Return to site

August 19, 2015

## Brigadoon

In the Southern Highlands of New South Wales lies the sleepy little town of Bundanoon. Once per year this country hamlet explodes and transforms into the fabled Brigadoon; Out of the mist from whence it came.



Upwards of 20,000 people descend upon the Bundanoon is Brigadoon

Gathering, making this the largest Highland Gathering in the southern hemisphere.

The inaugural event was on 21st October 1978. It then quickly moved for its second outing to 28th April 1979, adopting the tag from then on of "Always in April".

#### The Early Years

The story of the Bundanoon Stones of Manhood, begins in the early 1990's when Australian Highland Games legend, strongman and Guinness world record holder, David Huxley was enlisted to perform at the Gathering.

In addition to various demonstrations of strength and Caber tossing, he introduced stone lifting demonstrations in 1993 along with Edwin Sergeant, a professional rower and stonelifter. The following year saw the addition of World's Strongest Man competitor and world Highland champ Joe Quigley to the lineup and the athletes demonstrated fine skills in throwing and lifting to an appreciative crowd

The stones used in the contest were a beautiful set of Sandstone McGlashen stones, made and quarried locally at the Bundanoon sandstone quarries. This set of stones became Known as the Bundanoon Stones of Manhood.

Note: The McGlashen stones are named after the Scotsman who created the first ever set of round carved lifting stones. They were used in early strongman competitions. There were two sets made. One set remains in Markinch in Fife, Scotland. The name "Atlas Stones" is now more commonly used. Most likely due to marketing reasons and the global name recognition of Charles Atlas and also Atlas from Greek mythology.



1995 saw the return to Bundanoon of David Huxley and his promotions group, the Tartan Warriors. The Tartan Warriors had been formed by Harry Mitchell and David Huxley the previous year, following a tour of the Scottish circuit. This saw for the first time the stones being performed at Brigadoon in a competitive format between an invitation only line-up of international strongman stars.

The line up for 1995 included World's Strongest Man, Gary Taylor of Wales, South Africa's strongest Man, Wayne Price, Joe Quigley of Australia, David Huxley, Andy Andersson of Scotland and Colin Cox from New Zealand.



The Strongman Superstars were in Australia for the Weet-Bix sponsored World Series Strongman challenge being held at the Sydney Royal Easter show. This was an event that would endure, after an initial commitment of three years from the title sponsor, they instead stayed on for six years, appearing most notably on the Wide World of Sports telecast.

"Great Days Indeed! The World Series strongman challenge was being held at the Royal Easter show in Sydney and the competitors would make their way to Brigadoon on the Saturday, compete (the world's

best, mind you) and bring that little amphitheatre to the biggest crowd roar you have ever heard! Unbelievable!!! Only we could do that Luke my boy!"- Harry Mitchell

# The World's Best Tackle The Bundanoon Stones

Other Strongman stars would come to Australia in those early years, many of whom would compete at Bundanoon. These included World's strongest man winners Magnus Ver Magnusson, Magnus Samuelsson, Svend Karlsen, Jamie Reeves and also World's strongest man competitors Mark Phillipi, Torfi Olafsson, Grant Edwards and Derek Boyer.

In the late 1990's founding member of the Tartan Warriors, Harry Mitchell, made his first emceeing appearance at Brigadoon. After several years of clashing commitments, Harry was finally free to lend his skill and professionalism with a microphone to the event. To this day, Brigadoon would not be the same without Harry's excited tones inspiring the crowd and athletes to cheer louder and perform harder.

**Below:** 1998 World Series Strongman at the Sydney Royal Easter Show. The Stones used are the Bundanoon stones of manhood.

Moving forward into the 2000's, new competitors were welcomed into the Tartan Warriors fold. Names like Grant Edwards, Mike Sidonio, Derek Boyer, Craig Reid became commonplace at Bundanoon and later Aaron Monks (2009 champ), Stephen Diffy, Joe Heffernan, Luke Reynolds, Morgan Westmoreland, Lance Holland-Keen, Steve Tye (2012 champ), Kiwis Mick Cottrell and Reuben DeJong and current three time champion, Jordan Steffens would take their place in the Bundanoon history books.

#### Local Rivalry

During the 2000's, a particularly fierce rivalry developed between locals Derek Boyer and Craig Reid, with the two of them holding the fastest times ever recorded on the current 'Heavy' set of stones.

