



The Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) Army Foundation College, Harrogate

ANNUAL REPORT 2012



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2. Foreword by the Chairman

I am very pleased to introduce the 2012 Annual Report, which aims to give readers a flavour of the work of the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate and its membership, which is drawn from a wide range of backgrounds in the local community.

As the Report explains, the key role of the IAP is to provide an independent source of assurance for all concerned that the 1,400 Junior Soldiers have the most positive experience possible whilst undergoing their Phase 1 training at the College. We operate independently of the military chain of command and we are able at any time to access the College and the activities undertaken by Junior Soldiers.

IAP membership is entirely voluntary and unpaid. IAP members give many hours of time to their work, in the same conditions of sunny, windy and rainy weather experienced by the Junior Soldiers and the permanent staff who are training them here in North Yorkshire and further afield. I would like to thank them all for their commitment and active support to the IAP during 2012.

Kevin McAleese CBE, December 2012

3. The Role of the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP)

The IAP's role is to provide an independent, non-statutory source of advice, challenge, encouragement and support to the College at Harrogate. It does this by exchanging information, providing feedback and assisting in identifying possible areas for improvement. This is a demanding task, and one which aims to ensure that real benefit and assurance is given to both the College's commanders and the Junior Soldiers (some 1,400+ each year) in training, plus their families.

The independence of IAP members is vital. They are recruited to the IAP for the breadth of their expertise and experience in the public services, the commercial and industrial world, education and the military. They are unpaid volunteers, who serve for a maximum of six years. Two IAP members are assigned to each of the five Companies at the College, in order that they can explore all aspects of the training and care of the Junior Soldiers and the work of the permanent staff.

Members of the IAP have unrestricted access at any time to the Army Foundation College site and provide a written report on any activities they undertake. Those activities could include visiting education classes, dropping into company lines, observing military training and attending exercises in the field. On all occasions a key part of any activity will be talking directly with the Junior Soldiers about their experiences. IAP reports acknowledge positive work that is observed, as well as recording any issues relating to welfare or the duty of care to Junior Soldiers. They may also make recommendations for action where applicable.

IAP members meet six times a year with the Commanding Officer and all the Company Commanders, where specific themes and issues arising from the written IAP reports are explored in greater depth.

4. Current IAP Members

Alamein Company: **Kevin McAleese CBE** is Chairman of the IAP. He is currently Chairman of NHS North Yorkshire and York, having previously been Head of Harrogate Grammar School for ten years. He lives in Burn Bridge. Appointed July 2011.

Alamein Company: **Paul Nee** recently retired as Associate Director, Procter & Gamble UK. He is a dad, a resident of Harrogate and is serving his fifth year as a member of the IAP having been appointed in January 2007.

Burma Company: **Ciaran McGuigan OBE** is an Occupational Psychologist and is currently the Head of Centre at the National Policing Improvement Agency training centre based in Harrogate. He lives in Scotton village and has been a panel member since November 2010.

Burma Company: **Cllr Michelle Woolley** runs her own website, which sells scooters for children and teenagers. She is also a local Councillor in Harrogate, and lives with her teenage son in Hampsthwaite. Appointed January 2012.

Cambrai Company: **Gary Dale** is Managing Director of the Weston Group based in Leeds. He previously served in the Armed Forces and his son graduated from the Army Foundation College in 2010. Gary lives in Bradford, West Yorkshire. Appointed January 2012.

Cambrai Company: **Beverley Twizell** is a retired teacher who worked at a local Young Offenders' Institute. She is now in her fourth year as a member of the IAP and lives in Spofforth. She was appointed in September 2008.

Peninsula Company: **Robert McKenzie Johnston** has been a member of the IAP for the last 5 years. He left the Army 20 years ago to become a teacher. He has just retired as headmaster of a school near Thirsk. Appointed September 2007.

