

WINTER 2024 • ISSUE 30

High-Light



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



**ERS Gold
Awards
– Pages 6 & 7**

Busy period for Association

Welcome to the Winter edition of *High-Light*. As the following pages illustrate it has been a busy period for all with Employer Recognition Scheme Awards, Association Area Meetings, Remembrance events and a number of other notable anniversaries for Reserve and cadet units.

I am grateful for the many units who have submitted articles and would urge others to follow suit.

The Future Defence Infrastructure System for the Volunteer Estate (Reserve and cadet) was launched on 1 August and, not surprisingly, has taken some time to bed in and settle down, and there are still some areas that need further work.

The Estates team have worked hard to iron out wrinkles, learn their assurance role, establish effective liaison and communication with the Regional Prime Contractor Mitie and with Reserve and cadet units. In the meantime some notable live projects have continued to be delivered from HRFA, the re-build of Dunfermline Army Reserve Centre and the creation of a Joint Cadet Centre at Dingwall being the biggest. A significant number of small Estate projects have also been completed for the RAF Air Cadets.

The 10 year review of the Defence Relationship Management organisation has been completed and signed off by the Ministry of Defence. An implementation plan is now being developed which will see changes in how employers are engaged with in future. There is a strong desire to see the regional dimension of Employer Engagement reinforced, but this may come at a later date.

In the meantime the financial environment remains challenging and this will certainly continue into the next financial year.

Some of you will have spotted that we are recruiting for a new Chief Executive in 2025. It has been a great pleasure to have this role since 2015 but the time is coming for me to hand over and I hope that by the time the Spring edition of our newsletter is published we will be able to announce who will take on the role in my place.

All that remains is for me to wish you all a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Mark Dodson



Guests being welcomed to the 2024 Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Awards at The Black Watch Castle and Museum by the Chief Executive.

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The members and attendees at the Northern Area Meeting enjoyed the engaging presentations.

Highland RFCA's Northern and Southern Area Committees gathered for annual updates at the Area Meetings.

Both meetings began with the Area Chair's introduction, welcome, and report. HRFCA's Chief Executive, Brigadier (Retired) Mark Dodson, followed with an update on key changes since the Annual Association Meeting (AAM) was held at Discovery Point in Dundee in April. Members also heard unit updates from the unit representatives.

The Northern Area Meeting took place at UHI Inverness on 16 October. The Northern Area Chair, Major (Retd) Alec Rose, led the meeting. Brigadier Dodson, HRFCA's Head of Engagement Michelle McKearnon, and Regional Employer Engagement Director Ray Watt were in attendance.

The Northern Area Members enjoyed

hearing from the individual speakers who gave insight into the perspectives of a local employer, a full-time Army Reservist, a full-time Royal Air Force Reservist, and tri-Service cadets.

Speakers included Able Cadet Ally Fealy and Ordinary Cadet Lewis Kirkbride from Inverness Sea Cadets. They spoke about the positive opportunities, experiences, and qualifications within the Sea Cadet Corps. Cadet Sergeant Scott Tait, the Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet for Ross and Cromarty from Ross Company 1st Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force (ACF), shared the benefits of joining the Army Cadets, including how he has personally improved with skills such as problem-solving, confidence, and first aid. Cadet Flight Sergeant Adam Hayton from 161 (Highland) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets delivered a presentation on what he has been able to achieve, the friends

he has made, and the support he has received.

The Southern Area Meeting took place at Queen's Barracks Army Reserve Centre in Perth on 22 October. The Southern Area Chair, Colonel (Retd) Jim Kinloch, led the meeting. HRFCA's Employer Engagement Admin Officer Aaron Bain, Brigadier Dodson, HRFCA's Head of Estate Fraser Kennedy, Mrs McKearnon, and Regional Employer Engagement Director Roy McLellan were in attendance.

The Southern Area Committee also discussed its future operating model. The interactive session, led by Colonel (Retd) Kinloch and Colonel Scott Dunn, Southern Area Vice Chair and Commandant of Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF, proved productive and successful.

The HRFCA Membership will gather next for the AAM at Discovery Point in Dundee on 5 April 2025.



