

# THE MERCURY

Devon and Somerset Wing Air Training Corps



April/May 2014

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# A Word from The Boss

Our camp season has now started; with cadets at RAF Valley and Cyprus this Easter, then RAF St Mawgan and RAF Benson together with RAF Gibraltar this summer. There are still some vacancies especially for female cadets, providing we can find a female member of staff to attend. We are short of adult members of staff on most camps this year, together with a Camp Commandant for RAF Benson, due to Sqn Ldr Haywood's illness. I am pleased to report that Sqn Ldr Haywood is now out of hospital and recently visited the new HQ at Bideford in a wheelchair. We also have a cadet going to Israel and one to Canada on the International Air Cadet Exchange. This year we will be welcoming 47 international cadets and staff to the South West. I have asked the Sector Commanders to look after a group of cadets on the last Sunday of their visit, so I hope some cadets within the Wing will have the opportunity of meeting them.

My congratulations to CWO Jake Rosen who has been successful in gaining the Regional nomination for the Dacre Sword, which is awarded to the Best Male cadet in the Corps. He now has a one in six chance of gaining that honour. My congratulations also to all the cadets who have successfully completed the Junior Leaders and the Qualified Aerospace Instructors Course this year. It has been a long 6 months with many miles of travel but you have all done well and I look forward to seeing more maroon and blue lanyards in the Wing.

My sincere thanks to the eight members of staff who at relative short notice volunteered to undertake the climbing wall course at Wyvern Barracks recently. This is a great facility for the Region. With more members of staff qualified to use it, I am sure we will be able to take advantage of it at more Wing activities. Can I also remind Sector Commanders and Commanding Officers that the Regional Activities Centres at Boscombe Down and St Mawgan are brilliant facilities for our cadets. They have their own dedicated sleeping accommodation and are therefore ideal for weekend or week camps.

As I am sure you all know I am keen for every cadet within the Wing to gain a Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award and hopefully many will continue to Silver and Gold. The D of E team are organising events during the summer for expeditions at all levels so there is no excuse not to be included. Many staff have volunteered to undertake training for different exploration activities, so I am hopeful that a full range of assessed explorations will be available soon. You will know that we have been keen to undertake an overseas expedition and my thanks to all the members of staff who have volunteered to become part of the Command Team. They have had their first meeting when Wg Cdr Davies from Headquarters Air Cadets attended, to give valuable advice on location and planning; so look out for more information which will follow. It is anticipated the expedition will run during the October half term next year and will be open to cadets over 16 at that time.



## A Word from The Boss (Con't)

### A new look to The Mercury

As you will see we have had a bit of a change to the look of the Wing Magazine. Due in part to me upgrading my software, but also the original look to the magazine is now eight years old.

Therefore I decided it was time for a change. This is still work in progress. There maybe more changes over the next few editions until we find a version that fits our needs.

Hopefully we will soon be able to upload the magazine to the Wing Website as well as Bader.

If you have any feedback on our new format, please drop me a line via the details on the back page.

Chris Collman

At last year's Wing conference the Regional Commandant presented his paper on Total Safety and again at this year's conference it was mentioned. As a Corps we have a good record for the safety of our cadets, but sometimes accidents happen or there are near misses. The culture we all want is to learn by these mistakes and ensure they do not happen again. So I urge you to report any incident to Wing so we can all benefit from the knowledge. If you report it, you will not be punished or blamed and confidentiality is guaranteed.

Finally I look forward to seeing you all at the Wing Parade in Weston Super Mare on Sunday 4 May. The salute will be taken by Lady Gass the Lord Lieutenant of Somerset and Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire the Wing President, so a good turn our please. Transport is being organised by the Sector Commanders, so you have no excuse not to attend.

B W Wills-Pope

### Congratulations

Congratulations to Cadet Merriman and Cadet Giles both from 200 Sqn. On gaining their Cadet Gliding Scholarship qualification.



