



**EAST MIDLANDS**  
**RESERVE FORCES AND CADETS ASSOCIATION**

# Annual Report

**2019-2020**



**At the heart of the community**

[www.eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk](http://www.eastmidlandsrfa.co.uk)    



# Who we are

**East Midlands Reserves Forces and Cadets Association (RFCA) is one of 13 RFCAS in the UK. We are a community-based organisation with the responsibility of advising and assisting the Defence Council, the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force on matters that concern Reserves and Cadets.**

With its headquarters in Nottingham, the RFCA plays a leading role in strengthening the environment for the Armed Forces through building relationships with the local community and employers. By harnessing the extensive knowledge and experience of our volunteer membership, we work to increase understanding between military and civilian communities.

East Midlands RFCA is responsible for engaging with Reservists' employers; supporting Reservists and Cadets; assisting with recruitment of Army Cadet Force Adult Volunteers; and the maintenance and support of Army Reserve Centres and Cadet Centres.



**Our skills and experience  
date back to 1908**

# Our Vision and Mission

### Our Vision

Our vision is to be the essential, effective and enduring partner that supports Reserves, Cadets and the wider Armed Forces community in the region.

### Our Mission

Our mission is to provide professional and efficient support to the Volunteer Reserve Forces to enable them to deliver military capability through the single Services. We do this through maintaining estate compliancy and safety, employer and infrastructure support, and regional representation. Our mission for Cadets is to assist with recruitment, provide administrative and communications support and representation in the local community, as well as maintaining the estate.



## At the heart of the community

**East Midlands Reserve Forces and Cadets Association is a community based organisation which strives to keep the Armed Forces at the heart of our community. We promote the value of our people at the heart of Defence to create a favourable environment for improved recruitment and retention.**

Our buildings are located across the East Midlands, ensuring that Reserves and Cadets are an integral part of their local communities. We utilise our strong relationships with community contacts and employers to ensure that Defence personnel are treated fairly and with respect.

We have dedicated local expertise, facilities and support functions, and operate as a not for profit organisation. Our extensive portfolio of buildings are offered as venues to hire at affordable prices, with all funds invested back into the facilities for use by the Reserves and Cadets for their activities.

Our volunteer members act as local ambassadors across the region, ensuring the interests of our Armed Forces community remain at the heart of the community. Members are volunteers who include representatives from the Royal Navy, Army and the Royal Air Force but also include representatives from local authorities, businesses and charities, each seeking to support and promote our core values and messages.

**We are proud to support the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community.**

**We are proud to be at the heart of the community**



# A Welcome from our Chairman

**It is strange to think that only a few months ago none of us was aware of the concept of social distancing, or of the impending centrality of video conferencing to the nation's governance and business processes.**



television coverage of 170 Engineer Group's critical contribution to the construction of Birmingham's NHS Nightingale Hospital, while the region's logistics units have been providing effective assistance to the distribution of essential equipment. The focus is on getting the job done, but we hope to report how our local Reserves have contributed to the national effort in future editions of The Reservist.

The Cadet Forces have also ceased parading across the country for the moment and are identifying ways of continuing to engage with their members, such as through virtual lessons and on-line qualifications.

A critical area of support from us is to ensure that the Army Reserve Centres remain available to Defence for use during the Covid-19 crisis. To that end we are continuing, where possible, to undertake reactive maintenance, to fix faults, and complete statutory and mandatory inspections and tests, to ensure that the ARCs meet legislative and mandated requirements. This is proving a challenge as contractors' staff fall victim to Covid-19 and as replacement parts become ever more difficult to source. At the same time, we are attempting to continue with maintenance activities across the cadet estate, as allowing a backlog of inspections to build up will impose a further delay to the resumption of cadet activity once restrictions are lifted. Needless to say, all contractors are maintaining social distancing and some tasks simply cannot be completed because of this. In addition, our Professional Support Staff are conducting physical inspections of cadet properties, to ensure that they do not deteriorate.

All of our face to face RFCA engagement events have been cancelled for the foreseeable future, but these events will resume as soon as possible. It is possible that our return to normality may occur in early October, with our next round of county committees, but it is too early to predict even that.

As I write my first Chairman's Statement, we are entering the second period of lockdown, with some form of restriction likely to continue for several months. In the light of this uncertainty, we have taken the difficult decision to hold a 'virtual' AGM this year. Our usual reports will be issued online and we will conduct our voting online as well. The AGM is our opportunity to get together and consider the forthcoming year but on this occasion, I hope you will agree that we should prioritise the health of our members and staff.

If nothing else Covid-19 has allowed our staff to practise the Business Continuity Plan and all have been operating from home since the start of restrictions, wherever possible. Video conferencing has become the norm for staff meetings, and even a recent East Midlands RFCA board meeting. This crisis seems to be focussing minds on the ways in which technology can help us communicate and is encouraging people to adapt to change.

Clearly, however, Covid-19 has disrupted the work of Reserves and they have ceased regular parade nights. A number of Reserves have been mobilised to supplement the NHS effort. Many of you will have seen

## The Tailored Review

Before the advent of Covid-19, the primary concern for most RFCAs was the progression of the Tailored Review. The draft Review was issued for consultation towards the end of last year. The RFCAs were acknowledged by the report as doing critical work to support the nation's Reserves and Cadets. The RFCAs' volunteers in particular were identified as the keystone of that support. However, amongst a multitude of recommendations, many of which were welcomed by the RFCAs, was a key one, which seemed to threaten our very ethos. This recommendation was that the RFCAs should be 'merged into a single Executive Non-Departmental Public Body with a National Office and a set of Regional organisations'. Our concern was that the imposition of a hierarchical nationally-focussed organisation would erode the regional focus of the RFCAs and degrade the very capabilities that the Review praised. A further recommendation that stated that 'the wider RFCA membership should be retained in an advisory 'associate' capacity' provoked concern that the volunteer ethos that lies at the heart of all that the RFCAs stand for would be cast aside; taken as a whole the recommendations called into question the RFCAs' continuing and valued relationship with the Lieutenancy.

