

MINI High-Light



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



**Newport cadet hut
opened – Page 4**

Hoping for return to normality

Welcome to the Christmas edition of the *Mini High-Light* e-newsletter, which has replaced our hardcopy magazine for the time being until COVID-19 restrictions allow a return to office based working.

As you will see from the range of articles, the staff of all departments have been working hard to overcome the many obstacles COVID-19 has put in their path to continue to deliver a quality service for the reserves and cadets.

Particular highlights have been the delivery of the three Area Meetings by Zoom in November, the recent opening of the new Newport ACF hut by the Lord-Lieutenant of Fife and the completion of a number of ATC and ACF hut refurbishments. By the end of this financial year 57 huts will have been renovated over a three-year period.

On the cadet support side many huts are now open for business, though operating at reduced capacity, with activity generating the full range of PSS and Admin Officer support functions.

The engagement team were closely involved with the virtual visit to Scotland by Lt Gen James Swift, Chief of Defence

People, setting up a number of successful engagement activities for him.

But what is most impressive for me is how our staff have adapted to the constantly changing operating environment and how they have concurrently coped with the very heavy stressors of working from home, working without the right IT, overcoming the frictions and delays in all lines of business created by the virus, whilst at the same time looking after families, dealing with illness and family bereavement.

This has been such a stressful experience for everyone, so I am delighted that the HRFCA Board have approved the purchase of the Care First Employee Support Package which, over the next year, will provide an extensive range of expert support for all members of staff in a wide variety of areas that help deal with stress and improve mental wellbeing.

I would like to finish by wishing the membership, staff and all of our reserve and cadet units a Happy Christmas and New Year and in the hope that 2021 will see us eventually return to normality.

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)

Farewell and thanks to President

We bade farewell to Rear Admiral Mike Gregory CVO OBE on 15th December after eight years as President of the Association, on the same day as he retired as Lord-Lieutenant of Dunbartonshire.

Admiral Mike has been a staunch supporter of the RFCAs and the Reserves and Cadets, a wise head and counsel to the Chairman, Board and Chief Executive. We wish him the very best in his 'retirement'.

At the same time we welcome Robert Balfour, Lord-Lieutenant of Fife as our new President and look forward to tapping into his wide experience as a Lord-Lieutenant and expertise of being a board member of a range of charitable and public sector organisations.



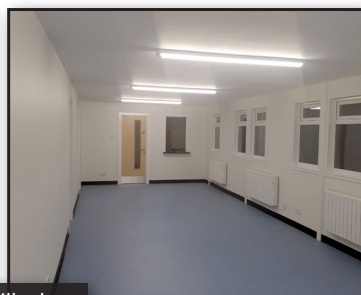
Mike Gregory welcomes Her Majesty The Queen and presents Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet CSM Jack Lord during a Royal Visit in 2019.



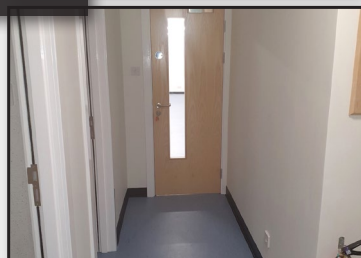
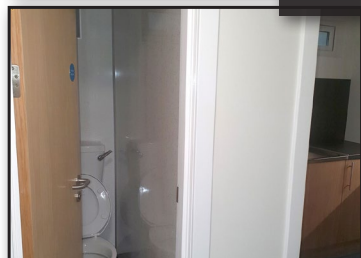
Robert Balfour



Kirkintilloch



Kirkcaldy



Stirling



Alexandria

The HRFCA Estates department has been working hard through the challenges of 2020 to deliver improved facilities across the cadet estate.

Most recently this has culminated in projects at Kirkintilloch, Alexandria, Kirkcaldy and Stirling. Kirkintilloch and Alexandria – used by the Argyll

and Sutherland Highlanders Battalion ACF – have had extensive internal refurbishments. Work on the Kirkintilloch Detachment facility was the second phase of works following an external refurbishment last year.

In Kirkcaldy, the refurbishment work at the 1192 SQN Air Cadets facility is

now complete, including upgrades such as double glazed uPVC windows and renewed soffits. In Stirling, the ATC centre was being re-clad externally.

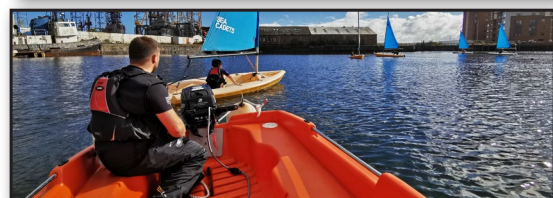
All of these improvement projects will greatly benefit the Service Cadets and adult volunteers.