# 13 Sqn visit Air Ambulance

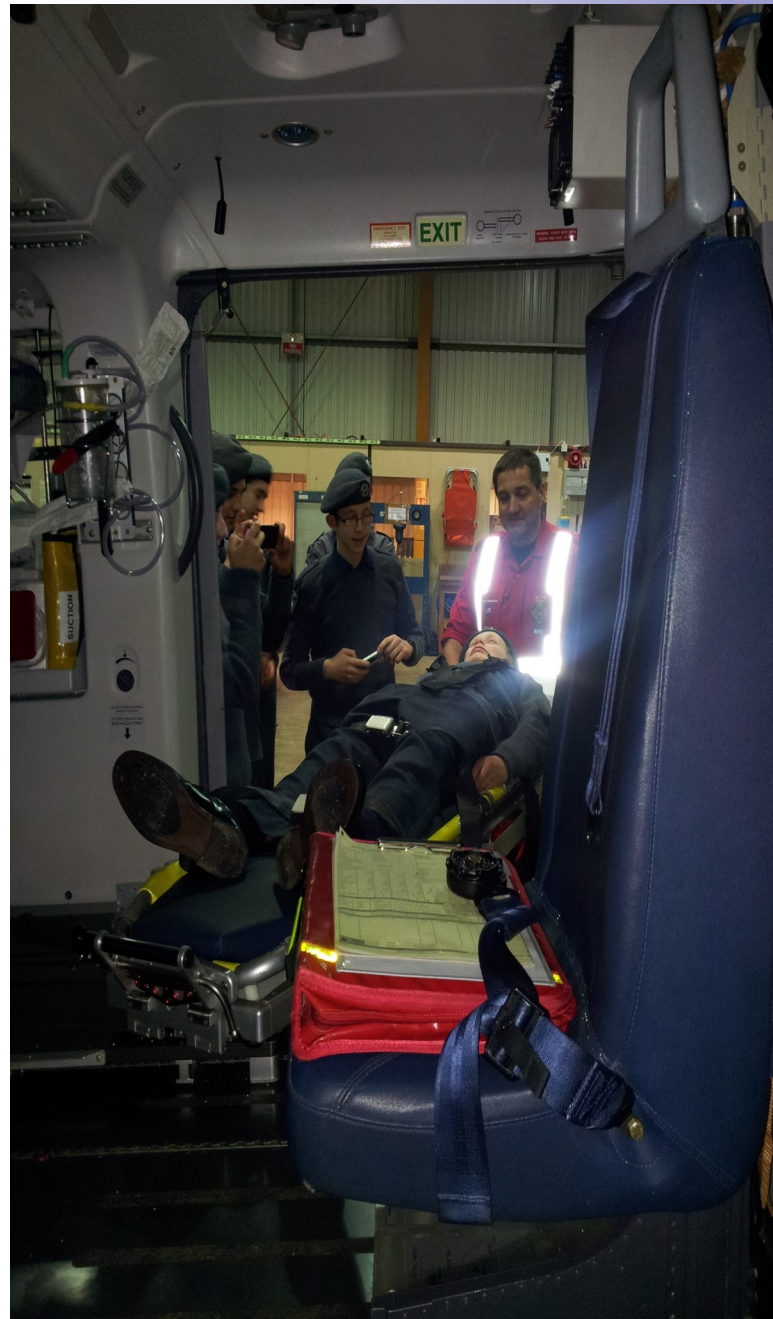
Recently, 13 (City of Exeter) Sqn Cadets were lucky enough to be given the chance to visit the Devon Air Ambulance at its base in Middlemoor Police Headquarters, Exeter.

We started the evening being greeted by Nigel Lang, one of the paramedics who works on the aircraft and Caroline Creer, the Devon Air Ambulance Trust's Fundraising Director. No time was wasted and we jumped straight in. We learnt that the helicopter we were currently flocked around was 11.2 metres in length from nose to tail. We were also told that the Eurocopter EC135 has a top speed of 155 knots and takes 5 people, including: The pilot, paramedics and the patients. We were then introduced to the equipment on the aircraft. We were given a tour of two of the 'kit bags', located in the back of the helicopter, in a fold-out door. It was fair to say that they were prepared for anything: burns, shocks, bleeding, toxic accidents, even childbirth – two babies were born inside whilst enroute to the hospital, since January!

As for funding, we were shocked to find that it costs DAA in the region of £4.5 million to keep the helicopters airborne... and none of it is funded by the Government! The Devon Air Ambulances are run completely by donations and fundraisers held by the general public.

Overall, all of the cadets that attended had an intriguing and informative time and we really enjoyed ourselves, and we're all really looking forward to going back when they move to their new base at Exeter Airport.

