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## Heavy events thrill crowds at highland games

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The otherwise quiet Churchill Park resounded with pipe music over the weekend. Bagpipers stood in groups, playing the pipes till they tired out.

There were other groups of highland dancers who practised their steps over and over again.

Elsewhere in the park, hammers and poles were tossed high, sheafs were thrown over a pole and there was loud cheering at the tug of war.

Yes, it was the weekend of the annual Cambridge Highland Games.

The 33rd games featured 25 pipe banks from Canada and the U.S. vying for top honours and 250 highland dancers showing their skills to the crowd of more than 4,000 who attended over the event's two days.

"The games are a way to celebrate our Scottish heritage and traditions," said Duncaun McLeod, president of the organization. "We try to get new things or events every year."

On the weekend, blacksmiths showed their traditional skills. People crowded around as they demonstrated how metal used to be traditionally cut, bent and shaped.

People also looked in awe as trained people tossed heavy poles into the air.

"If you are seeing this for the first time, it's a bit intimidating," said Oakville's Shirley Altman, who had come to see her son Ben play in a band. "I've seen this before and my heart skips a beat every time. It's fun though."

A sizable crowd also gathered in another part of the park where men and women were using pitchforks to throw sheafs over a horizontal pole.

As the sheaf, a small sack filled to make it a little heavy, fell over the pole its height was increased. "It looks quite easy but it's not," Altman said.

Tina Forrest, 11, watched with her older brother, Toby. "How do they still manage to toss it above the pole?" she wondered. "It's really interesting."

But the pipe bands were the real attraction of the games.

Kathleen Little said she wouldn't have missed it for the world. Little lives in Oakville and is a drummer with the Paris Port Dover pipe band while her son Daniel plays the pipes.

"It's great to be here to listen to other bands play and see their level, but believe me, it's always competition," said Little, who is going to Scotland to participate in the world pipe band championships next month.

The best was saved for the last. The closing ceremony saw all the bands take centrefield, making for a spectacular end to the games.

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