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# An t-Albannach

NEWSLETTER OF  
THE NEW YORK CALEDONIAN CLUB

Promoting Scottish Heritage • Established 1856

FALL ISSUE 2020

## The New York Caledonian Club Goes Virtual

Due to the continuing health risks of events at which Club members and guests would gather, the Board of Directors of The New York Caledonian Club has postponed those events for the foreseeable future. The Club is planning a variety of virtual events to be held via Zoom or Facebook Live. Event updates and details, including Zoom directions, are available on the Club's social media (Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn) and website, and will be provided to members in our regular emails.

**Here are events that are coming up soon or were held recently.  
Please join us, virtually and safely!**

### Upcoming Virtual Events

What's on tap for the remainder of 2020.  
More virtual events are in the works for early 2021, so stay tuned.

**At 6:30 pm on November 29** (the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend), **the Club will hold its annual St. Andrew's Supper** virtually. Whether you're with friends or family for the holiday, sheltering in, or under quarantine, this will be a great way to share in a beloved NYCC tradition! The Club has planned an eventful program, with a whisky tasting, a trivia contest with prizes, a raffle for those clad in Tartan, great conversation, and much more.

The St. Andrew's Supper program and festivities are **free**. Advance registration, by email to [rsvp@nycaledonian.org](mailto:rsvp@nycaledonian.org), is required for the Zoom link. The evening's experience can be enhanced by purchasing a malt whisky flight from the Hunterian, at [alan@thehunterianues.com](mailto:alan@thehunterianues.com), for \$30 (plus \$10 for delivery anywhere), or a Burns-style Scottish supper from The Scottish Gourmet, at [www.scottishgourmetusa.com/product/burns-supper-box-2020](http://www.scottishgourmetusa.com/product/burns-supper-box-2020), for \$35 (plus tax and shipping). Further details about food and whisky purchases will be posted on the Club's [website](#) and social media, and will be emailed to those who register.



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**At 6 pm on Sunday, November 8, David McNicoll will give a talk on the history of the Scottish Highlands.** Born and raised in the Highlands, David is a recognized expert on the history of that spectacular and iconic region. A graduate of Aberdeen University, David is the author of *The Language of Whisky*, and his company, Scottish Routes, provides whisky-themed tours. He also conducts classes on Scottish history and private whisky tasting sessions. Pre-registration, by email to [rsvp@nycaledonian.org](mailto:rsvp@nycaledonian.org), is required for the Zoom link. There is a suggested contribution of \$5.

### Recent Virtual Events

Looking back to Club events over the past month or so.



**On October 23**, we were treated to a virtual **concert by singer-guitarist Charlie Zahm**, a popular performer at Celtic festivals all over the Eastern U.S. Members, friends of the Club, and visitors across the globe enjoyed Charlie's versions of beloved tunes like *Loch Lomond*, *The Skye Boat Song* and *Flower of Scotland*, as well as his keen wit. The concert can be viewed, at no charge, on the Club's Facebook page and on YouTube. The Club is planning a **Celtic Christmas concert by Charlie** in December. Date and details to come.  
*(continued on page 2)*

# THE CHIEF'S CHANTER

Fall 2020



**84TH CHIEF**  
LORRAINE BELL

Dear Members,

*"Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."* This quote from the brilliant scientist Marie Curie is one that I have turned to throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, especially when I have felt at the end of my tether! It has been a very trying time for all of us, not only here but across the entire globe. I remain hopeful that good things will emerge after we have managed to get to the other side.

Your Club's Board of Directors continues to meet virtually. With Club events and programs postponed or going forward virtually in the interests of our members' safety, our current focus is on long-range improvements that will enhance the Club's ability to serve its members, such as updating the Club's website (enabling the Club, on our own, to sell tickets to events and sell our products) and revising our bylaws. We continue to plan and arrange virtual events that impose minimal (or zero) costs on members and on the Club.

I hope this message finds you well and safe. Please feel free to reach out to me at [lorraine@nycaledonian.org](mailto:lorraine@nycaledonian.org) with your comments and suggestions. And wishing you and yours a beautiful autumn and Thanksgiving.

**Sláinte Mhath,**  
**Chief Lorraine Bell**

## Recent Virtual Events

*Continued from page 1*



**On October 10**, Chieftain Sue Ann McDevitt interviewed **Clare Campbell, the founder of Prickly Thistle, a Tartan design and weaving mill in the Scottish Highlands**. Clare gave a video tour of Prickly Thistle's fabric mill, and she described the resurgence of Tartan weaving in Scotland, the use of natural fibers, the Prickly Thistle brand, and the design of bespoke Tartans. The Club is holding a raffle with the grand prize of a bespoke Tartan designed by Clare, along with ten meters of the finished cloth – a £4,000 (about \$5,200) value. Raffle tickets are available at [nycaledonian.org](http://nycaledonian.org). The winning ticket will be drawn at the Pre-Tartan Day Parade Ceilidh on April 9, 2021, if we are able to gather by then.

