Defence Minister on island

James Heappey visited the bases on a three day visit

In his first visit to troops deployed overseas, Defence Minister James Heappey was on island last week visiting personnel stationed within the Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs).

During his three-day visit, alongside meeting members of the Armed Forces deployed to Cyprus on a range of different missions, he also spent time with Cypriot Defence Minister, Savvas Angelides.

During his discussions with Mr Angelides, the Minister for the Armed Forces reaffirmed the valued friendship and close defence ties between the UK and Cyprus.

It is no secret that the two nations have deep existing defence links, strengthened in recent years by increased military co-operation and several large-scale joint exercises.

Speaking during the visit, Mr Heappey said: “Our bases in Cyprus are an invaluable security asset across an array of arenas. They provide us with a platform for our RAF jets to destroy Daesh, give us an ability

See page 2

Local financial donations

Last week, members of the Sovereign Base Area Administration’s (SBAA) Cyprus Communities Relations Committee, attended a ceremony at the Episkopi High School to present exercise bikes to its students worth €1,300 to the Parents Association President, Andreas Georgiou.

See page 3

CBF Reading Initiative

Major General Rob Thomson, visited Episkopi Primary School on February 27 to discuss the importance of reading with the children and to launch a new literacy initiative for all the schools here in the Bases.

See page 4
to respond to threats in the region, to contribute to United Nations peacekeeping and to combat the barbaric bird trapping trade.

"Yet our bases are only as strong as the people operating them. And it is the expertise, skill and commitment of our Armed Forces here in Cyprus that helps to keep us safe and secure in the UK." Mr Heappey was joined during his visit by General Sir Patrick Sanders, Commander of Strategic Command.

Whilst in Nicosia, the Minister also met with some of the UK troops based in the city on the UN mission. UK troops currently make up more than a quarter of the peacekeeping force in Cyprus and Mr Heappey was keen to see how they supported the mission.

From projecting peace on the ground, to destroying Daesh from the skies, the Defence Minister then visited RAF Akrotiri, where personnel are deployed on Operation Shader - the UK contribution to the Global Coalition’s counter Daesh mission in Iraq and Syria.

He also got to see first-hand how SBA Police officers have worked tirelessly and successfully to combat the illegal practice of bird-trapping on island, alongside the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and various other Non-Governmental Organisations based here, including Birdlife Cyprus.

"Our bases in Cyprus are an invaluable security asset across an array of arenas."

It was from RAF Akrotiri that the Typhoon and Tornado jets conducted more than 1,700 air strikes that led to the territorial defeat of the terrorist organisation in Syria.

Also during the visit, the Minister met personnel from the Regional Standby Battalion the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment, who are at 24 hours-notice to deploy anywhere in the region.

Less seriously, I hope you have been following our efforts to champion reading, especially amongst our children. I loved the chance to read in the Episkopi assembly last week and really enjoyed the question and answer session. Here’s a link to the reading list suggestions for our youngsters and here’s a link to a super BFBS report about the school visit which will make you laugh. I love the Royal Navy but I am definitely a soldier.

Finally, and much more seriously, be assured that we are taking the coronavirus threat very seriously and we have been planning hard to ensure our responses are the right ones. Please play your part in following the simple and clear guidance that has been issued.
Administration supports Episkopi High School

Report By Korina Orphanides

Continued from page 1

The money, from the Cyprus Communities Relations Fund, is distributed within the SBAs to assist in funding projects, supporting charitable organisations and helping individuals that may need financial assistance for certain issues.

The donations, which this year supported more than 60 recipients, have been making a difference within the SBAs for many years now and play a key role in the Administration’s efforts to support local communities.

I would like to express our gratitude to the SBA Administration for supporting our goal to achieve what is best for our students.

During the ceremony, headmistress, Katerina Constantinides, expressed her gratitude for the donation.

She said: "On behalf of our school's teachers, our students and myself, I would like to express my sincere thanks for your financial and general support to our school over the years.”

The Parents Association President, Andreas Georgiou, added: "On behalf of the Parent's Association Committee, I would like to express our gratitude to the SBA Administration for supporting our goal to achieve what is best for our students.”

Akrotiri Area Officer, Nicos Mylonas, pledged to continue supporting small projects like this.

He said: "It's a pleasure to have sponsored the purchase of these bikes and support the Episkopi High School in offering improved physical training facilities to their students.”

