



Pipe Major Graeme Ogilvie

Life Member, PPBSO Ottawa Branch

Graeme was born in Dundee, Scotland in 1954. He and his parents came over to Canada in 1956 via the RMS *Queen Elizabeth* to NYC and then Trans-Canada Air Lines to Toronto, settling in Port Credit with the family of his Uncle David. Unfortunately, just a few months later his Uncle and family moved to Winnipeg and the Ogilvie family was left with no house, no money and no friends. They moved to Stoney Creek and started a very austere life in the new world.

Adding to the difficulties in the early days was a medical problem with which they had to deal. Graeme was born with a significant deformity (it looked like he had no feet, as they were

pressed up against his shins), and his parents were told he'd never walk. On arrival in Canada, they took Graeme to the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto and were given the same answer – nothing could be done to ever let him walk. In their new “home” in Stoney Creek above a convenience store, his parents would listen to a Scottish radio program Sunday afternoons hosted by an ex-pat Scot from Glasgow, a podiatrist in Hamilton (Dr Bob Smith). Given they had nothing to lose, they contacted Dr Smith and for more than a year a long painful process took place, with bouts of crying every night, as the feet were “fixed”. Eventually Graeme was able to walk, and he has never forgotten his good fortune that if it hadn't been for that Sunday afternoon Scottish radio program he'd likely have spent his life in a wheelchair.

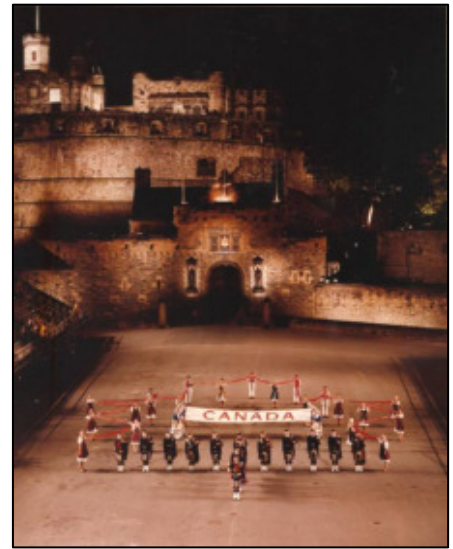


Graeme started learning the pipes at age seven with the East Kiwanis Pipe Band in Hamilton under P/M Jock McFarlane (above right), and played with the band until the age of eleven (left). The Ogilvie family, now including brothers Brian and Bruce, moved to Waterloo in 1966 and there Graeme joined the Grade 3 Hespeler Pipe Band under P/M Robert (Bob) Chalmers. He also began competing on the solo circuit (bottom right), eventually making it up into (and winning) in Grade 2 solos. Even at that young age he had some significant highlights in his life. He piped solo for Queen Elizabeth's visit to Kitchener in 1973 and also in 1973 he played for the amalgamation of Galt, Preston and Hespeler into the city of Cambridge. This year (2023) he was graciously invited back and had the honour of performing for the 50th anniversary of that event.



In the summer of 1973 Graeme was invited by P/M Ed Neigh to try out for the Grade 1 Guelph Pipe Band, but the first major fork in his life took place in August that year when he accepted enrolment in the Royal Military College of Canada (Kingston), where he played in the pipe band under P/M Donald Carrigan. In his senior year he was the Cadet Wing Band Master. A number of the pipers and drummers from those years at RMC have ended up playing (most still playing) in the Ottawa area – Neil Anderson, Ken MacKenzie, Donald Corbett, Mike Ward, Andy Main, Dan Cameron, and Rick Houseman.

After graduating from RMC with a degree in engineering, he played for Air Force pipe bands in Portage la Prairie MB, Greenwood NS (twice) and at Rockcliffe in Ottawa. His first taste of a major tattoo was with P/M Archie Cairns for the acclaimed Canadiana performance at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 1981 (right). During a three-year posting to Philadelphia as a Liaison Officer with the US Navy (Naval Air), he played for the Grade 2, then Grade 3, Ulster Scottish under P/M Tom Hall. He continued to compete solo in Grade 1 until 1992, but admits that his lack of ever having had a piping instructor and his procrastination related to practicing the solo tunes kept him anywhere from the prize lists.



On his move back to Canada he played for a short while with the Air Command Pipes and Drums in Ottawa (as a side drummer!!) under P/M Hugh Macpherson and D/Sgt Dave Yeo, and then during a weak moment in the beer tent in Montreal, was coerced

into the Grade 3 Ottawa Police Service (OPS) Pipe Band by P/M Pat Hayes – but only if he came as a piper!!



