

## HIGHLAND BRANCH - QUEEN'S OWN HIGHLANDERS REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Chairman & Treasurer	-	Lt Col (Retd) RJ Towns MBE DL
Vice Chairman	-	Ronnie Sinclair
Secretary	-	David Terron
Committee Members	-	Peter Finlayson
	-	Maj David Grant
	-	John Yarrick
	-	Jimmy Mutch
	-	Robbie Mackintosh
	-	John Johnston

### AMALGAMATION DAY SERVICE FRIDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2020 INVERNESS



A short Amalgamation Day Service took place at our statue on Bank Street Inverness on Friday 7 February 2020. The service conducted by Queen's Own Highlander, the Rev Stewart Mackay, Padre to 7 SCOTS was well attended by Regimental Association members including those from Highland Branch. Association Chairman Lt Col Peter Watson welcomed all and after the reading conducted by Major David Grant, we recited the Regimental Collect. The names of those listed on the Memorial were

read and all of those no longer with us were remembered. Association Pipe Major, Major Jim Stout played Flowers of the Forest.



This was followed by the Benediction and the singing of the National Anthem. We then retired to the Royal British Legion Inverness where we enjoyed a fine lunch courtesy of the Regimental Association.

#### Roll of Honour

Tpr Billy White	Borneo	1964
LCpl William McIntyre	Dungannon NI	1972
Pte James Hesketh	Belfast NI	1973
Lt Alistair McKillop	Belize	1976
Cpl Mathew Glasgow	Belize	1976
Pte Allan MacMillan	Crossmaglen NI	1979
LCpl David Lang	Bessbrook NI	1979
LCpl David Wares	Bessbrook NI	1979
Lt Col David Blair	Warrenpoint NI	1979
LCpl Victor MacLeod	Warrenpoint NI	1979
Cpl Dominic Turner	Belfast NI	1990
Pte Neil Donald	1 <sup>st</sup> Gulf War	1991
Pte Martin Ferguson	1 <sup>st</sup> Gulf War	1991
Pte John Lang	1 <sup>st</sup> Gulf War	1991

**We Will Remember Them**

## AMALGAMATION DINNER FRIDAY 7<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2020 FORT GEORGE

Sixty members and their guests attended the Dinner in the Sgts Mess at Fort George courtesy of the RSM of 3 SCOTS. The Chairman welcomed all, and although not present he highlighted the hard work and achievements of Col James Murray during his term in office with the successful erection of the statues at the Arboretum and Inverness being particularly notable. A round of applause followed. Col James has been succeeded by Colonel Peter Watson and he was welcomed into the post by all members of Highland Branch.

General Seymour Monro was given a warm welcome as the recently appointed Lord Lieutenant of Morayshire. Moray Loons do not come any more senior.

The Secretary David Terron read out the long list of names of absent friends. This was followed by a period of silence.



We enjoyed an excellent meal prepared by the Catering Manager Calum Smiley and his Chefs, expertly served by Mess Manager Craig Fletcher and his staff. After the meal was served, we observed toasts to the Queen and Prince Philip proposed by Peter Finlayson. After a short break we settled back down for our pipers to play at the table. Association Pipe Major Jim Stout was accompanied by Richard Anderson, Alastair Campbell and Stephen McCabe and they played a first-class set:

March	Kind George V's Army
Strathspey	The Shepherd's Crook
Reel	Kalabakan
March	Pibroch o Donuil Dhu

We continued the trend of recent years by inviting QO HLDERS who had moved on to become a success in other fields, to address those in attendance. Our speaker for the evening was Ian Linden. Ian enlisted as a Junior Leader in 1966 joining the battalion in 1968. As a member of A Company he served in Edinburgh, Sharjah, Osnabruck, and Northern Ireland. Ian left in 1972 and ended his civilian career as Head of Global Operations of KS Drilling Company. His very thought-provoking talk kept us enthralled throughout. Before leaving the table, we had a collection for all those who looked after us at the evening and the fine sum of £260 was collected by Peter Finlayson and handed over.