In further news, a new jet-ski was purchased and presented to the District Officer in Limassol by the Lady's Mile Fund Management Committee last week, which is co-chaired by the Area Officer in Akrotiri.

The jet ski will be used solely by the lifeguards at Lady's Mile for the better and more effective protection of swimmers during the busy summer period.

The Lady's Mile Fund Management Committee is a joint committee with members from the Republic of Cyprus and the SBAA, which manages the rental proceeds from lease agreements with restaurateurs operating on Crown Forest land at Lady’s Mile, for the maintenance and upgrading of the local infrastructure.
In discussing his book list and narrative competition, CBF said: “Often, senior officers have a reading list and I do have one of my own, listing books which have shaped me as an officer and as an individual. So we sat down as a family at Christmas and came up with the idea of creating a reading list where we could share our ideas with families here on the island.”

CBF also announced a narrative writing competition for children across all BFC schools.

He said: “For the narrative competition, which launched on World Book Day, we asked children to write a story - it is a chance for them to take inspiration from what they read elsewhere and use it to inspire their own stories.”

Freya Collinge, a Year 6 student who was reading ‘Murder Most Unladylike’, said: “For me, books take you into a different world, where there is always something new and exciting around the corner.

“I enjoyed talking to CBF about my favourite book and he has suggested some that I might enjoy reading too.”

Hayden Collo from Year 6, is a fan of action books, and he said: “The character in my favourite book is brave both mentally and physically and I talked to CBF about why it is important to have characters like that, because they give you something to look up to.”

Click here for CBF’s full reading list.
BFC marks Safer Internet Day

Bases school children joined in with the UK-led Safer Internet Day campaign on February 11 which aimed to promote positive on-line behaviour.

The event, which is gathering momentum all over the world, is based around the theme of ‘Together for a better internet’.

Statistics released on Safer Internet Day, show children’s identities are being shaped online but they also highlighted that many young people feel pressure to conform to an unrealistic image.

An overwhelming majority of young internet users also expressed concern about ‘haters’ – people that target individuals over their identity and views.

Within the Bases, the schools actively promote the Digital Leaders initiative, which is a group of students tasked with raising awareness about internet safety.

The campaign, which was supported by the Cyprus Joint Security Unit’s, Be Safe on Island team, celebrates the benefits of the internet but also promotes e-safety.

Corporal Gary Davis-Blair, who is part of that team, said: “The day is really important because it encourages people from every part of our community to join together and engage in an open dialogue about on-line safety.”

Be Safe on Island work with communities across the SBAs and surrounding areas, to provide the latest scam warnings, online safety advice and social media privacy information.

1PWRR warriors return

More than 100 soldiers from the 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales’s Royal Regiment have returned from Kuwait after taking part in a multi-nation exercise.

Exercise Desert Warrior saw 1 PWRR train alongside and mentor 90 members of the Kuwaiti Land Forces (KLF) and 150 US troops.

The exercise gave organisers the opportunity to test the capability of B-Company to conduct an overseas deployment in an ‘austere environment’.

B-Company, Officer Commanding, Major Georges-Marie Strachan-Heyes, who deployed alongside his troops, highlighted several important development opportunities the exercise presented.

He said: “We wanted to deliver on our Defence Engagement aims through training and mentoring an infantry battalion of the KLF and I also felt it was important to use the opportunity to develop our junior soldiers and leaders as part of their own professional development.”

“We designed a detailed and progressive syllabus that focused on individual to section drills across basic infantry skills, including patrolling techniques, offensive and defensive operations, urban tactics and essential tasks such as prisoner handling, resupply and first aid.”

Looking back at the exercise after returning to Dhekelia, it was clear the OC was delighted with its success: “Our soldiers have really developed their ability to teach and instruct and have learnt essential skills in cultural awareness, communication, as well as confidence.”

“The Digital Leaders are key to the success for us here in BFC because it empowers them to take responsibility to educate their schoolmates, parents and teachers about staying safe online.

“If our team (BSOI) conduct an education seminar to tell people about internet safety, we often have to interrupt their busy days but with young adults and children, they go home and speak to their families about it and they can have an enormous impact on them.”

Our soldiers have really developed their ability to teach and instruct
What's on in...

Episkopi & Troodos

CLAY PIGEON TARGET CHAMPIONSHIP

Wednesday, March 18th
0900-1600hrs.

