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High-Light



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



**Royal Gun
Salute – Pages
10 & 11**

Proud of team's achievements

Ten years and twenty-one issues after my first contribution to *High-Light* in June 2015 it is time to pen my final editorial.

The intervening years have seen some seismic events and changes: six Prime Ministers, three First Ministers, Brexit, COVID-19, the invasion of Ukraine, two Strategic Defence Reviews, the Paterson and Sullivan Reviews into the RFCAs, the DRM 10 Year Review and the incorporation of the Volunteer Estate into the Future Defence Infrastructure System (FDIS) to name a few. However, I still find myself only placed 30th in the league table of long service within the 75 current HRFCAs staff, a reminder of the commitment and durability of our staff and one of our unique selling points – the continuity which we provide for Defence.

In my first editorial I commented on the importance of Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) and, as the UK Government embarks on an ambitious project to increase the number of cadets in schools and communities by 30% by 2030, creating the right conditions to attract, train and retain CFAVs has never been more important. I offer two thoughts: substantially reducing Cadet Force bureaucracy must be at the heart of the project for growth to be achieved, as must more flexible co-use of existing cadet facilities.

On the back of the lessons from Ukraine, so convincingly explained to us at our Annual Association Meetings by General Sir Richard Barrons last year and Lieutenant General Sir Nick Borton this year, the Government is placing renewed emphasis on national resilience, the importance of the Reserves, and of recreating the systems to mobilise the Strategic Reserve at speed and at scale. And it looks like the RFCAs may well have an important supporting role in this – more to follow as plans develop.

The introduction of FDIS has been more painful than any of us anticipated. The geographical spread and remoteness of many of our sites have been a challenge for Mitie, who have been more used to large concentrations of Regular sites in the Moray Firth, Central Belt and Faslane. It is of considerable concern that the Tier 1 sub-contractor for our area has decided to pull out because they are making a loss. But I am reassured that Mitie have a contingency plan and our Estates team have an excellent working relationship with them. The legacy knowledge we have of the estate will continue to help Mitie and their sub-contractors deliver a safe and compliant Volunteer Estate, providing we receive enough funding to pay for the work arising and for other projects such as grounds maintenance.

It has been a truly great privilege to serve the Reserve and Cadet Forces in the Highlands and Islands this last decade. I am immensely proud of what the HRFCAs team have delivered and achieved for you in that time. It has been an equal privilege to work alongside such a dedicated, talented and committed team of Crown servants and I wish you all the very best for the future. I find it very reassuring to know that my successor, Lieutenant Colonel Huan Davies RM, will have such a strong and capable team to help him at the start of his tenure. My thanks also go to Angus Taverner, Nick Dorman and David Caddick, the three Association Chairs I have worked for, and to the Executive Board, Council and Association membership for their contribution, interest, guidance and deep local knowledge. Bydand!

Mark Dodson



Brigadier Dodson welcomes guests to the Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Awards held at The Black Watch Castle and Museum in Perth on 26 June.

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Lieutenant General (Retired) Sir Nick Borton delivering the keynote speech.

Annual Association Meeting

Highland RFCA members gathered for the Annual Association Meeting (AAM) at Discovery Point in Dundee on 5 April.

82 attendees made the journey from across the Highlands and Islands. This was the third time the venue has hosted the AAM, following a successful first event in 2023.

HRFCFA Chair, Wing Commander Dr David Caddick, opened the meeting by welcoming and thanking members. He then turned to official business such as the Election of Officials and Resolutions.

HRFCFA Chief Executive, Brigadier (Retired) Mark Dodson, then delivered his annual report. He gave a detailed update on the activities and environment HRFCFA has been operating within over the previous year. This is his last update as he will be retiring later this year.

The Chair of the Council of RFCAs, Captain (Retired) Nick Dorman, took the floor next to brief members on recent changes.

He was followed by keynote speaker, NATO Senior Mentor Lieutenant General (Retired) Sir Nick Borton, who delivered a thought-provoking presentation entitled 'NATO Security Challenges in an Era of Confrontation'.

Members and guests had the opportunity to network during the buffet lunch provided by Discovery Point.

