

Preparations for the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2014 at the Castle of Good Hope

Article and Photos by Regine Lord.

It is almost time for one of the highlights of the Cape Town events calendar: the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2014!

Scheduled to run from Thursday 6 November to Saturday 8 November 2014, it will again be hosted at the venerable old Castle of Good Hope in central Cape Town. The main gate to the Castle will open at 17h30. As in previous years, there will be a pre-show from about 19h00, with the show itself beginning at 20h00 and concluding at 22h00. In addition, on Saturday afternoon, there will be a special matinee performance, which starts at 16h30; this is ideal for families with younger children, who need to be in bed before 22h00. Secure parking for visitors is available on the Grand Parade opposite the main gates to the Castle.



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You can buy your tickets at Computicket; they will also have a stand outside the main entrance every evening, for those who want to wait until the last minute. Depending on the location of the seats, the cost ranges from R80 to R120 for adults; tickets for children from 3 to 11 years old cost R60. The tickets for the matinee performance cost R60 for adults and R50 for children from 3 to 11 years old; matinee seats are unreserved.

These prices are incredibly reasonable, given the impressively high standard of the performances.



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This year, the organisers have put together a fabulous new website for the Tattoo: <http://www.capetattoo.co.za/>. There is a brilliant line-up of bands and performers, with some newcomers making their first appearance. Also, this year they are really promoting the use of social media, so there is much activity on their new Facebook page. Remember to 'Like' it to keep updated with the latest developments.

The Castle of Good Hope was positively buzzing with activity over the weekend. The sense of excitement was palpable.

As in previous years, 3 Electronic Workshop from Wonderboom Military Base, under the watchful eyes of WO1 Shawn Boehme, set up the tracks for the lights above the Kat wall, assembled the lighting box on the balcony overlooking the arena, and erected the two lighting towers on the roof, either side of the main entrance. They also constructed the tall lighting towers on both sides of the arena, and affixed the lights and loudspeakers to the tracks high above.



Gearhouse (a well-known technical supplier to the live event industry) had arrived early on Friday morning, and off-loaded all the various components of the seating stands. A little green forklift dashing hither and thither, keeping the workers on the stands supplied with floor boards, backing boards, seats, steps and railings. The previous day, the boundaries and corners of the seating stands had been marked out on the lawns. Thereafter, it was a case of assembling all the scaffolding and floor boards, and creating the four blocks of stands. The first row of the seats, which used to be at ground level in previous years, is now about a metre off the ground. This means that even the people in the front row seats will now have an excellent view of the arena. They also constructed a framework at the back, which will be for the ‘curtain’ to hide the rear arena from view, so that the participants for the various acts can assemble there to await their turn.

A roof-top view of the front arena shows that the area demarcated by the seating stands was smaller and far more rectangular than it had been in previous years.



This year, the layout of the arena has been changed – rotated anti-clockwise by about 90 degrees. In previous years, the ‘central’ stand where the VIPs were usually seated had been the one closest to the Van der Stel entrance gate with the bell tower above. This year, however, the main stand will be Block A (on the right), with tickets costing R120. The seats in Block B cost R100, and the seats in Blocks C and D (on the left) cost R80. Tickets for children from 3 to 11 years old cost R60. There is also a matinee performance on Saturday afternoon – the tickets for that cost R60 for adults and R50 for children from 3 to 11 years old; matinee seats are unreserved.

A team from maintenance cordoned off the Kat archway to give the inside of the archway, particularly the ceiling, a thorough clean spray and to remove bits of flaking paint. They spread out dropsheets on the wooden cobbles, and applied thick coats of ochre-tinged paint to the entire inside of the archway.



At the back of the Castle, the rations for the next week – all the participants will need to be fed, after all – were delivered to the kitchens. In the rear arena, the framework for a large marquee was assembled; this is the mess tent, where all the participants will be eating their meals.

The Defence Reserve office, which is responsible for coordinating everything, making sure that all the paperwork is completed, and that all

the items on dauntingly long to-do lists are completed in time, was buzzing with activity.

Spending some time there today reminded me once again how many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle have to come together in order to make this event happen – and, even more importantly, to ensure that it is a success. May this year's Tattoo be an exciting and uplifting experience that the audience will remember with happy nostalgia for years to come.

For much of Saturday, the Cape Town Highlanders were drilling on the rear field, under the watchful eyes of their RSM, MWO Alfie Wort. Their new OC – Lt Col Tienie Lott – was also keeping an eye on the rehearsals. WO2 Jerome Mecloen of the SA Army Band Cape Town was using a large bass drum to issue the commands, as this is going to be a silent drill.

Meanwhile, Major Ian Long and his assistant were measuring out two identical arenas on the rear field. They also clearly marked out the various entrances and exits. This will allow the various participating groups to rehearse their routines in parallel, and to make sure that they are aware of the dimensions and layout of the arena.



Sunday was another baking hot summer's day in Cape Town. At the Castle, there was hardly a breath of wind, and the heat was reflecting off the massive stone walls. The main arena felt like an oven under a cloudless blue sky. Several of the pipe bands met for rehearsals the rear field, before running through part of their routine in the front arena, to practice entrances and exits.

This year, we will have six pipe bands: From the Cape Town area, there'll be the Drums and Pipes of the Cape Town Highlanders, the Pipes and Drums of Cape Field Artillery and of Cape Garrison Artillery. Visitors from further afield will be the Knysna & Districts Pipe Band, the Algoa Caledonian Pipe Band from Port Elizabeth, and 1 Med Pipe Band from Durban. I believe that there will thus be around 100 pipers (!) in the arena. So brace yourselves for an incredible experience!

Remember to get your tickets at Computicket! You do not want to miss this event!



More photos are available here:

<http://namibsands.wordpress.com/2014/10/30/getting-ready-for-the-cape-town-military-tattoo-2014/>

<http://namibsands.wordpress.com/2014/10/31/constructing-the-seating-stands-for-the-cape-town-military-tattoo-2014/>

<http://namibsands.wordpress.com/2014/11/01/getting-ready-for-the-cape-town-military-tattoo-2014-part-2/>

<http://namibsands.wordpress.com/2014/11/02/sunday-rehearsals-at-the-castle/>