

**UNIVERSITIES OF SHEFFIELD MILITARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE**Annual Report for the Session 2017 – 2018

*In Section 1 below, this Annual Report details the origins of the Military Education Committees (MECs) in Higher Education, and refers to recent events affecting this MEC and the Military University Service Units for which it has a responsibility. It will then touch upon the place of these Units in student development. Section 2 of this report will describe activities and experiences in the Service Units since the previous report, submitted in September 2017, before concluding in Section 3 with a further summary of the benefits that can accrue to students through their membership of one of the three Service Units which they are potentially able to join.*

**1. Introduction and Background**

Military Education Committees (MECs) owe their existence to a Privy Council ruling before the First World War, which requires Universities with associated University Service Units (USUs) to maintain a linking Committee, charged as a crucial part of its duty with ensuring that students' academic progress is not compromised by their military interests. In Sheffield, the MEC is a joint committee of the two Universities and its responsibilities relate not only to the Sheffield Universities Officer Training Corps, but also the Yorkshire Universities Air Squadron and the Yorkshire Universities Royal Naval Unit (respectively SUOTC, YUAS and YURNU).

The theme of change, as outlined in previous reports, has continued throughout the past year, with organisational changes for the Units as well as the MEC itself.

The structure of the MEC Committee will change substantially at the end of the academic year. Due to historical mistakes regarding roles and lengths of term of office, The Chair will step down and be replaced for one year only 2018-19. The Vice-Chair position is still vacant, the Governing Body at Sheffield Hallam University are seeking a member of staff to take up the role for one year only until 2019. The new nominee of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sheffield has been selected and agreed. Three of the Commanding Officers, the Squadron Leader of the RAF and the two Officers of SUOTC are finishing their mandate and will be replaced over the summer of 2018. One of the members appointed by the Academic Board of Sheffield Hallam has also stepped down as he is leaving Sheffield Hallam University, their Governing Body will seek a replacement.

All three Units are in good health, recruitment has gone well, although the SUOTC are 20% down this year. The military are going through a period of great change which has had an impact on all three Units but the opportunities for students' personal development and employability skills remain the priority.

Morale in the Units is very high. Students are being provided with opportunities to lead activities and events, including operational exercises and the Units are collaborating both with each other and other areas of the University and the wider communities.

A good number of Service Unit members from the Sheffield Universities have successfully completed the initial stages of Officer Training over the past year. The MEC strongly feels that the students are to be commended for their achievements, and notes that this is an excellent example for current and future students.

In addition to their military based skills, students in the Service Units have also excelled themselves over the past year with Adventurous Training (AT) and sporting exercises, together with their charity and outreach work, which has represented both the Service Units and the Universities to an exemplary standard.

## **2. Matters Concerning Individual Service Units**

### **2.1 Yorkshire Officer Training Regiment and Sheffield Universities' Officer Training Contingent**

The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) continues to review the format and content of the Reserve commissioning course training syllabus, from which the UOTC training is drawn.

One of the changes made this year are stricter medicals which are the main filter for recruiting into the OTC, this is now the entry medical should cadets wish to pursue a career in the Reserves or Regulars.

There has been a lot of interest from Senior Officer Cadets to move from the OTC to the Reserves as decent financial benefits are available. The Reserves and the OTC have a good relationship so the transition is easier for those wishing to make the move.

#### **Activities**

Forty Officer Cadets and staff took part in the regimental winter Adventurous Training (AT), Exercise Northern Dalesman Piste, an intensive alpine skiing expedition to Matrei, Austria. Ski Foundation 1 (SF1) and SF2 qualifications were gained allowing Cadets to progress to instructor qualifications in the future.

The Sheffield UOTC once again took a prominent role in the Remembrance Parade at Weston Park in November 2017 with 100 Officer Cadets in attendance. 20 more paraded with the main commemoration at the Centotaph in Sheffield. Cadets and their families attended a curry lunch afterwards at the Somme Barracks.

A Realities of War (RoW) Day took place in March 2018 with a trip to Newark to study the siege that took place during the Civil War. The Army uses RoW to encourage intellectual development in Officer Cadets by exposing them to tactical challenges from historical conflicts.