A thank you from TS Duncan

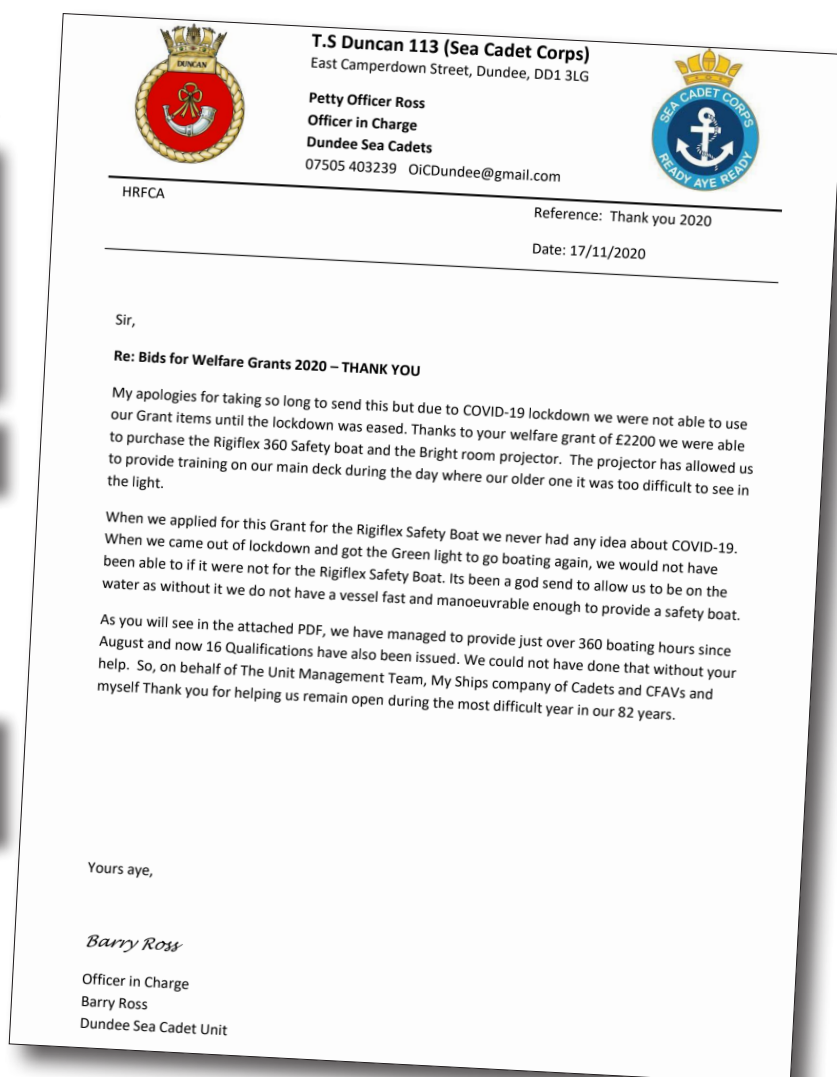
We received a lovely thank you letter (right) from Dundee Sea Cadets who were given an HRFCA Board grant of £2,200.