Graeme played nine years with the Ottawa Police, which included the competition circuit in Ontario, garrison duties related to a police band, the annual May trip to Cleveland OH for the Greater Cleveland Peace Officers Memorial, and an exceptionally memorable trip to the Bermuda Tattoo (below right). This was his second time in Bermuda, the first being with the 14 Wing Greenwood Pipe Band in 1988. The highlight of his time playing with

the OPS was participating in some very somber ceremonies for the first anniversary of 9/11 in New York City.

As he was retiring as a Major in the Canadian Forces, Graeme began to get seriously involved in the Pipers and Pipe Band Society of Ontario (PPBSO). He was invited in as the VP of the Ottawa Branch in 1996 by the incumbent President, Brian Williamson, and in 1998 Graeme took over himself as the President. He stayed in that position for twelve years (1998 to 2009). On retirement from that Branch position he became a PPBSO Director-at-Large where he helped from 2011 to 2014, and then again from 2017-2021. Although no longer a PPBSO Director, he still sits on the Governance Committee under long time PPBSO exec, Charlie MacDonald.



Over the years Graeme has also had a major part to play with the running of the Glengarry Highland Games (Maxville), the Montreal Highland Games, the Fergus Highland Games and the North Lanark (Almonte) Highland Games – for which in 2022 he was recognized as their special Guest of Honour. Once he stopped helping with the PPBSO running of the Glengarry and Montreal Games, he couldn't help but continue to be involved. Since 2008 he has been well recognized as the MC for Circle 1 at the Glengarry Highland Games.

While President of the Ottawa Branch, Graeme and Vice-President Brian Williamson were invited to pipe in the Millennium (01 January 2000) on Parliament Hill, an event that did not go exactly as planned. With an anticipated 20,000 on Parliament Hill, the organizers were overwhelmed with a crowd of 50,000+. As was obvious on the CBC TV split screen airing that night, the Millennium took

place at 00:00 hours in Toronto, Montreal and New York City, but at 00:02 hours in Ottawa. Oops. Live, and on TV, you could hear the bagpipes still playing at the precise moment the clock struck midnight. So Graeme and Brian know exactly what they were doing at the turn of the millennium.

Graeme has also had the good fortune to be in the right place at the right time for other events. Four times the Ulster Scottish band opened for Rod Stewart at the Philadelphia Spectrum while he was stationed there. At the National Arts Centre in Ottawa he has opened for the Chieftans and for Natalie MacMaster. In 2003 he led a composite Ottawa Branch pipe band (and dancers) on stage at the NAC for a fundraiser with renowned NYC pianist Philip Glass (which for Graeme included a highlight of singing on stage in the finale with Cape Breton star Rita MacNeil).

An inaugural member of the RCMP pipe band in 2000 under P/M Pat Hayes and D/M Graham Muir, things changed just a year later with an unexpected announcement from Pat that he was stepping down. Graeme was asked if he would consider taking over the band. Because he was already busy with work, family, his Ottawa Branch duties and playing with the Ottawa Police band, he declined. But caught at a weak moment in the Tartan Pub in Orleans six months later (by Graham Muir and Donald Corbett) he finally acquiesced and the official turnover took place on 14 October 2002. The “Change of Command” from Hayes to Ogilvie (right) was coordinated with the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to the RCMP Stables where Her Majesty presented the Force with the horse “Golden Jubilee”.



Many years of dedicated service and commitment have been reflected in the RCMP band’s growth over the past two decades. Other than for a short sabbatical before the passing of his wife, he still serves as the RCMP Pipe Major in the National Capital Region. His tenure with the RCMP has been filled with enough highlights that could fill a book.

In 2008, the RCMP allowed a composite pipe band (comprised of members from the seven, now eight, RCMP pipe bands across Canada) to travel for the first time to a major international event. That trip was to participate in the “World Gala”, a stage show at the Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas with host Regis Philbin. Significant lessons were learned on that February trip bringing together a national composite RCMP band for the first time, especially after a snowstorm had closed Chicago’s O’Hare Airport disrupting all North American air traffic. But in the first instance of Graeme pulling a rabbit out of a hat, the show was a tremendous success, with Tony Bennett shaking everyone’s hand and proclaiming it was the best performance of the Gala.



The trip of a lifetime took place in 2009 with the RCMP participating in the Windsor Castle Royal Tattoo, presenting RCMP Police Service Horse “George” to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. When Graeme was first contacted to discuss the possibility of that participation he was told that he had to keep the band to just thirteen members. Graeme balked at taking a band that small, but on learning why that restriction it became clear. The only available accommodation would be thirteen royal apartments in Windsor Castle. Graeme quickly accepted the invitation. For the ten days on site, while the Queen was in residence, the band had the amazing good fortune to stay in the royal apartments of Windsor Castle while they practiced and performed.