By 2010 Both Derek Boyer and Craig Reid held four championships each. David felt it only right to draw these two champions together one last time for a reckoning of sorts. Joining them that year were 2009 champ Aaron Monks and Luke Reynolds.

After a slight fumble early in his run, Craig turned in a quick five stones, but the window he left was too big. Derek capitalised on Craig's earlier mistake and was just too fast on that day, claiming his 5th and record setting title.

A disappointed Craig would wait another twelve months before securing his own 5th title in what would be his final Brigadoon appearance.

At the time of publishing the record time for loading the five stones is held by Derek Boyer at 19.8 seconds.



**Above:** Five times Brigadoon Champion, Craig Reid loads the 5th and final stone in 2010 whilst Brigadoon stalwart, Alaistair Saunders, keeps a close eye on the stopwatch.

#### The Vital Statistics

The format used at Bundanoon is of five McGlashens stones of ascending weight placed at five metre intervals. The stones are to be loaded onto barrels. The athlete who loads the most stones in the fastest time is declared the Brigadoon Champion.

The current competition set of stones weigh 110, 115,120,145 and 165kg. The final stone in particular is a tricky beast. It is not perfectly round like a typical atlas stone and has surprised many an accomplished stone lifter in the heat of battle.

**Below:** Video of Luke Reynolds, Reuben DeJong and Jordan Steffens- 2015 Brigadoon stones of manhood. *Thanks to Boris Zemljacenko*.

#### Have Stones. Will travel.

The set of stones used in the Bundanoon is Brigadoon contest also make appearances at a number of other gatherings around the country. Including, Berry Celtic festival, Aberdeen Highland Gathering, Canberra Highland Gathering and more recently at the Hawkesbury show.

This particular competition set are not the only Bundanoon sandstone McGlashen stones in existence as David had several made. The competition set of stones used at the Hororata Highland games each year just outside Christchurch, New Zealand are another of the Bundanoon stone sets. The Hororata Bundanoon stones were even transported to Queenstown, New Zealand in early 2015 for use in the New Zealand Rural Games heavy events contest.

Another of the Bundanoon stones lives on the gold coast and was included with a series of concrete atlas stones used at the Australia's strongest man contest in 2010. This particular stone is a close match to the current 165kg Brigadoon stone, however weighs slightly less at 155kg.

