

## **The Council, 3 July 2017**

### **Universities of Sheffield Military Education Committee**

#### **Annual Report for the Session 2016 – 2017**

*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 2016, 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 again.

The structure of the MEC Committee has remained static for most of this year. However, as we approach the end of the academic year, three committee members have reached the end of their term of office, one appointed by Council and the others by Senate. We are delighted one has agreed to continue for a further three year term and two new members will be appointed. A new Committee Secretary has also been appointed, Mari Brazil stepped into the role after Chloe Stentiford left the University to move into employment at Nottingham Trent University in September 2016.

The Units themselves are in good health, having seen an increase in recruitment across the board, specifically from Sheffield. We are now entering a period where the focus for recruitment is changing. While the opportunities for students' personal development and employability skills remain the priority, Units are also considering options for the future that may encourage students who wish to pursue a career in the military, specifically in the reserves.

Morale in the units has reached an all-time high again. 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 in an unprecedented way.

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 reports noted that the OTC had been successful in generating stronger relationships with both Universities throughout the past year.

The training staff at SUOTC was strengthened by the appointment of Major Ken Milner as OC Mod B and Major Andy Walker as OC Mod A.

This year there were two changes to the Officer Commanding members of the Committee. Major Philip Brothwood is now responsible for the SUOTC and Lt Col Nick Thom for the YOTR, replacing Colonel Jason Wright.

The OTC Annual Cocktail party took place on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017. The Honorary Colonel Mr Neil MacDonald, The Chair, Professor Stephen Beck, and others visited the Somme Barracks for cocktails and canapés served and cooked by the students. They were effectively chaperoned by the cadets.

The Chair, Professor Stephen Beck will attend the YOTR Annual Training Exercise at Lydd Camp in Kent on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2017.

#### **Activities**

Fifty five Officer Cadets took part in the Exercise Northern Cutlers Piste, an extensive alpine skiing expedition to Serre Chevalier. SF2 and SF3 qualifications were gained allowing Cadets to progress to instructor qualifications in the future.

A smaller number of UK based mountain climbing exercises were conducted with three Summer Mountain Federation and five Summer Mountain Leader qualifications achieved.

The Sheffield UOTC once again took a prominent role in the Remembrance Parade at Weston Park in November 2016. In addition, for the first time in recent years, a small contingent of Officer Cadets paraded with the main commemoration at the Cenotaph in front of Sheffield City Hall.

As part of the events to mark the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of the Somme, the SUOTC supported Sheffield City Council as they dedicated a memorial stone outside the city Cenotaph in honour of Major William Barnsley Allen VC DSO MC\*, a former member of both 212 Field Hospital and the SUOTC. Also, a trip to the Somme took

place at the beginning of April 2017, arranged by colleagues in Leeds, 20 Officer Cadets from Sheffield participated.

A Realities of War (RoW) Study took place in April 2017 with a trip to the battlefields around Ypres. 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) which will take place in June. In July the Ex Northern Bled, a climbing trip to Slovenia will allow Cadets to achieve testing routes and summits. AT Concentration encompasses hillwalking and rock climbing in the Lake District in two one-week packages from 15-29<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

Officers and Cadets are undergoing training to compete in the Nijmegen March, 15-22<sup>nd</sup> July 2017 where they will complete a series of endurance marches.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

Recruitment throughout the year 2016 – 2017 was very healthy which could potentially be due to access to both Universities which has been unlimited this year.

600 expressions of interest were received from Freshers' Fairs, 135 potential Officer Cadets presented for medicals. This year the requirements of the standard Army medical were applied more thoroughly to UOTC applicants resulting in a higher failure rate than expected, only 77 were able to attend the Selection Weekend at Wathgill Camp. Of the 77, 71 ultimately joined the Unit, 62 of which were retained. Due to the low numbers attending the Selection, the Commanding Officer decided to organise another round of recruitment after Christmas. 50 expressions of interest were received in total and from that 23 (from Leeds and Sheffield) committed to attend a two week consolidated course over Easter, 11 joined from Sheffield, 10 from Leeds. The second round of recruitment has been very successful and is likely to continue.

There are alterations being made to the Commissioning curriculum in Sandhurst, which may result in changes to their syllabus.

The Unit also undertook an outreach activity, Leadership Training at The Hub, in conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University Business School for 40 first year students. It has proved to be an effective way to raise awareness of the OTC within the Universities.

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

The YUAS have been impressed with the calibre of students and with the interest they have generated by attending Fairs.

### **Activities**

UAS Cadets took part in the Freedom of York Parade where the station exercised their right to march through York to the Minster for the Turning of the page service.

They were the only Squadron to parade in Tadcaster for Remembrance Day.

