

# Combined Cadet Force

## Annual Report 2022-23

Andrew Davies



The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) has been connected to Beechen Cliff since 2007, the year in which the army brokered an agreement between King Edward's School and Beechen Cliff. From this point Beechen Cliff pupils were able to put themselves forward as members of the contingent and to participate in the training and enrichment programme which underpins cadet activity across the country.

The contingent is led by a Staff instructor (or SSI) who arranges all the activities, writes risk assessments and oversees the work of all the cadets and adult instructors (CFAVs). Currently the SSI is Captain Phillip Jones, supported by Captain Cerys Jones, the latter taking responsibility for the administrative function of the unit.

The activities are funded (fully or subsidised) by the army and this makes it possible to provide an extensive and well resourced package for children. In addition to CCF created activities the cadets can participate in the Beechen Cliff Duke of Edinburgh programme and use the experiences towards the volunteering/skills section of the programme.

The contingent leaders are supported by a further five regular staff instructors who support the delivery of the syllabus and the various exercises in army camps/training areas around the country.

The contingent, together with other school CCFs around the country, was hit hard by the effects of Covid and the cessation of training activities and meetings did cause difficulties which are only now being slowly overcome. The reliance on a strong, skilled and determined NCO body (senior cadets) to provide training of the younger members of the contingent meant that the loss of around eighteen months of activity saw NCOs move on and away without the opportunity to develop the next cohort effectively. The overall effect was a loss of training and enrichment opportunity. Senior cadets had moved on and left without having the chance to train a new cohort of younger cadets, leaving the contingent in a difficult place.

In this academic year (2022-23) we have been able to move forward, however, seeing the provision of a full syllabus delivery and training programme which has had a positive impact on the members of the contingent.

## **Contingent Inspection Dashboard**

All CCF units are assessed in preparation for the biennial inspections which take place, overseen by the army. Units are assessed on the safeguarding qualifications (updated annually by King Edward's School, in line with their own policy), emergency procedures understanding (known as the Red Book Test), weapons test updates, syllabus delivery and budgets. The contingent is rated as green (Good) in all areas and is one of the best in the south west.

## **Contingent Roll**

September 2022 - 75 on roll (29 Beechen Cliff pupils)  
July 2023 - 120 on roll (60 Beechen Cliff pupils)

The 'ideal' strength of the contingent is between 80 and 110 cadets. At this level the number of trained NCOs to new cadets means that 'class' sizes are good and the training can be thorough and effective. Beechen Cliff pupils currently provide five of the NCOs and there are seven Year 10 cadets who will be put forward to take the intensive training programme in August (a ten day course) which will allow them to be considered for promotion.

### Activities in 2022-23

The cadets have been involved in a number of significant activities and training programmes throughout the year. In November all the cadets were involved in the Remembrance Sunday gathering at the Cenotaph and marched through the city, representing the contingent and their schools exceptionally well.



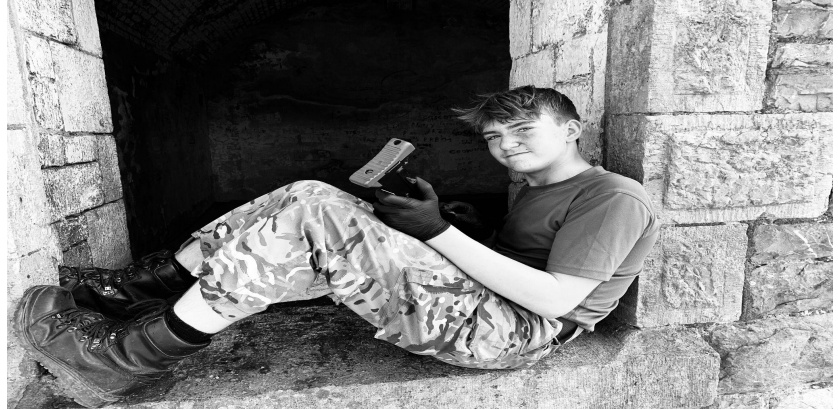
Later in the year all the new cadets were involved in 'Exercise Patch Up', a realistic simulation exercise where the youngsters have to show their ability to think under pressure, apply first aid and deal with casualties in a number of fairly stressful situations. Those that pass this weekend activity are awarded their First Aid badges and are always very proud to receive them.

In early May the cadets were taken to Portsmouth to have a full tour of HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Navy's flagship - courtesy of the Commander, a former King Edward's CCF member.



In addition to the weekends devoted to first aid and showing support to the city's remembrance activities, the cadets all learn to use army equipment, most notably the L98 rifle. Cadets attend an intensive course on the handling, stripping, firing and identification of individual parts of the weapon - all tested in a standard military weapon handling test (WHT), the passing of which is a matter of pride for all the cadets.

It should be noted that, as well as receiving all uniform and kit, activities are heavily subsidised, meaning that the average cost of a three to five day camp is around £30 for parents - no cost at all if the pupil is eligible for the Pupil Premium.



### Exercises in the field

All cadets want to put their skills to the test in the field and the CCF provides a number of opportunities for them to do so. In October the contingent participated in *Exercise First Chance*, the name giving away the purpose of the event. The new cadets get the opportunity to stay 'in the field' (usually in the rain), build shelters, cook using field stoves and also undertake some tactical exercises. The more experienced cadets have the opportunity to develop their tactical field skills and use the L98 rifle. For all the cadets this is a fantastic event and the cadets participating last October had a really enjoyable experience.

In May the CCF ran *Exercise Next Step* at Scraesdon Fort in Devon, giving the chance to the Year 9, in particular, to learn how to use the L98 in the field and also how to deal with commands and creating a camp for themselves. A rather warmer experience than that in October 2022. Again, the benefits to the boys, having to show resilience, take orders and endure periods of time without sleep, all manifest themselves in strong working relationships, the sharing of a common experience and the confidence that the training does have meaning. For all the participants it is an experience of huge value.

Coming up in late July we have the last exercise of the academic year, *Exercise Warrior Cadet*. This is a three day, entirely tactical exercise in the Brecon Beacons. The 'tactical' element refers to the fact that the cadets are immersed in the scenario of being in the field of operations from the beginning. It is very intensive, tiring and utterly exciting. For the boys a physical and mental challenge which pushes them hard.



## **Targets for 2023-24**

The key targets from my perspective relate to the recruitment of Beechen Cliff boys to the CCF and making sure that we have succession planning in place to make sure that our pupils can continue to be supported and represented at the contingent.

### **2023/4 Recruitment:**

The target is for 40% of the contingent to be Beechen Cliff boys, with a minimum of thirty boys being members. At this stage in the process (Summer Term 2023) we appear to be in a position where recruitment is strong (fifty plus boys attending the induction programme) and a core group of Year 9 to 12 pupils who provide the future potential leadership of the contingent.

### **Staffing:**

The staffing model at King Edward's provides for a very good number of adults overseeing the activities. The Beechen Cliff link is provided by the inclusion of Andrew Davies as the key 'liaison officer' and we have received a request from one other member of staff to support the contingent in its work from September 2023.

## **Thanks**

I must pass on my thanks to Tim Markall and the school for its firm support of the CCF and the opportunities it gives for Beechen Cliff boys to have experiences which are often the preserve of the independent sector, despite efforts to 'open up' CCF provision in schools in recent years. We are indebted to Captain Phil Jones and his team at King Edward's for their huge commitment of time and effort, providing benefits to the KES and Beechen Cliff pupils.

Andrew Davies

June 2023