The posting of the review on the MOD's website without any formal notification to the RFCAs was, to say the least, unfortunate. Nonetheless, MOD has agreed to an implementation committee, jointly chaired by the Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff Reserves and Cadets, Major General Simon Brooks-Ward, and the CRFCA's national chairman Major General Greg Smith. The implementation timescale is challenging and may be delayed by the Covid-19 crisis. However, we intend to work jointly and proactively with MOD to ensure that the outcome will not erode our volunteer ethos, the ability of our constituted membership to select a board, or our valued link to the Crown through the Lieutenancy. I am particularly keen that the RFCAs do not simply become a London-centric quango providing generic administrative support, but retain the ability to support the Reserves and Cadets in our region drawing on extensive local goodwill, knowledge and contacts. Government is well aware of the benefits that such an approach can bring, as exemplified by the RFCAs' External Scrutiny Team that applies an authoritative, questioning eye to provision and support of the Reserves.

I would like to thank two members of the RFCA's management team, who have left after many

years of providing outstanding voluntary support to the volunteers of the East Midlands. Lieutenant Colonel Robert Blomfield, who chaired our Northamptonshire Committee, and Major Richard Cole, who chaired our Leicestershire and Rutland Committee, have both stepped down and their knowledge, enthusiasm and energy will be sorely missed. I am very grateful to Wing Commander Peter Sergeant and Lieutenant Colonel Jane Chappell for kindly agreeing to join our board in their place.

The Lieutenancy is a key element in all that the RFCAs do, and have done in various forms, for over a century. Thus, it is with regret and gratitude that I have to record the retirement of two of our region's Lord-Lieutenants this year.

Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire, Mr David Laing, has been an enthusiastic and constant supporter of his county's Reserves and Cadets throughout his time in office and a regular visitor to all our volunteer organisations. He retired earlier this year and I am very grateful to him for his commendable and constant commitment to our cause.

Her Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Derbyshire, Mr Willie Tucker CVO, has held this demanding role for ten years and his commitment to the people of Derbyshire was recognised by his appointment as a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order last year. Mr Tucker became President of East Midlands RFCA in 2018, although he has of course been involved with the RFCA since he became Lord-Lieutenant. Throughout his tenure Mr Tucker has shown his support for the Reserves and Cadets through his very active involvement in their activities and in sponsoring a range of events throughout his county. He was also a regular visitor to ACF summer camps, and an invariable attendee at Derbyshire RFCA County Committees. This year's AGM should have been our opportunity to bid Mr Tucker farewell, as he will retire in July. Nonetheless, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all members of East Midlands RFCA to thank Mr Tucker for all that he has done throughout his tenure and to wish him all the very best in his retirement.

In closing I would like to wish all of you and your families the very best in these most difficult of times and to hope that next year we shall meet in the traditional way.

**Stay safe and well.**

# President's Farewell

**At this time of national crisis, I hope that you and your families are safe and well.**

Many of you will be facing testing times, as you cope with long hours at work, extended time away from work, children at home on protracted 'holidays', and for a number of you, the after effects of Covid-19. I wish you all well and hope that you will soon be reunited with your extended families and friends.

Clearly though, we must follow the government's direction, which should ensure that the effects of this terrible virus are less than they might otherwise have been. In that vein, we are holding a 'virtual' AGM this year, which will sadly prevent me from bidding a personal farewell to all of you before I step down as President of East Midlands RFCA this summer.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my time with the RFCA, and in particular my last 2 years as the organisation's President. The commitment of those who serve in the Reserves and the Cadets is simply outstanding, and yet

they could not perform so superbly without the assistance and advocacy provided by the RFCAs. Your practical support of all that they do ensures that they have the understanding of their local communities and that they can focus on the job in hand.

I want to put on record my sincere thanks to Nick and all of his team for their help and support during my term as President. I wish you all the very best for the future and I know that you will give my successor, Sir John Peace, the same incredible support that you have given me. I wish you and the RFCAs all the very best for the future.

**Willie Tucker CVO**  
President



Major Angela Laycock of 170 Engineer Group at NHS Nightingale Hospital, Birmingham NEC

# Reserves: Pillars of our community

**There are over 3,000 Reservists across the East Midlands who support the Regulars in the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force.**

They are highly trained men and women, often deployed on operations at home and overseas. They commit to an annual training programme, learn new skills and are paid for their time. Reservists are a vital part of the Armed Forces and form 19% of the nation's defence capacity.

## Reserves in the East Midlands

The majority of Reserves in the East Midlands are in the Army, reflecting the difference in size of the three Services' Reserves at a national level. However, as might be expected of 'Bomber County', Lincolnshire has a greater number of Royal Air Force (RAF) Reserves. Although the East Midlands has only one unit of the Royal Navy, HMS Sherwood is active across all of the region's counties.

## Providing a link between the military and our local communities

Most of the Reserves are part-time volunteers with full-time civilian jobs. Reservists offer a trained capability but they also provide a critical link between the military and civilian communities. This link is increasingly important as the Regular Armed Forces reduce in size and become less visible to the civilian population.

The move of Headquarters 7th Infantry Brigade from Nottingham to Kendrew Barracks in Rutland was completed during the year. This diluted the military presence in one of our region's major cities, making the Army Reserve Centre's even more

important in maintaining a presence. It also makes it more important that our engagement activities continue to expand to maintain awareness of the Armed Forces.

## East Midlands Reserves making a real difference

The Reserves of the East Midlands continue to contribute to operations and exercises across the world. This year, that has included deployments to Afghanistan, Cyprus and the Sudan.

Increasingly, trained and specialist skilled Reserves are able to support operations from UK bases. With the use of modern communications systems, units such as the RAF Intelligence Reserves are able to support operations from their base. This means, once trained, Reserves are directly impacting on operations and get a great sense of achievement.

The Royal Naval Reserve is also looking forward, with the appointment of a new Commander Maritime Reserves, Commodore Melanie Robinson. Melanie has served in the Royal Navy for 27 years; was amongst the first women to go to sea and remains amongst the first to command a warship. Setting-out her stall on day one, she said, "I am determined to lead a step-change in how the Maritime Reserves recruits, employs and deploys its personnel. The Reserves' greatest strength is our capacity to recruit and employ a fantastic diversity of personnel, allowing the RN to draw upon otherwise unaffordable skills, both from existing personnel and future recruits."