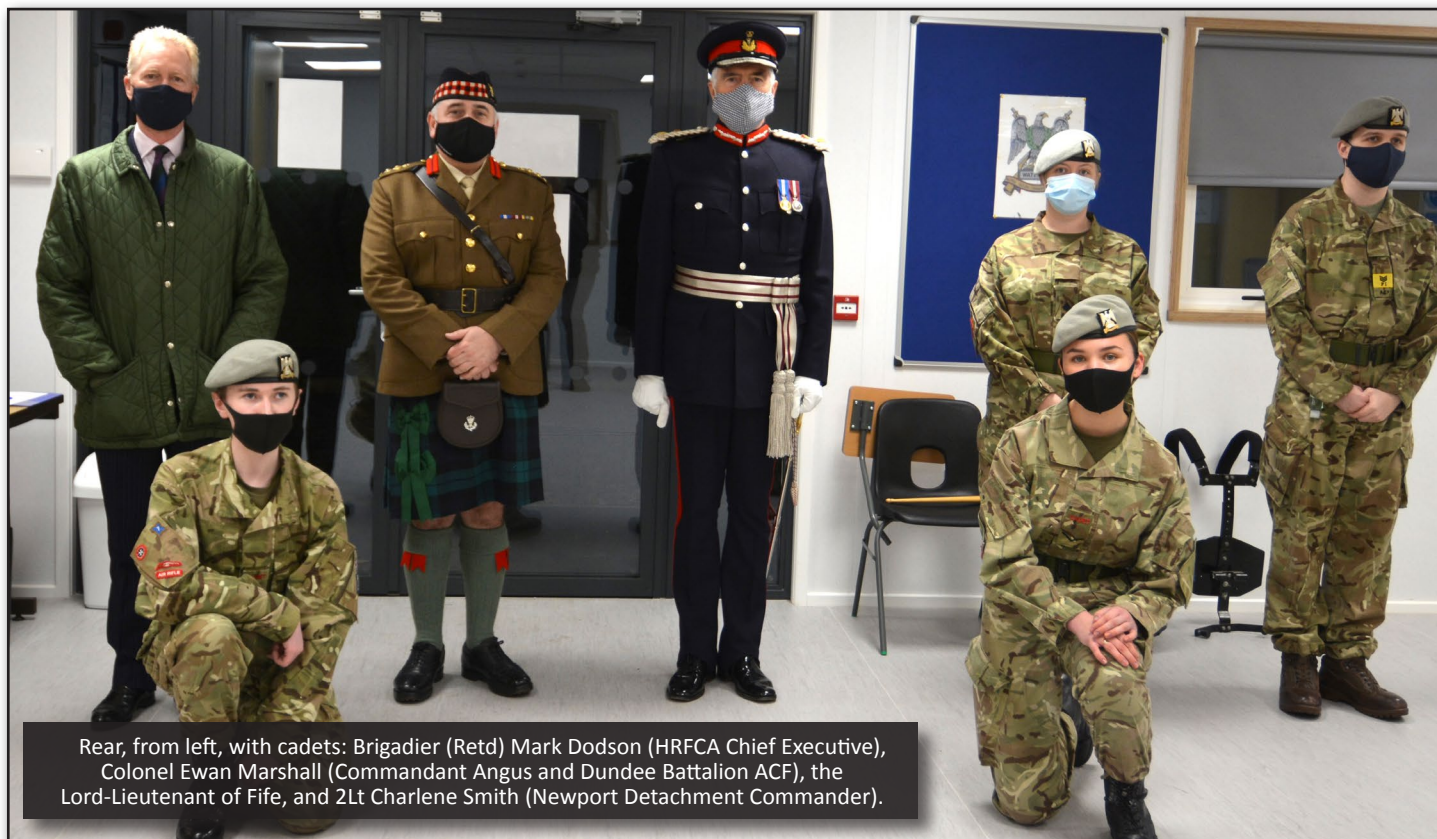


The Bright room projector being used to deliver sailing theory training.



The Rigidflex Safety Boat in use and (below) the Unit Boats Officer and Officer In Charge handed out qualifications to Junior Sea Cadets for passing RYA Youth Sailing Scheme level 1.





Rear, from left, with cadets: Brigadier (Retd) Mark Dodson (HRFCA Chief Executive), Colonel Ewan Marshall (Commandant Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF), the Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, and 2Lt Charlene Smith (Newport Detachment Commander).

Newport cadet hut opened

The Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, Robert Balfour, has officially opened the new Army Cadet Force building at Newport.

Cadets and adults of Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF Newport Detachment will use the facility, and several of them were present for the opening, held in accordance with COVID-19 social distancing measures.

The £330,000 building was a first for HRFCA, being a modular design specifically built for installation on the site of former Spooner huts. It was designed to the specifications of the ACF and HRFCA by Jam Studios in Aberdeen and made and installed by Elite Modular Buildings Solutions.

It forms one part of HRFCA's £1.4m programme of cadet building replacements. This year saw a similar build and installation take place at Bo'ness.

Opening the building on the 26th of November, the Lord-Lieutenant said: "It gives me great pleasure to open this new cadet hut for the Newport Detachment of the Angus and Dundee Battalion of the Army Cadet Force. It is a great credit to the Estates Team of Highland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association that the project has been completed within the many restrictions, delays and frustrations produced by COVID-19 and I thank you for sticking to the task.



The Lord-Lieutenant speaks to cadets (left) and (right) the new building.



"It will undoubtedly result in a significant improvement in the cadet experience for those cadets and adult volunteers who had previously been training in tired and poor quality buildings."

