

Officer Cadet Profiles

The following Officer Cadets

Joanne Chambers - Cardiff

My name is Jo Chambers. I'm 20 years old and I am at Cardiff University studying Biology, about to enter my second year. I was a keen cadet at school with a military family so when I joined university the OTC seemed like the next natural step on my path to Sandhurst in 2011. I have just completed my first year with the OTC and the adventures I have had have far exceeded my expectations. From getting lost in the infamous microclimate of our rugged Welsh training area Sennybridge at the very beginning of the term, to getting dropped 20 foot off a tower on summer camp, the OTC has done a lot more than fuel my interest in the army.

When the whole of Wales OTC gets together that's when the fun really kicks into gear. One of the highlights of the year for me was the annual Christmas sports weekend. It was a real chance for us to meet all the other students from all over Wales and the competitive environment meant we quickly got to know each other. Rivalries of the day were soon transferred to the evening parties and led to the most varied karaoke/cabaret show I have ever witnessed. I am certainly no singer but the Cardiff girls had great fun dressing up (as flowers, of all things) and showing them just how it's done.

The sports weekend was a really good way to see how the Army does sport and I surprised myself by really enjoying it. When I started university I was pretty ready to sink into a sedate student life style, but through the OTC I was coaxed into fitness every Thursday and haven't looked back. I now want to complete the Physical Training Instructors course and earn the coveted white vest. You never know, perhaps I will see if I can budge one of the boys out the way and bag myself a place on the Cambrian team.

One thing my non-OTC friends always ask questions about is the black tie dinners. We have several occasions a year where we are shown what life is like in an officer's mess. As I learnt last year, cheese boards and port are a big part of it. In the run up to the dinners the girls can talk about nothing else but (below the knee) dresses and hair dos. As potential officers we are taught etiquette fit for any dinner party. Each of us gets an opportunity to 'host' a guest who may be the student union president or a Welsh livery guild patriot. It's a great opportunity to brush up on our conversational skills and great practice for the big wide grown up world. For me the biggest issue is monitoring my wine intake and ensuring I don't start throwing cheese at any colonels (mentioning no names).

Because we do such a wide variety of things together we know each other very well and our OTC socials are the most well attended and varied socials of any other university club. The combination of cheap alcohol, brilliant themes and a dedicated social committee means every Tuesday night is full of fun. Each social evening sees the making of legends and enough goes on to ensure that we have plenty to discuss until the next Tuesday!

Other things I have done in just one year with the OTC include climbing up cliffs and then throwing myself off them (into the sea), learning to shoot, driving Landrovers, administering first aid, learning about map reading and being subsequently (momentarily) disorientated. I have also been skiing, played rugby for the first time and of course been given the opportunity to throw myself into the military environment that I loved so much at cadets.

I could rave about the opportunities but I think that what has surprised me most about OTC is the people I have met there. Far from being the clichéd army types I had met so many of at my officer selection, although there are a few (!), the range of personalities and backgrounds have been what has made the OTC for me. I met all 4 of my housemates for 2nd year in the OTC and they range from nutritionists to economists and although we are all very different I have found that my friendships with them are my most solid. After all, how can you not bond after being cold, wet, tired, and by some miracle still laughing.

It has been really great to watch all of us develop as individuals and as leaders through the OTC. There is nothing better than watching someone succeed when people have had doubts about whether or not they could. Now when something goes wrong, all of us seem able to take it on the chin, laugh it off and carry on having fun. In my opinion, what the OTC does is give people looking for a challenge an environment in which they can really test themselves. To me everyone in the OTC has 'something' about them and these are the people I know I wouldn't want to be without..

Tom Onion - Aberystwyth

My name is Tom Onion; I'm 20 years old and study International Politics & Strategic Studies at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth.

During my first year of University, I've had a great time playing Rugby League and 'Digs' Football, but by far the best thing I've done has been joining Wales UOTC. After University I'll be attending the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst to train to be an Army Officer, and WUOTC seemed to offer a valuable insight into how the military works.

This has been thoroughly fulfilled, with training ranging from the best way to erect a shelter and administrate myself in the field to skills such as firing rifles and the best way to enter a building under fire. I've also had the opportunity to visit various units in order to get a broader view of how the British Army works.

I've gained a lot more than that through WUOTC however, having been Skiing in the Alps (where I gained a Skiing Qualification), playing sports and joining a massive group of friends. I was also lucky enough to be selected as Best First Year Officer Cadet on summer camp and gained best shot on the ranges, which will all be great additions to my CV.

The social side of WUOTC is massive, with frequent opportunities to attend black tie dinners, cocktail parties and socialise in the Officers mess. Each of the companies within WUOTC also has their own socials after weekly training, which are a great laugh & Aberystwyth's are surely the best!

In the coming year with WUOTC, I'm hoping to undertake the challenge of Exercise Cambrian Patrol, the premier patrols competition of the British Army, and hopefully get some more Adventurous Training and Sports done.

Nothing else at University seems to offer anything like the varied opportunity of the Officer Training Corps, and certainly no other club pays you to have fun

Adam Birtwistle - Swansea

I'm 2Lt Adam Birtwistle, 22, and studying Economics at Swansea University. While at uni I have been a member of the hockey club, playing in the 1st team for a number of years and also discovered the joys of rock climbing on the Gower.

I joined WUOTC hoping to get an insight into the military, with a view to going regular after uni, and also to earn some much needed cash. Both have been duly provided, but I have gained so much more.

I have taken full advantage of everything the OTC has to offer, having recently gone to Sandhurst to get my TA commission. I have been on attachments with 29 commando, enjoying numerous visit days and competition weekends with a wide range of different regiments and arms of the army. I have also been a member of the Cambrian Patrol team 3 times, gaining 3 bronze medals in the process. All this is on top of the regular training weekends with the OTC and is fantastic both in terms of military training and also the vast improvement in leadership and character building skills.

On top of the military aspect I have been skiing twice, many walking expeditions, and a whole host of adventurous activities have been pursued including rock climbing, klettersteiging, kayaking and whitewater rafting. Through the OTC I have gained qualifications in mountain walking, rock climbing, kayaking, and skiing all of which are relevant outside the military, enabling me to instruct in areas which I enjoy.

I have had the pleasure of going to a number of mess dinners and formal functions which are a fantastic experience and I have made a huge number of friends for life from the OTC.

This coming year I am the Senior Subaltern for WUOTC. This is a massive and exciting challenge to have. I am also looking to continue to get the most out of life, with the OTC continuing to give me the opportunity to do so. After Uni I am looking at continuing on to Sandhurst and joining the regular army.

In short the OTC pays you to have fun, make friends, and enrich yourself with massive amounts of experience and qualifications on offer. I would recommend anyone joining in order to make the most of their uni experience, even if they are not remotely interested in the military.

