

Regimental Gathering – Saturday 11th June 2022

Ladies and Gentlemen, fellow Veterans

It's a privilege to follow such an outstanding Beating Retreat as we have just enjoyed. So my first set of thanks, on all of your behalf, is to Pipe Major Jim Stout and Drummie David Murray not only for the performance today but also for the Pipes and Drums many hours spent in practice and playing at other events through the years, including fitting farewells to our former colleagues in some of the most inaccessible spots across the country. We should never take this standard of performance for granted; it is like so much of what we did, and what we continue to do – today's Beating Retreat was of the highest standard and the envy of every other Association.

How appropriate also that the salute today should be taken by Major Dougie Shepherd, such a distinguished soldier in the Seaforth Highlanders, the Queens Own Highlanders and now such a prominent contributor to the Association – at events and with his amusing tales on line!

I'm not going to keep you long because I recall when talking at the last Gathering in 2016 that by speaking now I was up against increasing competition from the beer tent. The situation is even more challenging this time because we can all enjoy the generous gift towards the first drink donated by Major Mike Crowe who sadly joined the 2nd Battalion earlier this year; Mike would, I know, have asked for a brandy and ginger to get him going which could have been a good test of our bar team.

Mike's donation is one of many for which we must all be very grateful, including an amazing gift from a local business and many generous donations from Association members. Firstly, I want to thank you all, every one of you, for taking the time, trouble, and the cost of coming to Inverness this weekend. I also want us to remember those who wanted to make the journey but for some reason were unable to do so but who will in a day or two I hope read all about it on Social Media. The attendance this weekend highlights the strength of the Regimental family and the benefits of a strong Association spread across the country.

This whole weekend only happened because of a great deal of work done by the Gathering Committee which seems to have been deliberating for ages now since the previous planned event in 2021 had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. I want to pay tribute to the volunteers who have worked tirelessly to make today happen. Special thanks too for the displays put on by 7 SCOTS and by the Cadets who have set up stands to show you what they are up to - and I commend them to you, if you have not yet visited them. I'm particularly grateful to our Cadets for returning tomorrow morning to help with the Drumhead Service. Finally, I want to highlight the efforts of the team at the Museum at Fort George, including Ernie Pope, who helped lay on your visit there this morning and generously offered all the visitors a tasty NAAFI break.

The Museum remains a very important part of our heritage and I recommend a visit there if you can. It's invidious to pick out individuals but we should all be very grateful for the work that Majors Maurice Gibson and John Bailey are doing to help manage our museum and also for the amazing work that Bob Towns, Peter Finlayson and Jimmy Mutch have done to organise our impressive medal collection.

I understand that our Regimental Magazines are now online and you will be told in due course on how best to access them. The Museum Shop is here in the Control tent if you wish to order tweed, or the new maquettes, or indeed any regimental memorabilia.

Today is the culmination of some marvellous efforts by the Association, particularly those of you who've been office bearers and who have helped organise events, supported Veterans who needed our help, and have helped take care of our increasing number of memorials, many arranged after much hard work by our previous Chairman, Colonel James Murray. If you have not already done so, do find a moment while you are in Inverness to visit the Memorial overlooking the river Ness. So thank you to all the Association members and office bearers whose hard work and commitment has enabled us to achieve so much for our members and their memories.

We have had a marvellous and at times truly humbling turn out at funerals as we have said our farewells to former members of the regimental family; the Glengarry and Blue Hackle have been very much in evidence in churches, crematoria or at the graveside. I believe that it is important to say goodbye to friends and colleagues in a fitting way.. Finally, I want to thank Alex Bang Bang Gunn for his excellent work in keeping the 2nd Battalion Face book page up to speed.

Your Chairman, Colonel Peter Watson told me recently that today was an appropriate moment to hand in my mess tins as your President and so I am happily passing the baton over to Brigadier Charles Grant. He was both a distinguished Queens Own Highlander and then latterly Colonel of 7 SCOTS. Thank you to every one for your help, support and advice over the past 20 years but I am pleased to say that it is Charles who is keeping an eye on things tomorrow at the Drumhead Service to which you are all encouraged to attend, however you may feel; some fresh air and a prayer or two will help cure any headaches.

Before we all head to the marquee and enjoy both Mike Crowe's generous donation towards a drink -and much good crack - I would like to make one final thank you. It is to Brenda Ross who, working in RHQ, has organised all your applications, - and these were mostly on-line. She sorted those that were filled in incorrectly, dealt with those forms that arrived late, and fixed those without the money enclosed. All this has been done with an ever-present smile - even while she has also had to endure her husband Brian's unstinting work as Vice Chairman of the Gathering Committee. What better way for me to end than a big thank you to them both. A fitting finale is a bunch of flowers, from us all; to Brenda Ross in appreciation for all that she has done

to make today happen so smoothly. I ask Colonel James Murray, our previous Chairman to make the presentation on your behalf.

So let's now continue to enjoy the party, with soon to follow the Starlite Entertainment Disco, but in the meantime let's make the most of the comradeship of friends, family and colleagues from over the years. So please join with me in our rallying call = Cabar Feidh Gu Brath