The Lord-Lieutenant – who had a chance to speak to cadets following a socially distanced tour of the building – also acknowledged the work being done by the Adult Volunteers without whom, he said, "there would be no Army Cadet Force".

Colonel Ewan Marshall, Commandant Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF, thanked the Lord-Lieutenant for opening the building.

He added: "I'd also like to thank Highland

RFCF for funding this much-needed and most welcome detachment. From our perspective we didn't envisage the detachment being ready this side of 2020, so we are extremely grateful to Highland RFCF for pushing through to completion during some very, very tight restrictions.

"The new detachment will enable a better cadet experience for all and will be a welcome asset for the community. I'd like to thank the cadets and, in particular, our amazing adult volunteers for their patience and perseverance during the rebuild. Welcome home."

To see a time-lapse video of the modular building being installed at Newport, click [HERE](#).



A team from 7SCOTS has been awarded the Ulysses Trust Prince of Wales Award for Best Volunteer Reserve Unit Expedition for Exercise NORTHERN SCAPA TARTAN 2019.

A socially distanced presentation ceremony took place at Queen's Barracks in Perth on the 2nd of November with Stephen Leckie, Lord-Lieutenant of Perth and Kinross, handing over the award to expedition leader Captain Ken Scott (pictured, above).

The expedition – which saw members of 7SCOTS deploy to Scapa Flow in the Orkney Islands to develop their diving skills – took place in October 2019.

2019 marked the centenary of the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow after the end of the First World War, and the British Sub-Aqua Club SCAPA 100 project encouraged divers to dive the multitude of wrecks and salvage sites to commemorate this centenary.

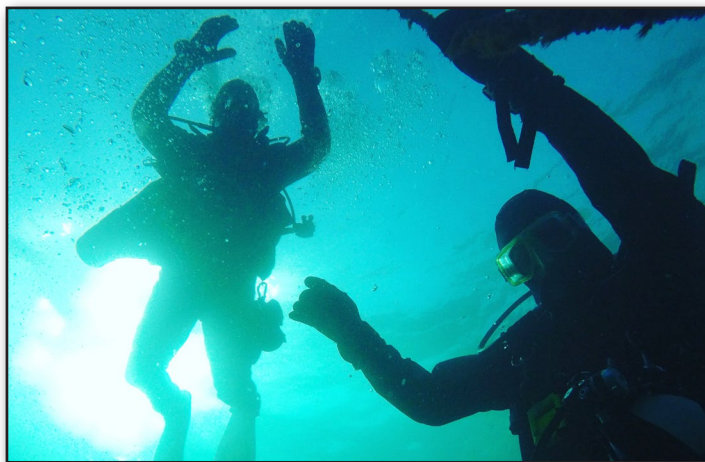
The group of eight reservists had to cope with the dark waters of Scapa Flow and, pushing themselves well beyond their comfort

zones, dived down to inspect the impressive wreck of SMS König, one of three battleships, lying in 38 metres of water, as well as many other sites. Diving in dry suits in the cold UK waters was a skill in itself.

Team member Captain Mike Dunnigan described seeing SMS König for the first time: "The scale of this wreck is something to behold. Descending down the shot line the shape wells up out of the gloom and it is difficult to get a sense of what you are actually looking at. Eventually details come into focus and you realise how big the wreck is (nearly 27,000 tons and 146m long!) and you start to explore."

This was an excellent example of a great expedition that was undertaken close to home, thus minimising transport costs and environmental impact but at the same time meeting all the Ulysses Trust criteria. The Trust granted £1,500 to the expedition.

The full expedition report can be found on the Ulysses Trust website: www.ulyssesrust.co.uk.