Associate Member, Major (Retd) Carolyn Caddick, speaking with Cadet Sergeant Scott Tait during a break at the Northern Area Meeting.



The Chief Executive updates the Southern Area Meeting.



Members networking over supper at Queen's Barracks.

Network advocates for Defence

Highland RFCA's Highland Gold Network (HGN) has met twice since the last edition of *High-Light*.

The HGN consists of the 47 current Gold Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) employers in the Highland RFCA area of responsibility. The aim of the group is to advocate for defence people, while sharing best practice and ideas, and to encourage and mentor Bronze and Silver employers to gain Gold status.

The group, formed in 2022, meets quarterly in a hybrid format.

The Chair is Sharon Faulkner. Sharon is the Head of HR, IT and Organisational Development at Angus Council. Ian Clark from IED Training Solutions is Deputy Chair.

The Network met on 18 September at Fife Medical Group's offices in Lochgelly. Fife Medical Group was awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award in 2023. The meeting was the largest to date since the Network's formation in 2022.



Topics covered included a discussion on Mentorship Partnering that would involve linking HGN members with 2025 Gold applicants in order to provide advice and advocacy support. Highland RFCA Regional Employer Engagement Director Ray Watt also updated the members on the

Service Cadet criteria relating to ERS Awards.

Member updates followed before there was a presentation from Fife Medical Group's Michael Braid outlining his organisation's journey to becoming a member of the Highland Gold Network.

The Network met again on 21 November at Forth Valley Chamber of Commerce's offices at Scion House, Stirling. The Chamber was awarded the Defence ERS Gold Award in 2023.

The meeting saw Highland RFCA Regional Employer Engagement Directors Roy McLellan and Ray Watt providing an overview of the 2025 ERS Gold Award criteria.

Member updates followed, before Chamber President and Chief Executive Lynn Harris told the meeting about her organisation's journey to becoming a member of the Highland Gold Network.

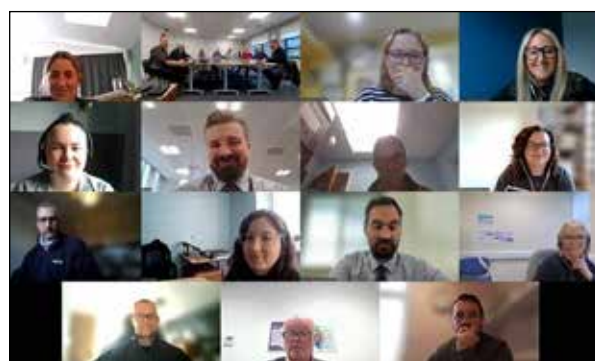
The next meeting takes place in Aberdeen on 18 February, 2025.



Highland Gold Network members at Fife Medical Group's Lochgelly HQ.



Left: The Lochgelly meeting and (right) the members who joined the latest meeting in Stirling virtually.



ERS Gold Awards 2024



Representatives from the 2024 Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award recipients with Major General Robin Lindsay (centre).

Nine employer organisations had their outstanding commitment to the Armed Forces recognised at the 2024 Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Awards.

The Highland RFCA organised event was held at The Black Watch Castle and Museum in Perth on 14 November with the recipients representing a wide range of organisations and companies.

The ERS Gold Award recognises the positive role employers play in supporting Defence and inspiring others to do the same. Nationally, nearly 200 organisations were recognised in 2024 by the UK Government with the highest badge of honour for supporting the Armed Forces community.

The winners have all been powerful advocates for the Armed Forces Covenant by actively engaging with their peers, encouraging them to employ Armed Forces personnel, Veterans, and their families, and providing robust and sustained support for Reservists.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise from the nation that those who serve or have served in the Armed Forces, and their families, are treated fairly.

There are now more than 1,000 organisations that hold Gold Awards. The Scheme is delivered by Defence Relationship Management (DRM). Organisations must reapply every five years to retain their Gold Award status.

Principal guest at The Black Watch Castle and Museum was General Officer Scotland, Major General Robin Lindsay.

General Lindsay presented the Awards and delivered a speech on the Employer Recognition Scheme and the value of members of the defence community to society.