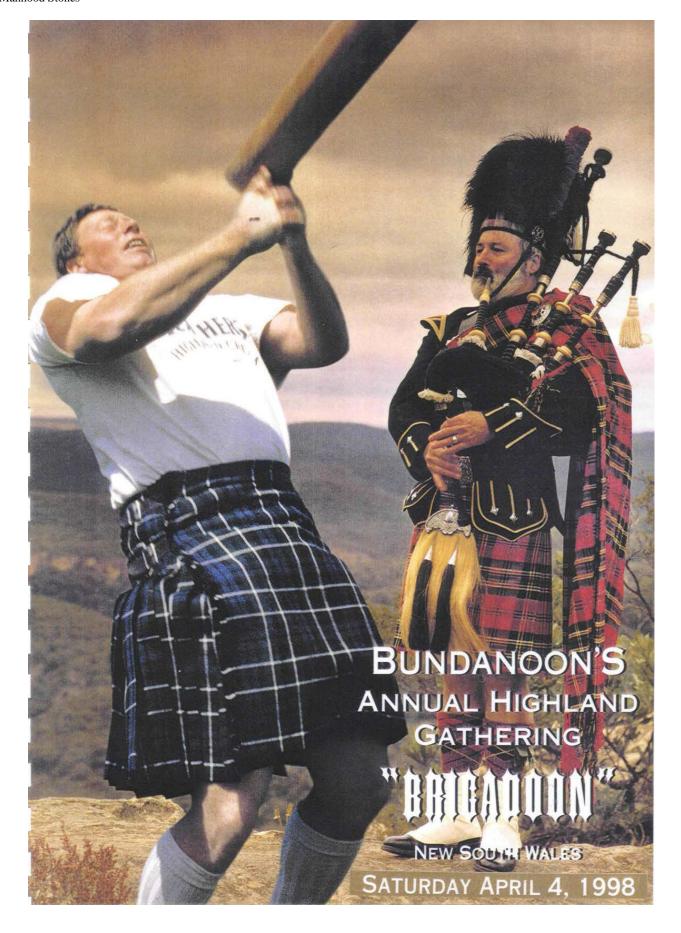
## **Recent Competition Results**

Year	Placing
2015	1st Jordan Steffens
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Luke Reynolds
2014	1st Jordan Steffens
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Aaron Monks
2013	1st Jordan Steffens
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Luke Reynolds
2012	1st Steve Tye
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Aaron Monks
2011	1st Craig Reid
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Lance Holland-Keen
2010	1st Derek Boyer
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Craig Reid
2009	1 <sup>st</sup> Aaron Monks
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Craig Reid
2008	1st Craig Reid
	2 <sup>nd</sup> Aaron Monks

Recent Repeat Champions	No#
Derek Boyer	5 times
Craig Reid	5 times
Jordan Steffens	3 times

## **Press Cuttings**

The competition enjoys much deserved press coverage. Some examples below.



**Above:** The man himself, David Huxley on the caber toss. The piper pictured has attended every single Brigadoon from 1978, right up to the present day.

THE DISTRICT TIMES WED, JAN. 25, 1995

# meet to remember

By KATRINA ADAMSKI BUNDANOON Oval is a

BÜNDANOON Oval is an antural amphitheatre surrounded by trees making it the perfect location for the annual highland gathering of Brigadoon.

The 18th Annual Bundanoon is Brigadoon is Brigadoon is expected to attract 20,000 people to the tiny village on April 8, and this year, the Bundanoon Highland Gathering Committee will aim to make it a weekend of celebrations.

Publicity officer Jim Thomson said the gathering will be expanded to take in the whole weekend so the Southern Highlands

take in the whole weekend so the Southern Highlands can benefit from visitors to the area.

"We start planning for the next Brigadoon almost as soon as the gathering finishes and accommodation at Bundanoon is always full," he said.

"There has been a good response from the hotels association and local chambers of commerce to make it a full tartan weekend.
"People can book into

"People can book into hotels from Friday to Sun-day and be served Scottish food by waiters in tartan

And because Brigadoon And because Brigadoon was drawing more people to the area each year, Mr Thomson said the oval will be improved in stages. He said the committee will terrace the west bank and add concrete steps with rails and grassed turf.

"The west bank could



STRONG man Jim McGoldrick, who holds the world title for heavy events in highland games, and Australia's own David Huxley

then take 3000 extra people," Mr Thomson said.

said.
"The oval is an attrac-tion because it is a natural amphitheatre and Scottish people like it because it reminds them of a glen." Last year's problem of congestion at the street parade has also been

solved; 1000 people took part in the parade with more than 3000 locals and visitors looking on. Everyone then had to cross the narrow walkway from the railway station to

from the railway station to the oval in single file and it

reportedly took one woman two hours. Mr Thomson said this

year three sections of fencing will be taken down and a special walkway will be built across the line so people can comfortably cross to the oval.

And a big drawcard on the activities list will be some of the world's stron-gest men, making their

first appearance as the Tartan Warriors.

They will lift the Bundanoon Stones of Manhood, which are solid round balls of sandstone weighing up to 140 kilograms.

David Huxley is Austra-lia's world heavy events

champion and he will be tossing the caber and lift-ings stones with six other strong men.

The day will start with the street parade at 9.45am with chieftain of the day, Ian MacNeacail of MacNeacail and Scorrybreac, who is the chief of the MacNicol clan.



## **BULGING MUSCLES - CENTRE OF ATTENTION** trongmen at Brigadoo

Six of the world's strongest men, also known as the Tartan Warriors will show the power they poses at this year's Bundanoon is Brigadoon Highlands

Gathering.
The Highland Gathering is being held for the 18th time and is sure to be the biggest ever according to committee member Jim

With the strongmen here for the first time as a group, they should draw a crowd on their own. We are hoping for over 20,000 people to come through the gates on April 8," Jim said.

The strongmen's team, put together by Australia's world record holder David Huxley comes from throughout the world, with the six members the most power-ful in their events.

Gary Taylor from Wales was the 1993-94 World's trongest man and Wayne Price is South Africa's strongest man.