Open to all UK Service Personnel including UNFICYP, UK Bases Civilians and Dependants, SBA Police, DFRMO as well as Service veterans and members of the ESBA and WSBA gun clubs. It will be a 100 Target English Sporting and all abilities and experience are welcome. Cost is €120 per team of three, or €35 per individual.

For more information please contact Will Wilson on 2527 6663 or Richard Hoole 9977 1098.

BARC BINGO

Thursday, March 19th
From 1830hrs

At Donovan’s Clubhouse at BARC, Norfolk Hill, near Lionheart. Doors open at 1830, eyes down from 1915. Prizes to be won and the bar will be open. Pass holders only.

For further information contact Tanya on 9651 6433

CHARITY RUN FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Saturday, April 18th
From 1530hrs

Episkopi Running club will be holding a charity run over 1K (children’s race), 5K or 10K to be held at Happy Valley. Registration is at the stadium from 1530.

1K=€1, 5K or 10K=€5 to enter

MISS ANDRI’S BALLET

Every Monday
From 1400hrs

London trained, experienced teacher and qualified by the Royal Academy of Dancing and Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. Age 3 and above.

For more information contact Andri Liasi-Petre on 9944 3543/2533 8432. Facebook - Andri’s ballet school.

TROODOS CHALETS AVAILABLE FOR RENT

Year round availability

Are you aware that Episkopi and Troodos Station have 11 chalets to rent to entitled personnel and their families? There are one and three bedroom chalets ranging from €25 - €60 per night.

If you are interested in booking a chalet, please contact Michael on 2596 7065/7027

VE 75 CELEBRATIONS

Friday, May 8th
0900-1600.

The 2020 RAF Akrotiri Station Fun Day will now take place on Friday May 8th and will also be used to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day (VE Day), the end of World War 2 in Europe on May 8th 1945.

VE75 activities will include displays, games, music, fairground rides, food and drink; activities will start at 1200hrs and go on until late.

For more information, please contact the event organiser, Sqn Ldr Tom cousins (OC JMS), and the organising team via BFC-AKI-StnFunDayGPMailbox@mod.gov.uk

NEW LIBRARY OPENING TIMES

Monday 0900-1200 1400-1600
Tuesday 0830-1200 1500-1900
Wednesday 0830-1200 1400-1600
Thursday 0830-1200 1400-1600
Friday 0830-1200 1400-1600
Saturday 1000-1200
Saturday CLOSED

MISS ANDRI’S BALLET

Every Thursday
From 1400hrs

Experienced teacher and qualified by the Royal Academy of Dancing and Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing. Age 3 and above.

For more information contact Andri Liasi-Petre on 99443543/25338432. Facebook - Andri’s ballet school.
Dhekelia and Ayios Nikolaos

PARENTING COURSE
DHEKELIA

Tuesdays March 17th and 24th
0830hrs-0930hrs.

This course is held in St Barnabas. It is for parents and step-parents to meet in an informal and safe space. Coffee and cake also available.

1st DHEKELIA RAINBOWS

Every Thursday
1600-1700hrs

1st Dhekelia Rainbows have spaces for girls aged 5-7. They meet upstairs in the Youth Centre. The cost is €40 per term.

To register for a place, please visit the girl guiding website http://go.girlguiding.org.uk/join-us/join-as-member or email dhekelia.rainbow@gmail.com.

DHEKELIA HOME START
STAY AND PLAY

Every Thursday
1900-1100hrs

Little Monkey's Dhekelia is only €1 and includes refreshments.

To find out more, contact the HIVE.

AMITHEATRE KIDS CLUB

Saturday, March 28th
5-7 year olds 1000-1130hrs
8-12s and 13-16s 1100-1230hrs.

Ampitheatre Kids Club is a drama and singing club for young people interested in being creative and developing confidence. Classes are at the Octagon Tavern where the amazing Star Dust show is performed. First week is FREE.

TEMPO BABY BALLET CLASS

Every Tuesday

Tempo Baby Ballet Class has a new class teaching basic ballet skills, fun with ballet movement social skills and musicality. All children from age 3 are welcome but must be out of nappies. Bring along a healthy snack and water. Parents are not encouraged to stay.

Call Claire for more information regarding uniform and ballet shoes on 9941 6821.

AY NIK CAMEO COME AND MEET EVERYONE

Every Thursday
0930-1100.

A great way to meet new people, the Cameo come and meet everyone. Refreshments are available and funds raised go back into the community.