Updates from the Royal Navy, Army, and Royal Air Force took place in the afternoon. The following single Service representatives provided presentations: Chief of Staff and Deputy Naval Regional Commander Scotland & Northern Ireland, Lieutenant Colonel Gary Giles; Colonel Jules McElhinney, Deputy Commander (Reserves) 51 Infantry Brigade & HQ Scotland; and HRFCFA Air Regional Engagement Officer, Wing Commander Paul Carrier. Members were then able to interact with them during a tri-Service Q&A. Lastly, President Robert Balfour Esq delivered closing remarks.

Discovery Point presented The Lord Provost and Lord-Lieutenant of the City of Dundee, Councillor Bill Campbell, Captain Nick Dorman, Brigadier Mark Dodson, and Robert Balfour Esq with Royal Research Ship (RRS) Discovery relics at the end of the meeting.

Members and guests had the opportunity to take part in a free tour of Discovery Point and RRS Discovery.

Armed Forces Covenant signatory and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award holder, Dundee Heritage Trust, has responsibility for Discovery Point, home of RRS Discovery, and Verdant Works.



From left: HRFCFA Chair Wing Commander Dr David Caddick welcomes members; the tri-Service Q&A, and the presentation of a Discovery relic to Lieutenant General Borton.

Meet new HQ staff members

Highland RFCA HQ has seen one **retiral and a number of new starts over the last few months.**

Regional Employer Engagement Director Roy McLellan retired from his post on 4 April having joined the organisation in August 2018.

During that time Roy oversaw numerous Armed Forces Covenant signings and successfully guided dozens of organisations towards Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver and Gold Awards. We

wish him well for the future. Roy has been replaced by Employer Engagement Administrative Officer Hayley Munro, taking over in the now retitled role of Defence Relationship Manager.

We welcome back Aaron Bain to the organisation in the role of Employer Engagement Administrative Officer. Aaron had previously held that position from late 2023 until earlier this year.

Aaron will be joined on the Employer Engagement team by fellow Employer Engagement Administrative Officer Erin

Couttie who joins us from the University of Dundee.

We also welcome back Davie Barclay into the Estates team as one of the Estate Managers. Davie had previously been the HRFCAs Facilities Manager before leaving to take up a position with Mitie Defence. Mitie is the Regional Prime Contractor delivering Hard Facilities Management across the RFCA Volunteer Estate in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Find out more about Hayley and Erin below.

Hayley Munro is the new Defence Relationship Manager for Highland RFCA, taking up the role in April 2025. She works alongside fellow Defence Relationship Manager Ray Watt, with both based in Dundee.

Hi Hayley. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

"I am originally from Edinburgh where I grew up and attended school, spending most of my teenage years within the Army Cadet Force. I then moved to Dundee for university and have settled here ever since. Whilst at university, I joined Tayforth University Officers' Training Corps where I learned how to play the tenor drum and joined the unit pipe band – this skill then gave me the opportunity to travel to various different Tattoos and gigs including The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, The Lord Mayor's Parade in London and The Basel Tattoo in Switzerland."

What attracted you to a job with Highland RFCA?

"I come from a family with numerous ex-Army personnel so finding an organisation that supports and works alongside Regular, Reserve and cadet units felt like a great fit. I



joined HRFCAs back in 2022 as an Employer Engagement Administrative Officer and fell in love with the work there."

What's your role within the organisation?

"As one of two Defence Relationship Managers, my main focus is to deliver Employer Engagement across the HRFCAs-region by building positive relationships with civilian businesses both in the public and private sectors. I encourage these businesses to firstly sign the Armed Forces Covenant and then progress through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme whereby they pledge to support all members of the Armed Forces community."

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

"I enjoy spending most of my spare time hanging out with friends or on family days out with my partner and young step-daughter. You will frequently find us in a trampoline park or exploring a museum or castle of some kind depending on the weather. I love attending all sorts of gigs or music festivals. My favourite genres at the minute are American Country and Scottish Trad. When I am not out and about, I love to curl up at home and read a crime or thriller book with the fire on."

Erin Couttie is the new Employer Engagement Administrative Officer (EE AO) for Highland RFCA, taking up the role in May 2025. She works alongside fellow EE AO Aaron Bain and Defence Relationship Managers Hayley Munro and Ray Watt at HRFCAs headquarters in Dundee.