He said: "I'm delighted to be here on behalf of the Secretary of State for Defence to present employers with Gold Awards that have been well earned. The Awards recognise a willingness on behalf of those organisations to sign the Armed Forces Covenant, supporting the defence family and advocating on its behalf.

"Over 12,500 organisations have signed the Covenant, which continues to grow daily as more and more employers reap the benefits of employing a member of the defence family. Consequently, the number of Employer Recognition Scheme awardees grows at all levels.

"All 12,568 are dedicated, valued essential partners for us, but I would note that you Gold Award winners have risen right to the top and I thank you hugely for all you do now and in the future."

A meal followed with informative speeches delivered by a Royal Naval Reservist, a Cadet Force Adult Volunteer and, lastly, the view of an employer.

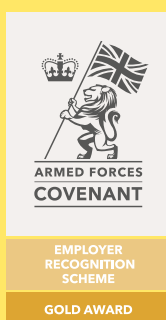
The speakers were: Lieutenant Matthew McPherson RNR (Unit Recruitment and Information Operations Officer); Flight Lieutenant Matthew Smith (Officer Commanding 2288 Montrose Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets); and Sharon Faulkner of Angus Council. Sharon is also the Chair of HRFA's Highland Gold Network.

Other military representatives in attendance included Brigadier Jody Davies MBE (Commander 51 Infantry Brigade & HQ Scotland), Lieutenant Colonel Gary Giles (Chief of Staff at Royal Navy Regional Command Scotland and Northern Ireland), Surgeon Commander Rob O'Donnell RNR (Commanding Officer HMS Scotia), Wing Commander Paul Carrier (Royal Air Force Regional Employer Engagement Officer, Scotland) and HRFA Associate Member Group Captain (Retd) Dai John. Neil Jackson (Director of DRM) was also in attendance.

Music was provided by piper Private Kieran Murray from 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland.

2024 ERS Gold Award winners:

BEAR Scotland
Eclipse (IP) Ltd
Falkirk Football Club
HorseBack UK
Lochgilphead Medical Centre
Serica Energy
Simplicity in Mind
Stirling Highland Games
The UKSI Limited





Recipients with General Lindsay, from left: BEAR Scotland, Eclipse (IP) Ltd, and Falkirk Football Club.



From left: HorseBack UK, Lochgilhead Medical Centre, and Serica Energy.



From left: Simplicity in Mind, Stirling Highland Games, and The UKSI Limited.



Following the presentations, hosts and guests enjoyed a meal.



Private Kieran Murray provided the musical entertainment.



Vignettes between courses were provided by, from left: Reservist Lieutenant Matthew McPherson RNR, Cadet Force Adult Volunteer Flight Lieutenant Matthew Smith, and employer Sharon Faulkner.

Dunfermline taking shape

The £9.6 million project to replace the Army Reserve Centre (ARC) at Dunfermline is making significant progress.

The building is wind and watertight, with the internal first fix well under way on all floors.

Offices – including the large, open-plan main space – are taking shape, as are the drill hall, industrial kitchen, bathrooms and shower rooms, transit accommodation, server and plant rooms.

External works are continuing with the recent installation of three high-efficiency air source heat pumps.

The electricity sub-station that will service the power needs of the new building is also in situ, although this still has to be connected to the main grid.

The latest phase of the project follows setbacks caused by the discovery of hazardous materials during initial groundworks. Additional works were undertaken to ensure there was nothing else of a historical nature buried on the site. This meant scanning the ground, then removing and replacing all of the potentially contaminated soil.

The site was then backfilled to allow 350 piles to be driven into the foundations in February. Work on pouring concrete for the foundations then began, with the building starting to rise out of the ground in April as blockwork was constructed above ground level. Steelwork was delivered to the site in early May with rapid progress being made on the main build since.

The Bruce House project had originally been due to get under way in March 2020. However COVID-19 hit and the national lockdown that followed halted all projects that weren't already in progress.

In 2022 Henry Brothers won the contract to design and build the new ARC and demolish the existing Bruce House. Mott MacDonald is acting as the technical service provider, supporting the Highland RFCA Estates team. The Army-funded project is due to be completed in 2025.