## Travel the world as a Reserve

Training exercises remain a key element of the Reserve training syllabus and increasingly Reserve units are exercising with their Regular compatriots. This year has seen Reserves travel to Lithuania for Exercise Iron Wolf and take part in Exercise Warhammer, amongst others, sometimes as individuals, sometimes as units. These visits provide invaluable experience of working with the Armed Forces of other nations.

## Building and maintaining resilience through Adventure Training

A key feature of Reserve service has always been the opportunity to undertake adventurous training, which provides both the physical and mental challenges which develop individual skills to the benefit of the military, the individual – and often, the individual's civilian employer. East Midlands RFCA uses funds raised under the Alternative Venues scheme to assist Reserves to undertake some of these activities.

In the last year, these activities have included skiing in Europe and scuba-diving in Cyprus. These challenging but enjoyable activities are a central part of the Reserve experience and ones that we will continue to support, where possible.



Image: BFBS

# 2019/20 Highlights



HMS Sherwood organised and took part in the Supersession ceremony to welcome the new Commander Maritime Reserves, Melanie Robinson

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester visited 203 (Loughborough) Transport Squadron, 158 Regiment The Royal Logistic Corps (RLC)

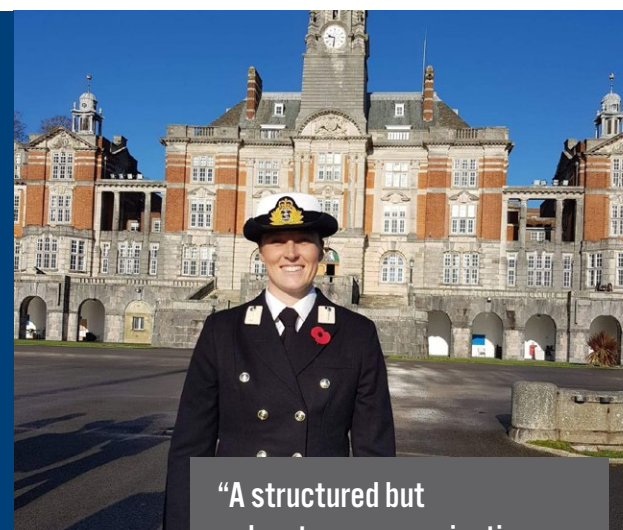


66 Works Group Royal Engineers, 170 (Infrastructure Support) Engineer Group, received the Firmin Sword of Peace for their work in disaster relief in the Caribbean

Senior Aircraftwoman Lou Elkington, RAF Waddington, Lincolnshire, won two Gold medals in The World Masters Rowing Regatta 2019 in Hungary



East Midlands Universities Air Squadron (EMAUS) was presented with The Prince of Wales's Expeditionary Award for an expedition in the South American Guyanese jungle



**"A structured but adventurous organisation can prepare you to face the world with more self-confidence, broader skills and a positive attitude." Afton**

## Afton Fitzhenry, Royal Naval Reserve

Afton Fitzhenry, a recently qualified Midshipman Officer at HMS Sherwood, is currently in full-time training as part of the GB Podium Potential Programme for the next Olympics. This was due to be held in Japan this year but has been indefinitely postponed. In true Reservist style, Afton has taken this on the chin and sees it as an opportunity to learn, adapt and overcome.

Afton's sport is the Canoe Sprint, and her daily training regime is a combination of work on the water, gym sessions and running for general fitness. In her 'spare' time, she is a Reservist with HMS Sherwood, and has spent the last 18 months doing her basic training before passing out recently at Britannia Royal Naval College. Afton started on this path as a Sea Cadet in Northern Ireland, which was where she first started canoeing.

Of her experience at Britannia, Afton commented: "I found the physical part of training enjoyable and could challenge myself, whereas some people just thought it was hell! However, they excelled in other areas and we were a strong team. We all passed, so that is a testament to the team effort."

## Chris Madden, RAF Reserve

Aircraftman Chris Madden serves with the RAF Reserves at RAF Waddington as well as pursuing a full-time civilian role as a solicitor. He has recently been mobilised to help support the Covid-19 effort.

"I joined the RAF because I wanted to do something a bit different, learn a new skill set, and get the opportunity to contribute to the RAF's defence role. It's the people in the RAF that make it a particularly enjoyable experience – Reservists come from many different backgrounds and professions across the UK. I have also been able to take part in a number of ceremonial events including marching in the annual London Pride Parade. Hundreds of members of all three Services of the Armed Forces took part and it was an immense source of pride marching in ceremonial uniform, cheered on by over 1 million people.

"I am also fortunate that my employer, Herbert Smith Freehills, has signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and provides me with time off to complete my Reservist commitments.

"I had been keen to go on deployment with the RAF for a while, but I didn't think the moment would arise so soon and in a time of national emergency. The training Reservists undergo is such that, in such times, we can be called upon to assist the nation doing whatever is required. It would be a privilege to be able to put the training I have received to use and to be able to help out our brilliant country and its people in this hour of need."



**"I don't view my career with the RAF Reserves as a 'secondary' job – for me, it is a concurrent employment alongside, and equal to, my role as a solicitor." Chris**



# Cadets: Investing in the future of our communities

**The Ministry of Defence sponsored Cadet organisations are extremely effective at training and developing young people. A four year study by the University of Northampton has reinforced the numerous benefits that Cadets bring to young people, their Adult Volunteers and the community as a whole.**

The Cadets offer young people the opportunity to develop their social and leadership skills, be challenged, develop strength of character and improve their self-esteem. All these qualities give them a great advantage as they progress into adulthood.

The Government's Cadet Expansion Programme reached its record breaking 500th Cadet Unit parading in schools across the UK during the year. The original target set in 2012 was 100 Cadets units in schools by 2015. When this was met early, an ambitious new target was set – and again reached early. Mark Alker, School Cadets Expansion Officer (SCEO) for East Midlands was presented with a certificate marking the success, along with SCEO's from other regions.

