



ATHOLL ESTATES

PRESS RELEASE

MAY 2009

Scottish History unveiled at Blair Castle's Annual Parade



Enjoy a weekend of fine Scottish tradition with a Homecoming flavour at Blair Castle on Saturday 23 & Sunday 24 May.

The annual inspection of Europe's last remaining private army, the Atholl Highlanders takes place on Saturday 23 May, 2.30pm. The army will march onto parade in front of His Grace The Duke of Atholl on the forecourt of historic Blair Castle, under the command of Major Drummond Moray, accompanied by the sound of their stirring pipes and drums.

On Sunday 24 May, the Atholl Highlanders will "march on" at the start of the annual Atholl Gathering and Highland Games in the grounds of Blair Castle. To mark the 2009 Scottish year of Homecoming, the Games will feature a special Clans tent detailing the history of the clans associated with the Atholl family; The Murrays and The Stewarts. The tent will also include displays about life in the castle, on the estate and of other local

families in a bygone era. Jane Anderson, Blair Castle's Archivist will be on hand throughout the afternoon to answer any historical questions. Clan Robertson, another clan closely associated with the castle and the area will also have their own tent at the Games.

The Atholl Highlanders are the only remaining private army in Europe having been granted the right to bear arms in the 1840s by Her Majesty Queen Victoria. The Regiment gathers annually in May at Blair Castle in Highland Perthshire, and the parade proves to be a popular tourist attraction. Entry to the event costs £4.00 for adults, £2 for children and £10 for families.

On Sunday 24 May, the Atholl Highlanders will march into the Arena at the start of the 2009 Atholl Gathering and Highland Games, before His Grace the Duke of Atholl formally opens the event. This year's Games promise World Class Heavyweights, Caber Tossing, Hammer Throwing and other feats of strength, as well as entertainment for all the family including highland dancing events, solo piping and tug o'war. A full programme of the weekend's events is available from the Atholl Estates Office on 01796 481355 and at www.blair-castle.co.uk. Entry to the event costs £6.00 for adults, £4 for concessions and £2 for children.

The Next Opportunity to see the Atholl Highlanders will be in Edinburgh on Saturday 25 July 2009. The Atholl Highlanders will be leading the Clan Parade along the historic royal mile as part of Scotland's 2009 Homecoming celebrations.

Notes to Editors:

If you wish to photograph, film or report on the Atholl Highlanders' Parade and/or the Atholl Gathering and Highland Games, or to arrange permission and complementary

tickets please contact Rebecca McCauley on 01796 481207 rebeccam@atholl-estates.co.uk or Ginny Lawson, Ginny Lawson PR on 07703 479 456 ginny@ginnylawsonpr.com. A professional high resolution photograph of last year's Atholl Highlanders' Parade is available to download at www.atholl-estates.co.uk/press/index.asp. Please credit this photograph to Atholl Estates/Ronald Weir.

Background Information:

The Atholl Highlanders

The original Atholl Highlanders were a regular regiment, the 77th, raised in 1777 for service in America. However, the war had been lost before they embarked for America. After Garrison duties in Ireland they were disbanded in 1783. In 1839 Lord Glenlyon, later 6th Duke, participated in a tournament at Eglinton in Ayrshire, taking with him a bodyguard of Athollmen. These men provided Guards of Honour for her Majesty's arrival and departure and guarded the Castle throughout her stay. In recognition of this service The Queen granted the Atholl Highlanders colours and thus the right to bear arms. This unique grant established the Atholl Highlanders. The original colours, which still survive in the castle, were presented on September 4th, 1845.

Under the 7th Duke, the Highlanders provided royal visitors with guards of honour, visited the Braemar Games and participated in the opening of the Glasgow water supply by Queen Victoria at Loch Katrine. An annual Gathering, when they paraded and then competed in trials of strength and stamina, was held the first week of September, at Blair Castle.

After the First World War regimental parades fell into abeyance although the pipers appeared on special occasion such as the visits to Blair of The Crown Prince of Japan in 1921 and King Feisal of Iraq in 1933 and the funeral of the 8th Duke in 1942. In 1966 the 10th Duke decided to revive the rank and file and to hold annual parades. From small

beginnings it grew to the present strength of about 100. Officers are local lairds or relatives of the Atholl Family. At the parade each new recruit is presented with a sprig of juniper, which is worn behind the cap badge.

Blair Castle

The castle has been the ancient home and fortress of the Earls and Dukes of Atholl for over 725 years, commanding a strategic position on the main route through the central Highlands. It is reputed to be the last castle in Britain to have been besieged. The forces of Bonnie Prince Charlie and those of the government both laid siege at different times during the Jacobite Rising of 1745-46. Today Blair Castle is a five-star, world-class visitor attraction. It is Scotland's most visited private home, displaying beautiful furniture, fine collection of paintings, arms and armour, china and other unique treasures which present a stirring picture of Scottish life from the 16th century to the present day.

John Murray, 11th Duke of Atholl

The 11th Duke of Atholl was born in South Africa in 1929 and graduated with a B.Sc. in Engineering (Land Survey) from the University of Witwatersrand in 1953 before practising as a land surveyor. Although he still lives in South Africa, the Duke has been able to visit Blair Castle regularly since he succeeded to the title in 1996. He has a daughter (Lady Jennifer) and two sons (Bruce, Marquess of Tullibardine, and Lord Craig) and seven grandchildren.

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