



Report on the 2016 Highland Military Tattoo

The Tattoo took place at Fort George from the 9th to the 11th September at Fort George. There were three evening performances and a matinee on the Saturday. The show was universally praised by the wide range of spectators.

For the second year there was also a full Catering and Retail Village with 11 local, quality food and drink retailers and 4 in-house merchandise retailers. Also in the village were 14 Armed Forces' charities' tents and displays from all three Services. The Moray gig – a wonderful replica of a French Admiral's barge, used for youth training and based at Findhorn – was also on display, in keeping with this year's Naval theme.

The show started with a dramatic fly over by 2 Typhoons from RAF Lossiemouth. This was followed by a fanfare from the Band of the Royal Marines Scotland. The Massed Pipe Bands regaled us with 12 rousing and beautifully played tunes. On parade were: The Highlanders (4 SCOTS), 51st Highland (7 SCOTS), 2622 Highland Sqn RAux AF, RAF Lossie, Forres and District, City of Inverness, 1st Bn The Highlanders ACF, City of Inverness Youth and Gordonstoun School Pipe Bands. It was a wonderful sound and a great spectacle.



The Royal Band of the Belgian Navy played some naval tunes and sea shanties and added an international flavour to the performance. The first military vignette commemorated the Battle of the Somme and notably featured a re-enactment of Drummer Walter Ritchie of the Seaforth Highlanders winning the VC on the first day of the battle. On the Friday night we were honoured by the presence of his two granddaughters. A traditional Highland dance set performed by the City of Inverness Highland Dancers followed.

A popular event – the Inter Armed Forces Competition – then took place. Sadly the Royal Marines pulled out and we only had teams from 39 Engineer Regiment, Kinloss, and from 51 Sqn RAF Regiment at Lossiemouth. The challenge involved dinghies, whisky barrels and hugely motivated servicemen! The Engineers won for the third year in succession.

The youngsters from the Fochabers Fiddlers gave us some feet tapping ceilidh music and then accompanied the Inverness Choreographic dancers with their contemporary routine in nautical dresses which they had made themselves.

The Royal Marines gave a most polished performance which led into the Battle of Jutland Vignette featuring a replica gun turret of HMS Chester on the arena. The gun action in which 'The Boy' Jack Cornwell won his VC was the central focus of the vignette.

The build up to the finale began with The Massed Pipe Bands and the 2 military bands and this was accompanied by the Inverness and Lossiemouth Military Wives' Choirs – in Gaelic: a first! The finale included the Guard of Honour from HM Submarines, the evening hymn, the National Anthem, fireworks and the Lone Piper – Brighde Chaimbeul – the winner of the Under 18 Piobaireachd at the Northern Meeting for the second time.

The show has improved year on year in quality and this year we introduced projection during the vignettes for the first time and this was a great success. Alasdair Hutton continues to be our narrator and he brings wonderful continuity, knowledge and expertise to this key role.

Salute Takers, VIPs, guests and members of 4 societies were entertained in the Officers' Mess beforehand. This included a small contingent from the Highland Society of London. Sponsors were looked after in The Highlanders' Museum at the other end of the Front Parade. Many hundreds availed themselves of the food and drink on offer in the Village and were able to wander around the displays and the ramparts before the show.

Despite increased efforts to market the event, ticket sales were poor at 5,500 instead of the 8,000 we were anticipating. This reflects the reduced attendance at other events in the Highlands this summer but was nevertheless hugely disappointing. This has put some financial strains on the Board but we believe that most issues are now resolved and that we will be announcing the 2017 Tattoo on or around the 1st December. The theme next year is RFC/RAF/RAF Regiment and will have some significant changes in the presentation of the performance to keep the show fresh. We will also be adjusting ticket pricing and changing our marketing strategy and plans to ensure a sell-out crowd!

There is no doubt that this Tattoo is much appreciated by all who attend the performances. It is a traditional style military tattoo but with contemporary music and dance. The setting of Fort George is fantastic. It is supported by the two local Councils, Highlands and Islands Enterprise and by Event Scotland. There are many sponsors and sponsors in kind to whom we are incredibly grateful. It literally could not happen without that support.

Our special thanks to the Highland Society; we hope that our links and that support will continue to grow and that we will be welcoming more members and their guests next year.

Seymour Monro
Executive Chairman and Director
21st November 2016
<http://www.highlandmilitarytattoo.com/>

