The Independent Advisory Panel
Army Foundation College (Harrogate)

ANNUAL REPORT
2009 - 2010


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“A particularly effective independent advisory panel (IAP) provides a very good support and insight to senior staff in the delivery and planning of welfare and training”

Welfare and duty of care in Armed Forces initial Training - Ofsted Report
Paragraph 140 Page 30 September 2010

“The IAP provides an invaluable source of objective assurance for the College. This particular strength derives from the careful selection of the Panel members by the Chairman, on the basis of expertise, range of perspectives and proactivity. The College has contributed to the effectiveness by guaranteeing openness and transparency. IAP matrix ensures capture and action of issues. IAP Reports are a valuable synopsis of their observations.”

Army Inspectorate Report
July 2010
Foreword by Chairman - Ms Della M Cannings QPM

It has now been 7 years since I became the Chairman of the newly created Independent Advisory Panel (IAP) at the Army Foundation College at Harrogate (AFC (H)). During those years I have worked with four different Commanders and with a changing membership of the Panel. What I do know is that the Commanding Officers and their staff have always been responsive to the issues raised by the Panel members; providing explanations and in changing procedures and practices, as well as, the culture always with the aim of organisational development. This ensures a positive learning environment for all. I am pleased that for another year I can provide the Panel’s assurance that:

"The College, its culture and dealings with the Junior Soldiers continues to be professional, supportive to their development and welfare and responsive to any concerns raised. There have been no major concerns during the year."

In our 2009-2010 report we made four recommendations - two for the Brigadier, Initial Training Group, one for the Commanding Officer and one for ourselves. Brigadier Richard Smith moved on during the year, but not before ensuring the actions to raise the profile of IAPs were undertaken. He also assured us that the learning from the Service Commissioner's work and recommendations from her annual report were being integrated into the army's approach to internal complaints issues. We wish Richard Smith well and thank him for his support. We welcome Brigadier Ben Bathurst and his on-going commitment to the four IAPs for initial training establishments across England. The Commanding Officer, Lt Col Steve O'Cock, has worked to ensure the correct level of welfare provision and other facilities for the life of the soldiers during their 42 weeks at initial training. As to the panel members - all volunteers - the majority have undertaken a steady level of visits to the College or being with the soldiers on exercise. I thank the members for their ongoing commitment and look to welcome Ciaran McGuigan as a new member in the autumn of 2010.

In short our role is primarily focused on 'safeguarding' the Junior Soldiers - the 16 and 17 years - who have committed themselves to an army career. The army clearly has a duty of care to the Junior Soldiers: that is not only a responsibility for nurturing and developing the youngsters - mentally, physically educationally - but also to ensuring measures are in place so that risks of harm (e.g. bullying, harassment, etc) are removed or minimised.

The army has in place many mechanisms to ensure that issues are brought to attention and dealt with. The IAP is complementary to these as another mechanism - where we see unimpeded what is happening and can raise concerns which we expect (and are) addressed.
We see the reports and recommendations arising from various inspectorates looking at AFC (H) and can be further assured by these. There is though a need for care in using 'retention' data. The Junior Soldiers are very young and it is to be expected that some will change their minds or are found not to be suited. Whilst it is always right to keep checking the rigor of recruitment processes youngsters should be given a chance and with that comes a risk of them leaving. If they do, they do so with additional skills, abilities and increased confidence - so not a wasted investment.

Every year is a challenging one, with some 1400 young people commencing their army careers. Each Junior Solider brings very different experiences and expectations: for many a first time away from home, a first time actually earning money and a first for stretching themselves educationally and physically. It is a delight of being an IAP member in seeing these girls and boys turn quickly into young adults - developing confidence, acquiring new skills, elated by the challenges presented, and taking responsibility for self and others. To see the pride they take in their appearance, their achievements and the army is immensely encouraging.

The pride of their families and friends is self evident at Passing-In and Graduation parades. It certainly made the summer Graduation extra special with HRH the Princess Royal attending and meeting with the soldiers and their families.

As a Panel we considered our way of working and had initially looked to have individual themes to link to and explore through the year. It was decided that actually through the tapestry of visits we undertake and a more holistic approach that any symptoms of concerns can more easily identified rather than stepping across a line into the day to day management issues for the Commanding Officer. It works for us and the panel will continue this approach into next year.

