

Pipes & Drums

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Although pipe bands, as such, were not officially sanctioned until the 1850s, pipers and drummers were certainly playing together many years earlier. When one considers that each of the 15 companies of the Regiment had one or two pipers and drummers, there could have been quite an assemblage of performers available at certain times for celebrations, partys, etc. Of course, when pipers and drummers get together, highland dancers would add to the festivities.

Piobaireachd, the classical music of the bagpipe, was the formal music of the period. In battle the troops would have been inspired by this haunting music. However, research shows that "small" or common tunes were being introduced that were simple and melodious, could be marched or danced to and were songs. Many of these have descended to us today.

The squad uses reproduction period rope tension drums, some made by the same supplier as two hundred years ago, Henry Potters and Sons, London. With calfskin heads and snares on the bottoms, the sound is loud and deep compared to modern drums.

Often Highland Dancers can be added to a piping and drumming parade. These dances show the agility of the dancer and were very much a part of highland military life. In the sword dance, for example, the dancer skilfully most avoid touching the crossed blade and scabbard of his sword. Legend holds that when danced before a battle touching the blade is a sign of bad luck. The Argyll broadswords dance is similar to the sword dance except that there are four dancers around four crossed swords.