

Report - Amalgamation Dinner – 12th February 2011

The 2011 celebrations to mark the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the Regiment kicked off in good style for the Edinburgh Branch with a bumper turnout of one hundred and eight members, partners, and friends of the branch turning up for a dinner at Easter Road, the home of Hibernian Football Club. The choice of venue proved to be popular, even for those die hard fans of the Jam Tarts!

George Givens, the Branch Chairman, started the evening off by welcoming all those members from the local Lothian and Fife areas, as well as those travelling from further afield – namely Liverpool, Newcastle, Gretna, the Highlands, and Glasgow. This was followed by messages being passed on from friends who could not make it to the dinner for various reasons – ie John Gilchrist currently in New Zealand awaiting the arrival of a new Grandchild, Margaret and Bobby Munro from their cruise liner somewhere off the coast of Japan, Stewart (“Geordie”) Anderson from Liberton Hospital, and Brigadier Nick Ridley from the Borders. Stephen McIntosh, the Secretary of the Highland Branch, passed on very kind best wishes from his members to the Edinburgh Branch. This was followed by a moments silence to remember all those comrades who had sadly passed away since the formation of the Regiment, some fifty years ago.

George then handed over the proceedings to Dougie Shepherd, who had composed a special Grace for the anniversary dinner. This went down a storm and hit all the right notes for the start of what proved to be an excellent evening. Seoras McIntosh asked Dougie for a copy of the Grace and if all goes well there should be a copy at the end of these notes.

The caterers at the venue did us proud and served up a tasty and filling three course meal after which a comfort break was called for. The second half of the evening started with a very fine performance by a Mini Pipe Band from Edinburgh Academy (incidentally the only Cadet Unit to retain the regimental cap badge of the Queen’s Own Highlanders). As usual the young lads, all under the age of eighteen, produced an excellent repertoire of tunes and did themselves proud. This was followed by an extra treat in the form of Pipe Major Michael Gray, a former Queen’s Own Highlander, playing a selection of favourite regimental tunes (The 79th’s Farewell to Gibraltar, Cabar Feidh, March of the Cameron Men, and Pibroch of Donuil Dubh). Michael was then called back and Colonel White thanked him and his Mini Pipe Band for an extremely polished performance. Michael replied by giving the Regimental Toast in Gaelic, which was very well received.

George Givens then gave the Loyal Toast and went on to introduce Colonel Mike White as our Guest of Honour for the evening. Colonel White proceeded to entertain the company with tales of life in the Seaforth Highlanders as a young second lieutenant before the momentous events in February 1961 and re-badging to become a Queen’s Own Highlander. Colonel Mike went on to recount tales of jungle warfare training, pirate hunting, the Brunei Revolt, mechanised warfare training in BAOR, and operational tours in Northern Ireland. His tales, linked to mentions of regimental characters, brought back long forgotten memories to many of the assembled company. To finish off a very entertaining talk, Colonel Mike gave the Regimental Toast, this time in English, to which there was an outstanding reply of **Cabar Feidh Gu Brath**.

George Givens thanked Colonel Mike for a very memorable talk and handed over to Colonel Charlie Millar, who proposed a toast to the 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland (The Highlanders) and wished them a safe and successful operational tour in Helmand Province, Afghanistan.

Michael "Dinger" Bell, Johnny Meechan, and Tam Balloch then cracked on with the raffle - the star prize being an original Kelvin Hunter Dram Table in the shape of a Queen's Own Highlander in Number 2 Dress. At this stage we must give a big thank you to all those members who generously donated prizes for the raffle.

The evening finished off with dancing to the Kool Kats and the sound of the swinging sixties

All in all, a very successful and enjoyable evening and a good start to the Regiment's 50th Anniversary Year

Pictures of the evening can be found in the Photo section in this website.

Regards,

George Givens
Chairman
The Edinburgh Branch