The Dunfermline ARC serves as the Regimental Headquarters for 154 (Scottish) Regiment Royal Logistic Corps; and is home to 239 (Fife) Transport Squadron and the Dunfermline Detachment of The Black Watch Battalion Army Cadet Force.

The new building will provide first-class facilities, allowing all the units housed there a chance to grow, and will impact positively on training, recruitment and retention.



Dunfermline ARC.



From left: The main, open-plan office space; the drill hall; and the three air source heat pumps that will heat the building.



The exterior of the multifunctional extension.



Kitchen facilities are being upgraded.



The existing dining area is increasing in size.



The officers' dining area is being refurbished.



Projects delivering for cadets

Work to expand the dining hall and upgrade kitchen facilities at Barry Buddon Cadet Training Centre is well under way.

Construction began in mid-September, with the 12-week project expected to be completed before Christmas.

The large, multifunctional extension will improve flexibility at the centre, allowing meal sittings to be reduced from two to one.

The extension will incorporate moveable partitions, facilitating subdivision of the space – creating flexible independent classrooms and cadet breakout areas. It will also incorporate an outside seating area. The works will alleviate current accommodation constraints and aid the efficient delivery of the Army Cadet Syllabus for Angus and Dundee Battalion Army Cadet Force (ACF).

RDA Architects is delivering the project on behalf of Highland RFCA with work carried out by CHAP Group (Aberdeen) Ltd.

Gary Scott, Director at Dundee and Perth-based RDA Architects, said: "We are delighted to see the onsite progression at Barry Buddon with the new-build multifunctional extension taking shape. The extension will provide a much-needed expansion to the under-scaled cadet dining hall, allowing a dinner service of over 150.

"Works also include full refurbishment of the commercial kitchen facilities along with major refurbishment and upgrade works to the officers' dining area and breakout rooms. In addition, the project incorporates the installation and provision of photovoltaic panels to the roof along with battery storage facilities to reduce energy costs and increase energy efficiency across the property."

■ Meanwhile, the newly-extended Joint Cadet Centre (JCC) in Dingwall was handed back to Highland RFCA on 4 October following months of improvement works.

The £1.3 million project increased the size of the existing 1st Battalion The Highlanders ACF building, enabling it to become a facility shared by young people and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) from the Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC).

Two classrooms, two offices and two storerooms were added to the existing building footprint.

In addition, solar panels were installed on the Highlander accommodation block.



The completed extension at Dingwall.

Dundee-based architecture and interior design firm Andrew Black Design delivered the project. The firm is an Armed Forces Covenant signatory and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award holder.

The building is net zero due to use of green technologies and will allow for the disposal of the two stand-alone ACF and RAFAC properties located across the road.

HMS Scotia Anniversary



The Ship's Company parading through Dunfermline and (right) the 30th Anniversary cake.



HMScotia's Ship's Company paraded through Dunfermline on 14 September as part of its 30th Anniversary celebrations.

2024 marked 30 years since HMS Scotia, HMS Camperdown and HMS Claverhouse merged to form the expanded HMS Scotia as the Royal Naval Reserve unit for the East of Scotland, initially at Pitreavie Castle before moving to its present site at HMS Caledonia in Rosyth.

The parade marked not only the 30th Anniversary of HMS Scotia, but also the first time the Ship's Company has paraded through Dunfermline since it gained city status in 2022, marking a continuation of the long bond between the Unit and the local community.

The salute was taken by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Fife

and HRFCA President, Robert Balfour Esq, and the parade was led by The Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Scotland.

Highland RFCA's Head of Engagement Michelle McKearnon was delighted to attend on behalf of the Association.

Present Scotians were joined on parade and at subsequent receptions by many former members of Scotia, Claverhouse and Camperdown.

Among those joining the parade was Commodore Tom Knowles. He is a former Commanding Officer at HMS Scotia and is currently the Naval Regional Commander Northern England and the Isle of Man.

Addressing those who took part in the event, he said: "The Royal Naval Reserve provides our people with the opportunity to serve their country, challenge themselves, travel the world, learn new skills, enjoy adventure and make friends for life."