Hi Erin. Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

"I am 23 years old and have lived in Dundee my whole life. I have worked since I was 16 and have always looked for opportunities to grow and expand my skills. Most recently, I worked for the University of Dundee's School of Science and Engineering where I obtained new qualifications and training which helped prepare me for this next new step working here at Highland RFCA. I hope to travel at some point in the future and am always looking forward to what is to come."

What attracted you to a job with Highland RFCA?

"Highland RFCA sounded like a highly rewarding organisation to work for, and I was keen to learn more

about the work they do and the positive impact they have on others. The position of Employer Engagement Administrative Officer stood out to me, especially with its combination of interactive, engaging duties and the responsibility and independence it offers, which I found very appealing."

What's your role within the organisation?

"I am responsible through the Defence Relationship Manager for helping maintain an accurate and dynamic employer database alongside assisting in the creation and maintenance of an environment that will encourage employers to support Reservists in meeting Defence requirements, in particular through recruitment and retention. This will often involve the planning and delivery of events as well as managing guest lists and invitations."

What do you enjoy doing in your spare time?

"I love spending time with family and friends, and I enjoy exploring new places with my dog, especially for long walks. I've always had a passion for textiles and clothes-making. After studying Textile Design for two years, I still enjoy sketching new ideas in my free time and occasionally turning them into the real thing."



2025 Silver Awards presented



The 2025 Silver Award recipients with Brigadier Andy Muddiman (bottom, right) and Highland RFCA Chief Executive Brigadier (Retired) Mark Dodson (bottom, left).

Employers from the Highland RFCA area gathered at The Black Watch Castle and Museum in Perth on 26 June to receive Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Silver Awards.

The reception and presentations, hosted by Highland RFCA on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, formally recognised the support the 18 organisations give to the Armed Forces community.

On the night, 17 organisations were on hand to collect their

Silver Award for 2025 from Naval Regional Commander Scotland & Northern Ireland, Brigadier Andy Muddiman.

Among the other military representatives were Lieutenant Commander Alison Devine, Executive Officer at HMS Scotia, Major James Kelly, Chief of Staff Royal Marines Reserve Scotland, Lieutenant Colonel Mike Onslow, Engagement Coordinator at 51 Infantry Brigade & HQ Scotland, and Group Captain Andy Tait of the Royal Air Force. Also in attendance was Perth and Kinross Council's Armed Forces Champion, Councillor Chris Ahern.

The evening began with employers and their guests being piped into the venue by four pipers from Glenalmond College Combined Cadet Force, before being welcomed by Brigadier (Retired) Mark Dodson.

An opportunity for networking followed before guests were invited outside to enjoy an outstanding musical performance from the pipers.

Prior to the presentations, Brigadier Muddiman said: "We are here this evening to give recognition to employers as part of the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme. You may be interested to know that the number of companies joining the Scheme is rising rapidly – the milestone 13,000th Armed Forces Covenant was signed at the end of 2024 and the number continues to rise. There are over 1,600 Silver Award holders nationally. We hope that now you too have reached the Silver standard you will go on to become advocates to other businesses and organisations on behalf of the defence family and thereby qualify to be considered for the Gold level Award.

"On behalf of Defence, I thank you for your commitment."

Representatives from Journeycall were unable to attend the ceremony. Their achievement will be recognised with a presentation of their Silver Award at a later date.

And the winners are...

Altrad Integrity Services Limited
Clackmannanshire Council
Copernicus Technology Ltd
Corporate Energy & Renewables Ltd
EASTON'S Training Limited
Flotation Energy Ltd
Forbes of Kingennie Country Resort
Golden Friendships
GSL Associates (Scotland) Ltd
Journeycall
Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland
Mitchell & Murdoch Care Ltd
OnFife
Port of Aberdeen
Raeburn Training
Robertson Group
Shearwater Marine Services Ltd
Well-Safe Solutions Limited





Award recipients, from left: Copernicus Technology Ltd, Flotation Energy Ltd, and Knights Templar Goodwill Charity of Scotland.



Award recipients, from left: Mitchell & Murdoch Care Ltd, Robertson Group, and Well-Safe Solutions Limited.