Peninsula Company: **Roy Mackay** is currently a teacher of PE at a local secondary school, having previously taught in Suffolk and Somerset. His son, Andrew and five nephews all serve in the Army. Roy has recently joined the IAP and he lives in Harrogate. Appointed January 2012.

Waterloo Company: **Angela Monaghan** is a recently appointed member of the IAP. She is a Registered Nurse and the Chief Nurse at Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust. She is the mother of two young adults. Appointed January 2012.

Waterloo Company and IAP Vice-Chair: **Sue Symington** has worked at senior and Director levels across public, private and third sector organizations. Sue is a Non Executive Director at Harrogate and District Foundation Trust and runs her own successful business in Knaresborough. Appointed May 2009.

5. IAP meetings this year

The IAP has held scheduled meetings with the Commanding Officer and his senior leadership team, plus the Officers Commanding the five College Companies, on six occasions this year. The meeting dates were:

Tuesday 7 February, Tuesday 3 April, Tuesday 12 June, Tuesday 31 July, Tuesday 16 October, Tuesday 11 December. In addition, the IAP Chairman had an extended meeting with the Commanding Officer at least once between each full IAP meeting.

6. IAP reports submitted this year and issues discussed

By the end of the year over eighty written reports had been submitted by IAP members. The Adjutant maintains an "Action Matrix" onto which all report recommendations are entered, responded to and discussed then either closed or left for further review. Discussions arising from the reports at IAP meetings this year have included access to Duke of Edinburgh arrangements, the operation of College laundry services, the pattern of military training lessons, the operation of Families' Days, kit lists, mentoring by the senior intake, Passing-In and Passing-Out Parades, mobile phone policy, use of the College website, footwear for sports activities, grouping by ability in education lessons, the quality of food and service in the cookhouse, power supply issues on the site, the course structure, minimum fitness levels, more active smoking prevention amongst Junior Soldiers, revised Realities of War arrangements, access to evening activities and relations with civilian staff.

7. Aspects of Junior Soldiers' life at the College as reported by IAP members in extracts from their reports. (Note: JS= Junior Soldiers, PS = Permanent Staff, names of individuals have been removed)

I spent the morning with 3 Platoon. I had an opportunity talk with some JS first of all while they prepared for their first lesson. As always they were very keen to talk and to share their views. My sense was that overall they were enjoying their experience at the AFC. We discussed all the usual issues- food, laundry, telephone usage, activities, time off- and the feedback was largely positive. There is a sense among some JS that the course is not as 'hard' (and I think they mean physically) as they might have expected. There is also an awareness that the physical challenge will develop over the life of the course.

Then I attended a military lesson about IEDs for the whole of 3 platoon. It was a clear and well delivered session supported by a Powerpoint presentation. After the lesson I was able to talk with Lt H. about ways in which the subject matter could be brought to life- perhaps using video footage or real life examples. I think this may have engaged the JS further. Secondly I attended an AMG maintenance session. Again very clear and well organised. 3 JS shared a gun and the Bombardier C. kept the session fast-moving. Some JS were able to learn very quickly- and it was clearly more of a struggle for others. 16.1.12

I spent time with 4 section over lunch and the JS were happy to discuss their views of the course to date. They spoke freely and made comments similar to other intakes at this stage – the shock of early starts, the pain of administration, the lack of time to get things done, the challenge of sleeping outside, in the cold and dark, during their first exercise. They are happy with the food, like each other and are looking forward to the passing in parade and spending time with their loved ones.

Following lunch, I talked to 2 section in their room, unaccompanied. The responses were similar to those above and they were happy with their start to life in the Army. In the main, it was how they imagined it would be when they signed up though a couple (ex cadets) thought that it may have been harder.

There was a good atmosphere in the Platoon office where PS seemed in good spirits despite the demands of these early weeks (longer hours, repetitive routine). They should be congratulated on their work to date.