Cpl Amy Jordan





# A Visit from Air Chief Marshall Sir Peter Squire

On Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March, 421 (Totnes) squadron welcomed Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Squire to our parade ground for our annual inspection with Wing Commander Brian Wills-Pope. Residing near Kes Tor on Dartmoor, Sir Peter Squire is very near to us – in fact the Ten Tors crew will pass him in May, when they exercise the skills and stamina they have been learning over the last few months.



It was a fantastic opportunity for the cadets at our squadron to meet and talk to a leading figure, who has done so much for our country. From our conversation we now have a better understanding of what we are potentially working towards, through our cadet experience. We have unlimited leadership courses and training camps. However here was a man, formerly of 1 Squadron who piloted combat missions in Harrier fighter jets, in the Falklands war – living every cadet's dream of serving our country from the air.

421 (Dartmouth) DF joined us for the evening, bringing several new and enthusiastic cadets which was great to see. As well as new faces, there were also promotions for cadet's, as well as adult NCOs. Together we demonstrated what the squadrons have been involved in during the last 12 months including: Shooting at our squadron range, a variety of annual UK and overseas camps, and gaining our first aid certificates. We have been working on the magic circle, 16 drill movements carried out without command. The Air Chief Marshall tested us by calling out our trigger word (to remain a secret!) as soon as we had finished our first demonstration.

Cpl Sayany



# No 1 & 3 Sector visits HMS Bristol

Over the weekend on 21<sup>st</sup> -23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014, 79 cadets and 16 Staff stayed aboard HMS Bristol which is moored at HMS Excellence, Whale Island Portsmouth. All those attending stayed on board HMS Bristol. A ship that saw service in the Falklands islands, but is now decommissioned and used as a teaching and accommodation centre. Last year's trip was cancelled as the ship was being relocated. This year the heating was fully functioning. However, the heads were being over hauled and potraloos were located on the bow. This reminded some of their



Glastonbury experience. The ship offers excellent accommodation, and all were safe and warm for 2 nights.

On shore experiences included: Visiting HMS Victory, the oldest serving ship in the Royal Navy, visiting Action Stations, a Harbour tour, and the RN museum on Saturday Morning. The D-Day museum was the afternoon attraction, with it's D-Day tapestry. It's a fine tribute to all those who were involved in operation "Overlord" in 1944. We then noticed that HMS Illustrious was along side. Sqn Ldr White and I walked up the gangway and approached the guards. We enquired about a visit, the Chief of the watch said he would ask the officer of the day, Lieutenant Gemma Radcliffe. Who without any hesitation she said "yes, how many have you got?" "95". We agreed that parties of 15 would visit at pre-planned times in the afternoon.

HMS Illustrious was due to sail on Monday morning to take part in an exercise, this did not deter members of the crew from giving up time to take us around the Royal Navy's last Carrier and to inform us of their personal experiences of disaster relief duties. She is now 32 years old, and no longer has a fixed wing aircraft, but is used for helicopter operations. It's fair to say that all of us were excited by the prospect of touring the ship. We are very grateful to Lieutenant Gemma Radcliffe, and the other crew members who showed us around HMS Illustrious.



# No 1 & 3 Sector visits HMS Bristol



## WRV Courses

Following on from the successful first year of the Wing Recruitment Vehicle. We intend to run more familiarisation courses over the coming months. Giving more staff the opportunity to be able to have access to the vehicle.

For more information regarding booking the WRV please see Sharepoint on Bader, or contact Sqn Ldr Rolfe.

The evening was spent bowling in Portsmouth. After a quick parade on Sunday morning, the party departed for the homeward trip. We stopped at the Royal Armouries Museum, before heading off after lunch to our homes. The weather for the weekend was very kind to us, sunny and warm.

I received many comments from the general public: staff at the museums and from Ant & Dec's film crew about the cadets. Our cadets were seen as smart, polite and well behaved. I was very pleased with the way the cadets conducted themselves, and am very grateful for the work put in by the staff over the weekend.

Some of the comments I have received so far: "An amazing experience - well worth going" Cadet Tom Lywarch, "Would love to do it again" Cadet Brandon Keen.

"HMS Illustrious was awesome" Cadet Brandon Ely.

"The cadets had a great weekend – as did I, so many thanks for the hard work in sorting it all out" Flt Lt John Blackburn.

Sqn Ldr White and I thank you all for making the weekend successful, the reception from HMS Illustrious was first class. We will be back next year.