In the Bar we enjoyed a further excellent set of Pipes:

March	The March of the Cameron Men
Strathspey	Molly Connell
Reel	The Sound of Sleat
Air	The Sands of Kuwait
Jig	The Banjo Breakdown
March	Cabar Feidh

The raffle organised and run by Peter Finlayson, Mav Yarrick, Angus Beaton and Robbie Mackintosh was a great success with a fair distribution of prizes. The raffle raised £360 for Branch funds. Thanks to all for your prize donations.

The transport arrived outside around midnight and we boarded and made our way home having had a thoroughly enjoyable night. Additional thanks go to Billy MacLennan for the mini coach from Elgin and to Freda Newton of Jacobite Cruises for the coach and driver from Inverness at no cost. Very much appreciated.

## **COVID-19**

We did not envisage the Amalgamation Dinner as our only social gathering of 2020. The spread of Covid-19 however has heralded uncertain times. At the time of writing, October 2020, we are still living under restrictions and the next social event could be some way away.

Branch members did however participate in events organised by Nairn Legion, namely St Valery 80 Years, VE Day 75 Years and VJ Day 75 years. They were particularly well represented at the ceremony at Nairn War Memorial to commemorate St Valery 80 Years.

## **ST VALERY 80 YEARS**



On Friday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2020 members of the Regimental Association joined Nairn Branch of the Royal British Legion Scotland at a short ceremony at the War Memorial to remember and honour the sacrifices of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division at St Valery 80 Years previously. In addition, members of the Black Watch, Gordon Highlanders and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders Regimental Association's represented their respective Regiment's. Lt Col (Retd) Bob

Towns Highland Branch Chairman and Nairn Legion President welcomed those supporting the event and set the scene, by reading the entry for the 12<sup>th</sup> of June 1940, from the diary of the Adjutant of 4<sup>th</sup> Seaforth, Capt RAAS Macrae. The Highland Battalions who fought so valiantly at St Valery were represented by; Ally Pattie representing 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> BW, Peter Finlayson representing 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> SEAFORTH, Maj (Retd) Mick Low representing 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> GORDONS, George Fraser representing 4<sup>th</sup> CAMERONS and Donnie Petrie representing 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> ARGYLLS. Following the Act of Remembrance, Nairn Provost Laurie Fraser laid a wreath and Association Pipe Major, Maj Jim Stout, played Heroes of St Valery. We Will Remember Them.



## DONALD SMITH

On the same day as our St Valery ceremony, some of our Forres members, namely Albert Duffus, Willie Ross, David Mackay and Kevin Bremner paid a visit to our own St Valery Veteran, and Highland Branch member, 99 year old Donald Smith to wish him well on a day special to him. Donald who lives in Forres, Morayshire, with his wife Helen 85, joined the Territorial Army aged 16, in 1938, signing up with the Seaforth Highlanders. A year later, during training at Fort George near Inverness,



he took a picture of himself with five friends. He was the only one of them to survive. Reliving the Battle of St Valery-en-Caux, the ex-soldier, who was just 19 at the time and had already lost pals at Abbeville, said: "We didn't know anything about Dunkirk. They never told us about it. We finished up holding the perimeter of St Valery at Veules-les-Roses. It was a big, open space and we had no time to dig in. We saw the German army coming across the fields, soldiers in front, the tanks coming behind. We were lying on the ground, facing them, and leaning over our packs with our rifles. We managed to stop them but that's when the big guns opened up. We were facing heavy weaponry with small arms. It was a hellish scene. The whole place was on fire. We thought that was the end.



I was on the Bren gun and the magazine went empty. I lifted my hand to take it off and put a new mag on when a shell burst over us. All I felt was a bang. It knocked my hand right back, took a finger off, and cracked my head. I couldn't remember anything much after that. My friends Nobby Clark and Bernard Finn were either side of me. They were killed outright.