To find out more, contact the HIVE.

AY NIK MUSIC TOTS

Every Friday
0930-1100.

Bring along your children up to pre-school age. Cost is €1, including a snack.

To find out more, contact the HIVE.

To advertise your community related event in this section, please contact the Cyprus Lion editorial team on 2596 2052 or email your submissions to sovereign.areas@outlook.com
# What's on...

## At the cinema..

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Astra - Akrotiri</th>
<th>Key - Dhekelia</th>
<th>Mercury - Ay Nik</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fri 13th</td>
<td>The Invisible Man (15) 2000hrs/150mins</td>
<td>Blumhouse's Fantasy Island (15) 1930hrs/109mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 14th</td>
<td>Onward (U) 1300hrs/107 mins</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>Sonic the Hedgehog (PG) 1500hrs/99 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 15th</td>
<td>Sonic the Hedgehog (PG) 1300hrs/99 mins</td>
<td>Onward (U) 1100hrs/107 mins</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 17th</td>
<td>Night at the Museum (15) 1830hrs/150mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weds 18th</td>
<td>Blumhouse's Fantasy Island (15) 1830hrs/109mins</td>
<td>The Invisible Man (15) 1830hrs/150mins</td>
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<td>Thurs 19th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 20th</td>
<td>Bloodshot (12A) 2000hrs/109mins</td>
<td>Military Wives (12A) 1930hrs/113 mins</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 21st</td>
<td>Onward (U) 1300hrs/107 mins</td>
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<td>CLOSED</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun 22nd</td>
<td>The Greatest Showman (PG) 1330/104 mins</td>
<td>My Spy (12A) 1100hrs/100mins</td>
<td>Onward (U) 1500hrs/107 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 24th</td>
<td>Bloodshot (12A) 1830hrs/109mins</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>Military Wives (12A) 1500hrs/113 mins</td>
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<td>Weds 25th</td>
<td>My Spy (12A) 1830hrs/100mins</td>
<td>Bloodshot (12A) 1830hrs/109mins</td>
<td>Bloodshot (12A) 1930hrs/109mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri 27th</td>
<td>A Quiet Place - Part II 2000hrs</td>
<td>My Spy (12A) 1930hrs/100mins</td>
<td>The Invisible Man (15) 1930hrs/150mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat 28th</td>
<td>My Spy (12A) 1300hrs/100mins</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>My Spy (12A) 1500hrs/100mins</td>
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<td>Sun 29th</td>
<td>CLOSED</td>
<td>Sonic the Hedgehog (PG) 1100hrs/99 mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues 31st</td>
<td>The Invisible Man (15) 1830hrs/150mins</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weds 1st</td>
<td>A Quiet Place - Part II 1830hrs</td>
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## Episkopi Station Cinema

- **Friday 13th March**: Bad Boys for Life (15) 1900hrs/124mins
- **Saturday 14th March**: Cats (U) 1000hrs/109mins
- **Saturday 14th March**: Richard Jewel (15) 1900hrs/124mins
- **Wednesday 16th March**: CANCELLED
- **Friday 20th March**: Star Wars - The Rise of Skywalker (12A) 1900hrs/142mins
- **Saturday 21st March**: Spies in Disguise (PG) 1000hrs/102mins
- **Saturday 21st March**: Birds of Prey (15) 1900hrs/109mins
- **Wednesday 25th March**: CANCELLED
- **Friday 27th March**: 1917 (15) 1900hrs/119mins
- **Saturday 26th March**: Dolittle (PG) 1000hrs/101mins
- **Saturday 26th March**: Bad Boys for Life (15) 1900hrs/124mins

Please note that all details were correct at the time of publishing.
SSAFA is encouraging all expectant and current parents/carers with children under 5 years of age to sign up to the eRedbook and to use this as their primary health and development record. You can record developmental milestones, weight, immunisations and any other important health and development information along with photos and never worry about misplacing it or packing it away in storage again!

To find out more, or to start using the eRedbook you can speak to your local SSAFA Midwife or Health Visitor or visit www.eredbook.org.uk

N.b. you will need to use the standard format (BF1) postcode.

NUTRITION AND HYDRATION WEEK
March 16th – 22nd

Look out for the SSAFA team promoting hydration in your areas.

With the sun making an appearance and temperatures finally starting to increase, now is the time to start thinking about how we keep hydrated in the summer months and which drinks are best – and which are best avoided. With the increase in obesity and problems with dental hygiene, it’s a crucial time to really look at the liquids we’re consuming.