Other planned activities include the Annual Camp Deployment Exercise (ADE) scheduled in June. In July the Ex Northern Dalesman Leone, a high level arduous trek in the Dolomites, Italy will allow Cadets to achieve testing routes and summits. Ex Northern Dalesman Cape will take Cadets on an arduous trek over 300 km of the Cape Wrath Trail in the NW Highlands of Scotland. Ex Northern Dalesman Highland is a mountain biking expedition, coasts to coast from Forth William to Aberdeen. AT Concentration encompasses mountaineering, mountain biking and rock climbing in Snowdonia in two one-week packages from 15-27<sup>th</sup> July 2018, which allows Cadets to earn foundation level qualifications.

Cadets also attended a very inspirational talk by the Ice Maidens, a team of women who crossed the Antarctic on skis via the South Pole, all are currently serving in the Regulars or the Reserves.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

Sheffield have seven Officer Cadets booked to go to Sandhurst which is the highest number for a few years, there will possibly be an eighth once he passes selection.

During the recruitment process there has been a lot of interest and people through the Drill Hall, but because of medicals and other demands of the Unit, they are c20% under recruited, these places will not be filled. Being at 80% has a knock on effect regarding drop-out over the year. The Unit have requested assistance from both Universities to help with promotion to new students arriving on campus.

As part of the rebalancing of the UOTC, Officer Cadets within the Senior Division have been reduced. An increased number have been encouraged to transfer to Group A Reserve Units, which has been a success story this year. The following Units have received SUOTC Officer Cadets on transfer: Army Medical Services (4); 7 Rifles (1); Royal Engineers (8); Royal Armoured Corps (1); Royal Signals (1).

Leeds and Sheffield came together for the first time as a Regiment to organise the Inaugural Regimental Dinner and Cocktail Outreach event at the Cutlers Hall, Sheffield. The Dinner gives cadets experience of formal dining, dressing appropriately and hosting dignitaries from Yorkshire.

A team of twelve Cadets ran the Sheffield half marathon and managed to raise £1000 and they hope to reach £2000 by organising other activities.

Twelve Officer Cadets took part in the Para's Ten which is an endurance task, a 10 mile hike carrying a 16kg pack on your back. Sponsorship money was raised for the Sheffield Children's Hospital Charity.

## **2.2 Yorkshire Universities' Air Squadron**

This year has been very successful again with 13 YUAS students entering Cranwell for Initial Officer Training in 2016/17 and 14 are either at, or due to start in 2017/18. A further six are going through the application process.

23 are leaving the squadron this year. Of these, six have achieved first solo with one achieving Preliminary Flying Badges (PFBs), 12 attended a Strike exercise, seven have TTCL qualifications and 13 have applied for or are interested in a military career.

A Defence Basing Review is taking place across all elements of the military. The Unit is based at Linton-on-Ouse which is set to close and as yet they have no indication of the future of it. However, the future of the YUAS is as assured as it can be.

### **Activities**

The YUAS were the only uniformed Squadron to parade in Tadcaster for Remembrance Day. Cadets also participated in the University of Sheffield concourse parade.

New recruits began with a three day induction camp in the Lake District in December 2017, there were activities such as mountain biking, orienteering and caving. Basic military skills training was also undertaken including Health & Safety, Fire and Police/Security. Easter Camp builds on induction and is the Initial Officer Training leadership lessons, incorporating inspections, discipline, drill and other things. Leadex is a field week deploying to the Catterick training area doing field work and command tasks. Range camp is run by HQ RAF Cranwell, it covers leadership and weapons handling.

Staff Rides are trips taken in this country and abroad to relevant military sites. Cadets are hoping to organise tours to Berlin and around the UK through the summer so they can integrate with RAF 100, the centenary celebrations.

A skiing trip in February was the highlight of the year. 30 Officer Cadets gained the SF1 qualification. Over the summer there will be AT expeditions to Austria for mountain biking and Newquay for surfing. Also two Officer Cadets will be attending England Entry 18 visiting the Himalaya's for four weeks.

15 Officers and Cadets have qualified and are undergoing training to compete in the Nijmegen Marches where they will complete a series of endurance marches.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

The Squadron attended nine of the affiliated university Freshers' Fairs with the exception of Bradford and Huddersfield who did not welcome a military presence. From a total of 137 applications, 48 students were formally interviewed with a final 33 chosen to constitute 49 Cse. All have shown great potential and enthusiasm.