Pipers from Glensalmond College Combined Cadet Force entertained the audience with a fantastic and varied set.



Brigadier Muddiman salutes one of the Glensalmond College pipers.



Guests had opportunities to network.



Lord Lyon opens CTC extension



From left: Wing Commander Dr David Caddick, the Lord Lyon, Colonel Scott Dunn and Brigadier Mark Dodson.

The new multi-functional extension to the Cadet Training Centre (CTC) at Barry Buddon was officially opened by Dr Joseph Morrow, The Right Honourable Lord Lyon King of Arms, on 4 April.

Highland RFCA Chair Wing Commander Dr David Caddick and Chief Executive Brigadier (Retired) Mark Dodson attended along with members of Angus and Dundee Battalion Army Cadet Force (ACF).

Wing Commander Dr Caddick said: "What started as a plan to increase the capacity of the cookhouse and kitchen, ended up providing a multi-use space which allows feeding in a single sitting, plus the ability to quickly convert it into additional classrooms in the daytime, and provide a soft breakout space for the cadets in the evening. It also incorporates sustainable features such as solar panels supplemented with battery storage."



Colonel Scott Dunn, Commandant of Angus and Dundee Battalion ACF, thanked all of those involved in the project for bringing the plans to fruition and especially the Battalion's Permanent Support Staff and Cadet Force Adult

Volunteers for their efforts in readying the new facilities.

He noted that visiting other CTCs across the country reminds Adult Volunteers just how lucky the Battalion is with its own facilities.

The ceremony saw the Lord Lyon – who is also the Battalion's Honorary Colonel – unveil a commemorative plaque. He emphasised the importance of facilities such as the CTC in helping support the development of young people.

Along with the extension and upgraded kitchen, the works also created an outside seating area. The improvements will alleviate current accommodation constraints and aid the efficient delivery of the Army Cadet Syllabus for the Battalion.

RDA Architects delivered the 12-week construction project on behalf of Highland RFCA, with work carried out by CHAP Group (Aberdeen) Ltd.



The Lord Lyon speaks to Cadet Force Adult Volunteers.



The new extension and patio area.



Participants during the stretcher run.



ChamberFORCE
Business skills in Reserve

Supported by 

Spirit of the Marines on show

Around 40 people joined Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce on 26 June for a day of immersive challenges, problem-solving, and shared achievement, hosted by 45 Commando, Royal Marines, in partnership with Highland RFCA.

The Spirit of the Marines team building exercise at RM Condor, near Arbroath, was designed to strengthen bonds, inspire personal growth, and foster collaboration among individuals from diverse backgrounds. Hosted by 45 Commando, the event encouraged participants to push their limits, develop critical skills, and build lasting connections.

Reflecting the Royal Marines' core values of courage, determination, unselfishness, and cheerfulness in adversity, Spirit of the Marines celebrated the power of collective effort.

The employers were broken into four teams to enjoy:

Leadership Under Pressure – Practical first aid scenarios to build confidence and quick decision-making.

Adaptive Team Challenges – Inspired by the Royal Marines but adapted for all abilities, focusing on creativity, problem-solving, and teamwork.

Command Tasks Carousel – High-impact, fast-paced team rotations to reveal natural leaders and strengthen communication.

Networking and Team Bonding – Forge lasting connections with colleagues and Royal Marines alike.

Activities were delivered by a combination of Royal Marines and Royal Navy personnel. The first set of tasks was all first aid-based, covering all the basic skills required to check a patient's vital signs (airway, breathing, circulation), perform CPR, apply dressings/bandages to wounds, and use an emergency tourniquet.

Other tasks, including a field gun competition, casualty extraction, observation, and equipment recovery followed lunch. The event wrapped up with an informal prize-giving and barbecue provided by 45 Commando.

Teams came from a variety of organisations. These were: Brunton Design, The ESP Group, The Scottish Shutter Company, Winter & Simpson, and McIntyre Chocolate Systems.

The event took place as part of the ChamberFORCE initiative, a partnership programme between selected Chambers of

Commerce and local Navy, Army and RAF units, designed to bring tangible business benefits to Chamber members. Prior to the activities, Highland RFCA Defence Relationship Manager Ray Watt spoke to the participants about the Armed Forces Covenant, Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, and the value of employing Reservists.