We have changed the format of our report this year. Our focus is on members of the panel providing individual 'vignettes'. There are no recommendations being made by the Panel this year as the College is proactive on all we raise. We thank the Commanding Officer and all the staff for their commitment to the Junior Soldiers. We wish each and every Junior Soldier good wishes for their futures.

The on-going re-shaping of the army and the ever tightening financial pressures will impact upon the College and we will continue to be vigilant that changes do not have an adverse impact on the welfare of the junior soldiers in the College care.

Chairman
IAP Members

Ms Della CANNINGS QPM FRSA BSc MIoD
   Chairman of IAP
   Chairman of Yorkshire Ambulance Service
   Chief Constable North Yorkshire Police (Retired)

Mr Robert MCKENZIE JOHNSTON MA (Cantab)
   Headmaster, Queen Mary’s School, Thirsk.

Mr Paul NEE
   Associate Director, Procter and Gamble

Mr James FOXWELL
   Head Teacher, Romanby Primary School, Northallerton

Cllr Nick BROWN
   Official representative of Harrogate Borough Council
   Councillor for Newby Ward

Ms Jean MacQUARRIE
   Editor Ackrill Media Group

Mrs Beverley TWIZELL
   Teacher, Wetherby Youth Offenders Institute.

Ms Sue SYMINGTON
   Businesswoman, Knaresborough

Ex officio

Colonel Mary O’BRIEN
   USAF Commander, RAF Menwith Hill
The Role of the Independent Advisory Panel (IAP)

The aim of the IAP is to provide an independent, non-statutory source of advice, challenge, encouragement and support to the AFC (H) in order to exchange information, provide feedback and assist in identifying possible areas for improvement. This is a demanding aim, but one that should ensure that real benefit is given to both the College's commanders and its Junior Soldiers (some 1400+ each year) in training.

The independence of the Members is vital. The Members bring a breadth of expertise and professionalism from the public service, the commercial world, education and the military.

Members are required to provide a report on activities they undertake. These reports acknowledge positive work that is observed, as well as recording issues of concern or for discussion and to make recommendations where applicable. All the reports are made available to each member and the recommendations are entered into an Action Matrix, maintained by the Adjutant. The Matrix has been developed to allow the monitoring of subsequent actions taken by the College or an explanation as to why there was not a need for action. During the year, 44 new observations have been added to the Matrix of which 13 remain “open” – still be actioned. Since the commencement of the Matrix in August 2007 there have been a total of 72 observations, with 59 “closed” as receiving a satisfactory response or action.

Members meet at least quarterly with the Commanding Officer and Company Commanders, where specific themes and issues are explored in greater depth. Members do meet separately when necessary to discuss issues ahead of the joint meeting. In 2011, the IAP will move to holding 3 formal meetings per year.

Each Member is assigned to a Company in order to manage the opportunities for them to explore all aspects of the training and care of the Junior Soldiers and the work of all staff. The army has decided that Criminal Record Bureau checks of Members are not required.

The IAP Members also attended a wide variety of AFC (H) functions and thank the Commanding Officer for extending such invitations that ensure Members are involved in the activities of the College.
Realities of War

The IAP has previously reported on the ‘realities of war’ element of the Junior Soldier training. It is a vital element of their training and it is strongly recommended that this is retained. The IAP have considered the costs involved but consider that such is essential in the development of the JS, many of whom within a year or two could be in a war theatre. The Permanent Staff add considerably to the inputs of the guides, by commenting upon their own operational experiences.

IAP member Beverley Twizell accompanied one of the visits this year and reports:

“I was lucky enough to accompany Cambrai Company on their Realities of War visit to France earlier this year.

The Realities of War visit gives the Junior Soldiers, who may know little about World War 2, the opportunity to develop knowledge and an understanding of the nature of conflict, the challenges, the casualties and the possibility of making the ultimate sacrifice while standing in the very places where history was made.

The company stays in a number of hotels in Normandy, leaving each day after breakfast (and armed with a hearty packed lunch) to visit the sights and locations associated with the Normandy Landings.

Every day of the trip is packed with activities and learning. The trip is physically and mentally tiring (hours of coach travel, a lot of walking over fields and beaches and lots of information to absorb), but extremely rewarding.

