

CFA Pipes & Drums Visit to HMS Argyll 10th & 24th May 2013.

Article by Ssgt Andrew Imrie, CFA



HMS Argyll alongside at the SA Naval Dockyard in Simonstown.

On Friday the 10th May HMS Argyll, a Type 23 Frigate from the Royal Navy docked at the SA Navy Dockyard in Simonstown, for a scheduled two weeks repair and maintenance session. The Cape Town Caledonian Society via the British High Commission in Pretoria was then approached to try and find some pipers to pipe guests onboard the vessel during a RPC cocktail function hosted by the ship's captain Commander Tim Neild. Caledonian Chief Stuart Munro approached Pipe-Major(S/Sgt) Andrew Imrie from the Cape Field Artillery to find out if a mini-band could be arranged, and the necessary planning began.



A mini band of pipers and drummers from CFA piping the guests on board HMS Argyll.

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The Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums mini-band arrived at the SA Naval Dockyard in Simonstown, and after a quick warm up began to perform at the bottom of the ships brow. As soon as they had piped all the VIP's on board the Captain invited the band aboard to perform on the flight deck as the guests were enjoying drinks. During a break the ship's Executive Officer Lieutenant-Commander Euan Stewart made a special request for the ensemble of musicians to perform "Happy Birthday" for Cdr Neild and the Ships Engineering Officer, as they were both celebrating Birthdays.



Cape Field Artillery Pipes and Drums performing under the Royal Naval Ensign on the flight deck.

After the performance the band was invited to join the guests for drinks and canapé's – where it was also established that besides many of the crew members being of Scottish decent (the XO and Engineering Officer both wore their clan kilts), we also found out that HMS Argyll's home port is Plymouth – home to our sister Regiment 29 Commando Royal Artillery, At the end of the evening the Captain then bestowed the honor on the Pipes & Drums to pipe HMS Argyll out to sea on the final four month leg of their seven month deployment.

The big day arrived and the band arrived early on board. We were met by the XO Lt-Cdr Stuart along with some other guests and the first order of the day was a formal photograph of the entire ships company, the Pipes & Drums and other guests. Thereafter a tour of the ship was in order preceded by tea and cake in the officers mess where Ships/Regimental crests and other gifts were exchanged. The band then bade the traditional matelots farewell of "*fine winds and fair sailing*" and then headed for the end of the pier at "Oscar outer" where they struck up with Highland Cathedral (the tune to which HMS Argyll was piped out of Plymouth Harbour when she began her deployment.)

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CFA Pipes & Drums with HMS Argyll in the background.



The band is seen here posing with the Ships Company of the HMS Argyll (pennant number F231) Type 23 Duke Class Frigate of the Royal Navy. It was the Captain's wish that the band have a photo taken with the ships company and a few guests prior to her departure. This is a VERY RARE PRIVILEGE. I have confirmed through sources in the Navy that NO PIPE BAND HAS EVER Piped a warship out to sea in South Africa before, well done to all of you for the effort put in at short notice. This privilege is usually reserved for the SA Navy Band, and I must admit that they feel that it is a well-deserved honor to be bestowed upon us!!!