly. I had been wanting an introduction to winter climbing for a long time, and what an opportunity that had shown itself! One successful application later, some very slow months of waiting and one day of frantic packing, I was finally sat on a plane flying to Oslo.

The instructors flew out a few days before the main group and sent back reports of sub-optimal conditions in Rjukan. Unfortunately, unusually high temperatures over Christmas had stripped a lot of ice from Rjukan and as a result not many climbs were in condition. The decision was made to move to the area of Hemsedal, around 200 kilometres north, with the hopes of finding colder temperatures and more ice.

We arrived at the cabin in Hemsedal on the Sunday night ready to get started. I met my instructor, Duncan, and my

climbing partner, Stacey, who I would stay with for the week and we decided on a plan for the first day.

On the Monday we headed to an ice fall called Haugsfossen, a short drive from the cabin where we were staying. The walk in was superb; steep and icy but with a stunning backdrop and glimpses of huge vertical walls of ice further ahead. We used the first day to get used to climbing with sharp metal points attached to our hands and feet. It was a strange feeling at first, in climbing you can generally tell if a hold is good enough for your fingers or toes to cling to but climbing with the extensions of ice axes and crampons meant at first it was difficult to judge a good placement. We climbed four single pitch routes that day, looked at ice screw placement and

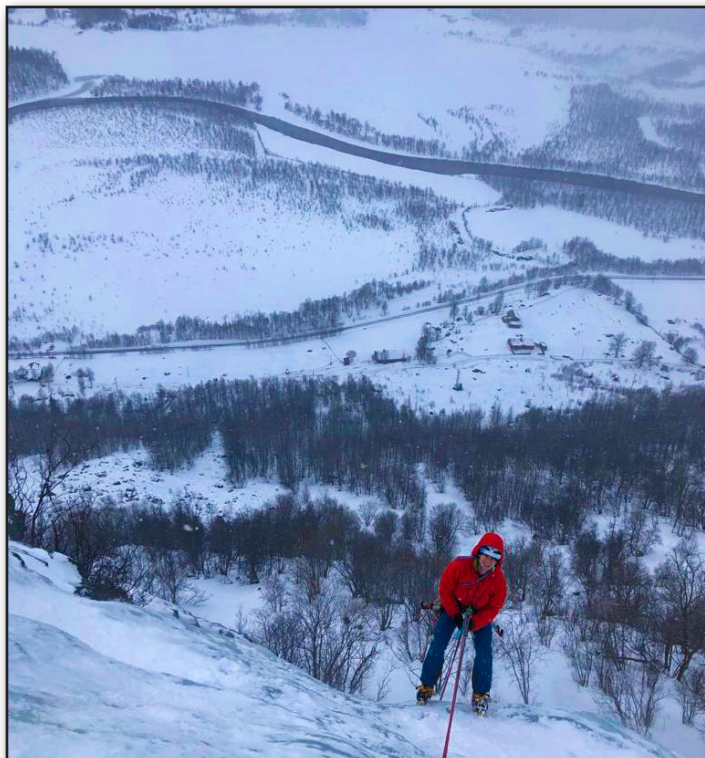
Abalakov Threads and then made the mandatory café stop on the way home.

For the rest of the week we headed to various multipitch venues; Flagetfossen, Bøttnebekken, Øvredalen and Murekløve. The climbing tended to get steeper and steeper throughout the week, but luckily where the climbing was harder due to the steepness we were starting to compensate with some degree of technique. My climbing partner must have thought it was too easy, as I was waiting for her to reach the belay stance above me I heard a scuffle and an "oh ****".

Moments later a crampon came flying past me on its way to the bottom of the climb. To her credit, she flew up the rest of the climb using just the one foot. Our instructor thought we should get the full



Matthew half way through his first lead climb.



Abseiling down from the top of Bøttnebekken.



