

Cardiff Company Camp Report

Summer Camp this year began with the Olympics social, a chance to meet everyone, and the annual Combat Fitness Test, a chance to get reacquainted with your boots – well-broken and comfortable, or otherwise. The first week was then a rotation around 4 special-to-arms training days and a range day.

The Royal Engineers day centred upon mine clearance training, including using metal detectors currently deployed in theatre. It also included some fun free phys, in the form of a stretcher race. The REME day included a vehicle recovery stand and an off-road driving course for both a ‘4-tonner’ lorry and a Land Rover.

Officer Cadet Matt Perks, having driven a ‘4-tonner’ lorry

On the range day we didn’t just fire but also sat behind an earth rampart, underneath the targets, and got to see up close the bullets impacting. We also had more fun free phys, this time a March and Shoot contest, running 2 miles before firing at falling targets, with any left incurring time penalties.

The Royal Signals day was clearly the best, being run by the Cardiff PSI, and included contact drills with paintball guns, lessons in woodland fighting and survival training, teaching hunting and trapping techniques with a chance in the evening to gut and cook a trout and to do the same with a chicken – having wrung its neck first.

Officer Cadet Alexei Bond with his wrung, plucked, skinned and gutted chicken

On the Royal Artillery day we handled anti aircraft missile launchers and did plenty of fun free phys – a 3 mile stretcher race that finished by dropping the stretcher to go over the assault course, a huge amount of heaving to bring a ‘light’ gun into action and, in the evening, an orienteering competition covering the whole training area.

There were also other evening activities, which included a pub quiz – fun, if you’re the sort of person who knows what comes in varieties called Jerusalem and Globe – the answer being artichokes. All of these contributed to a platoon and section competition – the section cup being won by my section which, naturally, included 5 members from Cardiff Company out of a section of 9.

Having been intermingled with everyone else for the week, we reformed as Cardiff Company to demonstrate our sporting superiority once again in the sports competition on the Saturday, winning the rugby, volleyball, tug-of-war and overall prize, missing only the football for the full house.

Cardiff’s winning tug-of-war team

On the Saturday night there was a barbeque, followed by company outings on the Sunday. Cardiff, along with Bangor and Swansea companies, headed to nearby Alton Towers, with tickets being entirely funded from the profits of the company bar.

The second week began straight away on Sunday night for those keen enough on ‘green’ to go on patrol training, in preparation for the brigade competition in the autumn. For everyone else there was a three day rotation. Two days of adventure training, with choices including mountain biking, white water rafting, water skiing and caving, and a day of reflection at the National Memorial Arboretum, with experience lectures in the afternoon from officers newly returned from operations.

Wreath laid at the newly inscribed names from 2007 on the Armed Forces Memorial

On Thursday there was a parade to present prizes and next year’s appointments. In the evening the REME Band performed a Beating Retreat ceremony for us, with cocktails before and after. Friday was spent packing and was followed by the Annual Regimental Dinner which was a great chance for everyone to dress up and let their hair down. Then early on Saturday morning we boarded coaches to head home.