The Viking, Andy Anderson from Denmark will be at Brigadoon, along with the winner of the New Zealand strong man competition

Joe Quigley from Melbourne, who ranked number one strongman in 1994 for Highlands Games Heavy events, along with other Aussie strongman David Huxley is the other two to com-

Huxley, who put the team together, at a lot of expense to himself, as an entertainment group, has many world records, including pulling the Concorde, pulling a Jumbo Jet, and a Darling



Six of the strongest men in the world will be displaying their strength at the Bundanoon Highland Gathering.

Harbour ferry unaided

"Although he is ranked fifth or sixth strongest in competition, David has an incredible strength in his legs and lower back which enables him to pull or tow very large objects," Jim said.

"A funny story occurred when he was to tow the Concorde. Firstly the plane almost did not stop in Australia due to poor

conditions, then with a 30 strong crew from the BBC ready to film the event down came the rain, "With poor conditions under foot David was unable to move the plane an inch. Then his team realised that the plane's wheels were up against the rubber in the concrete, and once the plane was moved to another strip he towed it unaided to every-HIGHLANDS

one's relief," Jim said. With the Tartan Warriors appearing at the Brigadoon Gathering, it will be the first time an international competition is being in the Southern Hemisphere. The stone lifting competition sure to draw a huge crowd. As a major sponsor of the

Tartan Warriors, Bundanoon Quarries Pty Westfield Shopping
Ltd. supply the sandstone Centres.

POST, WEDNESDAY MARCH 22, 1995

rocks to be lifted.

There are five stones ranging from 100kg through to 150kg, with the lighter 80kg stone no longer in use. "The major sponsor of

the strong men is Teacher's Whisky, and instead of the 40 gallon drums used last year, there will be Whisky barrels for placing the stones

The five Bundanoon Stones of Manhood, as they are known have to be lifted onto the barrels, and the man who can complete this task in the least amount of time is the victor," Jim said.

With David Huxley and Joe Quigley both putting on an exhibition of strength in 1994, Jim believes the people who attend Brigadoon this year are very lucky indeed.

It was only by luck that the two Australian came to Brigadoon last year,

I knew that David Huxley was very good at tossing the caber, and after phoning him up, arrangements were made with John Parkes from Bundanoon Quarries, and the stones were made for the event.

The stones even appeared on Hey Hey It's Saturday, where there was a demonstration," Jim said.

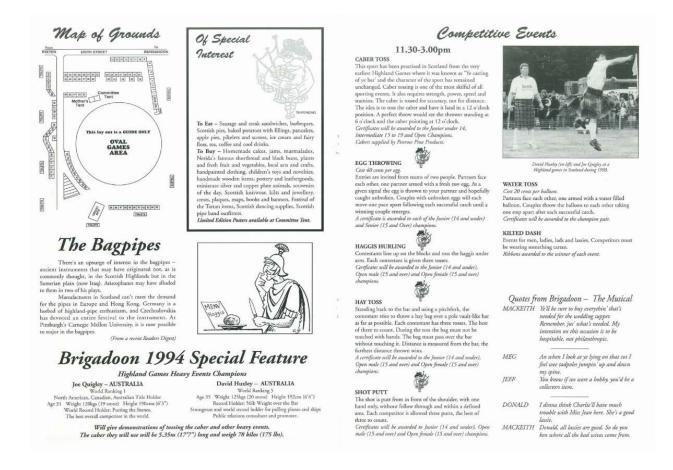
When the Tartan Warriors leave Brigadoon they will embark on a tour of NSW, putting on exhibitions at the Sydney Royal Easter Show as well as throughout the Westfield Shopping











## Summary

The stones at Bundanoon have been manhandled by the best strongmen and Highland Heavies from across the world. Sometimes tacky is used and sometimes it is not. Sometimes it's 40 degrees centigrade and other times it's raining. Brigadoon goes ahead regardless of weather conditions every year with the Tartan Warriors and the Bundanoon Stones of Manhood featuring prominently. There really is something special about lifting these stone in this place. Sometimes they fly. Other times you would swear they're bolted to the ground. But such are the trials of stonelifters.

Regardless, lifting 5 stones, from grass, in front of 20,000 spectators is a test that some of world's best stone lifters have enjoyed and shall continue to enjoy in the years to come.



« Return to site

« Previous Post