BAND OF THE IRISH GUARDS
MAJOR S.C. BARNWELL
Music Director

The Irish Guards were formed on 1 April 1900 on the expressed wish of HM Queen Victoria to commemorate the bravery of the many Irish Regiments who had fought in the South African campaigns. The Regimental Band was formed at about the same time and consisted initially of 35 musicians and a Warrant Officer, Mr. C.H. Hassell, who was the Bandmaster. The Band quickly gained a reputation for excellence and in 1905 was invited to make what turned out to be the first of many tours of Canada. The people of Toronto were so impressed with the band's performance that they presented the Band with a large and very ornate Silver Cup that remains a cherished possession of the Band today.

There is a fine tradition in the British Army of bands providing musical support to troops on active service. It engenders a unique esprit-de-corps and during both World Wars the Band regularly travelled to active service areas in order to give morale-boosting performances to the troops. During World War II in particular, the commitments of the Band had so intensified that its strength was increased to 65 musicians.

Over the years the Band has toured extensively visiting Australia, New Zealand, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Germany, Hong Kong, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Japan. In 2010, The Band of the Irish Guards will make its debut tour of the United States of America. It was in Japan where the band was accorded the unique honor of being the first band ever to play in the Imperial Palace in the presence of the Empress and the 2 Crown Princesses. The Band has toured Australia twice, once in 1957 for 10 weeks as part of a world tour, and more recently in 2004 for a six-week concert tour of both Australia and New Zealand. The latter consisted of 27 performances, which took in all the major cities and included the Sydney Opera House.

With a current establishment of 49 musicians the band has a variety of professional ensembles that include a Concert Band, Marching Band, Salon Orchestra, Dance Band, Fanfare Trumpeters and several other smaller ensembles. The band's main duty is to play, in turn with the other 4 Foot Guards Bands, for the Mounting of The Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace and for state ceremonial occasions and public duties such as Investitures, State Visits, Royal Weddings, Guards of Honour, Royal Garden Parties and, of course, The Queen's Birthday Parade (Trooping the Colour).

The Band has made many broadcast and recordings over the years and in the 1950's was chosen to give the UK premier performance of Paul Hindemith's Symphony for Concert Band live On Air. The Band has also appeared on television (most notably for the Queen's 80th Birthday Celebration in Windsor recently), and in films (The Ipcress File starring Michael Caine). Upon
retirement from the Service a number of musicians have continued their careers with the National Orchestras, which included the Halle, the BBC Symphony and the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

In addition to their musical activities, Musicians are trained to give support to the Army Medical Services in the event of mobilization. Three of our musicians served in the first Gulf War of 1990/1991 and in June 1999 the band was deployed to Kosovo as part of a NATO Peace-keeping force.