Sqn Ldr John G Heath RAF VR(T) No1 Sector Commander (Northern Alliance)

# 1146 Sqn joins in with Sport Relief 2014

For Sports Relief 2014, throughout the bright day of Sunday the 23rd of March, cadets from 1146 Barnstaple Squadron took on the challenge of a sponsored triathlon. They ran 1 Mile, swam 1 Mile and cycled 4.6 miles (note the figures.. It's our Squadron number 1146!) This raised a large amount of money for the worthy cause. For further comedy/challenge value the land based parts of the triathlon were completed in the fancy dress theme of RAF, Pilots and Aircrew through the ages. It was for charity after all.... and an excuse for us to do something a bit different in the community. We have raised both the charity's profile and the ATC's however for the event we re-badged as "THE RED SPARROWS"



Around 300 people from the town of Barnstaple took part in the organised mile run, with 100+ more watching and supporting, all in aid of sports relief. Within these 300 were 21 representatives of 1146 Barnstaple Squadron, staff and cadets. Once they had all participated in the run, the cadets were all very proud to see that their Cadet Sergeant, Charlie Burbidge, had arrived in first place for the run. The other cadets who brought up the rear and the remaining cadets who finished were able to reform into a column of cadets. They then marched over the finishing line in front of the watching crowd, to a large round of applause. It was made very clear that they weren't going to stop at that. The local radio announcer told everyone what was happening next just in case we had forgotten what we had signed up for and been sponsored to do...

The swimathon was completed by 1146 squadron in 3 teams of 4. Each team had to swim a total of 75 x 20m lengths. Even the Squadron padre Matt Wilcox and the C.O. were involved and completing their part of the doggy paddle / swim for 2 of the "medium slow" teams. The participants hope that this can be included in their version of the RAF swimming proficiency!

Finally the cycling part of the triathlon involved us circumnavigating the cycle paths of Barnstaple, in fancy dress again. It took about 45 minutes to complete, together with a variety of flying "V" formations and other unique formations being trialled. The near misses prompted the O.C. to re-assess his "dynamic" risk assessment quite rapidly at one stage. This resulted in an unusual morse code system of S.O.S being heard, utilising a cycle bell!

All in all the Squadron have raised at least £500 we are (still collecting sponsorship) with total figures estimated to be between £1,000 & £2,000. 1146 Squadron hope to do many more charity based events this year and are already planning the next Sports Relief Fundraiser! Watch this space....

Cadet Charlie Lion (F) cadet 1146 media officer & Pilot Officer Clark,  
1146 Barnstaple Squadron.



# A visit from HMS Defender

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> March 200 men and women who serve on board HMS Defender exercised their Freedom of the City of Exeter for the first time and 13 (City of Exeter) Squadron was invited to the event. The state of the art Type 45 Destroyer is affiliated with Devon's Capital and also 13 Squadron ATC. The freedom parade, the first since the decommissioning of the last of the five HMS Exeter's in 2009, was the highlight of a series of weekend events to mark the occasion.



We arrived in time to watch the crew of the HMS Defender organise themselves in preparation for the event. The Ship's Company arranged themselves into three squads and were joined by the Band of the Royal Marines from CTCRM Lympstone. A large crowd had gathered to watch the Ceremony in the High Street, including cadets from the Sea Cadet Corps and the Royal Marine Cadets. The Lord Mayor, Councillor Rachel Lyons arrived with other dignitaries including Flag Officer Sea Training, Rear Admiral Ben Key and the Lord Lieutenant of Devon, Sir Eric Dancer. She gave a speech welcoming the crew, reminding Exeter's of its long history with the Royal Navy which dates back to the first HMS Exeter in 1680, as well as expressing how honoured the City was to affiliate themselves with HMS Defender. Then it was the turn of the HMS Defender's Commanding Officer, Commander Philip Nash, who responded on behalf of the ship's company. After an inspection, the Freedom scroll was presented to the Captain. The Defender's crew unfurled their banner and another gave another general salute. As the Ship's Company marched off through Exeter's High Street with bayonets fixed, the Cadets were asked to flank the Mayor's



podium as she took the salute in front of the City's historic Guildhall. After the proceedings had finished we were invited into the Guildhall to see the table that had been gifted to HMS Defender and the portrait of the ship that been presented to the City.

13 Sqn has close links with HMS Defender and visited her at Devonport Dockyard last October.

Cpl Joe Simmonds

# Silver service waiting

“Sergeant, you put apple crumble in front of cadets: what did you think was going to happen?!”

