

## **Pipe Band of the 50th Regiment (Gordon Highlanders)**

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When the 88th Regiment (Victoria Fusiliers) was formed in 1912, it was felt by a large number of people in Victoria who were of Scottish origin or descent that the Victoria Fusiliers represented the English community, and that they, too, should be represented. This resulted in a series of meetings in the spring of 1913, the first of which, according to press reports, was called by a Captain Chambers to discuss the formation of a Highland Regiment in Victoria.

In August the sanction of the Minister of Militia, Colonel Sam Hughes was received, and on 4 September, 1913, an official announcement from Ottawa authorized the new Highland regiment, to be known as the 50th Regiment (Gordon Highlanders) wearing the uniform of the Imperial Gordon Highlanders with the Gordon crest, a stag's head, as its cap badge. On the same day the first fifteen or twenty men were sworn in, although the regiment was not yet actually in existence, and was temporarily administered by a civilian committee.

On 25 October it was announced that Lieut.-Col. Arthur Currie, of the 5th Regiment C.G.A. would be appointed to command. On the next day Major Lorne Ross was appointed Second-in-Command, and Major Garnett Hughes (only son of the Minister) as junior major. The Saint Andrew's and Caledonia Society of Victoria offered their full support.

On the 21st of November Mr. W.H. Coy became the Honorary Lieut.-Colonel. He promptly gave \$35,000 to the Regiment, with which full dress uniforms and equipment was to be purchased, much of which was to remain in use for decades with the Canadian Scottish Regiment for guards of honour.

The first parade of the new Regiment was on Monday, February 16, 1914 at the Knights of Pythius Hall on Douglas at Pandora. It was here that Lieut.-Col. Currie and his officers met the men in a body for the first time. The Regimental Pipe Band was present, and later in the evening played in the street outside, attracting a large and delighted audience. The following Sunday, the Pipe Band was present at the Menzies Street Drill Hall for the decorating of the commemorative tablet honouring the sons of Victoria who fell in the South African War, the Pipes and Drums then leading the way to the devine service at the Cathedral. There were to be many other parades in the next few months. One of the more moving parades being the sendoff for the 30th Battalion, C.E.F. which took place on Feb. 15, 1915 in which all the military bands then in Victoria took part.

It was during the winter of 1913-14, that the Regimental Pipes and Drums had been formed under P/M Donald Cameron, formally the Pipe Major of Victoria's St. Andrew's & Caledonia Society Pipe Band (organized in 1908). Also joining with him were pipers John Low Sr. and William Whishart. The Pipe Band

practiced throughout the winter of 1913 and spring of 1914 every Sunday at 3:00 at the Menzies Street Drill Hall. (The rifle companies paraded weekday evenings at the Knights of Pythius Hall and the buglers at the Regimental Headquarters at 1175 Fort Street). During this pre-war period the pipe band grew to approximately 12 pipers and 6 drummers. Other pipers in the band at this time were: G. Birnie, W. Calder, J. Parks, C. Wilson, A. Dunsmuir, A. McDonald, W. MacGregor, C. Coutts, C. Sims and A. Wallace. The Drum Major was N. McDonald and the Sgt. Drummer was T. Hoey. Only two other drummers have been identified, T. Wishart and W. Muir.

The people of Victoria did not have long to admire the Regiment in their resplendent uniforms (which arrived in early May, 1914) -- tall white-plumed feather bonnets, scarlet or white shell doublets, gold lace and snowy pipeplayed equipment -- for only six months after its first parade, they were mobilized for war!

When war broke out in August, 1914, Canada's militia was mobilized. The 50th Regiment, with its pipe band in the lead, marched to the Exhibition Grounds at the Willows where the unit, along with the 88th Regiment (Victoria Fusiliers) were to be encamped. There was no call-up of regiments, but drafts of volunteers to form numbered battalions. Along with the draft from the Gordons, contingents from the following regiments made up the 16th Battalion (Canadian Scottish) Canadian Expeditionary Force -- The 91st Canadian Highlanders (Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders) from Hamilton, Ont. formed in 1902; the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders of Canada from Winnipeg, Manitoba formed in 1910; and the 72nd Seaforth Highlanders of Canada from Vancouver, B.C. formed in 1911. 50th Regiment pipers G. Birnie, J. Parks and C. Wilson were among those who entered the newly formed 16th Btn. C.E.F.

