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Hi Friend,

Once again, I find myself starting a newsletter with sad news. I have started three newsletters this year so far with sad news about great people passing who served with a great regiment (Queen's Own Highlanders), those being Pipe Major Iain Morrison, Jimmy Macintosh and now HRH Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. I received this photo from Dietmar in Berlin, Germany showing the Union Jack at half-mast in front of St. George's Anglican Church,



George's Anglican Church, former British Garrison Church of Berlin. We, the Queen's Own Highlanders band, attended the Tattoo in Berlin, I think in 1988. Also, on the Berlin Tattoo that year were the Strathclyde and Lothian and Borders Police pipe bands.

The Duke of Edinburgh was our Colonel-in-Chief and therefore we had a lot of associations with

him. On a personal level, I had many occasions with him during my time as Pipe Major of the 1st Battalion, too many to relate here. However, just to mention a few, in last month's newsletter I wrote about playing at the Gulf War Memorial Service in Glasgow Cathedral attended by Her Majesty, the Queen. The Duke of Edinburgh accompanied her and, as I slow marched down the centre of the cathedral and passed Her Majesty, he gave me a slight nod in recognition. He also wrote to me personally afterwards.

I was wearing the Duke's Pipe Banner – just as Pipe Major Peter Grant was when he played the same tune, *Flowers of the Forest* so splendidly at the Duke's funeral on Saturday. The Pipe Banner has the Duke's Royal Crest/Standard on one side and the Regimental Crest/Badge on the other side. Peter was also wearing the Pipe Major's regimental buckles that have been handed down/on for many generations and worn by the Pipe Major of the 1st Battalion of the Regiment. These are the same buckles that I wore, as did Alasdair Gillies, Iain Morrison, Donald MacLeod, John MacLellan, D. R. MacLennan, Peter MacGregor and many more over the last 150 years or so.



There is a strong superstition that you should only play the whole of *Flowers of the Forest* when playing at a tribute/salute and neither to play the whole tune when practicing and therefore should always leave a piece out. To play the whole tune through when practicing would bring bad luck and could mean you will be attending a funeral soon. I never play the tune without feeling respect.

I also mentioned in my previous newsletter that we Trooped the Colour in Munster, Germany with His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip in attendance. He actually visited the regiment for three or four days and stayed with the Commanding Officer, now retired Maj. Gen. The Hon Seymour Monro CBE LVO and presently Chairman of the Northern Meeting Piping Trust plus Chairman of Forres Pipe Band. During the visit, a Beating of Retreat was held, the Retreat Programme is pictured below. There was also an Officer's Mess Regimental Dinner Night held in his honour. We played with the traditional four pipers followed by myself playing the piobaireachd; I cannot remember which tune I played but it will be kept in the mess records. Pipe programmes are made and signed by the Pipe Major for every Regimental Dinner Night. On the Saturday there was a Highland Games and, of course, we ran a piping competition that was contested hotly yet still friendly. The Duke of Edinburgh

presented all the prizes, see attached photo. Euan Stuart won a hand engraved full silver long practice chanter donated by David Naill Bagpipes (they have always been very supportive of military piping) Euan got to keep the chanter as Naills donated one for each competition. Euan went on to become Pipe Major of the King's Own Scottish Borders and is now a Colonel in the Army Air Corp and is currently attached to the USA forces in Southern California. Also competed for was a Silver Star presented by the Royal Scottish Pipers' Society.



RETREAT PROGRAMME	
March On	: The March Of The Cameron Men
Retreat	: Bugle Call
Royal Salute	: St Andrews Cross
Drummers	: Drummer Call
Retreat Marches	: Dark Lowers The Night Kilworth Hills Lochanside
Regimental Band	: Pride of Princes Street Road To The Isles Dunedin Sounding Brass Captain Campbell, Piper o' Dundee Harry Lauder Selection Invercargill
Medley Selection	: Hogtles Reel Invergordon Castle Donald Ruadh The Twisted Bridge Kennach M'hor John Keith Laing Ceacall A Chuan Merrily Danced The Quaker's Wife The Queen Of The Rushes
Reform	: Ballochisle McNeils of Ugadale
Combined Bands	: The Rustic Bridge Rowan Tree The Dark Island The Sands Of Kuwait
March Off	: Scotland The Brave March Of The Cameron Men Cabar Feidh
	Pipe Major : WO2 BJ Hitchings BEM Drum Major : CSgt WD Houston Bandmaster : WO1 TW Whittingham LTCL
Spectators are asked to remain seated throughout the programme but to stand, and gentlemen to remove their headdress, during the Royal Salute and the March Off.	

A little while after, whilst we were back in the Highlands, the band played at Fort William where Her Majesty and the Duke were staying aboard the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. We played for the Queen who came along and spoke to me. She mentioned that she had been reading the local newspaper that morning and noticed that we had been playing for her mother, The Queen Mother at her Castle Mey (located in north Caithness) Highland Games on the previous Saturday. The Duke was elsewhere opening a new facility. I stayed behind after the band had headed back to Inverness to play as the Royal Party boarded the Royal Barge to head out to *Britannia*, which was moored off Fort William. The two of them got out of the car and started down the gangplank/walkway when the Duke noticed it was me who was playing (and, of course, wearing his Banner). He returned to greet me, and we exchanged a few words whilst the Queen waited for him. I refer to this as the day I kept the Queen waiting! The moment was captured with the Royal Yacht in the background by the *Aberdeen Press and Journal* newspaper's photographer and appeared on the front page of the paper the next day. It also appeared in glossy colour in the middle of *Hello* magazine. This photo hung in my mother's living room for many years.

I also judged the Duke of Edinburgh Pakistani Pipe Band Championships on several occasions. Representing the Duke, it was tied in closely with the Palace where you needed to collect the medals and afterwards had to write a report that also went to the Duke. I neither thought he would personally read it but one day in my office at Edinburgh Castle I received a phone call from the Duke's equerry in Buckingham Palace. He informed me that the Duke had read my report and was unclear at what I was getting at. To my surprise, I was then connected with the Duke, so I explained to him that I had tried to be diplomatic in the report because the result I had handed in was not the result that was read out at the prize-giving ceremony. He found it all quite amusing and explained that I should have been informed I could have written a report directly to him and written "For Buckingham Palace eyes only" on it. The reason/explanation I was given in Pakistan for the change of the results was the drumming positions changed the results. Nothing new there then!

I also received a tribute to the HRH Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh from Marco Kronenwetter. Marco can be seen here playing the *Flowers of the Forest* at Hohenlohe-Langenburg Castle where some relatives of the Duke live. Listen to the harmonics from his pipes (playing my HR3 drone reeds) and see some great photos of the Duke in Queen's Own Highlander uniforms. Nicely done, Marco.



• **The Rob McLintock California School of Piping and Drumming (the former College of Piping San Diego School) is now going to be an online school, June 26-29. For details [please click here for information and registration](#)**

• **The Jim Thomson School of Piping and Drumming, Flagstaff (July 9-July 16, 2021) is still planning to run if at all possible an in person school. Information at www.jimthomsonpipingschool.com**

As ever, enjoy your piping.



Bruce Hitchings MBE BEM.

As ever, please send me photos or videos you'd be willing to share at bruce@highlandreeds.com including a caption of event and date. Please also leave a product review on the appropriate produce page of my website – or leave a comment or video clip of you playing on the ['Submit your comment/playing' page](#).

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