

# **Youngest performer at the Tattoo travelled from Australia**

**The youngest performer in this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has said playing the bagpipes in the world famous event was "the most extraordinary thing" in his life.**

Austin Irving, 12, from Brisbane, Australia, flew 10,000 miles to perform in the Tattoo, which closed at the weekend after performing for 23 nights to a live audience of 230,000 people and a global TV audience of over 100 million.

The youngster, part of the Brisbane Boys' College Pipes and Drums, said he had been "bouncing off the walls" when he was chosen and is now desperate to return in future years.

He said: "I started playing the bagpipes at the beginning of last year. I saw someone playing through a window and I thought it would be interesting to try them.

"When I was told I'd been chosen to come to Edinburgh I was bouncing off the walls. I was asleep when my dad got the email and ran into my room. I jumped out of bed and was jumping around.

"I've only been outside Australia once before, on a family holiday to Fiji.

“It feels pretty amazing to be the youngest person in the Tattoo. I’d say it’s been the most extraordinary thing I’ve done in my life.

“The best thing has been marching out, turning to the crowd and starting to play each night. At first it’s hard to see through the smoke on the drawbridge and then it clears and there are lights everywhere, and then you see the audience and it’s just amazing.

“It’s hard to describe. I want to come back again and do it for as long as I can.”



This year's stunning event, Journeys, featured the Royal Navy as the Lead Service, and honoured the seafarers who traverse the oceans to connect people and cultures across continents.

More than 850 performers travelled from the USA, India, Switzerland, Australia, Canada and around the UK to take part in a spectacle that included a Bollywood extravaganza and a kaleidoscopic Highland rave complete with DJ, glow stick-twirling dancers and flame-throwing bagpipes.

Steven Stanley, director of Brisbane Boys' College Pipes and Drums, said: "Playing the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo is on the bucket list of every bagpiper in the world.

"For Austin to be involved in such a fantastic show at such a young age is a huge thing. He's loved the whole environment and is looking forward to coming back."





The oldest participant in this year's Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo was 72 year old Drum Sergeant Bruce Neill, of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Pipe Band.

Mr Neill, from Indian Head, Saskatchewan, in Canada, started drumming aged 12 and said he had fulfilled a lifetime's dream by performing on the Edinburgh Castle esplanade three times.

Mr Neill, who previously took part in the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo in 2015 and 2019, said: "I've had the chance to go to a number of international events but Edinburgh is the biggest and most prestigious. It's on every piper or drummer's bucket list.

"Other tattoos sort of simulate Edinburgh but here you march out on the drawbridge every night and it's amazing.

"At the finale, when the lone piper strikes up, the whole crowd goes 'wow'. And when the pipe bands form up again and march down the Royal Mile 200 people shoulder to shoulder, it's unlike anywhere else."

Mr Neill said it had been an even greater joy as wife Laura Poppy, a tenor drummer in the RCMP pipe band, was also performing this year.

He added: "It's been a great opportunity for us to have an adventure together. It's probably my last Edinburgh Tattoo so it's been a really special year. Every night we've just been soaking it all in."

He added: "I may be the oldest but music is something you can do for life. Austin is 12 years old, the age I was when I started drumming in my local boy scout pipe band."

Wife Laura, 55, said: "It's been a great experience."

\* Tickets for the 2025 Tattoo, "The Heroes Who Made Us", running from 1-23 August 2025 are available now online.