In the East Midlands, over 11,000 young people are members of the Cadets. There are 24 school based Combined Cadet Force units, and then the community based Sea Cadet Corps, Army Cadet Force and Air Training Corps. All are working hard to expand their numbers, with Cadet Force Adult Volunteer recruitment being central to achieving this.



**"I enjoyed all of the trip. It was incredible and the best experience of my life, thanks to Cadets." Evie**



**Army Cadet Regimental Sergeant Major Evie Botting had an amazing trip to Africa this year, as part of the Army Cadet Force Association Sports project.**

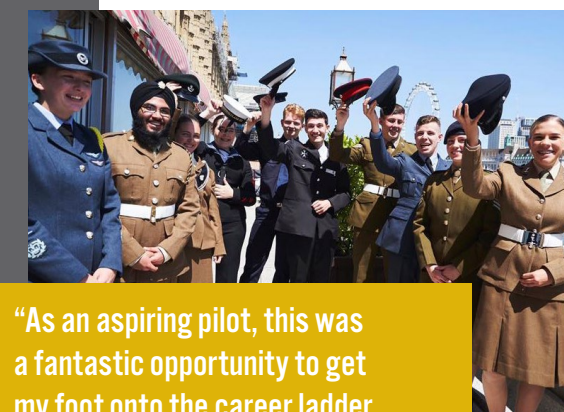
Evie, from Ulverscroft Road detachment, Leicester, commented: "When we first arrived at the school near Nairobi, we were helping out with general maintenance. When the children came, they sang a song to welcome us, and we then had the chance to get to know them. Over the next few days, we were able to teach them about football and even play a tournament. The children were so inquisitive, and it was a privilege to have known them, so bright and willing to learn. We loved how they all were so happy with their lives even though they had barely anything."

"After the school was finished, we embarked on a Safari over the weekend, to spend the night out there was exhilarating. We also went white-water rafting, got to jump off high bridges and ride the rapids. We went back to the school to say a very emotional goodbye as we had to leave them for the last time."

**Air Cadet Flight Sergeant Benjamin Hunter, 1 Flight (City of Leicester) Squadron, has had a year to remember, winning both a Sir Michael Knight pilot award and a place in the final of the CVQO's Westminster award.**

"I was very privileged to be one of only 10 cadets in the UK to be awarded a Sir Michael Knight pilot scholarship by the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust. The scholarship offered 33 hours of training, as well as all exams and a skills test, for the award of a Private Pilot's Licence.

"I was incredibly fortunate to also gain a place in the final of the CVQO Westminster award, where the prize was a trip to South Africa. I got take part in conservation work, whilst also seeing some of the most amazing sights in the world. It was an experience that changed my outlook on life, reminding me to enjoy the time I have and treasure the things and environment I have around me."



**"As an aspiring pilot, this was a fantastic opportunity to get my foot onto the career ladder and overcome some of the initial financial barriers associated with flight training." Ben**

## Army Cadets enjoy variety of summer camps

Summer camps are the highlight of the year for many Cadets, and provide a great opportunity for socialising, as well as honing their skills and learning new ones. With groups from across the region working together, Cadets get to make new friends from different backgrounds and broaden their experience. It is also a cost-effective use of resources. In summer 2019, over 1,300 Cadets attended camps, including at Wathgill, near Catterick, Swynnerton Training Camp, Staffordshire and Lydd Training Camp in Kent.



**"We hope that the opportunities we can provide will really make a difference." Amelia**

**Air Training Corps Cadet Warrant Officer Amelia Seymour, 2248 (Rutland) Squadron, was one of just three Air Cadets appointed to the national Youth United Foundation youth panel.**

The Government run organisation was set up to represent uniformed youth organisations across the country. The focus of the project was Mental Health and Loneliness. Amelia was Vice-Chair of the panel. The focus of the group now is on developing effective working relationships with key sector organisations (VCS, Emergency Committee, NCVO, NHS, Government and other charities) that require voluntary support in order to identify safe, age-appropriate and impactful voluntary activities that young people can support.





**This year's Lord-Lieutenant's Cadet for Leicestershire, Cadet Warrant Officer Samuel Page, was honoured to meet Their Royal Highnesses Prince Charles and The Duchess of Cornwall on a recent visit. The occasion included a tour of the Cambridge Satchel Company's factory in Syston, and was also attended by the Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire Mr Mike Kapur OBE.**

"Alongside my recent role in the Lieutenancy, I have also been fortunate enough to experience a true range of what the RAF Air Cadets has to offer. I gained a 12-hour RAFA Flying Scholarship allowing me to complete a Silver Gliding Scholarship. I am currently working towards my Gold Wings Gliding Training (GWGT) Package as a Flight Staff Cadet. Outside of the wing, I have been a member of the National Marching Band since 2015 and performed at many prestigious events. I also had the opportunity to travel to Canada as part of the International Air Cadet Exchange (IACE) programme.

**"These are unforgettable experiences that I will proudly remember for the rest of my life. The RAF Air Cadets has provided me with many special and incomparable opportunities." Samuel**

**14 year old Army Cadet Corporal Corey Kahut, from Heanor, Derbyshire was awarded the BAE Systems Award for Excellence in music.**

The awards recognise exceptional cadets across the UK who have excelled in one of five categories: Bands and Corps of Drums, National Sports, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, First Aid and Piping & Drumming.

Earlier in the year, Corey also played at the Beating Retreat at the prestigious Edinburgh Castle. Corey's instrument of choice is the cornet, but he is equally as talented at playing the flugel horn, post horn, trumpet and piano. In his 'spare' time, Corey conducts a training band at Ilkeston Brass and is also a qualified young person's adjudicator, enabling him to judge at Band contests.