This was the quote of our enjoyably pressure-filled evening of new experiences and kitchen drill. On February 26<sup>th</sup>, Cpl Jasmine Sayany, Cdt Charlotte Clark, Cdt David Cox and Cdt Felix Clarke from 421 Totnes squadron took on the nerve-racking task of serving Wing Commander Brian Wills-Pope and Wing staff at the Wing Staff Dinner. Fantastic chef (and Sergeant at our



squadron) Matthew Tremlett prepared a lovely melt-in-the-mouth beef Wellington – the Wing Commander’s favourite – which we all had the pleasure of sampling in the kitchen. Our opportunity to experience the pressures of silver service waiting, was under the guidance of an expert ex-silver service waitress (and Sergeant at our squadron) Helen Webb. The cadets and myself however, having had little experience in waiting, let alone silver service, were somewhat thrown in at the deep end. Time was short and precious for us to learn the skills of silver service waiting before the staff arrived. Once we had grasped the very basics, it was time to begin serving. The pressure in the kitchen was high, we hoped that our service would be adequate and that the staff would enjoy the dinner (though this was an unnecessary concern as the food was delicious). Serving the courses went by mostly without incident. Although I must say that serving green beans with silverware in low light and under pressure is not something to be attempted without a degree in coordination and experience! We managed, however, to present some of Sgt Tremlett’s finest work to the grateful Wing staff without spilling too much coffee or dropping an excessive amount of cutlery.

The members of 421 who took part in this lovely, relaxed and enjoyable – yet at times rather stressful – evening, are proud and grateful to have had the opportunity to spend time doing something not immediately associated with being in cadets. We gained some really great experiences – including brushing up on some drill in the kitchen!

Cpl Sayany



# Smart Move

1182 (Shepton Mallet) Squadron recently made the move from CS95 uniform for activities requiring 'greens' clothing to the new Multi Terrain Pattern (MTP) uniform. The squadron decided to do so in one step, there was no charge to cadets and each cadet to receive their proper size!

These aspirations created two significant issues:

Funding.

Measuring cadets.



To address funding a 'bonus' bag pack was organised, generating £800. The Civilian Committee then took up the challenge of raising the remaining money by approaching the local town council for a grant. This was successful, the councillors voting unanimously to provide the full amount, showing their appreciation of what the ATC does for young people.

The issue of measuring cadets proved to be more difficult than raising the money!!! Cadets were tasked with being measured at home and filling in their sizes into an on-line spreadsheet. After weeks of chasing up the details they were eventually gathered. However, quality checks on the data revealed that a number of cadets had bizarre physiques, such as: 30cm waists, 24cm inside legs and 94 inch chests.

'Plan B' was then implemented; which involved buying a range of items of uniform, holding a fitting session on two parade evenings and then buying the remaining items of MTP. This pragmatic approach was much more successful.

After 3 months of efforts 1182 squadron was ready for its go-live MTP evening, we invited two councillors to attend and to celebrate our smart new look. We did this before it was tarnished by: PLT exercises, adventure training activities, shooting, tug-of-war, etc.

# Operation Buckland Alpha

Operation Buckland Alpha took place on the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> February 2014 within the Barnstaple 1146 squadron Field craft training programme being held at West Buckland School. I was a brand new cadet for this exercise. It was my first ever time sleeping outdoors, as well as practising night exercises. To any new



cadets like myself I recommend any field exercise of any kind. I was excited but nervous about going, especially due to never having had any experience of camping let alone sleeping in a bivvi!

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February I was packed full of kit, webbing and Burgan full, dressed in my greens ready for action. Step 1 was putting up the staff tent, that was fun. I'm not sure if they realised that it was placed over sheep poo or not, but that's where they wanted it. After that we went around the area which the operations were taking place in. We got an idea of what things we would be doing over our 1<sup>st</sup> (alpha) weekend exercise. Even a Sea King from 22 squadron came down to see us (and be there for any emergencies possibly!!), It flew really low, hovering and showing off what they could do.

After they left a similarly memorable moment was when Cadet Flight Sergeant Hatcher pretended to be watching our backs and keeping enemy's away with his hands formed in to the shape of a gun. It seemed very tactical, until a cadet pointed out that he had florescent green bungee's on the back of his Bergan.