"You don't have time to feel fear. All you are thinking about is staying alive and, as bad as it sounds, killing that German in front of you." He was severely wounded but managed to make his way to the town of St Valery, where he passed out from blood loss and was captured by the Germans. He and other prisoners were frogmarched along the top of the cliffs where they could see the boats out in the Channel. He said: "There was a big German officer who asked how old I was. I was in a state, but I managed to say, 'I'm old enough to fight you'. He just smiled at me and said in perfect English, 'for you the war is over'."

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 2020 Donald celebrated his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday. Happy birthday Donald, Cabarfeidh Gu Brath.



## IN REMEMBRANCE



***Chalky Whyte and David Terron  
at 'Jock' in Inverness***

In Forres Peter Finlayson laid a wreath in memory of Neil Donald whilst Nairn, Ardersier and New Elgin also saw wreath laying or quick two-minute silences held.



***New Elgin***



***Ardersier***

Eric MacDonald (23), Ed Osborne, David Grant, Bob Cameron-Winfield and James Dyce paraded at 'Jock' our statue in Inverness on Armistice Day.

As usual branches organised their own local ceremonies where members paraded, suited and booted to lay wreaths or simply stand at memorials in remembrance.

Due to COVID some branches were restricted to laying wreaths at a predetermined time to allow for social distancing etc. Elgin laid theirs at 1300hrs on the Sunday and saw a good turnout from the local 'loons'. Three members, Jed Geddes, Chalky Whyte and David Terron travelled to Inverness on the Saturday to attend the laying of a wreath by the Provost of Inverness and the local Legion branch.



***Peter Finlayson***



***Inverness***



Roddy Wood, accompanied by David Grant and Bart Lucas, Chairman of RBLs Inverness, were present at the Cavell Gardens memorial in Inverness.



Meanwhile at Fort George, museum volunteers paraded with the resident battalion for a two minute silence.



*A point to note is that Peter Finlayson paraded at Fort George as a recruit on Remembrance Day 1960. In addition, Peter was instrumental in the setting up of Highland Branch. The Branch held it first event on 6<sup>th</sup> February 1982 and Peter has supported the Branch as a Committee Member including a period as Chairman since then. Sixty years plus continuous service, thank you Peter. CFGB.*



The Elgin 'Loons' paraded at 1300hrs on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November to lay their wreaths due to there being a staggered series of wreath layings by different groups. They then retired to the Seaforth Club for soup and sandwiches.

## CONCLUSION

2020 has thus far proved a difficult year. We especially regret the restricted attendance at the funerals of several fine members, denying us the opportunity to pay our respects in the customary way.

Branch membership remains reasonably strong with 207 members.

Hopefully, Covid -19 restrictions will ease and we can get together socially as a Branch in the New Year.

**COVID -19** *If any member requires assistance of any kind during these difficult times please get in touch. There will always be someone willing to help and all enquiries will be dealt with in the strictest confidence.*

### Contact:

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## Obituaries – Seaforth, Camerons and Queen’s Own Highlanders/ Highlanders (since 7 February 2020 - Regimental Dinner Night)

- |                              |                              |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Graham Squair             | 11. Ron Milne (ex Paymaster) |
| 2. Gavin Wilson              | 12. Harry Gray               |
| 3. Jock (Gil) Taylor         | 13. Adam Urquhart.           |
| 4. Stevie Graham             | 14. Iain Laughland           |
| 5. Gordon (Flash) Elliott    | 15. John (Paddy) Mills       |
| 6. Derrick (Dickie) Paterson | 16. Leo Price                |
| 7. Robert (Bob) Miller       | 17. John Wood                |
| 8. William (Ben) Gunn        | 18. Norrie Bremner           |
| 9. William Lennox Young      | 19. David Henderson          |
| 10. Noel Ness                | 20. Hamish Sutherland        |



### Wives, mothers and sweethearts

1. Katheryne Wink
2. Violet McKenzie
3. Karen Harper

**Farewell Norrie**