

VP Day in the Pacific



Photos by Brian Hartigan

By Brian Hartigan
Marketing and Communications

As Australia and the rest of the world celebrated the 60th anniversary of VP Day – Victory in the Pacific – the remote community of Norfolk Island also marked the occasion in its own small way – with the help of the AFP's Pipes and Drums.

With its historic annals stretching back to the First Fleet and, later, to the Bounty mutiny, Norfolk Island also played an important part in the defence of Australia during World War II.

Placed between Australia, New Zealand and the south Pacific islands, Norfolk served as an important, strategic outpost for Allied air operations. US, Australian and New Zealand military forces and Australian public works officers built, defended and operated what would be a very busy and important airfield, in 1942 – the same field that today sees thousands of mainly Australian and New Zealand tourists flock to the self-governed island every year.

Joining the tourist trail, on a trip organised to coincide with this year's 60th anniversary of VP Day, the Canberra City Pipes and Drums band – aka the Australian Federal Police Pipes and Drums

– added a welcomed and much applauded dash of pomp and ceremony to the occasion.

On this, the band's second major self-funded tour – the first being to China in 2003 – the Canberra City Pipes and Drums tore up the tranquillity and peace of this isolated island community for a full eight days – and not a soul (living or dead) complained. In fact, just about every member of the small-island population, young and old, turned out at one gig or another during a busy week of engagements. From the veterans who marched on VP Day to the hundreds of kids on the Norfolk Island Central School sports field – and everyone in between – appreciation was high.

For one dear old lady, recently turned 99 years old and wheeled out to the car park in her hospital bed for twenty minutes of

sunshine, tears of joy flowed. The building volume and tempo of *Amazing Grace* on the bagpipes moved the matriarch to declare this, "The best day of my life".

The tour came about when the band's collective feet became itchy two years after its hugely successful and much talked about visit to China, where they became the first pipes and drums band to ever march and play on the Great Wall. Norfolk was settled on as a likely destination after a member browsed an old travel brochure while visiting a friend in hospital. The band's association with the AFP and the AFP's association with the island made the decision easier, especially given that two bagpipe-playing members, Frank and Sandra Priest, had lived in the police sergeant's house on the island for three years in the late '80s.

In fact, the band's tour and the Priest's ties to the island community were further enhanced by the marriage of daughter Michelle on the last full day of the tour. Michelle, who as a young child attended the Norfolk Island Central School while her dad policed the community, felt a strong affinity with the island and fittingly chose St Barnabas' Church to tie the knot. Both Michelle and new husband Leslie are former drummers in the band and their parents are still active playing members.

Family ties in the band and among its strong band of followers is the glue that keeps the troupe together. It is a social as opposed to a competition band – members and supporters coming together regularly for the sheer pleasure of good music, great fun and a strong feeling of kinship.

Accordingly, on this tour, more than 70 people did their bit to support the economy of Norfolk Island while enjoying what they like best – following the skirl of the pipes and the beat of the drum and being part of the one big happy family.

The band was originally formed more than 15 years ago and three years later developed a close association with the AFP that has grown stronger in the intervening years. It performs at several official police occasions each year including National Police Remembrance Day and United Nations Day. The funeral of Protective Service Officer Adam Dunning also recently stirred to the haunting strains of bagpipe laments.

But, it was during a Freedom of the City investiture in Canberra last year as part of the AFP's 25th anniversary celebrations that the relationship was cemented – both sides proving they could, literally, march to the same beat.

In May next year, the band will represent the AFP at the third International Police Tattoo in Adelaide. This will be a major undertaking for the band, requiring inordinate dedication, rehearsal and organisation as well as, on the part of members and followers alike, a great deal of fundraising.

NORFOLK ISLAND

Norfolk Island is rich in history and culture, from Captain Cook's discovery in 1774 to today's tourist outpost, it has seen the best and the worst of human history.

The island was settled by elements of the First Fleet, despatched from Sydney just six weeks after arrival, to establish what would become one of the New World's most notorious and brutal penal colonies.