I enjoyed learning how to survive in military ways by building bivvi's and using hexi cookers to make some ration back gourmet food! The bivvis were surprisingly low and I thought I would never be able to get in. So there I was clambering in and I felt so sorry for my neighbouring cadets, because I was making a huge noise. Getting back out was just as much of a pain, as getting in. Putting them up using paracord though was extremely fun; although annoying when the knots became loose and it all fell down. But after some quick learning we had a small area filled with bivvis. We were also taught about ration packs, we had a showing of what was in them and Sir found some nice stuff including, tons of chocolate bars! So after that we got straight onto making some lunch and tea. The food wasn't great, but some of the snacks were tasty.



# Operation Buckland Alpha

We had learnt about camouflage, the 7 S's, ration packs and also setting up Bivvis. Now there was some time for learning how to use maps and learn bearings. Beforehand we learnt how to judge distances using the amount of steps we took with in 100m. We used all of these skills during the next phase "the night exercise" I would have been "lost" without them.

I found the night exercise most enjoyable. I was there at the back of our group keeping a lookout for someone who might be behind me, and then I noticed someone in front of me. They didn't look like the cadet who was in front of me a second ago. So I asked if it was the cadet that was meant to be in front of me, of course I get a "yes". 5 minutes later we stopped at our first clue to success and it had been Sgt ATC Niall Gooding in front of me tricking me. He had been in our group for the past 5 minutes and I didn't even notice. However, before we were let loose into the wild fields of west Buckland school we had some training in how to manoeuvre across the fields as quietly as possible. Although the staff caught us easily we managed to hide from a dog walker, and we were right beside him!

The next day we awoke and then we cooked our breakfast, did some boot cleaning. Then we used our skills of walking on bearings again, to find an important member of the air force that had information into what the enemy was planning. However she (CI Hannah Boon, Sqn 1<sup>st</sup> aid officer) was injured, so after finding her (it took a while) everyone had a laugh at our attempt to save her. We then heard that the next group dropped their intelligence on the head. No-one has noticed any difference in CI Boon since then, however. Finally at the end-ex and final parade there were promotions "in the field" to 3 of our cadets... a great ending.

Overall the weekend was amazing, I learnt more than I do in a week of school in two days... and I enjoyed it! Having fun whilst learning, bonding with the team, developing your skills and learning new ones! It helps when you have an amazing squadron there with you to help you along the way. Once more I would recommend this to any cadet.

Junior Cadet Robert Dendle





# Staff scale new heights

Recently eight staff from across the Wing attended a course held at Wyvern Barracks to be able to deploy and operate the Regional climbing wall. The day was lead by Wing Commander Davies from Headquarters Air Cadets and provided instruction in all aspects of using the wall; from considerations of transportation to rescuing those who decided being up the top was better than being at the bottom.

The day was not all theory based and the staff had the opportunity to climb the wall.

We also undertook simulated rescues, involving people who did not wish to descend the wall. Following recent modifications to the wall, it now operates on a self belay system which does involve a certain amount of trust when you to let go of the top. However, once you have done it once you soon get over any initial fears.

Following the successful completion of the course the staff are now able to run the wall for Cadets and Staff across the Wing.





# Sir Peter opens new IT Suite

Former chief of the air staff, Air Chief Marshall Sir Peter Squire GCB DFC AFC DL officially opened 65 (Bridgwater & District) Squadron Royal Air Force Air Cadets' brand new national lottery funded computer suite, during his annual inspection of the squadron at their headquarters last week.

Sir Peter inspected both staff and cadets before enjoying a presentation by all the cadets on the squadron's achievements during the past twelve months and what they are looking forward to in the next twelve.

The Air Chief Marshall then opened the new computer suite featuring: Brand new networked desktop computers, flight simulator equipment, laptops, projectors and a handheld video camera which the cadets will use, to create a recruitment video.

The suite was made possible by a £10,000 grant secured by the OC of 65, Flight Lieutenant Chris Garrett who added "when I took over 65 squadron the IT situation was very outdated. With the help of the staff and cadets of 65 we came up with a plan of what we required and now I'm really glad to say that it's in and working. This will benefit not only 65 but local squadrons including our local Sea Cadet Corps and Army Cadet Force in Bridgwater. It will enhance our local cadet forces participation in joint events" .

Another highlight of the night was the promotion to Flight Sergeant ATC for Claire Fabiano who was presented with her stripes by the Air Chief Marshall, well done!





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[media.devonsomerset@aircadets.org](mailto:media.devonsomerset@aircadets.org)

PHONE

07768 025119

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