Dundee & Angus Chamber of Commerce is an Armed Forces Covenant signatory and Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Gold Award holder.

Highland RFCA established ChamberFORCE in 2018, then in 2022, the project entered a sponsorship deal with Amazon UK, who are also ERS Gold Award holders and key employers in Central Scotland. This sponsorship enables the project to deliver events like Spirit of the Marines.



The Marines put the teams through warm-up exercises.



HRFCA's Ray Watt talks to the participants.

Presentations go with a bang



Guest and hosts at Edinburgh Castle.

A 21-Gun Salute was fired at Edinburgh Castle on 1 July to mark His Majesty The King's birthday and the start of Royal Week celebrations in Scotland.

Guests from a range of Armed Forces-friendly organisations were welcomed to the Officers' Mess by Highland RFCA Deputy Chief Executive Major (Retired) Tom Kerrigan.

Guests then heard from Lieutenant Colonel Doug Bertram, a Reservist and Commanding Officer of 105th Regiment Royal Artillery, who thanked the employers for supporting the Armed Forces before handing over to his Adjutant who gave a talk about the history of Gun Salutes.

Guests were then escorted to the Salute viewing area accompanied by music from the Royal Marines Band Scotland.

Reviewing Officer Air Commodore Sonia Phythian OBE of the Royal Air Force was piped to the dais by a Reservist from the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry (SNIY) before giving permission for the Salute to be fired. The Salute was timed to be fired at the exact moment The King arrived by helicopter at the Palace of Holyroodhouse and fired by 46 (Talavera) Battery from Salisbury-based 32 Regiment Royal Artillery (The Wessex Gunners).

Following this, the Air Commodore inspected the Saluting Troop before returning with guests to the Officers' Mess for refreshments.

The Salute was followed by Armed Forces Covenant signings and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Bronze Award presentations to Carmichael and Baxter Industrial Services, GBSS Civil Engineering Limited, and The House of Bruar.

Air Commodore Phythian presented the Awards on behalf of Defence. She is a former Head of the RAF Medical Services and is currently Head of Defence Case Management System, delivering a programme to support wounded, injured and sick Service personnel.

Air Commodore Phythian said: "Today you will formally receive your Armed Forces Covenant certificates and also your Bronze Awards. Thank you for inviting me to share with you this momentous occasion, an occasion that will become part of your companies' history and give you a story to tell.

"It is also, hopefully, a stepping stone on your journey to the

Employer Recognition Scheme Silver and Gold Awards. I am delighted we have some Silver and Gold Award winners with us today, and I know 18 new Silver Awards were presented just last week to companies in the Highland RFCA area.

"The Armed Forces Covenant was established in 2011. I have seen for myself the wonderful difference the Covenant has made, and is making. More than 13,000 organisations across the UK have now signed up to this declaration.

"The Ministry of Defence and our Armed Forces are deeply grateful for the support that you, the employers, provide – particularly with regards to your members of staff who are also Reservists.

"Without supportive employers, these women and men simply could not deliver their military commitment to defend and support the nation in times of need. We thank you for the work you do on our behalf."

Events were rounded off with the awarding of a Gold Award revalidation to Aberdeen-based Wood PLC. Gold Awards are valid for five years before being reviewed for revalidation.

Air Commodore Phythian said: "Wood employs over 6,000 people in the UK and over 35,000 worldwide. Equally impressive is their continued engagement with the team at Highland Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association, including being the first Chair of the Highland Gold Network, and their visible advocacy for Defence. They are tremendous allies and I am delighted to award them their Gold Award revalidation."



Air Commodore Phythian inspects the Troop.



Air Commodore Phythian presents the Gold Award revalidation to Ally McLeod of Wood PLC.



Air Commodore Phythian and George Burns of GBSS Civil Engineering Limited signing the Armed Forces Covenant.



Air Commodore Phythian Peter Carmichael of Carmichael and Baxter Industrial Services signing the Armed Forces Covenant.



Air Commodore Sonia Phythian presents the Armed Forces Covenant and ERS Bronze Award certificates to Fiona McLellan of The House of Bruar.



The Royal Marines Band Scotland provided music, with Air Commodore Phythian piped to the dais by an SNIY Reservist (below).