The Camerons and Seaforths both sent their own battalions, the 43rd and 72nd respectively, later in the war. Attempts were made by the 50th Regiment to raise an overseas battalion of its own, but without success. They were fated to remain throughout the war as a mobilized militia unit, filling guard duties and sending drafts to newly-raised battalions such as the 30th, 48th, and 67th (Western Scots).

The 67th Btn was raised in Victoria in June of 1915. A number of pipers from the 50th Regiment enlisted in the 67th Btn. William Wishart, who became Pipe Major, Sandy and John Chisholm, Alex Ferguson and John Low Sr.

When a depot for B.C. was formed at the Willows Camp in 1917, the Gordons still maintained their organization, their drafts into the overseas formations retaining their kilts. At the Willows, the Gordons also maintained a pipe band, with C. Coutts as Pipe Major. The buglers and pipers of the Regiment took an active part in the daily routine of the Willows Camp, sharing reveille and tattoo with the band of the 88th Regiment (the 50th band playing on odd days, the fife and drum band of the 88th, on even days).

In addition to the pipes and drums, the 50th Regiment also had a bugle band. It was even planned to have a brass band, but the war put a stop to such a grandiose scheme. The buglers, most of them young boys, were responsible for the majority of duty calls played at the camp. The following orders for October 9, 1914 clearly illustrates the various calls which were part of the daily routine for Willows Camp.

Reveille	6:30	Sick Parade	4:15
Breakfast	7:30	Supper	5:30
Sick Parade	8:15	Retreat	7:00
Orderly Room	8:30	1st Post	9:45
1st Parade	9:00	Last Post	10:15
Dinner	12:30	Lights Out	10:30
2nd Parade	2:00		

Buglers were either in the bugle band or were company buglers. Some of the bugle band members have been identified as: Sgt. Bugler Meads, Buglers W.J. Rance, F.C. Alexander, R.S. Porter, F.B. Vansicklin, Ballantyne, McKinnon, Cavanagh, J.D. Butler, A.A. Bates, A. Moir, N. Fatt, N. Sneddon, N.L. Caldwell, H.D Wallis, McLaren, O.M. Ferrabee, W. Pauline, G. Murray, J. Rodger, J. Langton, V. McKinnon, C. Lang, J.D Rochford, V. Hodding, Pomeroy, H.D. Bowerman, F.V. Richardson, and A.G. Nix. The following former 50th Regiment buglers served over-seas with various units: F.C. Alexander, A.A. Bates, H.D. Bowerman, E.J. Diespecker, J.S. Plows, C. Abbot, F.V. Richardson and L. Marrs.

Apparently the 50th bandsmen were not appreciated by everyone in the camp, a Regimental Order (No. 161) being issued on December 12, 1914, stating that "no drummers, buglers or pipers are to practice anywhere between the lines of the 5th C.G.A. (Canadian Garrison Artillery) and B.C. Horse or anywhere in the vicinity of the Grand Stand"!

It appears that a Gordon Highlanders' pipe band remained intact after the war. At the Vancouver Games held August 4, 1919, the 50th Regiment from Victoria won third prize in the pipe band competition. At the Games held on August 17, 1920, the Vancouver Daily World of August 19th reported that the Gordon Highlanders came first, out of five bands, and thus won the Stewart Trophy. However, engraved on the trophy itself as the winner was "Comrades of the Great War, Victoria", under Pipe Major Donald Cameron. A photograph of this band with the trophy shows the band apparently in Gordon Highlander uniforms. No explanation is known for this 'double naming'. This, however, would be the last parade for the Pipes and Drums of the 50th Regiment as a new Highland

Regiment would be formed in Victoria the following year, the 1st Btn, The Canadian Scottish Regiment.

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