

The Queen's Birthday Parade 2021

By Colin Dean

The parade again took place in the Quadrangle of Windsor Castle but whereas in 2020 it was based around a turnout of the Windsor Castle Guard, this year it was expanded to a format with certain similarities to the parades held there for Queen Victoria in 1889 and 1895.

Four guards of 3 officers and 26 other ranks took part, representing the Grenadier, Coldstream and Scots Guards. A composite band of 2 directors of music and 54 other ranks was drawn from the five bands (but mostly Scots Guards), providing a touch of nostalgia as they paraded with a frontage of seven as I remember from my (very) young days. The Pipes and Drums of 1st Battalion Scots Guards under Pipe Major Stephen Bennett formed two ranks in the rear, with three Household Drummers at the head. They marched from Frogmore Drive in the Home Park and entered the Quadrangle via the George IV Gate.

F Company Scots Guards trooped the Queen's Colour of 2nd Battalion Scots Guards so it is hardly a surprise that, aside from the traditional tunes, all but two of the items played had connections with the northern region of Great Britain.

The first of these was *Guards Armoured Division* by Major George Willcocks MVO MBE. Irish Guards, whose one birthday parade as senior director of music was to have been in 1948. the year that it was cancelled due to expected rain which never arrived.

The pipes and drums took over with *Pipe Major Donald McLean of Lewis* (Donald MacLeod) and *Farewell to the Creeks* (James Robertson), then back to the band with *Moray Firth* (based on *The March of the Cameron Men* and *Nut Brown Maiden*), written by Rod Mackenzie, one of many pen names used by James Ord Hume.

They arrived at the Quadrangle with band and pipes combining for *The 79th's Farewell to Gibraltar* (John MacDonald) and *The Crags of Tumbledown Mountain*, the latter composed by Pipe Major Jimmy Riddell on the slopes of the mountain a few days after the battle at which it was re-captured from hostile invaders by 2nd Battalion Scots Guards 39 years and 1 day earlier, so a tune very special to the regiment.

The King's Troop, with three subsections, joined the parade, circumnavigated the Round Tower and formed up in Engine Court. Reminiscent of the birthday parades up to 1936, the Household Cavalry was represented by two troops, which appropriately formed up on the west side of the Quadrangle in front of the statue of Charles II as they had done at the 1889 and 1895 parades.

The waiting music began with the pipes and drums playing *Mist Covered Mountains*, *Skye Boat Song* and *Morag of Dunvegan*, then Major Mark Aldridge, Scots Guards, conducted the band in *Scottish Emblem* by one-time Welsh Guards musician Archie Ellis, and his own arrangement combining *The Belle Mere's Waltz* with *Ye Banks and Braes*, bringing in the pipes.

Lieutenant Colonel Simon Haw MBE then took over for *The Aberdonian* (based on *We'll Gang Nae Mair* and *The Lass O' Fyvie*) written by Lieutenant Colonel Duncan Beat LVO, Director of Music, Scots Guards from 1974 to 1982, who reached his 90th birthday in 2021.

Her Majesty then took her place on the dais, accompanied by the Colonel, Scots Guards, HRH The Duke of Kent who, despite the effects of a stroke, gave the modern generation a fine lesson in duty, loyalty and stoicism.

The Royal Salute was followed by the slow troop, *Les Huguenots*, and the quick troop *Septem Juncta in Uno* (*Seven Joined in One*) by Major Aldridge, reverting to the title under which it won the major general's march competition when he was bandmaster of the Scots Guards, and rearranged to bring in the pipes towards the end. The march has also been known as *Horse Guards Parade*. This part of the parade included two very impressive 180 degree turns by the band and pipes, not an easy manoeuvre with the need to keep six feet six inches (2 Meters) apart.

The 'Trooping the Colour' sequence followed, then the march past in quick time to the regimental marches and ending with another Duncan Beat march, *Edinburgh Castle*, in which the pipers play the trio tune, *The Sodger's Return*.

The King's Troop and Household Cavalry ranked past, unusually with their regimental music played by the Foot Guards (although this also happened on the parades in London in 1937-39), after which came the other non-Scottish march, *Great and Glorious* by Major Leslie Statham, Welsh Guards, as The Red Arrows flew over with immaculate timing.

The Guards marched past for a second time and left the Quadrangle to what has become the unofficial march of the Guards Division, Horatio Nicholls' *When the Guards are on Parade*; I wonder how many on parade know the words?

Last to leave were the band and pipes, to *Scotland the Brave*, *Hielan' Laddie*, *Black Bear* and *A Man's A Man For A' That*, the latter tune being the march of F Company. The pipes and drums played *Glendaruel Highlanders* and *Cock o' the North*, and the last we saw on the BBC was the band playing *Stirling Castle* by Major Jimmy Howe MBE who, despite being a Geordie, spent all his army service in Scottish regiments including the Scots Guards from 1959 to 1974.

Much as we all hope that when the Queen's Colour of 1st Battalion Irish Guards is trooped in Platinum Jubilee year the parade will resume its traditional format, it has to be said that Windsor Castle made a highly impressive venue. Given the circumstances, we can forgive a few tinkering with tradition and, after all, if the ghost of Queen Victoria was present, the parade would have seemed strangely familiar.

Trooping the Colour 2021

Her Majesty The Queen's Birthday Parade
Saturday 12th June 2021