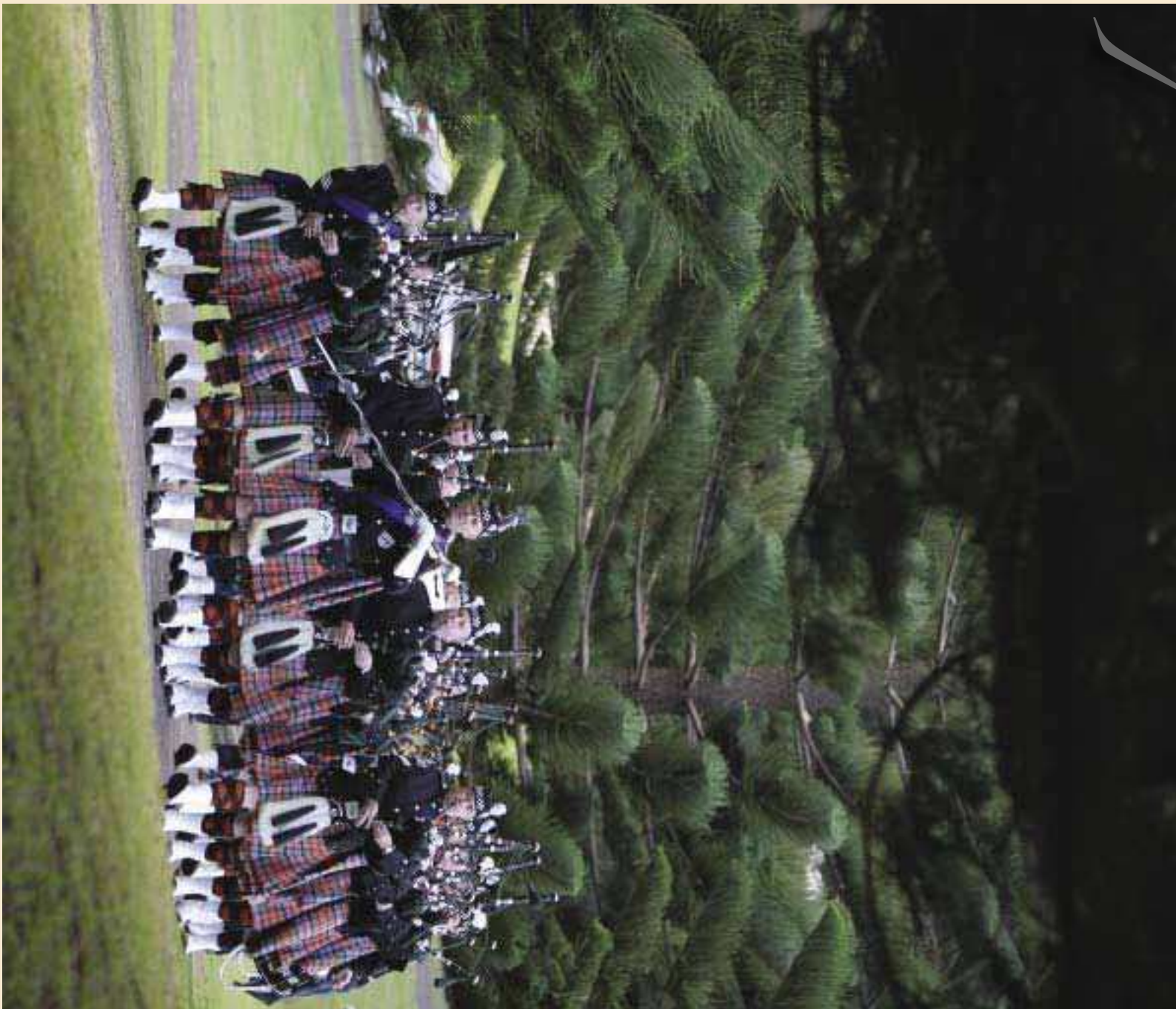
More than half of today's population are direct descendants of the mutineers from HMS *Bounty* and proudly preserve their Pitcairn heritage, many still speaking a unique language passed down from Old English forefathers and their Tahitian wives.

Norfolk Island is a territory under the authority of the Commonwealth of Australia since 1914, but is essentially self-governed under the supervision of an Australian Administrator. It is a completely self-funded community, deriving no income through Federal grants or handouts. It is administered under the *Norfolk Island Act 1979* which provides the basis of the territory's legislative, administrative and judicial systems.

Tourism accounts for a major part of the island's economy, though in recent history, fortunes were made and the economy bolstered by a palm-seed industry catering mainly to the European indoor-plant market. Unfortunately, this has gone into severe decline in recent years.

From a heyday of around 30,000 visitors per year, the tourism industry too is experiencing a downturn, which is unfortunate given the diversity and uniqueness of this remote outpost. The island has much to offer, from pristine coral reefs to magnificent bushwalks. And the rich tapestry of modern human history is magnificently preserved in the colonial architecture of Kingston, the centre of so much cruelty 200 years ago.

Pipes and Drums



Verfacke Island



Photos by Brian Hartigan



POLICING IN NORFOLK ISLAND

Norfolk Island has a long and chequered history with the law. From its establishment as a penal colony for the penal colony, where the very worst of the Empire's miscreants were sent for prolonged and extremely harsh punishment, to a modern-era reputation as an island paradise where very little happens in a criminal sense, save for two notable recent incidents.

Today's policing responsibilities fall to just three policemen in a community of more than 2000. But, according to the AFP's Sergeant Larry Andrews, his responsibilities and those of his team run much deeper than 'normal' community policing.

"Policing here is an opportunity to demonstrate and develop skills and make decisions far and beyond most experiences in any larger force," he said.

"In a community like this I am expected to be police sergeant, sheriff, bailiff and custodial officer. My position holds a lot of weight in the community – about equal to the school headmaster – and as such, my duties even extend to drawing all the raffles at the RSL."

Sergeant Andrews says that policing in a small, insular community such as Norfolk is essentially a balancing act. Living on the island, accompanied by family, and with a new and growing circle of friends, he is on the one hand an active member of the community but conscious of a need to balance familiarity with the responsibilities of his official office.