I sat in a class covering the Courage and Selfless Commitment. The fairly philosophical nature of the discussion was made real and brought to life by asking the JS to talk about times in which they had demonstrated courage, trust, integrity etc. – this was done with an appropriate level of gravitas while recognising humour in some of the situations described. The JS seemed engaged and the lessons learnt – at least during the time in the class. They will need repeating frequently before really sinking in. 31.1.12

I attended the Company celebration of the Battle of Waterloo and the inter company sports day . My visit began at 07.30 when I saw the whole of Waterloo Company on parade. The significance of celebrating battle honours was explained to the JS at the parade by the officers . Major L. emphasised the importance of effective team work in order to achieve difficult things , as in battle. The importance of the battle within British history was briefly described and there was a focus on leadership. Five JS had volunteered to speak about particular historical figures involved in the battle . This was a potentially daunting challenge for each of these JS and some were able to do this better than others .However that these young soldiers felt confident enough to do this before the whole company was impressive . One JS did become tongue tied at one point and one of the officers present provided him with some unobtrusive moral support . All were congratulated by members of the staff afterwards. 10.3.12

After the catch up, I was taken to visit three different Platoons in the harbours they had created in the wooded areas. The JS were actively engaged in the tasks such as being briefed and taking notes, on patrol, practising filling in range cards or on downtime. Capt H. was given feedback on progress by the Section Commanders. It was good to see Capt H. asking questions of the JS and giving direct feedback as if they encountered them in the field. For example, being in the correct prone position if guarding, the correct questions to ask to strangers approaching the harbour, what time the next JS is taking over patrol etc. The JS are still learning these skills and the PS expect to keep pointing them in the right direction at this stage. They have a couple more practices before the summative assessment.

I had the opportunity to speak alone to several groups of JS from different platoons. Overall, I would describe the mood in camp as very positive. The JS I spoke to were happy to be back after half-term (in fact they commented on being bored during the one week holiday and keen to get back to the college.) They were particularly enjoying the exercise, practising basic infantry skills and being outdoors – doing the kind of activities that drew them to the army in the first place. They feel supported by the PS and commented on how they enjoyed the opportunity to have a laugh with their Section Commanders in amongst the serious learning. 22.3.12

The emphasis on health & safety throughout the routines was impressive. It was clear that by not following correct procedures the JS risked injury such as incorrectly positioning the hands "stirrup fashion" when helping fellow JS climb the high walls. Having been instructed in how to safely negotiate each obstacle on the course the JS completed a full circuit with their Section Commanders providing plenty of encouragement and timely reminders of technique and safety measures.

Throughout, the JS were encouraged to use their initiative – individual and team - particularly when helping each other through the most difficult phases. There was a good sense of camaraderie at all touch points – the exercise was taken very seriously by the JS and it was evidently a tough challenge for most of them given their current state of physical development. The difference in capability and performance between the JS was marked with some completing well ahead of others. As a Platoon, the exercise was judged a success. 9.5.12

This is my final visit to this Waterloo intake-the JS graduate in 3 weeks time and I met them the day before they went on their summative exercise at Gaerloch Head. I met and spoke with large number of JS and this was very positive visit. I had a sense that the JS had become 'large fish' in a 'small pond' and were absolutely ready to move onto phase 2 training.

This visit provided a great opportunity to ask wide reaching questions about the time the young men had spent at the college overall. Most of them have surprised themselves with what they have achieved! The qualifications they have got, how fit they are...and importantly how confident and mature they feel they have become. Unequivocally all the JS have really enjoyed their military training and can identify how the training has impacted on them as potential soldiers and as men. I found this to be heartening. Alongside this however the JS observe their intake as being 'experimental' with lots of new rules (eg smoking and being marched to breakfast) and changes within the college, ie not going on the Realities of War course. 27.7.12

New JS were escorted from the theatre, leaving behind their families (some very upset). The family members were taken to various buildings to listen to the company commanders presentations. Maj. O, CSM D and I proceeded to the Slim theatre where we welcomed the family and friends of the new intake. We each took our turn to address the families. Maj O's formal presentation began and the IAP was introduced as an integral part of his team. It was stressed that our role was imperative to help ensure the welfare and wellbeing of the new recruits. CSM D then took to the stage. He discussed discipline, mobile phones, leave consent forms, etc and the role of the CSM in more detail. His presentation was more relaxed and light-hearted and even received a few giggles (between snuffles!) from the audience.

