



CATERHAM SCHOOL

CCF Army Exercise 'Summer Lightning' 2014

June for Caterham Army cadets means Exercise 'Summer Lightning': a 36-hour battlecraft exercise over a Sunday and Monday. This year 40 Army cadets from recruits to NCOs dared to take on the challenge of a gruelling, exhausting and adrenaline-fuelled two days of training on Bramley Training Areas in Hampshire – a demanding complex regularly used by special forces housing a disused munitions depot, tunnels, woodland and the shell of a Lynx helicopter.

Self-sufficient for the exercise with kit and rations in their bergens and webbing, the cadets began with a training phase run by their Sixth Form NCOs, recapping and rehearsing the principles of ambushes and section battle drills. But just after lunch intelligence came through which interrupted the lessons: the Scottish Nationalist Partisans had occupied Bramley's extensive buildings and hangars as a base of operations to pursue its armed struggle against the Union in the South of England. Cometh the hour, cometh the Caterham Rifles.

Platoon commander Sgt Ewan Davidson and his trusty platoon sergeant Sgt Daniel Webb quickly assembled a plan to dominate the ground and eliminate the SNP's separatist threat. After an initial ambush, the platoon soon occupied a building compound for Company HQ and its harbour area in woodland nearby. Fighting patrols and recce patrols established a foothold in the area, with grenadiers, rifle-mounted torches and slick section skills employed to clear tunnels and compounds of enemy troops. Night's darkness caused some navigational problems which led the platoon to make a massive circle and nearly assault its own company's HQ, but eventually a night ambush, complete with flares, was sprung on a vehicle convoy carrying weapons to supply the SNP.

As intelligence was gathered deep into the night and the following morning, a rolling platoon attack was embarked on to clear the enemy once and for all from Hampshire. When the smoke cleared and the dust settled, 40 tired, smiling cadets returned to Caterham mission accomplished. They deserve immense credit for their self-reliance, endurance and courage as well as their irrepressible enthusiasm, while their NCOs, as usual thrown into leadership roles miles beyond any other responsibility a seventeen-year old might expect, were impressive tacticians and motivators. Many thanks of Maj Taylor, Capt Wilkinson, Lt North and WO2 Bryne who made such an adventurous exercise possible and enjoyable.

M M OWEN
Lt
Training Officer