Air Commodore Phythian with The King's helicopter in the background. Below: Guests look on as the Salute is fired.



Brigade Commander Q&A

Brigadier Lisa Brooks joined 8th Battalion Light Infantry and commissioned in 1995. She completed an S-Type engagement with 1st Battalion Light Infantry as B Company Second-in-Command in 2001 which included operational deployments to Northern Ireland and Sierra Leone.

Transferring to the Royal Artillery she commanded 269 (West Riding) Battery equipped with Rapier Field Standard C exercising in the Outer Hebrides, Cyprus, and Lithuania. Unit command from 2013 to 2016 was with the Yorkshire Officers' Training Regiment (Leeds and Sheffield University Officers' Training Corps) taking the newly formed Regiment from initial to full operating capability. Later postings include Executive Officer of the Advanced Command and Staff Course (Reserves) at the Defence Academy; and Deputy Commander Reserves with 4 Infantry Brigade and Headquarters North East, with primary focus on developing the capability and readiness of the Army Reserve. In 2022 she was appointed Assistant Head Reserves at the Ministry of Defence, and was appointed Commander 19 Light Brigade in 2024.

She is a graduate of the University of Reading, and the Higher Command and Staff Course 24; and holds a Master's in Strategic Studies from the US Army War College. Lisa lives in Yorkshire with her three children where she is a Deputy Lieutenant for the East Riding of Yorkshire.

Brigadier Lisa visited 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (7 SCOTS) in Dundee earlier this year to see Exercise Urban Argyll; an urban training exercise for Reservists from 19 Light Brigade taking place at the new specialised indoor urban training facility (part-funded by HRFCA) at Oliver Barracks. Our Head of Engagement took the opportunity to chat with her about the challenges of being a Reserve Brigade Commander.

What is your role as Brigade Commander?

"I am responsible for leadership and management of 3,000 personnel across 86 different locations. The Brigade HQ is in York, but there are also 10 combat units based across the UK from the Outer Hebrides to Cornwall. The team is a hybrid mix: Reservists, Regular personnel, Full Time Reserve Service, and Civil Servants and no two days are the same."

What would you say is your biggest challenge?

"Time! There just isn't enough of it. It is impossible to get around everywhere and visit everyone personally, much as I would



Brigadier Brooks with members of 7 SCOTS at Exercise Urban Argyll in Dundee.

like to. As well as the personnel in the UK, we have over 1,000 soldiers on overseas exercise, and getting out to see them is a logistical challenge in itself."

19 Brigade is a relatively new Brigade. What is special about it?

"The Brigade entered suspended animation in 2013 following the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and was reformed in 2022 in York as part of Future Soldier reform. 19 Brigade is the only Reserve Brigade in the British Army. We are one of seven Brigades who make up 1st (United Kingdom) Division, the British Army's Global Response Force. We can be called on to respond to a wide spectrum of operations from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to warfighting. 1st (United Kingdom) Division is also the current Land Component Command of NATO's Allied Reaction Force. Being part of 1 Division very much raises the profile of Reservists and the many skills that they have which can transfer from military to civilian employment and vice versa."

Should civilian employers employ Reservists?

"Yes, absolutely. When I started work in the food industry back in the 90s, my employer had no formal policy for supporting employees who were also part of the Reserve Forces. We have come a long way, due in part to the Armed Forces Covenant and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Awards, which actively encourage employers to hire Reservists and have suitable policies in place to enable them to fulfil their duties.

"Employers who employ Reservists in their workforce benefit from having employees who are trained to be the best

they can be in any situation. They will have undertaken many hours of specialised training – at no cost to the employer – in leadership, teamwork, first aid, logistics, transport, communications... the list goes on. They are highly skilled and used to working under pressure and delivering in very demanding circumstances. I think Reservists are an asset to any employer, to be honest."

Finally, why should people consider joining the Reserves? What has it meant to you?

"When you join the Reserves, a whole wealth of opportunities opens up to you. You will challenge yourself to do things you never thought you could do, and push yourself to achieve success in all sorts of areas. You develop a sense of pride, service and duty; make new friends; and undertake a huge amount of personal development. And if that isn't enough, there is worldwide travel and the chance to take part in activities such as skiing, diving, riding, music and every team sport you can think of! You also get paid to do it!"