I then had the opportunity to stand up and express empathy with the families. I explained that I had

stood in their shoes three years prior when I had to physically remove my son from the clutches of his mother (or was it the other way around???) while we waved him off into the world of the AFC. I discussed my role as an IAP member in depth and hopefully reassured the parents that their children would pass out of the college next year as well rounded soldiers.

This process ran seamlessly throughout the day. This worked well and all 500+ JS and their family and friends were ushered through the administration process and various presentations in five waves, the last being at 5.00pm. Each group was encouraged to engage in an open forum Q&A, held at the end of each wave. I would like to thank and express gratitude to Burma company. They ended their leave early to help out on the reception day and they ensured it ran like clockwork.

In summary; a worthwhile but very long day. 9.9.12

The group in the Cookhouse were all eating steak, mushrooms and chips for lunch and said that it was usually the best meal of the day. A number said the £4 a day charge for food was good value, though most of them said they still preferred home cooking. At the weekends a number choose to buy food from the Spar or go into town rather than be tied to the Cookhouse opening hours. Some had managed to save some money towards a car or motorbike whilst at the College, and they confirmed that they were encouraged to use a bank account which enabled them to put a sum away each month. One of the group had not been successful with their chosen Scottish regiment and was considering asking for a transfer at phase 2, all the rest were happy to have got their choices. There was a strong desire to go to "Afghan" and an awareness that the opportunity would only exist for the next two years, despite the fact that a number said their mothers were concerned about that. I asked them what would happen if they discovered one of the other JS was struggling and even self-harming and all confirmed that they had been briefed fully on such matters, which was reassuring. They said that the PS were really supportive at such times though stern with them in other places, like on the parade ground.

I was amazed how clean and tidy were both the military kit lockers and the civilian clothes lockers of each JS. The posters on the wall were no different than other teenage boys' bedrooms, I'm sure. I thought their ironing ability was amazing, though Sgt D was concerned about a crease on a sleeve, and the JS I spoke to about it confirmed that he had done no ironing before joining the College. They understood that failing a locker inspection could mean extra duties around the College that evening and clearly had the passing of it down to a fine art. I imagine what I saw was a long way from the initial experiences of the PS with newly arrived JS. 10.10.12

8. Commanding Officer's Response

I would like to thank the Chair for this comprehensive report, which provides a fair and very accurate

reflection of life in the College from the Junior Soldiers (JS) perspective. It is of note that this report could not possibly have been produced without the considerable commitment of the IAP Membership to both the IAP and by default to the College itself. Rest assured that the time and effort that is put in by you, voluntarily and without any appreciable form of re-numeration, is greatly appreciated by both the Permanent Staff and the JS for whom you provide independent and unbiased assurance.

Over the last year the Army Foundation College has continued to go through a period of significant organisational and training delivery change. The AFC IAP has assisted the College in navigating this change programme by providing assurance that during this process we continued to maintain the very high level of supervisory care that our JS have rightly come to expect. What however is most impressive is that it has done so whilst undergoing a significant degree of its own internal organisation change – I believe that we are both better for it!

As I complete my two year Command tenure and prepare to ‘move on’ in the New Year I would like to take this opportunity to both publicly and personally acknowledge and thank the IAP members for their support, advice and, on occasion, challenge of our processes and procedures; its value cannot be overstated.

Lt Col KD Sharifi QRL

IAP Contact Details

The IAP is very appreciative of the secretarial support received from the Adjutant at AFC (H), Captain Ed Lyons:

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