In addition to visiting the beaches, the Merville Battery, Pointe du Hoc, Bayeux, Longues sur Mer, Arromanches, Hillman and learning about the incredible Stanley Hollis VC, we visited Pegasus Bridge. Here, we all met the impressive Madame Arlette Pritchett-Gondree. Madame Gondree’s family owned the café beside the bridge which was the first building (and family) liberated at exactly 23.20 hours, June 5th 1944 on D Day.

Although only a young girl at the time, her memories are still vivid.

She spoke to the Junior Soldiers about her personal experience of German occupation, her memories of the British soldiers and her enduring gratitude to them. You could have heard a pin drop. It was an unbelievably moving experience at the end of which, the Junior Soldiers gave Madame Gondree a heartfelt round of applause. Madame Gondree then gave us tea, coffee and hot chocolate!
Changing for the memorial service at Bayeux the Junior Soldiers and the Permanent Staff showed their adaptability by being able to change into their suits outside (for the males) and inside the coach (for the females). No-one would have known because they all looked impeccable! The Padre led a short service and the Junior Soldiers sang admirably.

The French food was not always appreciated and the Junior Soldiers showed an impressive ability to find a McDonalds or a sweet shop wherever we were! I have also learned that when on a coach, Junior Soldiers have the ability to fall asleep almost immediately but can wake up and be ready to "get up and go" with amazing speed! They can also eat large numbers of doughnuts without any adverse effects.

I enjoyed my time with the Junior Soldiers on the Realities of War visit. I think we all learned a great deal. I also learned just how much these young people have changed during their training at AFC. They have matured into capable, confident, self disciplined soldiers who are a credit to the AFCA and to themselves.

In conclusion, here are a few comments made to me or overheard.

- "He goes on a bit but he knows his stuff".
- "I knew a bit about WW2 but now I know loads more". "Now the Atlantic Wall makes perfect sense".
- "Sometimes I find it hard to keep this information in my head but he has made it more real".
- "Much better than just reading about it in books".
- "I would have taken the right flank wouldn't you?"
- "They must've just put their heads down and got on with it".
- "I wonder what they thought when they woke up that morning and saw us coming over the field?"
- "I wish I could have stayed longer".
How the Junior Soldiers grow.

IAP member Paul Nee is one of the longest serving members of the IAP. Paul visits the College on a regular basis, meeting with the JS in the canteen, in class, on exercises and at various parades. Paul's observations:

"The transformation in Knowledge, Skills and Attitude demonstrated by the Junior Soldiers (JS) starts on Day 1 and continues through the course. While this might be expected from a "doing the job" point of view this development transcends training alone and shapes the JS in their outlook to each other, their families, friends at home and the population at large.

Listening to them describe the pride they feel in their progress through the programme is very heartening - they quickly develop a much higher sense of self worth and frequently become quite critical of their former lifestyle showing concern for friends at home who continue in such mode. Many describe how their parents or guardians notice this personal development which makes them feel good and keen to continue.

They develop an improved sense of proportion such that matters which seemed quite important at the start of the course diminish - issues around early starts, access to their mobile phones, and boredom during periods of "down time" fade away, pride in team performance, self responsibility, expectations of future stages become the focus. The area where opinions often remain split is over education. Some JS claim to have joined the Army to escape study and feel disgruntled about the amount covered within the course and for them; this view persists throughout the year. For the majority, education is seen as an enabler for a progressive career and for many an opportunity to have a second chance at achieving levels not attained while at school often surprising themselves with their own ability given a well run scheme and disciplined environment in which to learn.

The team ethic grows as the JS mature through the course and this progress is enabled by dramatic improvements in their communication skills - listening, verbal and non verbal - as initially reticent teenagers become confident young men prepared to speak out in one to one and group situations maintaining eye contact and standing ready to explain their thought processes - happy for these to be critiqued by officers and fellow JS alike."
All this is made possible by the professional and dedicated contribution of the Permanent Staff. They create a positive environment where the well-being and development of the JS is always at the fore and often at a cost to their personal work-life balance. To their great credit, they never seem to lose sight of the fact that these are still very young people and bring the right mix of discipline, encouragement, humour and fun to what is a very serious business.