"For me, it has been an incredible experience. I joined as it seemed a good way to allow me to develop my civilian career and my Army one at the same time. I never imagined I would go on to become Brigade Commander, but it just shows what can be achieved. I have been fortunate to have worked with some incredibly gifted and committed people, I would not be here without them or the support of my friends and family. The Reserves have made me the person I am, and I thoroughly recommend the Reserves to anyone looking to develop themselves and their career. It is life-changing and life-affirming."



Falconer Liam Johnson with Jack.



Jack keeping a close eye out for gulls.

Nature providing a solution

Highland RFCA visited Yeomanry House in Cupar to see a natural method being used to deter gulls from nesting at the site.

The work is being carried out by HF Pest Control – a subcontractor for Graham Pest Control, an Armed Forces Covenant signatory and Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Bronze Award holder – and is aimed at reducing the disruption to Reserve and cadet activities at the Army Reserve Centre (ARC).

The site houses C Squadron of the Scottish and North Irish Yeomanry (SNIY), as well as a detachment of The Black Watch Battalion Army Cadet Force.

Sometimes, managing bird populations becomes a necessity, particularly when certain species intrude on areas where they can pose challenges. Here, the innovative use of a Harris Hawk called Jack is proving effective.

Handled by falconer Liam Johnson, Jack has been spending around two hours on site each week starting at the beginning of gull nesting season in March, with the work due to carry on through to August.

The ARC faced a problem: gulls were nesting in areas that

posed risks to operations and safety. The birds began to establish themselves in various areas, creating complications ranging from noise disturbance, aggressive behaviour to hygiene issues. With the population rapidly growing, it became essential to explore humane and effective methods of deterrence.

In 2024, issues caused by the birds forced a temporary suspension of cadet activities after the gulls – instinctively protecting their chicks – began acting aggressively toward the cadets. In addition, damage to the canvas roof of an SNIY truck forced repairs running into several thousands of pounds.

Enter the Harris Hawk, a bird of prey known for its intelligence and adaptability. Having demonstrated success at other HRFCAs properties, including Mid Craige in Dundee, the decision to incorporate the hawk into the ARC's wildlife management plan is proving to be a promising solution.

Harnessing the natural instincts of the hawk offers a non-lethal method of controlling the gull population without harming them. Working with Liam, the hawk is flown in and around the facilities to deter gulls from establishing nests. The mere presence of a raptor is often enough to encourage the birds to vacate their occupied areas.

RMR celebrates employer partnerships

Royal Marines Reserve Scotland hosted the biennial Royal Marines Scotland Dinner on behalf of the Commandant General Royal Marines Sir Gwyn Jenkins KCB OBE RM (1SL), welcoming a distinguished audience, including valued employers, to Edinburgh Castle.

The 12 June event offered an opportunity to recognise and thank those whose support is vital to the Royal Marines, particularly employers who continue to back serving Marines, Reservists and Veterans. Their presence affirmed

the strong partnership between the Corps and the organisations that enable its people to thrive both in and out of uniform.

Throughout the evening, employers heard directly from serving and former Royal Marines about the ethos, and demands of military service.

Guest of honour was Kathryn Lindsay, Chief Executive of Angus Council. Angus Council signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2018 and was awarded the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award in 2020.



Taste of Army life for pupils

Around 700 secondary pupils from schools in Fife attended Leuchars Station for Exercise Leuchars May Challenge from 13 to 15 May.

More than 200 pupils took part in a round robin of various interactive Army stands on each of the three days of the engagement event. The intent was to provide a taster of career opportunities available in the British Army.

The event – taking part in one of the massive hangars at the former Royal Air Force base – formed part of 51st Infantry Brigade and Headquarters Scotland's plans for 2025.

The day saw groups of pupils visiting each of the stands for 15 to 20 minutes each. Units represented included: 7th Battalion The Royal Regiment of Scotland (7 SCOTS), Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, 71 Engineer Regiment, 154 (Scottish)



Royal Logistic Corps, the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, 212 (Highland) Battery Royal Artillery, and the Royal Corps of Signals.

