



26th July 2006

## **The Streets Of London**

As a reward to the cadets of 134 (Bedford) Squadron for their hard work at winning the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Wing Drill Competition for an impressive 3 years in a row, the squadron staff had arranged for a very special parade.

We arrived at Downing Street at 8:45am, to find that Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Minister, had just finished a meeting with the Prime Minister about the situation in Israel and Lebanon. We were initially asked if we could wait for him to leave before starting. But when Prince Saud al-Faisal heard we were present, he decided that he would allow us to hold our parade before leaving. After our parade, when he did finally get his chance to leave in his police escorted cavalcade, he gave a thumbs up to the cadets.

Tourists could be seen clinging to the security gates at the end of Downing Street, craning to get a better view of what was going on. All eyes were on Bedford Squadron Cadets as they proudly marched up and halted outside the famous No 10 door.

Tony Blair and Defence secretary, Des Browne emerged from no 10, to inspect the cadets. It seemed unreal that, with everything going on in the world, The Prime Minister and Des Browne gave up 20 valuable minutes of their time for us.

When Tony Blair reached Cpl James Tye, they had a brief discussion about James' career aspirations where James informed the Prime Minister that he wished to join the RAF as a Helicopter Engineer. Tony Blair responded with "that's a great career to choose and rewarding, Good luck!". Following his inspection of the cadets, Tony Blair had an opportunity to speak to the squadron, he spoke to them for a couple of minutes and told them they were "exceptional young people".

After the parade and when the interviews with the waiting media had been complete, we concluded the Downing Street section of our visit with a obligatory Squadron photo outside the door of No 10

Once we had left the secure compound of No 10, AWO Oliver Browne spent an hour showing the cadets a few sights of London, including the Cenotaph, the Horse Guards, Nelsons Column and the Admiralty Arch.

We then progressed down the Mall towards Buckingham Palace where the Changing of the Guard would be taking place.

AWO Paul Taylor took the initiative and asked the police inspector in charge of guarding the Palace Gates, if it would be possible to bring the cadets inside the gates to give the cadets a unique view of the parade. To our surprise he and the Guard Commanders agreed. So we were led to the edge of the Palace courtyard, with tourists, pressed against the railings, trying to get the best view. We even had a chance to talk to the two banner bearers when they marched across to the cadets and spent 10 minutes discussing with them what was going on.

After the day Defence Secretary Des Browne said "I was extremely impressed with the Air Cadets from 134 (Bedford) Squadron - they are a credit to the Air Training Corps. Our cadet forces give young people the opportunity to receive nationally recognised qualifications, first aid training and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. The skills and training they receive make a positive contribution to their communities and to their own futures. "

Commanding Officer, Flt Lt Robinson, commented "A momentous day for 134(Bedford) Squadron and the Air Training Corps. Meeting the Prime Minister was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Tony Blair and Des Browne showed genuine interest in the cadets and what they have achieved. I am tremendously proud of the cadets and staff who work exceptionally hard for the squadron. What an incredible day to remember."

[And a Cadet View :-](#)

## **Prime Time**

They've done it again - another first from the cadets of 134 (Bedford) Squadron Air Training Corps as they parade outside of 10 Downing Street, and are inspected by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, and Defence Secretary, Des Browne. As if that wasn't enough, the cadets also had an excellent view of the Changing of the Guard at Buckingham Palace...

Following the outstanding success of the Squadron for the third consecutive year in the Wing Drill Competition, Bedford Squadron was invited to parade outside the famous black door of the residence of the Prime Minister. This is in keeping with the Squadron's tradition of carrying out drill in unusual places, such as at 20,000 feet in an RAF Tristar.

For the event, the Squadron was split into Tucano Flight and Hawk Flight, so named to reflect the training element of the unit, with the Banner Party carrying the Squadron's banner between the two Flights. After practising tirelessly for three weeks, the stage was set for a parade to remember. There was an element of nerves present in all the cadets as they arrived at Downing Street, the experience was slightly more daunting, though, for some of the cadets who had never been to London before.

Flight Sergeants Otulakowski and Russell began the show by perambulating along the edge of the drill area outside the front door, soon followed by the two flights under the keen eye of the Parade Warrant Officer, AWO Paul Taylor. Subsequently the Parade Commander, Flight Lieutenant Mark Robinson, took charge, and fell in the Flight Sergeants and the 134 (Bedford) Squadron Banner.

The Reviewing Officers, Tony Blair and Des Browne, then inspected the cadets, engaging many of them in conversation. Afterwards, the PM gave some of his time to speak to the cadets. He thanked them for joining the Corps, and congratulated all of the squadron members for being 'exceptional young people'.

Once out of Downing Street, the cadets were shown some of the key sights of the immediate area around Whitehall, such as Horse Guards, the Cenotaph, Admiralty Arch and the Mall. Ultimately arriving at Buckingham Palace, the cadets were admitted to the Royal Palace grounds to watch the midday Changing of the Ceremonial Guard, from the inside the gates. The bearers of the Guards Colours also spoke to the members of the Squadron once the handing-over was complete.

This was the perfect end to an incredible day, and one that will never be forgotten by the attendees. An audience with the Prime Minister, and entrance to Buckingham Palace are singularly amazing, but considering that this was the first time that Air Cadets have ever paraded outside Number 10 and the first time that some of the cadets had visited the Capital, this trip was truly remarkable.