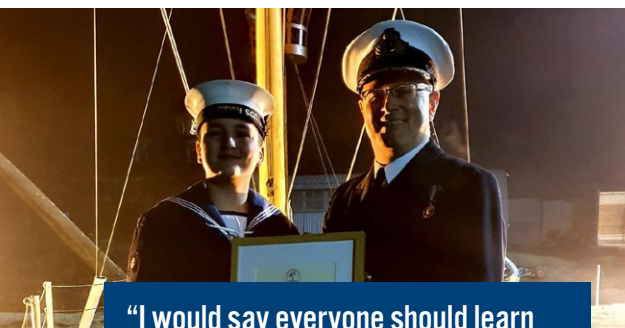


**Ben Neal, a Sea Cadet from Calverton, Nottingham, received a Royal Humane Society Resuscitation Certificate for his efforts to save the life of an elderly man.**

Ben was travelling on holiday with his family when a car stopped suddenly in front of them. Ben took control of the situation, realising the man was having a heart attack, helped remove him from the car, and immediately began cardiac pulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

Ben has been a Nottingham Sea Cadet since he was 10 and learned many of his first aid skills there.

**"I would say everyone should learn first aid as you never know when you might need it. You might be able to save someone's life." Ben**



# Cadet Force Adult Volunteers: Contributing to our community

**Cadet Force Adult Volunteers (CFAV) are essential to the successful running of our Cadet units. They inspire others through their dedicated volunteering, sharing their knowledge to help develop our young people.**

Whether Sea, Army or Air Cadets, all deliver a structured programme of activities for young people aged 10-18 (depending on the Cadet Force). This can include sports, canoeing, first aid, cyber training, fieldcraft, gliding and many qualifications such as Duke of Edinburgh and Cadet Vocational Qualifications (CVQO).

CFAVs need no military background, just a passion to help develop young people. A comprehensive training programme is provided for all new Adult Volunteers and many find their experiences and qualifications benefit their civilian careers also.

In the East Midlands, there are almost 2,000 Cadet Force Adult Volunteers. From running a small Cadet detachment in rural Lincolnshire, escorting Cadets to St James Palace to receive their Gold Duke of Edinburgh award or taking Cadets overseas for the first time, the role of a CFAV is varied and challenging. The reward comes from instilling values and self-worth into young people and seeing them grow in confidence.

Exercise Dragon Aphrodite's Eagle saw 47 Cadets from Derbyshire Army Cadet Force visit their parent Mercian Regiment's 2nd Battalion, who are based in Cyprus currently. The trip included mountain biking, horse riding in the Troodos Mountains, water sports and shooting, as well as cultural

visits to Kourion and Paphos. The Cadets had a tour of an RAF squadron operating from Akrotiri, undertook fieldcraft training with 2 Mercian and even found time for some social activities in the evenings.

Lieutenant P Thomas, Derbyshire ACF commented: "I was invited on this exercise to perform a public relations role, and it was exciting to get involved in the incredible range of activities. In the five years I have been a Cadet Force Adult Volunteer, my focus has been to enable Cadets to experience all the ACF can provide. I have achieved this by undertaking many challenges myself; from instructor courses in adventurous training, Cyber, Signals and Skill at Arms, to being a Duke of Edinburgh Assessor and a Training in a Built Up Area trainer."



**"I firmly believe a Cadet career fulfilled could set a young person up for life, and it is a privilege to be one of their role models." Lieutenant P Thomas**



# Employer Engagement

## Building relationships with the business community

Our Employer Engagement team are delivering a government campaign to improve the understanding of the roles of our Armed Forces and to support their needs. We develop mutually-beneficial relationships with businesses and organisations in all sectors, in order to support the employment of Reservists; to improve transition to civilian life for those leaving the Forces; and to improve career opportunities for Service spouses and partners. The campaign also supports adult volunteers in the military sponsored cadet organisations.

The foundation for our relationships is the Armed Forces Covenant (AFC), which also provides an opportunity for employers to recognise publicly the value that serving personnel, Regulars and Reserves, veterans and military families contribute to our country; across the UK, over 5100 organisations have signed the Covenant; 570 are in the East Midlands. This year, we have targeted business sectors including Parish Councils, GP Practices and schools and colleges. The results have meant 152 Armed Forces Covenants signed in the year.

Those who sign the Covenant gain access to a range of Defence benefits: access to recruitment platforms targeted at Service-leavers and Service spouses, with transferrable skill sets; a positive impact to reputation and corporate social responsibility; access to free personal development and leadership training delivered by the military; and are offered discounted rates on versatile and affordable venues for hire across the East Midlands. Employers also gain acknowledgment of their support through the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme.

**570** Armed Forces Covenant signatories in East Midlands

**152** new signatories in last year



## Employer Recognition Scheme

We were delighted to award 6 Gold ERS Awards and a record 23 Silver Awards this year, along with 129 Bronze Awards. The Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) Awards recognise those employers who support Defence personnel and advocate for others to do likewise.

Bronze award-holders are self-nominated employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant and pledge their intention to be Armed Forces friendly.

The Silver Awards recognise employers who demonstrate support for Defence personnel and employ at least one member of the Armed Forces community (Reservist, Service-leaver, military spouse or Cadet Force Adult Volunteer). They have established HR policies and actively communicate these to employees.

The Gold Awards highlight those employers who actively advocate and support Defence personnel, communicating both internally and externally to the wider community. They demonstrate significant support for Reservists through policies such as additional paid leave, to enable Reservists to fulfil their military training and mobilisation commitments.

Signatories of the Armed Forces Covenant are also invited to learn more about Defence and involve their staff in professional development through events run by the single Services. This year, Exercise Future Leader, run by the 162 Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps, saw 40 junior managers take part in leadership theory training before applying what they had learnt in a series of unique command task challenges.

**6** Gold ERS Awards

**23** Silver ERS Awards

**129** Bronze ERS Awards





# Employer Engagement

## case studies

### Councils in partnership for Gold ERS Award

Rushcliffe and Charnwood Borough Councils were both Gold ERS award winners in 2019 as a result of their unique partnership approach in supporting the Armed Forces Covenant. The partnership, which includes Melton Borough Council, began by submitting a joint bid to the Covenant Fund for resources to strengthen the delivery of the Covenant support integration with the local community.

The Partnership commenced with two overarching aims: support for the relocation of the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) and support for the wider Armed Forces community.

One of the first objectives was to review the existing action plans and undertake gap analysis. Major gaps were identified, firstly, in HR policies and secondly, in training for frontline staff to understand the issues often faced by veterans, and the benefits of employing both veterans and Reservists.

