



## The 157th Turakina Highland Games

The 157th Turakina Highland Games will take place at the Turakina Reserve, Cameron Road, Turakina on Saturday the 30th January 2021.

The Turakina Highland Games were first held in 1864 and are the oldest continuously running on land sporting event in New Zealand. This is an event of historical importance to the village of Turakina, the Rangitikei and is part of the network of piping, dancing and highland sports in New Zealand. It is an event that brings the locals together, working toward a common goal.

The official opening for the Games will take place on the Friday evening at the Ben Nevis Tavern and will include a recital by a prominent piper. This brings some welcome revenue into one of the local businesses. The Official Opening is preceded by a lament played at the local cemetery over looking the village. This was first introduced at the 150th Games and proved very successful with a large crowd making the trek from the Main Road up to the cemetery. It has now been permanently added to the programme.

The Highland Games offer a full traditional programme. The morning will see the solo pipers, solo drummers and the Highland and National dancers competing. The Pipe Bands take to the centre of the arena in the afternoon. Competitors and supporters come from all over the North Island and further afield. Adjudicators from throughout New Zealand have been secured to judge and provide feedback to competitors.



Throughout the day the traditional Field Events prove very popular with visitors of all ages. The chance to learn to toss the caber, toss the sheaf, carry the stones, shot put or do the Farmers Walk brings out the competitive streak in many. Events are broken up into age groups and male and female to encourage participation. There is also the tug-of-war for both adults and children.

The little ones are also catered for with lunch time games including old favourites like the tattie and spoon race and the three legged and sack races or finding the Needle in a Haystack. Or if they want something less vigorous there is the colouring in and activities under a shady gazebo.

Many Clans are represented amongst the Clan Stalls, they are happy to chat and help visitors research family histories and find Clan affiliations. The Market place is always popular and is growing. Local stall holders selling local produce are mixed in amongst Celtic themed stalls and information sites.

As the Turakina Domain has no permanent structures apart from a roof over the main dancing stage and two garages, a large marquee was introduced at the 150th Games to provide a shaded seating area for everyone. This proved so popular that it has become a regular feature. Along with the much appreciated shade it has also proved to be the ideal area to stage other events and displays. During the morning we have a "Have a Go" area within the marquee the original intention was to introduce youngsters to the arts of Highland drumming and bagpiping. It has proved extremely popular and not with just the youngsters but with all ages. Last year we also had a Drum Major demonstrating and giving lessons.

The afternoon rounds off with a massed bands display at the end of the band competition. This is followed by a traditional Haggis Ceremony held in the marquee. The presentation of awards completes the formal part of the day.

An evening bar-b-que is available with tickets sold through out the day and the Ceilidh begins. This is a free community event. A live band plays a mixture of Celtic folk music and more contemporary numbers, ideal to dance the night away.



The Turakina Highland Games is a popular event on the Pipe Band calendar and while it attracts New Zealand champions in piping, drumming and dancing it is also seen as the perfect springboard for younger competitors beginning in these arts. It is an event where age barriers disappear, the more experienced players are happy to share their wisdom and the younger ones are keen to learn and rub shoulders with these mentors.

For the spectators it is often a chance to catch up with old friends and family. In some cases several generations have been coming to the Games.

It is an event that allows local community groups to fundraise. The Turakina Women's Institute, Marton Lions and Turakina School use the opportunity to profit from visitors to the area. The school opens its pool to visitors for a small charge as well.

The organising committee work hard to get a mix of the old favourite events, while introducing new events and displays to keep the Games current and interesting.

Because the Highland Games is growing in reputation and popularity it has outgrown the Turakina Reserve but thanks to the support of locals it has been able to spill over into nearby properties. The prestigious A Grade Piobaireachd solo piping event is now held in an adjacent private garden, the farmland surrounding the Domain is made available for parking and camping and the Turakina School allow the use of their grounds for campers and for pipe bands to tune up.

The gate fees are deliberately kept low to make this an event that is affordable for families from all walks of life. The event attracts around 1500 people including competitors and spectators.

The committee works hard to get funding from many different sources to allow this to happen. Financial reserves are held by the Society to guard against the losses that would be incurred if we were to have a rainy Games day.

Any profit goes toward further improvements and maintenance.