Clockwise from top: Some of those who took part in the parade; Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, Robert Balfour Esq, with Corporal Hannah Scott, the Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet for Fife; the parade was led by The Band of His Majesty's Royal Marines Scotland; Commodore Tom Knowles (left) with Colonel (Retd) Jim Kinloch. Tom is Highland RFCA's Vice Chair Navy, and Jim is the Highland RFCA Southern Area Committee Chair.



Lord-Lieutenant for the Western Isles, Mr Iain Macaulay, and Brigadier Leigh Drummond (left) salute during the Freedom ceremony.



Soldiers from The Royal Regiment of Scotland in Perceval Square.

Freedom honour for SCOTS

The Royal Regiment of Scotland (SCOTS) was granted the Freedom of the Western Isles at a ceremony held in Stornoway on 7 September.

Highland RFCA Head of Engagement Michelle McKearnon had the honour of representing the Association at the event.

The Parade stepped off from Stornoway Golf Course at 1200 and, led by Regimental Mascot Corporal Cruachan IV and the Regiment's Pipes & Drums, marched to Perceval Square for the Freedom ceremony.

Granting of the Freedom is the highest honour the local authority – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Council of the Western Isles) – can bestow.

Freedom of a Borough/County/City/Town is generally bestowed in recognition of the services of the Regiment, both in peace and war.

Since the formation of the Council in 1975 the Freedom of the Western Isles has only been granted on seven occasions, including to the Queen's Own Highlanders.

Brigadier Leigh Drummond, who accepted the Freedom on behalf of the Regiment, said: "It is an exceptional honour to receive the Freedom of the Western Isles and a great privilege to be able to march through Stornoway.

"The Western Isles have a strong history of producing fine

soldiers and supporting all those who serve, and we thank the community for their ongoing support."

The Royal Regiment of Scotland was formed in 2006 and is the senior and only current Scottish infantry regiment.

Earlier this year the Regiment was granted the Freedom of Aberdeenshire. The event was marked with parades in Peterhead, Alford and Laurencekirk over the weekend of May 11 and 12.



From left: Brigadier Leigh Drummond, Council Convener Kenneth Macleod and the Lord-Lieutenant for the Western Isles, Mr Iain Macaulay.



Left: The Regiment marching through Laurencekirk and (above) Army Cadets forming up in Alford.

Units celebrate milestones

85 years of Sea Cadets in Dundee . . .



Sea Cadets parading through Dundee City Centre.

Dundee Sea Cadets paraded its colours through Dundee on 10 August to mark the unit's 85th birthday.

The parade was led by Army Reservists from The Band of The 6th and 7th Battalions of The Royal Regiment of Scotland (SCOTS) and joined by other Sea Cadets units, Army Cadets, Royal Air Force Air Cadets, Royal Naval Reservists from HMS Scotia, and Armed Forces Veterans.

The marchers had stepped off from Dundee Congregational Church following

a morning service. They then gathered outside the High School of Dundee before marching past the McManus Galleries, along the Murraygate and onward to the statue of Admiral Duncan situated outside St Paul's Cathedral.

A series of wreaths were then laid in honour of the 18th Century naval hero.

The parade then continued onto City Square to be greeted by Bailie Christina Roberts, along with supporters of Training Ship (TS) Duncan, the Dundee Sea Cadets' ship.

The groups were then inspected by

various dignitaries including Colonel Scott Dunn, the Commandant of Angus and Dundee Battalion Army Cadet Force, before the Commanding Officer of TS Duncan, Petty Officer (Sea Cadet Corps) Barry Ross, cut a special birthday cake to mark the end of the celebration.

Rear Admiral Jude Terry, the Royal Navy's Director of People and Training, and Naval Secretary, was the Inspecting Officer for the occasion. Rear Admiral Terry graduated in 1997 from the University of Dundee with a degree in Anatomical Sciences.



Rear Admiral Jude Terry passes a wreath to a TS Duncan cadet.



Commanding Officer of TS Duncan, Petty Officer (Sea Cadet Corps) Barry Ross addresses cadets, guests and onlookers.

... and 80 years in Fraserburgh



Cadets marching through a misty Fraserburgh.



Taking the Salute.

Fraserburgh Sea Cadets celebrated its 80th anniversary with a parade in the town.

