

Queensland Police Pipes & Drums at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo

By Paula Hedemann, Media and Public Affairs Branch



A once in a lifetime opportunity for the Queensland Police Pipes & Drums who performed at the Edinburgh Military Tattoo held in Sydney in February.

Photos by Senior Constable Deon Williams, Forensic Services Branch.

Queensland Police Pipes & Drums musicians were proud participants in the Edinburgh Military Tattoo held in Sydney in February.

The event featured more than 1,300 performers and was the largest single gathering of military bands, pipe bands and dancers ever held in Australia.

The Edinburgh Military Tattoo has a long history of pageantry and tradition, having been held annually in Scotland since 1950.

Staging the tattoo in this country is likely to have been a once in a lifetime occurrence as the event has only left British shores twice in its 55-year history. The previous occasion was in New Zealand in 2000.

Titled *A Salute to Australia*, the tattoo was held in Sydney's Telstra Stadium, from February 3 to 8. As well as attracting 160,000 spectators over the six days, an estimated one million Australians tuned in when it was televised on February 20.

In its homeland, the tattoo is performed at historic Edinburgh Castle and, in keeping with tradition, a replica of the castle was built at Telstra Stadium. The structure was more than 25 metres high and represented the guardhouse, drawbridge, gates and walls of the castle, and provided a stunning backdrop to the spectacle of the performances.

The Queensland Police Pipes & Drums sent a contingent of 20 performers to help form the 300-strong massed pipes and drums.

The massed band comprised eight Scottish bands and seven Australian bands from organisations including the Queensland Police Service (QPS), Tasmania Police, Royal Australian Regiment, Australian Army Reserve, Federation Tattoo, Scots College and Royal Caledonian Society.

Coordinating rehearsals with so many performers from opposite sides of the globe presented a unique challenge.



Queensland Police Drum Major Senior Sergeant Peter Flexman.

Apart from practising the set pieces prior to arriving in Sydney, the massed pipers and drummers had less than a week together to prepare for their world class performance.

They achieved it by spending three days rehearsing at Sydney University, followed by two full dress rehearsals at Telstra Stadium, which included a public preview the night before the official opening.

The tattoo is held for charitable purposes and the funds raised from the public preview were donated to the Tsunami Appeal.

The Queensland Police Pipes & Drums has won numerous state, national and international championships, and is highly regarded as one of Australia's finest pipe bands.

Officer in Charge and Drum Major Acting Senior Sergeant Peter Flexman said the invitation to perform at the tattoo was a credit to the band's reputation.

"The Edinburgh Military tattoo is the biggest and best known tattoo in the world and to be invited was an honour," he said.

"Queensland Police Pipes & Drums previously accepted an invitation to perform in Edinburgh in 1975, but most of the current performers were not around at that time.

"Being part of the tattoo gave our members the opportunity to forge new friendships and perform with other world renowned pipe bands.

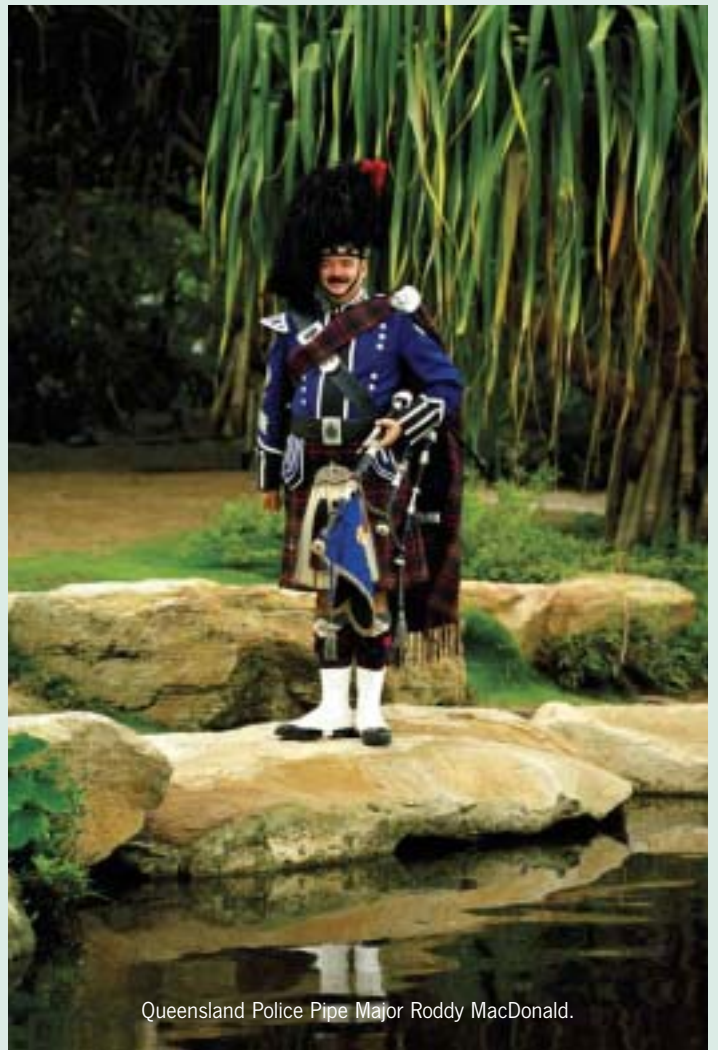
"It was a wonderful experience and represented a milestone in the careers of individual players as well as enhancing the image of the QPS," Acting Senior Sergeant Flexman said.

The Queensland Police Pipes & Drums was formed in 1958 and serves the community by performing at charity events and festivals across the State, as well as at a variety of official engagements.

The band has initiated an aged care program which includes visits to hospitals and nursing homes, and the Kops in Kilts program for schools where they perform traditional, modern and popular children's music.

They are also the teachers and mentors of the Queensland Police Juvenile Pipes & Drums – a group of 28 youths aged from seven to 19 years, who recently began winning awards in their own right.

The Queensland Police Pipes & Drums helped fund their attendance at the event through various fundraising initiatives. They were kindly supported by the Queensland Police Union of Employees, and by the many members of the Service and local community who bought raffle tickets and took part in other fundraising activities.



Queensland Police Pipe Major Roddy MacDonald.