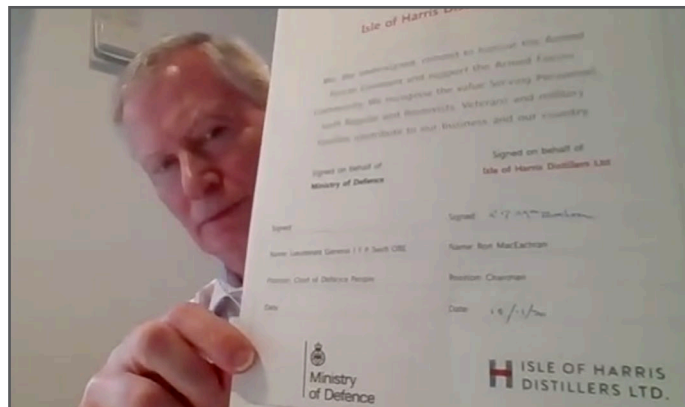
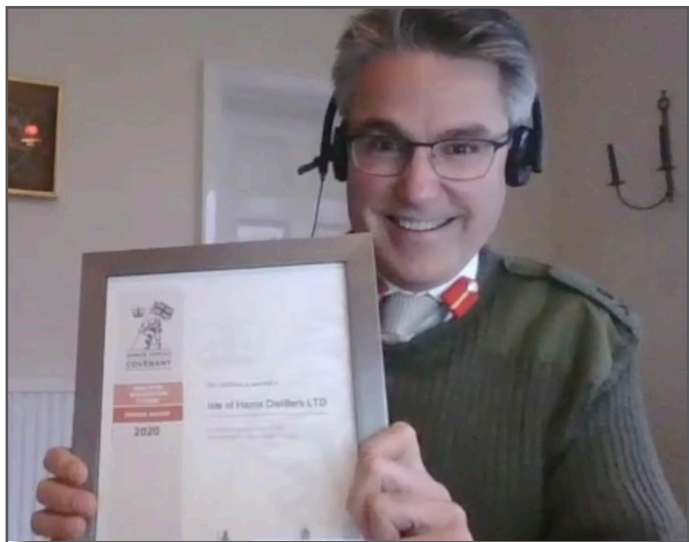


Images from the Scapa Flow dives.

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

Contributions are always welcome!

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



Above – Ron MacEachran, the Chairman of Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd, with the signed Covenant. Left – Lt Gen James Swift presenting the ERS Bronze Award.

Island distiller signs Covenant

Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd has become the latest organisation to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, a commitment to support the UK's servicemen and women wherever and however it can, ensuring no member of the Armed Forces should suffer a disadvantage because of their service.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the 18th of November 'virtual' signing took place online with HRFA representatives, distillery staff and Chief of Defence People Lieutenant General James Swift all logging in to the event.

Lieutenant General Swift co-signed the Covenant for the MOD, combining signing duties with a virtual visit to the Association. Isle of Harris Distillers joins more than 6,000 organisations to have shown their commitment to the Armed Forces.

Chairman Ron MacEachran signed the document for Isle of Harris Distillers.

He said: "Why is it appropriate for this company to sign the Covenant? Well, I think it's fair to say that the distillery, even at the tender age of five years, is an intrinsic part of the island's

community. That community, in common with other parts of the Western Isles, has a significant history of military service. So, I do think it's appropriate for a company such as ours to sign this Covenant because of the role we play in the community and because of the heritage and ongoing contribution the community has to military service."

Lt Gen Swift added: "We are thrilled that there are so many businesses of all sizes across the UK who are prepared to sign up both to the Armed Forces Covenant, but also to the Employer Recognition Scheme. Because both of those send such a strong message to the members of the Armed Forces and their families about how society feels about them.

"It's a real honour that Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd have signed this, and I'm enormously grateful for where they are placing the Armed Forces in their community."

As well as signing the Covenant, Isle of Harris Distillers Ltd also received the Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award from Lt Gen Swift. The ERS awards encourage employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same.

To watch a video of the HRFA-organised event click [HERE](#).



Raymond Watt joins team

Raymond Watt is the newly-appointed Regional Employer Engagement Director within Highland RFCA.

His background is mainly in the Army, having served a total of 35 years. He joined in November 1985 as a Junior Leader Royal Corps of Transport and served in BAOR, Berlin, the Gulf, and Bosnia during a 24 year Regular career.

He left Regular service in July 2009 and transferred into the Army Reserve within what was the Scottish Transport Regiment as a Commissioned Officer – initially as an Ops Captain, then latterly as Officer Commanding 251 (Ayrshire) Transport Squadron. Recently Ray was deployed as the Assistant Military Liaison Officer to Forth Valley as part of Op RESCRIPT. He now continues to serve within 154 (Scottish)

Transport Regiment as the newly-appointed Regimental 2nd in Command.

In civilian life Ray initially started working as a Driving Instructor as a franchisee with RED Driving School. He and his wife Michele are also foster carers for Foster Care Associates and have fostered many children since passing the Foster Care panel in November 2005.

Ray and Michele are about to move house to Arbroath where they will live with their foster child currently in place and their two dogs. Their daughter is currently studying medicine at university. Ray's experience of military service, coupled with his experience and knowledge of the transition to civilian life and the personal experience of mobilisation as a reservist, means he brings broad knowledge and experience to the HRFA engagement team.

Ray (above) and (right) meeting the Princess Royal.