The student establishment is set at 75 although recruiting was such a success in October 2016 that at one point there were 80 RAFVR members of the Squadron. This has now reduced to 76 plus one Medical Cadet.

With regards to outreach, Cadets continue to work with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and the Jon Egging Trust. The highlight of charity events is the YUAS Charities' Auction which took place in August 2017 and raised £3000 for the RAF

Benevolent Fund, Yorkshire Air Ambulance, JET, Leonard Cheshire Disability and the RAF Linton-on-Ouse Boathouse. Another major event is the Ex Easter Bunny, which involves collecting Easter eggs from donors and delivering them to children in hospitals across Yorkshire.

### **2.3 Yorkshire Universities' Royal Naval Unit**

It has been another very successful year. However, restructuring above the Unit has put them into a recruitment line. Also budgets have been cut for Military Training Days, but staff have managed to meet all targets and attend major events.

Dr Jonathan Rayner assisted with the YURNU interviews in September 2017. Again, his knowledge and experience was vital to ensure that students have sufficient academic rigour to join the Unit but most importantly, ensure they put their University studies first and do not over commit.

#### **Activities**

The Royal Navy syllabus is very much co-ordinated towards deployment. Sea training is a highlight of the year with two deployments, one at Easter and another during the summer.

Easter deployment took place finishing on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2018. HMS Explorer sailed to Scotland visiting Buckie, Oban and transiting through the Caledonia Canal. Summer deployment took place from 27<sup>th</sup> May to 29<sup>th</sup> July 2018 and saw HMS Explorer in company with HMS Example of Northumbria on a tour of the Baltic.

Over the weekend of 28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> October 2017, 25 students completed Adventurous Training at the Plas Menai Outdoor Activity Centre in Angelsey, Wales which included dingy sailing, hiking and sea kayaking.

The Bogseat Challenge took place in December 2017 in Portsmouth between Yorkshire, Liverpool and Manchester, giving a chance to show off sporting prowess in various sports. The cadets retained the Bogseat (last place) for a second year.

The Annual Mess Dinner took place in Leeds on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and was supported by a grant from the RFCFA. The event enables affiliates, military guests, alumni and university staff to meet current students. This year the guest of honour was Commodore Phil Waterhouse, Naval Regional Commander Northern England.

The highlight of the sporting calendar is the URNU Sports Weekend which was scheduled to take place in Portsmouth from the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> March 2018. This is the only time all 15 URNUs come together. Unfortunately, due to heavy snow, the weekend was cancelled.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

The YURNU have recruited 24 students this year which make up half of the Unit, five of which were from Sheffield. The URNU currently stands at maximum capacity of 51 Officer Cadets.

In relation to outreach, the YURNU held a highly successful charity evening with a St Patrick's Day theme and a horse racing element which was held on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2018. In total the URNU raised £1,585 which will be split between Walking with the Wounded, a military charity for vulnerable veterans in need of support and Roundabout, a youth homelessness charity in Sheffield.

Cadets competed in the Sheffield Round Walk, a charity event, which took place on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2018. £250 has been raised so far with a target of £500.

Sean Bean, a native of Sheffield and supporter of the military has accepted an invitation to visit HMS Explorer in the near future depending on his film schedule.

The YURNU supplied the wreath for the Vice-Chancellor to lay at the University of Sheffield Remembrance Service held on 11th November 2017.

### **3. Conclusion**

This report must, by necessity, only deliver a relatively narrow insight into the achievements of the Sheffield student members of the Service Units. The breadth and depth of development afforded to those students who participate in the Service Units helps to prepare them for their future, both in terms of life skills and employability. Being successful in the recruitment process, and consequently becoming a member of a Service Unit is an achievement in itself. Furthermore, the skills they learn within the Service Units are of great importance for their life after University. The Students involved with the Units display a maturity and level of professionalism that is a credit to the Universities at which they study, whilst still maintaining a sense of perspective and fun.

The Military Education Committee's role is to oversee the balance between the University and the Service Units and ensure that a conduit exists to extinguish any problems that arise. It has been noted by Service Units themselves that they greatly appreciate this link and support provided by the Universities. The MEC has been able to deliver appropriate levels of support over the past year, and it is hoped this will continue into the future.

*Submitted by Mari Brazil  
Secretary for the Military Education Committee*