Throughout the event, pupils had the chance to operate a digger, try out musical instruments, try on webbing and bergans, take part in physical training,

vehicle recovery, command tasks, and much, much more.

Highland RFCA attended on all three days, setting our gazebo up with our bear mascots attracting lots of attention.

A field kitchen provided the pupils, teachers and military personnel with lunch.



Troops from the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards with some of their kit.



Captain Scott Shaw of 7 SCOTS.



The vehicle recovery stand.

Cadet's lifesaving actions recognised

A cadet from 1st Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force (ACF) has received recognition at the Scottish First Aid Awards.

The lifesaving actions of Cadet Company Sergeant Major (CSM) John Bremner, from Halkirk Detachment, earned him the Young First Aid Hero for 2025 from St Andrew's First Aid at the ceremony held on 28 March in Glasgow.

CSM Bremner (17) sprang to the aid of his father after he accidentally injured himself. His dad was laying carpet when he badly cut his forearm. The wound was bleeding profusely and, without hesitation, John applied pressure, elevated his arm and lay him on the floor all while offering reassurance. He also called an ambulance. When the ambulance arrived, CSM Bremner went with his dad to the hospital, continuing to provide comfort throughout the journey.



CSM Bremner (pictured with his award) said: "I'm honoured to receive this award, but more importantly I'm just glad I could be there to help my dad when he needed me most. First aid is a hugely valuable skill, that you never know when you might need to put into practice."

He has also been praised by his Detachment Commander for his calm and composed efforts on April 1, 2024.

Captain Stephen Mezals said: "CSM Bremner is a credit to the ACF and has grown into a fantastic role model for those around him. Being able to administer first aid on anyone who has such a horrific injury was an amazing feat in its own right, but to do so with the added pressure of the casualty being a loved one, and to be able to remain so calm and professional, shows great courage.

"First aid is one of the core skills that we teach in the ACF, with cadets gaining various first aid qualifications up to the standard of a First Aid at Work course. These are real-life practical skills and it's always a profound moment when we see them being put into practice and having such positive outcomes."



The King and Queen at the War Memorial.



Cadets and Adult Volunteers form up for the parade.

King and Queen in Kirkcaldy

Their Majesties The King and Queen visited Kirkcaldy on 2 July to commemorate the centenary of the town's war memorial.

The Royal couple were greeted on a very rainy day by the Lord-Lieutenant of Fife, Robert Balfour, who is also the President of Highland RFCA. Despite the weather, large crowds of well-wishers had gathered to see the visitors.

The King unveiled a new commemorative cairn, honouring not only those who gave their lives in war, but also the unsung heroes who kept Kirkcaldy's public services running during both world wars. The cairn is designed as a time capsule for future generations and



The Royal couple unveil the cairn.

is filled with mementos and photos from Viewforth High School.

The event included a parade that saw cadets and Cadet Force Adult Volunteers from The Black Watch Battalion Army Cadet Force taking part. Several members

of the Battalion also had the honour of meeting The King.

It was also a proud day for Kirkcaldy Detachment, who saw their hard work on the Poppy Screens that were displayed over the memorial.

In addition, officers and soldiers from 105th Regiment Royal Artillery took part in proceedings, with the marching contingent led by 212 (Highland) Battery. There was also representation from the other Services and Armed Forces Veterans.

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Some of the exhibitors on the day and (bottom right) Adult Volunteers from Peterhead Sea Cadets who kept everyone fed.



Highland RFCA Head of Engagement Michelle McKearnon attended an Engage with Engineers event at the Cadet Training Centre in Boddam on 10 May.

The Centre is home to 2nd Battalion The Highlanders Army Cadet Force who organised the event.

The day saw numerous engineering companies from the Aberdeenshire area showcasing job opportunities available to the area's young people.

Many teenagers and their parents from secondary schools in the North East, along with tri-Service cadets, were welcomed at the event that ran in glorious sunshine.

There were numerous information stands for the young people to get round, including engineering in some of the following industries: oil and gas, construction, Defence, electronics, communication, helicopters, plumbing, and Blue Light Services. Some of the organisations also gave presentations throughout the course of the day.

Engineering was chosen as the main focus as it supports STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) subjects that form part of the Army Cadet Syllabus.

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