

Deputy Town Mayor's Report

Love Unites Festival

This was on Saturday the 3rd of September; everyone was to meet up outside Reading Station at 10.30 and when we arrived it was extremely well attended and organized into groups. Many Mayors were invited to attend and along with Mayor of Reading, Bracknell Forest, Thatcham and Newbury. Matt Rodda MP, the High Sheriff and other dignities also lead the march through Reading Centre. It took over an hour and half and was extremely good natured and fun. The march finished in Kings Meadow where an all-day fair with many community stalls and music had just opened. I did appear on television for about 2 to 3 seconds.

Cllr Caroline Smith
Deputy Town Mayor

Royal County of Berkshire

Army Cadet Force, Longmoor Training Annual Camp 2022

I attended this event at Longmoor Military Camp, Hampshire, on behalf of the ETC Mayor, Cllr Tahir Maher.

On arrival we were taken for coffee and to choose our picnic lunch – it becomes apparent later why this was important. Along with our coffee was a general briefing presentation which explained thoroughly what the cadet force involves and their funding. I have the booklet if anyone would like to see a full explanation of the life of an Army Cadet.

This day was about visiting the camp during the Army Cadet annual camp week. With our picnic lunch, we were taken by bus to meet some of the Cadets during one of their many outdoor activities, such as an outdoor climbing wall, archery, and physical training (indoors). We were at all encouraged to talk to the Cadets. This group was referred to a 1- Star (first years). I found out the climbing tower was had various levels of difficulty per side, but the Cadets were not going to give up - thankfully I was not asked to give it a try.

We were also taken to a target range which they called a PlayStation 10; we watched as the Cadets, with modified real guns that have been fitted electronically to shoot virtual bullets into a screen (just like a computer game). We were told that it is easier to manage training with this electronic equipment being immediately able to adjust shooting angles etc whereas before someone had to walk to a target and look at the bullets holes to see how well an individual had done; this computer did all this in seconds and the Cadet can be trained into improving their shooting. However, with the cost of the technology, is not any cheaper than using blanks – but provides more accurate, instant feedback.

The next visit was to meet the 3-Star Field Cadets (the eldest of the 3 triers) for lunch. These cadets, who just finished outdoor night activities and were going to eat their Army rations including the heating of various pouches of food, this is all outdoors, and we were going to eat our picnic with them. The Army Cadets has a reciprocal arrangement with the Norwegian Army Cadets where a few of our Cadets go to Norway on exercise. In return, and for this week, about 10 are joining the annual training camp. And once again, we were encouraged to talk to the Cadets, and they offered a share of their rations. I did refuse though they did say it was very nice including chocolate brownie.

The final exercise of the day was the 2-Star cadets this took place in a part in a nearby wood and concrete open space. We were taken into a wood to watch this full-on exercise. The exercise starts out with some of the cadets checking their part of the wood, to get their bearing, they then proceeded across open ground at which the point they came under fire by Cadets hidden in bunkers before them. Using two Corps, one on the ground shooting being followed by back group moving forward before changing over and start shooting going forward. When they decided they were coming under too heavy fire, they pulled back using the same mechanism but in reverse. Also, I should add they were using blanks but still very noisy. Once we had a chance to speak to the Cadets afterwards about their experience of sleeping outside and taking part of this exercise and most were looking forward to a shower and cooked dinner having lived on rations.

This was the last part of the day, and we went back for a last goodbye. It was a full-on day, and it only gave a flavour of the whole experience. What I did take away is the commitment of the various officers involved in making sure that the Cadets have a great experience. Secondly, the Cadets themselves who were clearly enjoying themselves and challenging themselves in ways not are not open to most young adults.

Cllr Caroline Smith
Deputy Town Mayor