On 23 May 2012 the Royal Canadian Mounted Police had the honour of being the first foreign non-military unit to guard the Queen at Horse Guards Parade. As a special favour to the Mounties, and to mark her Diamond Jubilee, the Queen agreed that they should take over for the day for the Queen’s

Diamond Jubilee. This performance is one of London's great traditional set pieces – the Sovereign's personal body guard has been guarding the ceremonial entrance to the royal residence since the 17th century. This day, however, there was to be a Canadian stamp to it. As well as the RCMP members on horseback turning out in their dress uniform of red serge and yellow-striped trousers, instead of a bugler they were accompanied by a piper who played the RCMP Regimental March. P/M Graeme Ogilvie and P/M Wayne Moug (RCMP Halifax H Division) were accorded the privilege, with Graeme piping out the first of the RCMP mounted guards, and trading off with Wayne for the successive rotations of the guard. It was a terrific honour to have been the first pipers to play for the Horse Guards ceremony in its hundreds of years of history.



Twice more the RCMP pipe band in Ottawa has played for members of the royal family, with the National Division band playing for Her Royal Highness Princess Anne at the RCMP Stables in 2014 on a visit to see the Musical Ride horses after a re-dedication of the National War Memorial. Then in 2022, as part of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations, the band and dancers performed for the visit of Prince (soon to be King) Charles, and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, to the RCMP Stables.

Other major events have included New York City in 2007 for their St Patrick's Day Parade (in a blizzard) and a special performance at UN Headquarters (as a guest player with H Division Halifax), the 2017 International Festival of Mayan Culture in Mérida, Mexico, and the 2018 Belfast Tattoo in Northern Ireland (again as a guest player with H Division Halifax). Just 36 hours after returning home from Belfast, Graeme turned around with an RCMP composite band departing for the Shanghai Tourism Festival, followed by a journey to Beijing, culminating there in a performance at the Canadian Embassy. In 2019 Graeme took a composite RCMP band to play at the world famous Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, Graeme's second time at the tattoo, 38 years apart. The most recent tattoo in which a composite RCMP pipe band performed was July 2022 in Basel, Switzerland (an RCMP composite band will be going back again in July 2023).

P/M Ogilvie has also led RCMP pipe bands for tattoos in Halifax, Quebec City, Regina, Estes Park CO, Rochester NY, Hamilton, Kingston and Toronto. The band has conducted six major concerts at the majestic Dominion Chalmers United in Ottawa for audiences of between 700 and 800 people.



The most recent major event for the RCMP band and dancers was to the Netherlands in early May 2023 for the 75th + 3 anniversary of the liberation, postponed from 2020 (and 2021 and 2022) because of the Covid pandemic. This trip was a significant endeavour over twelve days including stops at Vimy and the Menin Gate in France, Bienen and Rees in Germany (Bienen being home to the only memorial to Canadian troops on German soil), remembrance services across multiple commonwealth cemeteries in the Netherlands, playing for the Dutch Remembrance Day at Groesbeek

Canadian War Cemetery and leading the celebratory Liberation Day Parade in Wageningen (above left). Church concerts with brass band and choir were held in Silvolde and in Gendringen. Not many veterans of the Second World War are left and participating with them at the events across the Netherlands, France and Germany was emotional for the entire RCMP contingent.

Over the past twenty years for the RCMP, Graeme has performed with the band in red serge at 550 events and has played at a further 250 solo events.

In 2013, under the stewardship of retired District Fire Chief and lead tip Jim Corrigan, Graeme assisted with the establishment of the Ottawa Fire Service Pipe Band (right). Although the original intent was to find someone else, Graeme assumed the position as Pipe Major and he also still continues today in that role with the fire service. This pipe band is one of the area's best kept secrets as they play only for Fire Service garrison duties. The talent level is extraordinary and that allows the group to ably survive on just one band practice a year (before the national fire service memorial weekend).



Graeme has been the piper for the Senate of Canada since 2013. In recognition of his volunteer work he has been awarded the RCMP Commissioner's Commendation, a United States Navy Commendation, the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal, the Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers, and a volunteer certificate from Prime Minister Chretien.

Trying to prove that pipers are actually musicians and can do more than just play the bagpipes, Graeme also plays the fiddle in a number of local session groups, dabbles on the piano (he was a church organist for two years) and since 1993 has been a drummer for the 20-piece Ottawa Rube (German) Band (which was originally the Baden Rube Band at the CF base in Germany). The year before Covid he further expanded his horizons by playing as a first violin with a local community string orchestra, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, William Ogilvie, who led a string orchestra in the late 1930's playing at Saturday night dinners in Glamis Castle for the royal family.