The unit – Fraserburgh Training Ship (TS) Gowanlea – and its Royal Marines Cadets Detachment, founded in 2017, was joined at the 7 September event by cadets from Sea Cadets Peterhead, Sea Cadets Aberdeen and Army Cadets from 2nd Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force (ACF), led by Colour Bearers Cadet Corporal Craft and Cadet Lance Corporal Bruce.

The Lord-Lieutenant of Banffshire, Andrew Simpson, took the Salute from a dais by the town's Market Cross. Fittingly, his Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet is Petty Officer Cadet Finnlly Murray, a member of TS Gowanlea. Other VIPs in attendance included Jim Buchan, Deputy Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire, and 2nd Battalion The Highlanders ACF

Commandant Colonel Sean Fraser. Led by the Fraserburgh Royal British Legion (RBL) Pipe Band, the contingent marched from School Street via the saluting dais to Fraserburgh and District Parish Church for a commemoration service led by Rhoda MacDonald. During the service, a Junior Sea Cadet, a Sea Cadets Petty Officer and a Royal Marine Cadet of the unit spoke to the congregation about their cadet experiences.

Following the service, the parade contingent marched to the RBL where the Lord-Lieutenant congratulated the cadets and Adult Volunteers for their excellent turnout.

The cadets then staffed display stands on School Street and within the RBL Building. Councillor Judy Whyte, Provost of Aberdeenshire, Commander Gary Farmer, Area Officer Northern Area Sea Cadets and Mrs Donna Gemmell, Chair of Fraserburgh Sea Cadets gave further addresses. A Sea Cadet assisted the Provost with the cutting of the anniversary cake.

In the evening, members of TS Gowanlea reassembled at Fraserburgh Leisure Centre for a dinner dance, together with family and community members.

The unit currently trains on Tuesdays and Thursdays at its new shore base as well as running a very active and wide-ranging boating training programme at Sandhaven. Petty Officer Cadet Wesley attended His Majesty The King's Coronation parade, in his capacity as Northern Area First Sea Lord Cadet. Lieutenant Commander Trail also had the honour of attending. In the same year Chief Petty Officer (SCC) Pat Davidson took over command of the unit from Lieutenant Commander Trail who was promoted to Deputy District Officer.

Ongoing fundraising efforts are now aimed at building a new main deck at the rear of Grampian House allowing the unit to reduce its waiting list and to continue the growth of TS Gowanlea.



Finishing touches!



2 Highlanders march through the town.



The Sea Cadets looked very smart.



The ACF Colour Bearers.



A cadet's injured arm attracted attention.



2nd Battalion The Highlanders ACF Commandant Colonel Sean Fraser chats to cadets.

Prestigious award for cadet

A cadet from 1st Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force has received a prestigious award for her work helping young people from Armed Forces families.

Cadet Lance Corporal Isabella Turner (17), from Elgin, was presented with a British Citizen Youth Award (BCyA) by Dame Mary Perkins, Patron of the British Citizen Awards. She is pictured with Dame Mary (right) and event host Kimberly Wyatt (left).

The ceremony – honouring young people aged 18 and under who are doing “extraordinary work in their community” – took place at the Palace of Westminster in London on 17 October.

Recognising the difficulties children face during the transition from military to civilian life, and understanding the stresses related to coping without military support, inspired Isabella to co-produce the Tornado of Change Project.

The project welcomes children and makes suggestions to help them make the transition more easily. Isabella also supports the Your Mind Matters project which provides wellbeing and mental health support to serving, Reservist and Veteran children. She co-produced a Your Mind Matters hub which provides access to support, online quizzes, podcasts and



more. These resources are also useful to parents, educators and professionals.

For the past four years Isabella has also been part of a Forces children's book club named Page Turners. Here, Isabella helped develop a ‘book journal’ and was then invited to participate in multiple projects for Forces Children Scotland including the Ruby Boots project which focused on living as a Veteran family.

Dame Mary Perkins said: “The British Citizen Youth Award recipients are very special individuals. These young people all go above and beyond for others with selfless acts of kindness and community spirit with no thought or expectation of praise or reward.”

The awards were hosted by singer and

actress Kimberly Wyatt, a Patron of the British Citizen Youth Award.