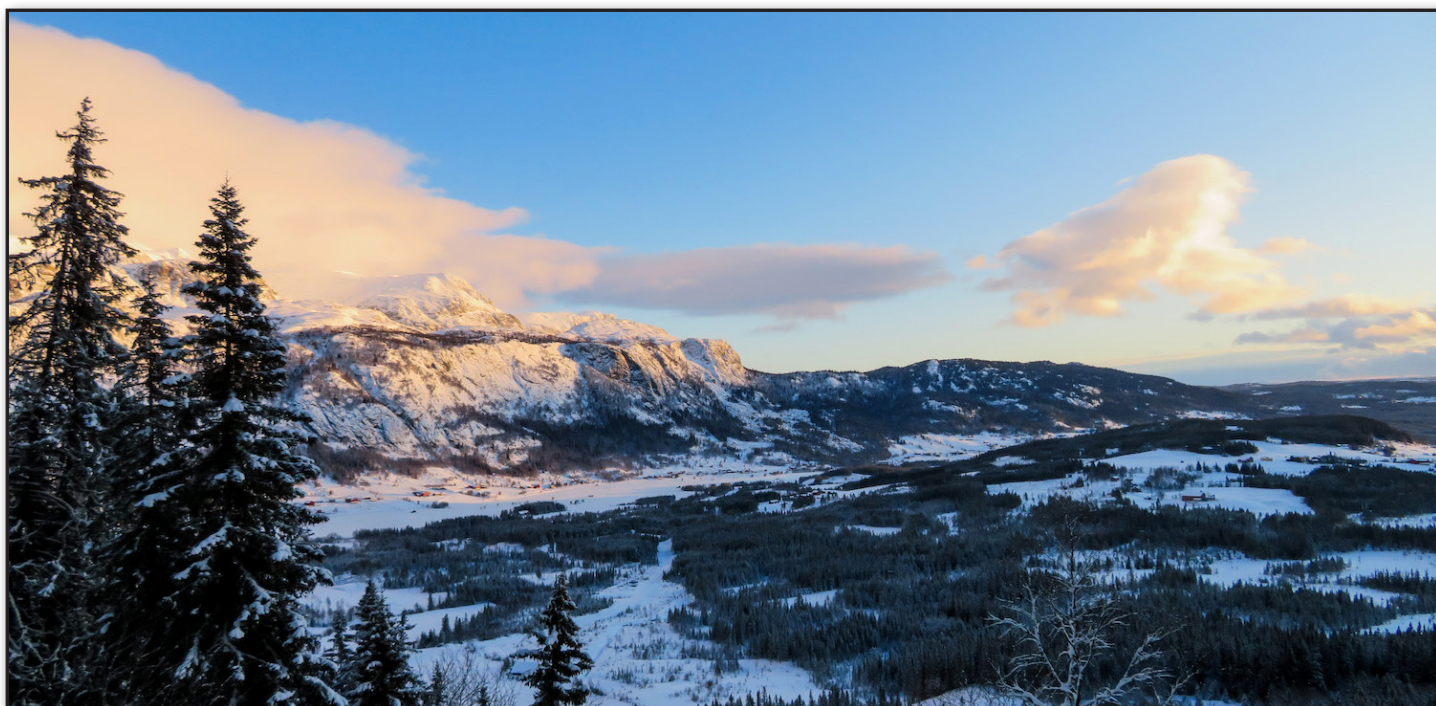
Stacey approaching the top of the unnamed "Scottish" gully.

winter climbing experience and climb something similar to what can be found in Scotland. So we put on our snowshoes and walked the 5km approach to the base of two mixed climbing routes, one a narrow chimney and one a snowy gully. All the grace of ice climbing was gone, we found ourselves jamming anything and everything into turf, snow and rock trying to get ourselves up these steep climbs. All in all, a very different experience than the previous days climbing ice, but definitely an adventure and a very enjoyable day.

On the final day of climbing, we were finally caught out by the steadily warming temperatures and arrived at our final venue to find there was no ice there at all. We quickly had a rethink and drove to another icefall down the road. We trudged along the snowy footpath, following in the previous group's snowshoe prints and trying to avoid sinking to our waists in snow. Arriving at the bottom of the ice fall, the instructor asked if we would like to try leading a climb. I went first, placing more ice screws in a 20 metre pitch than had been placed by our instructor all

week. Approaching the top of the climb I kicked into some softer ice trying to gain a foothold with my crampons and managed to dislodge a huge slab of ice about 2 inches thick. Scary! Reaching the top marked the end of my week ice climbing. It was an awesome experience and I learnt a lot throughout the week. A huge thank you to the AMA organisers of the expedition and to my own unit for supporting my application.

To find out more about the AMA go to their website at armymountaineer.org.uk.



Morning Alpenglow from Flagetfossen.



Gleneagles signs Covenant

Gleneagles, the hotel and sporting estate in Auchterarder, has signed the UK Armed Forces Covenant.

The Covenant is a commitment to support the UK's servicemen and women wherever and however an organisation can, ensuring no member of the Armed Forces should suffer a disadvantage because of their service.

The luxury hotel and golfing destination joins more than 4,500 UK signatories to the Covenant.

Joint Managing Director Conor O'Leary signed the document at the Perthshire hotel. It was co-signed on behalf of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) by Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Mackinnon, commanding officer of 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment

of Scotland (7 SCOTS). As well as signing the Covenant on March 3, Gleneagles received the Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Bronze Award. The ERS awards encourage employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same. The prestigious Bronze, Silver and Gold awards are for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the Armed Forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The Covenant signing was organised by Highland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association and attended

– along with the signatories – by the organisation's Regional Employer Engagement Director Roy McLellan.

Roy said: "I am delighted that Gleneagles has formally pledged its commitment to the Armed Forces community by signing the Covenant. By demonstrating its support, it is helping to provide employment and opportunity for servicemen and women, regular, retired and reserve in the Perthshire community."

Conor O'Leary, Gleneagles' Joint Managing Director, said: "The signing of this Covenant reflects our ambition to attract the finest new talent to our team, as well as our commitment to provide outstanding professional development opportunities for individuals at all career stages.

"Roles within the Armed Forces require many of the key attributes, like team work, discipline and attention to detail, demanded by a successful career at Gleneagles – where we offer a wide range of employment opportunities.

"In pledging our commitment to this scheme, we look forward to elevating the profile of the many exciting and rewarding career paths available at Gleneagles."

The signing at Gleneagles took place ahead of the Coronavirus lockdown. Since then, four additional firms in the HRFA-area have pledged their support to the Armed Forces by signing the Covenant online. They are: Bon Accord, Wings for Warriors, H2 Natural Health, and Saturn Fluid Engineering.

What do YOU want to see in your *High-Light*?

Contributions are always welcome

Contact: hi-offcomms@rfca.mod.uk
or 01382 631027