Please be aware there are new car tax rates
Click here to find out more or contact your local Fiscal Office:

Episkopi 2596 3342
Dhekelia 2474 4078

Akrotiri 2527 6762
Ay Nik 2474 4226
Coronavirus (COVID-19) update
Plans in place for British Forces Cyprus

If you suspect you or a member of your family have COVID-19
**DO NOT VISIT YOUR MED CENTRE**
You will be given advice over the phone by a health professional

- **Self-isolation for 14 days**
  - Call your Med Centre

- **Self-monitoring**
  - Call your Med Centre

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**Travel restrictions and isolation**
Note the restrictions and isolation instructions for each category below...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY 1</th>
<th>CATEGORY 2</th>
<th>CATEGORY 3</th>
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<tr>
<td>Hubei Provence in China</td>
<td>China (exc Hubei)</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>Italy</td>
<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Iran</td>
<td>Hong Kong</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you have travelled from Category 1 countries in the last 14 days with or without symptoms:
- Self isolation
  - Call your Med Centre

If you have travelled from Category 2 countries in the last 14 days:
- Self-isolation for 14 days
  - Call your Med Centre

If you have travelled from Category 3 countries in the last 14 days and have a cough, fever or shortness of breath:
- Self monitoring
  - Call your Med Centre
Bases Faces
Meet Acting Chief Inspector, Esra Omar

BFC and the SBAA are a diverse workforce, with both military and civilians working alongside one another with great success. At its heart, is the Locally Employed Civilian community, including, Acting Chief Inspector, Esra Omar.

I was looking fora new challenge and I loved getting out and about meeting people

The SBA Police is placed right at the very heart of the Bases community and it has always prided itself on employing a diverse and talented group of officers working in both the east and west of the island and Acting Chief Inspector, Esra Omar, who is based in Dhekelia, is the living embodiment of that.

After graduating as an English teacher, the now 40-year-old spent two years as a lecturer at the Cyprus International University, before she started looking for a new challenge and in 2002, that presented itself in the form of the SBA Police.

After overcoming the gruelling recruitment process, the Turkish Cypriot, who lives in Cyprus’ only mixed community in Pyla, started on a trajectory that would see her become the first female Turkish Cypriot officer to reach the rank of inspector, an achievement she is not surprisingly proud of.

She explained: “I was always interested in the police and at the time I joined, I was looking for a new challenge and I loved getting out and about meeting people. I also spoke a little Greek too, which meant I could work in both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities, which I felt was a great privilege.

“I had never considered policing as a career before but once I started, it was clearly the best thing for me to develop myself.”

Her obvious determination to succeed and serve both communities saw her promoted through the ranks to where she is now, an acting chief inspector.

“To have my work and professionalism noticed and to be given these promotions is great and I am of course thankful for the trust shown in me.”

Acting Chief Inspector Omar is married with one daughter

This has been another exciting year for Turtlewatch in both the ESBA and the WSBA, with the ESBA caging 29 nests, Episkopi Turtlewatch an excellent 68 and the team at Akrotiri protecting 82. Sadly, the rise in fox numbers has caused significant losses in Dhekalia. New protective measures and better caging techniques have seen a drastic reduction in losses due to other wildlife. That said, high tides have also caused a number of losses. However, it’s not all bad news, the excavations carried out last year have shown excellent results for both Loggerhead and Green Turtle nests.

New protective measures have seen a drastic reduction in losses

Turtlewatch would not be what it is without the volunteers. The Akrotiri team alone have had 56 different people complete 284 separate walks on the Akrotiri Peninsular. So thank you to all our volunteers wherever they are. Finally, congratulations to Emma Dewan and Gillian Davies who both gained their licence this year, allowing them to locate, protect and excavate nests.

For anyone wishing to get involved, look out for us in the Akrotiri shop, or ask to join one of the Facebook pages, just search for Akrotiri or Episkopi Turtlewatch.

Finally, dogs, can we remind any owners that dogs are not allowed within 90 metres of the shoreline on any Sovereign Base beaches at any time of year, this is to protect all wildlife.
Cadets take part in weekend training exercise

**Exercise Beaver Challenge 2020**

This month, the cadets and staff from No.1 (Overseas) Squadron, based at RAF Akrotiri, completed a weekend training exercise to allow the junior cadets to finish their Phase 1 fieldcraft training and senior cadets to hone their skills at instructional training. The exercise, named Beaver Challenge, was the perfect opportunity for the entire squadron to take part in fieldcraft, one of the most popular activities among cadets.