She said: “Many of these kids have faced turmoil in their own lives yet still choose to be selfless and help others. I applaud you and your families for your hard work and dedication. You are the future, and your brilliant endeavours will make a difference!”

The British Citizen Youth Award, now in its ninth year, honoured 21 young people from across the UK that have made a difference in their communities and to society.

Each inspirational young person is invited to use the post-nominals BCyA as a legacy of their achievements and commitment to others.



Cadets demonstrate their drill skills.



Visitors, cadets and Adult Volunteers enjoyed a meal together.



Brigadier Dodson promotes a cadet.

Employers given cadets insight at camp

Highland RFCA attended a Scotland & Northern Ireland Region Royal Air Force Air Cadets (RAFAC) Engagement Day on 15 October.

The event – held at the Barry Buddon training area, near Carnoustie – gave Defence-friendly employers an opportunity to meet cadets during their camp. HRFCA Regional Employer Engagement Director Roy McLellan attended along with representatives from Serica Energy, Fife Sports and Leisure Trust, and Crieff Hydro Family of Hotels. Highland RFCA Chief Executive Brigadier (Retd) Mark Dodson was also in attendance.

Each of those employer organisations has pledged support to the Armed Forces by signing the Armed Forces Covenant. They also hold Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Awards at the following levels: Serica Energy (Gold); Fife Sports and Leisure Trust (Silver); Crieff Hydro Family of Hotels (Silver).

250 RAF Air Cadets from across Scotland and Northern Ireland attended the camp. They were able to showcase their activities to the employers and visitors throughout the day.

Activities included Cyber and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) classes, drill and shooting. Employers also enjoyed an evening meal with the cadets and Adult Volunteers.

A choir performance followed, with the cadets living up to the adage of ‘the show must go on’ after a power failure interrupted the music a couple of songs in.

Visitors were also able to look on as a cadet was promoted, and an Adult Volunteer was presented with the Cadet Forces Medal (in recognition of 12 years of RAFAC service).

The visit was rounded off with networking.



DofE practice expeditions

Northern Area Sea Cadets descended onto Loch Tay for a mixture of Bronze Qualifying and Silver Practice Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) expeditions.

Paddlers, rowers and sailors met and camped in July at the Willowgate Activity Centre, near Perth. After the groups pitched their tents, essential skills for the expedition were covered and kit bags checked to make sure they were waterproof. The safe use of stoves, and using the wild camping toilet bags were just some of the other highlights!

Following breakfast on day one, it was time to strike camp and head for Loch Tay where the expedition was launched next to the hotel at Killin. The weather was good for the expedition although the wind could have been stronger, at times, for the sailors.

The day finished at what was a busier-than-expected amazing wild camping beach by the loch. The cadets set up camp and then had dinner together before exploring the beach and waterfall, keeping a close eye out for any wildlife.

Day two saw the cadets continuing their



paddling, rowing and sailing expeditions, exploring the Old Lawers village, a Scottish Heritage site on the way. Then after a lunch stop it was the home straight to Kenmore beach.

Once all the kit and boats were loaded on the trailers and in the buses – quite a substantial amount of work – the group headed back to Willowgate for a night of sorting out kit, eating take-away and having a campfire – with skewers and marshmallows.

A great effort to all the participants who completed their Bronze Qualifying or Silver Practice expeditions. Bravo Zulu to all!

Able Cadet Matthew Little from Whitley Bay said: "I completed a 15-mile rowing expedition on Loch Tay for my Bronze DofE Award. It was a fabulous opportunity to incorporate and improve my teamwork and leadership skills as well as testing my resilience and building self-confidence. I developed a true spirit of adventure and discovery by completing this self-sufficient journey."

Sub Lieutenant (SCC) Peter Todd, the Area Staff Officer for DofE, added: "Expeditions that provide young people with an achievable challenge and freedom of choice truly enhance the cadet experience like no other cadet activity. Whilst offering paddling, rowing and sailing expeditions at the same time was a logistical challenge for the supporting Adult Volunteers, we were keen to give our cadets an opportunity to utilise the boating skills they had gained previously on their DofE expedition, whilst offering them as much choice as possible. I am proud of the cadets and supporting staff who made these expeditions such a success and looking forward to offering more expeditions to our young people in the future."



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