Most impressive.
Exercise Solar Warrior

James Foxwell became a member of the IAP in 2009 and like all members maintains regular visits to the College to follow the experiences of the JS from initial reception through to graduation. From such observations IAP members can monitor the activities and culture of the College, seeing how Permanent Staff and other trainers deal with the JS. Here James comments on a visit to one of many exercises the JS experience:

"The exercise was designed to put into practice the skills that the JS’s had been taught earlier in their training. In moving around the training area between the assessments the JS’s were being given the opportunity to refresh their skills as well as practice other areas of their training. What was very apparent was the progress and improved confidence shown by the JS’s in this area of their training.

I had the opportunity to see the JS’s involved in two of their four assessment exercises based on their observation skills as well as their skills in camouflage and concealment. The observation exercise involved the JS locating and identifying ten different objects of varying sizes using the sights on their rifles. The items ranging from water bottles to targets were spread out over a wide area of the training ground approximately 100m square. In the camouflage assessment the JS had to conceal themselves amongst the vegetation of the training ground in a position where they could see the instructor. The instructor then had the task of trying to spot the JS. It sounds a simple task but the JS had listened well to their instructors and several proved very difficult to locate!

The experience and work of the Permanent Staff in this exercise was very evident in the way that the JS were given guidance on how to address each of the assessment areas as well as in the small details that would improve their performance e.g. use of bungees to help camouflage areas of webbing.

In a discussion with one group who had just successfully completed their observation assessment it was also clear that they felt more comfortable at being able to look after themselves in the outdoors e.g. they were now better prepared for their overnight camp and were beginning to learn the details that would make their night more comfortable. It was very apparent that they had learnt a lot from their earlier training that was being put into practice on this exercise."
New Panel member’s experience

Jean MacQuarrie has just completed her first year as a member of the Independent Advisory Panel at Harrogate Army Foundation College, and it has been as much of a journey for her as it has for the Junior Soldiers who began their training there last September.

She said: “What has struck me the most over the last year has been the incredible change in the Junior Soldiers from last September through to July this year. At the outset of their training, when I was a new to the AFC as they were, they were incredibly awkward, not just with me but with the whole process of change they were experiencing. They were nervous, apprehensive, uncommunicative, and very immature. They were also quite belligerent at times about seemingly trivial matters, such as what time they were allowed to call home.

And home was very much a key word for them, with some clearly missing their parents very much.

My visits over the next months saw them gradually settle in and enjoy their new lives. But it wasn’t until my final visit to see them in July, shortly before Graduation, that I realised the full impact of their transformation from the raw youths of last September to the professional young soldiers of today. They were courteous, articulate, positive, confident, professional - and incredibly proud of their achievements. They were also excited about Phase Two training, and desperately wanted to be 18 years old.

I suspect many people would think they were.

It was a pleasure to see such a change over the year, and enjoy sharing their feeling of achievement.

A job well done by all the staff at the AFC, who should be immensely proud of their achievements as well.”
College Permanent Staff

The College has military Permanent Staff (usually on a two year attachment) as instructors supported by civilian educators. Robert McKenzie Johnston is one of the longest serving members of the IAP and here is an aspect of the College upon which he comments:

“I have spent most of my visits listening to the Permanent Staff (the instructors) to try to gauge their morale, as their morale will have a direct impact on how they treat the Junior Soldiers. Low morale would not mean that they would take out their frustrations on the juniors - they are too professional for that - but it could contribute towards an easier acceptance of minor bullying than would be correct or appropriate.

The morale of the permanent staff will be based in part on how well they are kept informed of what is happening, how much they are involved in decision making and how much they feel their professional experience and opinion is taken into account when decisions are made. It will depend very much on how worthwhile their job seems to them to be.

I have no doubt whatsoever that each and every member of the permanent staff I have met, from the most senior to the most junior, feels that the Army Foundation College is one of the most worthwhile jobs he or she has ever done. They recognize how important their role is in training and educating the junior soldiers, and work long and hard to ensure they deliver the best they possibly can. They find the leadership opportunities as trainers intensely satisfying, and enjoy competing within their companies and across the College to make their training team (platoon) the best. They are strongly on the side of the Junior Soldiers, even when the Junior Soldiers get it wrong (as they must do if they are to learn how to get it right). They defend their own platoons against any criticism from outside. Their loyalty to their Junior Soldiers is total and unequivocal. The Junior Soldiers could not ask for a more dedicated and committed training staff. But I have never felt any danger that they might overdo their enthusiasm and competitiveness. The weakest Junior Soldier is as important to them as the strongest. They are teaching and living true team spirit.