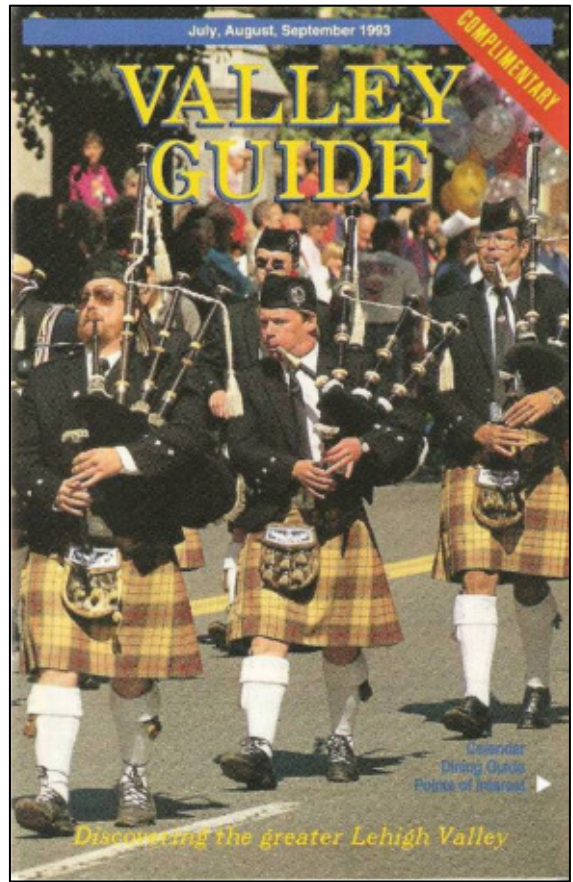
Although Graeme has composed music on pipes, fiddle and piano, it is the pipe tunes that have left their mark. His hornpipe "Maintiens le Droit" (the motto of the RCMP) was twice played by the Dowco Triumph Street Pipe Band at the Grade 1 World Championships in Glasgow (making the cut to the finals both times). In 2019 after the RCMP band had played at the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo, he composed a tune for MGen Alastair Bruce, Governor of Edinburgh Castle (left), called "Governor Bruce's Ramparts". That tune was played for Her Majesty over dinner at Sandringham House one night and shortly after added into the collection of the Queen's personal piper. Twenty-three of Graeme's pipe tunes will be published in the RCMP 150th anniversary collection of bagpipe music being made available to the public in late May 2023.



Graeme married Debbie (Bird) in 1978, has two sons Iain (wife Katherine) and Geoffrey, and two grandsons, Braeden and William. Iain is a side drummer with the RCMP Pipes and Drums (NCR). Debbie unfortunately passed away from brain cancer in 2017.

While Graeme often says "there is no sympathy for self-inflicted" to describe his, and others, over-tasking of themselves, his lifetime exploits and all that he has accomplished reflect his lesser known mantra, that it's amazing the places you get to go, the people you get to meet, and the events in which you get to participate just because you play the bagpipes. His approach to life can be summed up well by a quote from US Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg, "Whatever you do, leave tracks. That means don't do it just for yourself. You will want to leave the world a little better for your having lived." Graeme has lived.







ABOVE – ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE 1977
(Graeme, front row 2nd from right)

BELOW – OTTAWA FIRE SERVICE 2022
(Graeme on left)





ABOVE – GREAT WALL OF CHINA 2018
(Graeme, standing 2nd from left)

BELOW – CANADIAN NATIONAL VIMY MEMORIAL 2023
(Graeme, second row left)



Presentation of Police Service Horse “George” to Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II. After initial practices at the RCMP Stables, Rockcliffe (Ottawa), and final review by RCMP Commissioner William J.S. Elliott, the following band left for Windsor Castle on Thursday 07 May 2009: (sitting) D/M Graham Muir (NCR), P/M Graeme Ogilvie (NCR), (standing L-R) D/Sgt Bruce Hewat (NCR), D/Sgt Tracy Bérubé (Montreal), Piper Ryan Cadotte (Winnipeg), Piper John Stewart (Edmonton), P/Sgt Gilbert Young (NCR), Piper/Band Officer Rod Booth (NCR), P/M Hugh Peden (Vancouver), P/M Brent Blanchard (Regina), P/M Wayne Moug (Halifax), P/M Scott Murray (Moncton), and Bass Sandy Turner (NCR).



BELOW – DOMINION CHALMERS UNITED 2019