A training package was developed to meet the needs of staff from different departments internally, and with aligned statutory partners such as the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As an outcome of the training, the DWP office suggested running work groups for veterans that specialise in enhancing skills and experience gained while serving in the military, and building on their relationship with the local Reserve Forces.

The project also observed that there were large gaps in capacity within local authorities, where they do not have a dedicated Covenant Officer. As a result, the project put together a grant bid to The Forces in Mind Trust for funding to deliver training to all of the districts, city and county councils in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire.

The programme included practical and interactive workshops, guest speakers such as the Regional Employer Engagement Director at East Midlands RFCA, John Wilson, and plenty of time for debate. Delegates were provided with a comprehensive resource pack that included templates for policies and training materials for frontline staff.



**Victoria Coomber, Armed Forces Community Covenant Officer at Charnwood Borough Council, commented:**

“Some of the most sustainable outcomes from the project have been achieved where the councils have taken individual responsibility for a piece of work. For example, the HR team at Rushcliffe have introduced a guaranteed interview scheme for veterans and Reservists. We very much look forward to further developing our policies and supporting the Armed Forces community locally.”

### Derby County Community Trust achieve Silver ERS Award

Derby County Community Trust (DCCT) were awarded a Silver Employer Recognition Scheme Award in 2019 for their outreach to the Armed Forces community.

Derby County Community Trust use the power of Derby County Football Club to improve lives and communities through physical activity, sport, health and education. In 2019, over 30,000 people took part in their activities, after an investment of £3.2 million in connecting with the community. Not only do the numbers show that their outreach is growing, but the quality of these interactions is central to their focus.

Work with veterans and Defence personnel formed a new part of their outreach into Derbyshire communities in 2019. Specific activities included hosting an annual Remembrance Day fixture and launching their first veterans-only events, including a family sports day and visits to local football clubs.

Upon signing the Covenant pledge in 2017, Derby County Community Trust committed to actively supporting the Armed Forces through promotion, seeking to support employment of veterans and of their spouses, endeavouring to offer flexibility in granting leave for Reservists or Service spouses and offering opportunities for current and ex-Service personnel to take part in weekly physical activity sessions.

**Over 30,000 people took part**  
**An investment of £3.2 million**



**Simon Carnall, Head of Community, said:**

“We pride ourselves on creating meaningful experiences and we continue to deliver projects that have been in existence from our beginning; football coaching, schools delivery, post-16 education courses; but our extension into new areas of project delivery, which go far beyond the traditional reach of a football club, continue to develop.

“Our Health programme is an amazing example of how we use the power of the football club to interact with different groups in society. Over the last few years our expansion into supporting older groups with falls prevention, encouraging social interaction and staying active has grown hugely.”



# Estates

Managing and maintaining over **300 buildings** on **168 sites** with over **4000 assets** continues to bring its challenges to the small Estates team.

We continue to ensure that we provide a fully compliant Estate and carry out as much reactive maintenance as funding allows. Additional funding that was received throughout the year has also allowed us to carry out some larger maintenance projects, including replacing failed roofing, replacing life expired boilers and carrying out some much needed redecoration within Reserve Centres and Cadet facilities.

We continue to support the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) by managing the adaptations to injured or sick service personnel properties. Each one of these projects brings its own challenges, as we are dealing not only with the service person but also with family as a whole.

Work has commenced on site at Sobraon Barracks, Lincoln, on the construction of a major new building that will house workshop and servicing bays, storage, classrooms, gymnasium and changing facilities. Works commenced on the 23rd March and despite challenges, has progressed well. Our contractors have worked within the Covid-19 restrictions, which has reduced their rate of progress, but the anticipated completion and handover to the Army is still expected to be November 2020.

The upgrading of all Armouries across the Estate continues. This is a national project of considerable complexity, but each RFCA is managing their own areas. East Midlands RFCA has three completed sites, three that are ongoing and seven more in planning. The work required careful co-ordination with the site staff and a number of contractors.

## Improvements to the Estate in 2019-2020 included:

- New roof to the ARC, Bath Street Mansfield.
- New pitched roof, Bolsover ACF.
- Boiler replacements at Loughborough ARC, Sobraon Barracks ARC and Foresters House ARC and CTC.
- Refurbishment of the first floor at Foresters House for the Royal Naval Reserve and installation of new security gates.
- Installation of high efficiency steam ovens at the UOTC Beeston and at Foresters House CTC and ARC.
- New CCTV to improve security, Gibraltar Barracks ACF Centre, St Marks Road ARC, Phoenix Street ACF HQ, Glen Parva ACF HQ and Wigman Road ARC.
- Numerous internal and external redecoration and refurbishment projects at ARCs, ACF and Joint Cadet Centres.



## We continue to plan future projects with an anticipation that the following works will get approval to start in 2020-21:

- New workshops at the ARC, Windmill Lane, Kingsway Derby.
- New ATC Squadron accommodation, Tollerton, Nottingham.
- Extension to existing accommodation Swadlincote ATC.

The future is unknown, we are living in unprecedented times and the restrictions this has placed on us all makes the maintenance of the Estate even more complex. Funding will inevitably be tight and the way we spend that funding will be under even greater scrutiny. We will continue to strive to squeeze everything we can from our allocation and ensure that the Estate stays in good health.

## Alternative Venues

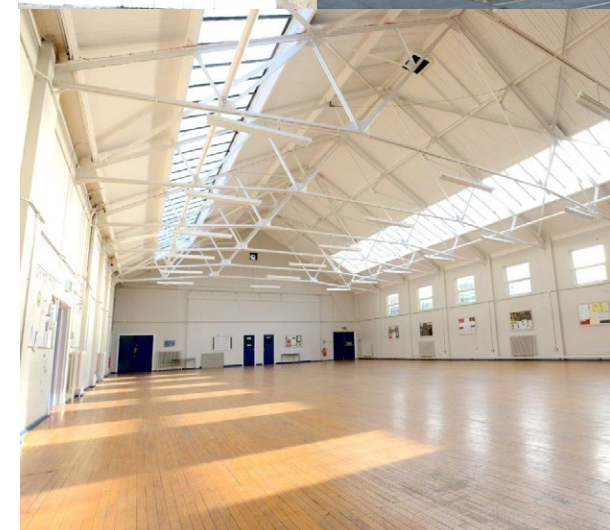
Maintaining our Estates is a costly business and this is part funded through income generated from our Alternative Venues – a catalogue of our properties that are available to hire. They offer affordable, versatile and secure spaces, right across the East Midlands.

