



## CATERHAM SCHOOL

### Army Section Summer Camp 2014 – RAF St Mawgan, Cornwall

Immediately after Speech Day at the end of a busy term, 45 Army section cadets and staff boarded coaches and minibuses for the 5 hour journey to RAF St Mawgan, near Newquay. Clad in the near 'Multi-Terrain Pattern' uniform and with sunshine booked for the week, the cadets started with a skill at arms package: training in marksmanship, following by live firing on ranges, on the DCCT computerised range, laser tag and air rifles. 36 hours in the field followed, with a battle exercise on the undulating Penhale Sands in which the cadets fought off insurgent forces in a series of section attacks, night ambushes through dried river beds and a full platoon assault.

To recover from the minimal sleep and dubious rations, a day in sunny Newquay did the trick. Most followed Caterham's surf-master general, Cdt Alex Paul, into the sea for a session of surfing and body-boarding; others, led by the insatiable Cdt Saraf, tried to buy their own body-weight in ice creams and chips. The afternoon saw the annual officers and NCOs versus other ranks beach cricket match: Capt Wilkinson's demon bowling and WO2 Byrne's lusty hitting had the juniors on the ropes from the start, and despite Cdt Watson's skulduggery, rugby tackling subalterns as they ran, the cadets were roundly beaten. After a fish 'n' chip supper on the sea-shore, it was back to camp to sleep before another day's hard work. The Military Skills package gave the cadets invaluable training in patrolling, section tactics and ambushes, coaching by regular soldiers on a disused airfield and the firing of an ungodly amount of blank ammunition. There followed the inter-school competition as we pitted what remained our sleep deprived wits against the ten other school contingents ... while Cdt McMillan built a toy car to play with. Owing to a clerical error, the awards were never made, but Caterham felt confident that once again they had swept all before them.

The last full day was devoted to adventure training. In more beautiful sunshine on Cornwall's majestic north coast, cadets fearlessly abseiled down cliffs into coastal caves, were coached and practised in surfing, tried to beat Cdt 'Spiderboy' Blatch on the bouldering wall and braved the terrifying Tyrolean traverse of a forty-foot canyon. The speed at which one crossed the latter was determined by one's 'friends' who pulled the traverser across from the far side – leading some of the female cadets especially to dangle pendulously for what seemed like hours to the sadistic cackling of their peers. And so in a blur our week was over, capped as tradition dictates by the cadets' skit night whose concurrent highlight and nadir was the OC being hit in the face by a flying D-shaped pasty. All the cadets, who as ever approached the whole exhausting week with gusto and energy, deserve great credit, but especially Sgt Katherine Ham and her JNCOs who fulfilled the toughest of all school's leadership challenges with character and maturity. Many thanks to the staff too, especially Maj Taylor's incredible commitment to the cause and Capt Wilkinson who masterminded another wonderful camp.

M M OWEN  
Lt  
Training Officer