2017 began with a three day induction camp in the Lake District, there were activities such as mountain biking, abseiling and caving. Basic weapons training was also undertaken alongside standards and mess etiquette brief.

The annual Easter Camp, based at Linton-upon-Ouse, is similar to initial Officer Training with early room inspections and such.

Staff Rides, these are trips taken in this country and abroad to relevant military sites. Students visited the North East Land, Sea and Air museums, which was part of the induction camp training. They also visited Normandy to focus on the D-day landings. The squadron are going to London in the summer and to Arnhem in September.

The UAS Muster will take place shortly, involving Air Squadrons from all over the UK coming together to take part in sporting competitions. There is also survival training, LEADEX, a joint event with Northern Ireland Universities Air Squadron and Edinburgh Units.

Over the summer a trip to Sweden is planned, involving mountain biking and kayaking as well as another expedition to France to go climbing with an opportunity to pick up qualifications. There is a squadron challenge organised by first year students in September. A team will take part in the Nijmegen March.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

The YUAS received 200 applications this year mainly from Freshers' Fairs. 44 students had been invited to join. However, due to various reasons from medical to personal, only 35 students have been recruited this year. Of this number, 12 were from the University of Sheffield and five from Sheffield Hallam University.

YUAS has continued to maintain good station relations with RAF Linton-on-Ouse, both within the course itself and the other members of the RAF stationed there. The new course has settled in well and has had the opportunity to develop. High numbers of students entered into Officer Training, another successful year.

With regards to outreach, Cadets are currently working with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and the Jon Egging Trust. In April, 'Exercise Easter Bunny' took place, the squadron collected a record breaking 300 eggs which were handed out by students in children's wards at four local hospitals.

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

The Royal Navy are conducting a feasibility study to see if it would be possible to increase the size of the URNUs slightly and therefore offer more students the opportunity to gain a URNU experience.

HMS Explorer will enter a period of maintenance in South Shields during December 2017 to ensure she is ready for the spring 2018 training programme which will include the Annual Easter Deployment.

Dr Jonathan Raynor assisted with the YURNU interviews in October 2016. 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 to the unit.

The Chair, Professor Stephen Beck, visited Carlton Barracks on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2016 for a brief by the Royal Navy Presentation team and also had the opportunity of socialising with the students at Carr Lodge afterwards.

The Chair, Professor Stephen Beck, visited Carlton Barracks on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2017 for the YURNU Summer Reception. This was concluded with the Sunset Ceremony.

### **Activities**

Sea training is a highlight of the year, there are two deployments, one at Easter and another during the summer.

Summer deployment took place from 13<sup>th</sup> June to 1<sup>st</sup> August 2016. Deployment saw HMS Explorer in company with HMS Biter (Manchester URNU) on a tour of Northern Europe and Scandinavia. 46 students took part in the deployment, of which 13 were Sheffield Cadets. On return to the UK the ship and students supported the Sunderland Air Show attended by over one million members of the public over three days.

Easter deployment took place finishing on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2017. HMS Explorer was deployed with a number of other units to Northern Europe (Germany, Netherlands and France) and around the UK. 40 students took part, 15 of which were Sheffield Cadets. The trip culminated with the Army/Navy rugby match.

Over the weekend of 27<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> October 2016, 35 students from the unit conducted multi activity Adventurous Training in Angelsey, Wales which included sailing, hiking and paddle boarding.

The Annual Mess Dinner took place in Leeds on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2017. The event enables affiliates, military guests, alumni and university staff to meet current students. This year the guest of honour was Commodore James Perks OBE, who was the Commanding Officer of YURNU and HMS Explorer in 1998 and is now in command of the Submarine Flotilla. He spoke about his time in the Navy and gave an insight to the Officer Cadets about Naval life.

The highlight of the sporting calendar is the URNU Sports Weekend that took place in Portsmouth from the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> March 2017. This is the only time all 15 URNUs come together. This year YURNU finished in 11<sup>th</sup> place.

Six YURNU Women celebrated International Women's day from 6<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> March 2017. It involved transit from Hull to London on HMS Explorer, plus a parade of the ships on the Thames. The women also hosted a cocktail party for a number of female guests as Commanding Officers of the ships were all women.

### **Recruitment and Outreach**

The YURNU received 920 expressions of interest, 64 interviews were held, resulting in the recruitment of 25 students, 10 of which were from the University of Sheffield. The URNU currently stands at maximum capacity with 51 Officer Cadets of which 20 are from Sheffield.

In relation to outreach, the YURNU held a highly successful charity evening; their Annual Charity Horse Racing Night held on the 18<sup>th</sup> March 2017. In total the URNU raised £1,750 which will be split between the RNRMC – Royal Navy, Royal Marines Charity and Combat Stress – the UK's leading veterans' mental health charity.

### **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*