



FEATURE

GOING BACK TO BASICS

The CCF Army Basic course at Frimley Park is an ideal foundation for instructors, equipping you with all the tools you need to train cadets

The National Cadet Training Centre at Frimley Park is a hub of activity for the ACF and CCF, hosting training and development courses all year round. The main building accommodates up to 40 students per course but, as was evident from the building works going on when *Connected* visited in February, it is being extended to host up to 60 students at a time.

Six times a year the centre hosts the CCF Basic course. New CCF officers from around the country come together for six days to share experiences and develop key skills they will need in the CCF.

The first night focuses on getting to know each other and sorting out kit. Although students are given a kit list two months ahead of the course, inevitably someone will forget a rank slide, or as happened recently,

all their socks. The staff are good natured about helping fix these issues.

The course starts in the classroom. The students receive an introduction to the structure of the organisation and the role of a CCF officer. There are usually a few people with military backgrounds but the instructors give an insight into the Army's regimental structure, to give volunteers a better understanding of the wider organisation.

MIX OF EXPERIENCES

Maj Ade Clayton joined the team here as chief instructor less than a year ago. He says: "We know there will always be a real mix of experience, but we're not trying to make anyone into a soldier. It's aimed at enabling instructors with the subject knowledge to deliver training to cadets, and giving them the confidence to do so effectively."

The regional Cadet Training Teams (CTTs) run pre-attendance courses to



The Basic course at Frimley includes lessons taught by both CFAVs and Army instructors

“IT’S A GREAT WAY TO FIND PEOPLE FROM OTHER SCHOOLS WHO MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN WORKING TOGETHER” *Captain Sam Amos*

› give volunteers an insight into what to expect. Even so, the instructors know that volunteers turn up with very different ideas of what they’re getting themselves in to.

“There’s often a concern among the candidates that this is going to be a week of being yelled at and sent for long runs. In reality it’s nothing like that. We’ve done a lot of course development and really focus on helping volunteers pick up the basic knowledge they need to deliver an effective lesson to cadets,” says Ade.

On the course in progress when *Connected* visited, half were teachers in subjects ranging from philosophy to PE. Ten more were working at their schools in a different capacity, for example in operations support or IT. And the rest were linked to the school in a different way, such as being the parent of a cadet or a former pupil.

Although some attendees have a military background or have been cadets themselves, for many it’s the first time that they’ve been in the field experiencing cadet training. On the second day of the course, the staff demonstrate various skills such as packing a Bergen, setting the sights of a rifle, cooking in the field, and basic fieldcraft skills such as judging distance, stealthy movement and constructing a basha.

The lessons are delivered by full-time staff and assistant directing staff – usually CCF officers who have undertaken the course in the last few years and who have come back to support the training.

SKILL SETS

“We have a real mix of instructors,” Ade says. “Some have a wealth of knowledge about military skills because they’ve spent 25 years in the Army. Others have a CCF background and understand what it’s like to come on a course that is so far removed from the life of a teacher. They temper each other brilliantly, because they understand the skills needed, but also have a realistic view of how lessons are delivered in a CCF setting. A great example of this is Sam [Captain Sam Amos], who is my expert in civvies,” says Ade.

Sam has been an instructor at Frimley for a year. His involvement in the CCF

started five years ago at Thomas Deacon Academy, a CEP school with Army and RAF sections. Sam attended the course as a 2Lt and enjoyed it so much that he took up the invitation to come back as assistant directing staff. Then, a year ago, when a vacancy opened up on the training team, he joined full-time.

“The course gives you the confidence to teach cadets new skills,” says Sam. “It also means you can reassure them: they have no excuse not to get hands-on in patrolling or sleeping out under a basha because they know that you’ve been there and done it all.”

Although the teaching periods are long, the group has time to talk and relax in the mess at the end of the day. “It’s really sociable. The candidates come from all over but have a lot in common. It’s a great way to find people from other schools who might be interested in working together on training and exercises,” says Sam.





Attendees develop firm bonds while on the course



The course includes classroom and practical elements



Instructors are keen to share their experience



Practical elements are tailored to the attendees

DID YOU KNOW?
Over 160 CCF CFAVs attended the Basic course in 2016/17

Of course, there are some aspects of the course which can be a bit of a surprise. “Most people who come on the course have been camping, if only at a music festival. Not all of them have slept out under a basha though. It can be a bit of a shock to the system.”

The physical nature of the training can be a concern for volunteers. But Ade is quick to reassure students that this isn’t boot camp.

“We know you’re not in the infantry,” he says. “We aren’t running you about all over the place and it would be a real shame if people were put off by this idea.”

Sam agrees. “You end up walking a few kilometres, and for some of it you’ll be carrying your Bergen and rifle. But students can take things at a sensible pace,” he says.

On the following day, the students spend time on the shooting ranges. For many, this is their first time firing. The instructors hope this will encourage some to go on to undertake an ancillary range duties course, or qualify as a range conducting officer.

COURSE HIGHLIGHTS

When asked what the highlights of the course are, a lot of the volunteers pick out the shooting. But they also say the teamwork and friendships contributed a huge amount to their enjoyment. 2Lt Deb Bacon, from Burton Co-operative Learning Trust, says: “There’s a real sense of camaraderie which develops very quickly.” This seems to be the case on Thursday morning. Despite spending the

night sleeping out under a basha, the group are laughing and joking. They’ve all come from different backgrounds and schools – but, just like the cadets they’re in charge of back home, they’ve bonded over sweets, nicknames and impromptu sing-a-longs.

So what advice would they give to potential candidates? “Have a sense of humour. And be open to new experiences,” says 2Lt James Barrett from Gad’s Hill School. The group murmurs in agreement at this. The week has seen a lot of firsts for many of them, but for the most part, they’ve been positive. “Oh and be prepared for the cold,” adds Deb.

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Visit www.combinedcadetforce.org.uk for more info. To register on the course, see www.ctcftrimleypark.com/events/ccf-basic-qualifying-course-10/