Our sites offer large halls, conference facilities, professional kitchens, disabled access and audio visual equipment. Some also offer accommodation, up to 150 people, and are in easy to reach locations in the heart of our communities.

Bookings this year have included the Police Services, NHS Blood Donation, St Johns Ambulance Service and the charity Combat Stress, amongst others.

Unfortunately the Covid-19 restrictions have impacted significantly on our ability to undertake Alternative Venues work. At the time of writing all activity, save that in support of the NHS, has been placed on hold. We hope to reopen for business as soon as we can. However, here are a few words from those who have experienced our Alternative Venues facilities:

“Thank you for all your help with organising our day yesterday. I wanted to also highlight how lovely and helpful Dave was with us, nothing was too much trouble. If you could also pass our thanks over to the caterers that would be brilliant, the food was perfect for what we wanted and the ladies serving were really accommodating. The centre is great and I know that our attendees were all really impressed with it.” **Anna Hopkinson, HSBC**





# Financial overview

East Midlands RFCA is funded by multiple Ministry of Defence and single Service sources to deliver its three mandated Defence outputs of Estates, Engagement and Cadets and Youth.

Staff costs increased in financial year 19/20 in line with annual increases.

Estates Management expenditure saw a decrease of £4.5k.

Infrastructure costs have remained steady this year due to the increase last year of £42k following the reinstated budget for Facilities Management – which has seen more sites being cleaned on a regular basis.

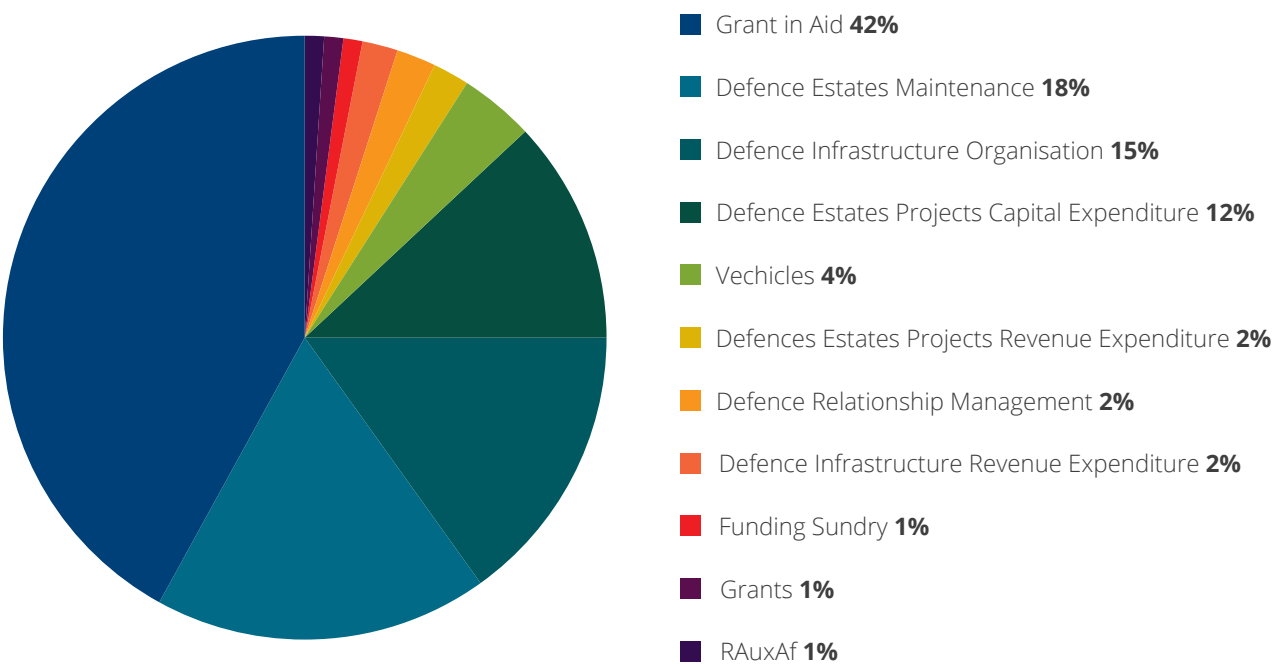
Reserve and Cadet support expenditure is up by £1.2k.

We continue to generate an income from the commercial exploitation of our Estate and this is an area of the business we hope to build in the future. The hiring out of Army Reserve Centres and Cadet Centres raised an income of £143k this year.

East Midlands RFCA secured a further £213k in non-domestic rates (NDR) rebates from local authorities.

Gains on Vehicles generated £21k during the year.

Feed in Tariffs produced £10k of income. The money raised has funded various estates projects approved by our Finance Scrutiny Committee and our Board; it has also been used to assist Reserves and Cadets undertake adventurous training.



# The power of communication

Our Communications team has seen a complete change of personnel this year but we have tried to maintain a steady presence in social media and more traditional media throughout this time, to continue to build awareness of the RFCA, and to promote the Reserves and Cadets throughout our local communities.

Our remit in supporting with communications across all three pillars of the RFCA means there is never any shortage of activity to promote, but with a settled team, the coming year will see a more structured approach, and one that prioritises impact and outcomes.

## Digital and Social Media

We have seen significant growth in followers on most of our platforms, and the challenge now it to support that growth with improving engagement further. We have a broad and varied following, and an even broader potential audience, and tailoring our messages more closely will help cement relationships and build engagement.

Cadet activities continue to interest all, with a story about Lincolnshire Army Cadet Force cleaning graves in their local cemetery being one of our most popular stories. More recently, the campaign #ClapInUniform, where Cadets from all services have shown their support for the NHS and frontline workers, has stimulated much interest.

## Press

Building and maintaining strong relationships with the press remains an important part of communicating with our stakeholders and the wider community.