The youngsters began by learning the basics of personal camouflage and how to move as an individual in the field, before learning how to work together and eventually commanding their own section. Fieldcraft, first aid, adventure training and more is taught throughout the year but the camp gave cadets the experience of what it’s like to live out in the field over a number of days, patrol at night, prepare food on the go and practice their first aid skills.

Camping out for the weekend learning fieldcraft, first aid and adventure training.

Cadet Sergeant Jack McNee said: “Working as a team to patrol an area at night and deal with a mock ambush situation is one of the most exciting things I’ve experienced outside of aerobatics.

“Teamwork and communication are two skills developed in fieldcraft exercises that are readily transferable to everyday life; one of the elements we are proud to encourage in all our youngsters in the Akrotiri squadron and our detached flight based at Ayios Nic.”

All were given the opportunity to meet military working dogs.

Personal camouflage was taught.
Exclusive screenings of Military Wives film
Plus an appearance by the Cyprus Military Wives Choirs

Military Wives Choirs around the world joined forces with BFBS Cinemas last weekend to host a series of special performances at exclusive free screenings for serving military and their families of the new hit-film, ‘Military Wives’ before its worldwide release.

The film, which is based on the real lives of women who came together as their partners served in Afghanistan to form the very first military wives choir in 2010, was shown at cinemas in Dhekelia and RAF Akrotiri to great acclaim.

More than 200 people attended the screening at RAF Akrotiri, armed with drinks and tissues and they were given a special treat, as the Military Wives Choirs from Akrotiri and Episkopi Garrison joined forces to perform before the film started.

Both choirs can be seen during the films end credits.

Cyprus News in brief

Coronavirus

There is no risk of shortage in supermarkets following the confirmation of coronavirus cases in Cyprus, according to the General Director of the Cyprus Supermarket Association Andreas Hadjiadamou. Cyprus Mail

All 152 samples taken from the contacts of the 64-year-old state doctor who tested positive for coronavirus emerged negative for the virus, the Health Ministry announced Tuesday evening. Kathimerini

Immigration

Minister of Interior Nicos Nouris announced the government’s action plan to manage migrant flows arose from a sharp increase in illegal immigration and asylum applications, mentioning that Cyprus is currently handling 33,000 applications that correspond to 3.8% of the Cyprus population. In Cyprus
BFC Half Marathon Success

Gym to gym challenge

Close to 300 runners and walkers took part in the annual British Forces Cyprus Half Marathon on February 15th, where competitors cover more than 13 miles over some extremely challenging terrain.

The race, also known as the Gym to Gym takes place between the Episkopi and RAF Akrotiri gym.

A key sporting fixture on the BFC calendar, it covers a 13.1-mile route of tracks, off road trails, long tarmac flats and challenging sections through the salt lakes.

The year, the race saw 171 runners and 120 walkers take part across the five different categories for males and females junior, senior, masters, super masters and the overall category.

The overall winner this year and for the second time in succession, was 2 MERCIAN’s Staff Sergeant Craig Williams, who crossed the line in Akrotiri in a time of 1 hour 20 minutes and 27 seconds.

Taking top spot in the female category was Davina Rutland, who tackled the course in an impressive 1 hour, 40 minutes and 40 seconds.

Staff Sergeant Chris Wood, a Physical Trainer at the Episkopi Gym and race organiser, was delighted with the event and was equally impressed with the times in the challenging conditions.

He said: “Considering there was a very strong headwind into the competitors for the last four miles, looking at previous years, the times remained very respectable. SSgt Craig Williams won the event last year in a time of 1.19.01, so it was pretty close again.

“From an event organiser’s point of view, I was extremely pleased with how the event ran very smoothly, all the way through from the administration phase and on the day, it was pretty much faultless.”

Commonwealth Day Colours

Coming together for vibrant food, dress and dance

Episkopi’s own 2nd Battalion The Mercian regiment hosted a Commonwealth Day celebration on Tuesday which highlighted the cultural diversity within the Battalion and the community as a whole.

Personnel and their families were treated to traditional dances and food from Ghana, Jamaica, Cyprus, Nepal, Fiji and Kenya, all in a welcoming and celebratory atmosphere.