Inevitably their opinions are not always agreed with, but they know that their professional opinions are respected and sought, by the Commanding Officer downwards. They have confidence in the chain of command; they feel that communications work well both upwards and downwards. As a result they accept willingly decisions which do not necessarily accord with
their own opinions, and follow College policy carefully and sensibly (while still, correctly, continuing to challenge policy if they think it is wrong).

I judge the morale of the Permanent Staff to be very high, and believe this high morale acts entirely to the benefit of the Junior Soldiers. The College is extremely well led and managed. The evident pride taken in their jobs by the Permanent Staff is reflected in the high professional standards, enthusiasm and positive outlook of the graduating Junior Soldiers. The Junior Soldiers are in very safe and capable hands.”
Example of Matrix observations:

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<th>Observation</th>
<th>Panel member</th>
<th>COs Response/Actions</th>
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<td>49</td>
<td>Male and female staff given training to deal with opposite sex when in mixed Platoons.</td>
<td>Sue Symington</td>
<td>In each mixed Platoon there is a ratio of 1 x PS for every 12 JS (male to male and vice versa). Any issues that occur can be covered by the respective Section Commander.</td>
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<td>64a</td>
<td>Look into the relatively higher number of leavers among JS from Scotland</td>
<td>Paul Nee</td>
<td>Reasons investigated and found following: Parents not attending reception and open days. Unable to travel home at weekends. Looking into coaches being available to bring families from Scotland to AFC. (Cost and location of collection). Companies now given long weekends to allow those Scottish JS to travel home. Frequency is dependent on massaging the Training programme.</td>
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<td>Meal arrangement on the Realities of was visit – long period between food on ferry and arrival at hotel, except for services stop where JS purchased own snacks. Would it be better to arrange a meal in France so that meals are more spread out?</td>
<td>Bev Twizell</td>
<td>Was decided to have the meal on ferry so the group can arrive at the hotel at least an hour earlier, concurrent activity. Also many JS complained about French food. 3 meals are provided and the packed meal can be consumed anytime.</td>
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<td>68a</td>
<td>Involve the Permanent Staff in some elements of the education sessions in order to raise the profile of the education part of the course.</td>
<td>James Foxwell</td>
<td>The PS are attending lessons and play a part i.e. Sgt briefing on contemporary operations. The ETS Officers will follow the VEIT and draw together the Training Teams more effectively.</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>More fitness training was something they all felt very strongly about, although despite my questioning, I couldn’t understand the barriers they perceived to doing some training in their own time. Is it a motivation issue, or are there really problems for them in doing some work in their own time? I did get the feeling they could take more responsibility themselves for increasing personal fitness.</td>
<td>Jean MacQuarrie</td>
<td>OC PAT is outlining to the Companies what training can be done in the evenings and weekends. There are guidelines for JS after week 6 to conduct own training. This includes weighted runs carrying no more than currently training with in programme. Open use of PRTC (less free weights). Swimming pool is slightly restricted to Nordanglia staff timetable.</td>
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Commanding Officer’s Response

This is the third annual IAP report that I have received during my tenure in Command (it is the fourth overall). During my time at the AFC I have come to rely on the IAP to a very marked degree.

The IAP provides me with invaluable support and advice, but most importantly it provides independent assurance that the JS are being properly and professionally looked after. Frequently the College is ‘challenged’ by the IAP. They help us to ensure that there is no complacency. The relationship between the IAP and the College is a dynamic one - ensuring that issues are dealt with immediately they are identified. It is for this reason that both OFSTED and the Army Inspectorate have both identified the relationship between the IAP and the College as a particular strength.

I thank all members of the IAP for the huge amount of hard work that they have dedicated to the College this year. This is real ‘public service’ in its truest sense. Vitally, the lives and learning experiences of our JS have yet again been materially improved through this hard work. I would particularly like to thank our dedicated Chair - Della Cannings - for her tireless support both to the AFC and to the wider ITG. Her help and guidance (and frequent wise counsel) has made my job as CO immeasurably less difficult than it might otherwise have been.

Lt Col S P Ocock
IAP Contact Details

The IAP is very appreciative of the secretarial support received from the Adjutant at AFC (H), Captain Jamie Linsdell.

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