Reserves Day 2019 was marked by an open day at Sobraon Barracks where BBC Radio Lincoln broadcast live from the event, interviewing many Reservists about their roles. More recently, Forces TV featured some Air Cadets from Leicestershire delivering parcels to vulnerable people locally.

## Magazines and newsletters

We continue to produce The Reservist magazine twice yearly, focussing on the varied achievements and experiences of our

Reserves. Armed Forces Covenant signatory businesses are also featured, showcasing the benefits to businesses of signing.

The Cadet magazine is produced once a year, featuring some highlights from Cadet stories throughout the year.

**f** 2018/2019: 1464  
2019/2020: 2037  
**+39%**

**t** 2018/2019: 2561  
2019/2020: 2700  
**+5.4%**

**@** 2018/2019: 307  
2019/2020: 749  
**+144%**

**in** 2018/2019: 108  
2019/2020: 169  
**+56%**

**y** 2018/2019: 157  
2019/2020: 211  
**+34%**





# The year ahead

## To attempt to communicate a plan for the forthcoming year in the context of continuing uncertainty about Covid-19 and the restrictions it will impose upon us all might seem a little ambitious.

However, we are all keen to continue to do as much as we can to support the Reserves and Cadets over the next 12 months. Whatever we do will be shaped by the restrictions mandated to constrain the spread of the coronavirus which causes Covid-19. There is a great focus at the moment on the influenza pandemic at the close of the First World War, which saw a pattern of 3 waves of infection over a period of 15 months. While our ability to control disease has increased exponentially in the past century, it could be that we see a similar pattern with Covid-19; it is likely that we will be under one form or other of restriction for several months to come. Therefore, we must learn to work within those restrictions. East Midlands RFCA staff are working from home wherever possible. We are holding regular meetings on various video conferencing platforms to progress our work. There will be a minimal increase in IT costs as we move those few staff still using desk top PCs to laptops in the future, to increase our flexibility. I am conscious that our workload has been reduced in a number of areas: Reserve and Cadet routine drill nights have been curtailed, although both organisations are interacting online wherever possible: all engagement events have been cancelled until the end of June at least and all Alternative Venues activity has ceased.

Ironically, although there is less to report from reduced activity, external Communications activity has increased, as the effort invested in finding, developing and communicating stories has increased; wherever we can we are publicising the continuing efforts of our region's Reserves

and Cadets, both in their virtual training and in their contribution to the effort against Covid-19. Internal Communications have also been increased to ensure our staff remain informed and connected.

Another area where the workload has been maintained is that of Estates. Although buildings are not being used as much, there is still a requirement to ensure that they maintain mandatory and statutory compliance with such things as legionella checks and electrical conformity. Our Estates Department is working with our contractors to try and maintain compliance and, where necessary, to remedy any building faults. Clearly our focus is on those buildings that are being used in support of Covid-19 operations, or might be so used. Our Professional Support Staff are also making regular inspections of cadet buildings that are temporarily not being used and they are key to allowing contractors to inspect and remedy faults in these buildings. We have already had one car driven through a cadet building fence and one burglary since the inception of restrictions. Nothing is being undertaken, however, unless it can be done within social-distancing requirements.

I suspect that this model will provide the framework for our work pattern for the next few months, at least into autumn and perhaps beyond. However, we will develop our ability to inform and interact online as both Reserves and Cadets continue to operate in the same environment. In the longer term we may well see a reduction in the number of meetings around the country for our professional staff as the

ubiquity of online conferencing proves itself. Where possible, in the longer term, we will try to reintroduce physical meetings for our volunteers; hopefully the October County Committees will be able to proceed as normal, but an online meeting may well be a viable backup plan. We also need to consider how we can move some of our engagement activities online and continue to present the Reserves and Cadets to the public. There are many good contemporary stories about both Reserves and Cadets supporting Covid-19 operations and we will ensure that they are communicated.

### Change is the theme for the year

If the manner in which we work is in the process of necessary change brought on by Covid-19, then change remains a major theme for this year, as we address the consequences of the Tailored Review which was published by MOD earlier this year. Planning for implementation of some of the 80 recommendations of the Review is currently underway and a Joint Implementation Committee, staffed by both MOD and the RFCAs, will work to ensure that the outcome does not erode the capability of our organisation to support the Reserves and Cadets. MOD has stated that the solution will be bespoke, to suit the particular needs of the RFCAs. Initial thoughts are that the majority of the change will be in the relationship between the 13 RFCAs and the Council of RFCAs, which will now be constituted as a formal 'head office'. It is hoped that the majority of members and regionally employed members of staff will see little practical change, but we will keep you updated.

The two major estates projects, at Sobraon Barracks in Lincoln and Kingsway ARC in Derby, mentioned in last year's Annual Report, are still underway. Both have been delayed by protracted approvals processes and this year's progress is likely to be further delayed by Covid-19.

Contractors are working at Sobraon Barracks, but work is slow, because of the necessity of following Covid-19 guidance. Nonetheless, we anticipate that project being complete by the end of this year. The delay in approvals for the Kingsway project mean that it has yet to start and, moreover, now has to meet strict carbon emission targets set by the government; it is unlikely to be complete until 2021.

There will be less money available to support Estates work this year as we have had to cancel all Alternative Venues activity, which has been a valuable source of funding for improvements to our real estate. It is unlikely that we will be able to resume these activities until social distancing measures are eased, but we will continually look at what can be done within our resources.

The coming year then is one of uncertainty in many areas, but uncertainty produces challenge and challenge is a useful tool in developing an organisation and its people. I look forward to a challenging year in which perhaps the one area of certainty is that we, professionals and volunteers, will continue to do all that we can to ensure the success of the Reserves and Cadets. For the moment though, I wish you and your families well, and look forward to a time when the term social distancing is confined to the history books. Stay safe.



**Gp Capt (Rtd)  
Nick D Sharpe**  
Chief Executive





## Contacts

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## Join the conversation

 @east\_mids\_rfca  EMRFA  @east\_midlands\_rfca  East Midlands Reserve Forces



## Do you have a story you'd like to share?

Share your story and help to raise awareness of Reserves and Cadets in the East Midlands  
email [em-comms@rfca.mod.uk](mailto:em-comms@rfca.mod.uk)