**On September 26**, Chief Lorraine Bell interviewed **George Lambie, retired Detective Superintendent of Police in Glasgow**. Drawing on his illustrious 32-year career in law enforcement, George led a fascinating interactive discussion on topics including his high-profile murder inquiries, heartbreaking crimes he has investigated, and drug trafficking in Scotland, as well as his recent, post-retirement work using DNA in cold cases and consulting with crime writers. Those who attended learned how real-life crime-solving differs from TV and movie versions.



An t-Albannach, the newsletter of the New York Caledonian Club,  
published several times a year. **ISSN#1520-90**

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With contributions from others - thanks!

**The New York Caledonian Club, Inc. (Est. 1856)**, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit, charitable, educational and literary organization and is open to anyone interested in Scotland and Scottish-Americans

## One Club Member's Ten Favorite Scottish Films

Circumstances prevent us from gathering to celebrate and be entertained by things Scottish. Virtual programs help to fill that void. You also can celebrate and be entertained from the safety of home, and beginning with this issue, we'll make some recommendations about how you might do that. First up, newsletter editor Steve Klugman presents his ten favorite Scottish films. Steve welcomes comments and reactions to his choices at [sklugman@nycaledonian.org](mailto:sklugman@nycaledonian.org).

Here are my ten favorite Scottish movies, or more precisely ten that I really liked and can remember. Try a couple – you'll enjoy them.

**10.** *I Know Where I'm Going (1945)*. An ambitious Englishwoman, en route to the Hebridean isle of Kiloran (in real life, Colonsay) to marry an older, wealthy businessman, is delayed by foul weather on Mull (some realism there). There she encounters gossipy islanders, a ceilidh with pipers, a haunted castle and a handsome naval officer. When she faces a conflict between romance and money, guess which wins out? Shot mostly on location in the Western Isles, the film is the subject of a 1994 BBC Scotland documentary about those sites.

**9.** *You've Been Trumped (2011)*. I tried to avoid including documentaries, which I know very little about (*St. Kilda: The Lonely Islands* is really good), but couldn't resist this one. The future President and his minions try to displace long-tenured neighbors of his Aberdeenshire golf resort in order to improve the views from the new links. Maybe more diatribe than documentary. Filmmaker Anthony Baxter has made a follow-up, *You've Been Trumped Too*.

**8.** *Restless Natives (1985)*. Two youths in economically depressed Edinburgh seek to make their fortune as thieves, giving their money away to the needy. This is a combination of cops and robbers, a Western with tour buses replacing stagecoaches, a travelogue for the Highlands, and a screwball comedy, with Big Country providing upbeat musical accompaniment. The film apparently did well in Britain, but it never caught on here.

**7.** *Shallow Grave (1994)*. Three hard-driving young professionals who share an Edinburgh flat take on a fourth roommate. The new guy is soon found dead, leaving behind a bagful of cash. The yuppies bury the body and try to keep the money. Things get complicated when the police and certain other parties get interested in the disappeared roommate – and the missing cash. Directed by Danny Boyle and featuring a young Ewan McGregor, the film pretty much defines black comedy, and I'm good with that.

**6.** *Trainspotting (1996)*. Another black comedy from Danny Boyle. A tawdry bunch of heroin addicts, drug dealers and petty criminals tries to survive in Edinburgh (filmed in Glasgow). A great cast including Ewan McGregor, Kelly MacDonald and Robert Carlyle early in their careers and Boyle's flair for reaching both the gut and the funny bone make this more than a tale of unremitting woe. For some reason, I liked it more on the second and third viewings. Probably time to see it again.

**5.** *Local Hero (1983)*. A Texas oil company wants to buy Ferness, a (fictional) town in the Highlands, and build a refinery there. There are intriguing plot twists, great dialog, and strong performances, especially by Denis Lawson as Ferness's negotiator, but the real star is the town itself. Screenwriter and director Bill Forsyth deployed over a dozen locales to present Ferness, and you feel as though you've been there and gotten to know the place and its quirks. (I resisted the temptation to include two more Forsyth charmers, *That Sinking Feeling* and *Comfort and Joy*.)

**4.** *Braveheart (1995)*. Not my favorite kind of movie, and Mel Gibson is far from my favorite actor. But it's a masterpiece of the genre: a ragged army of locals fighting a foreign tyrant, battle scenes with lots of mayhem, and a mixture of history with fiction. Released when Scottish nationalism was ascendant, the film stirred up Scottish pride, and tourist interest, in William Wallace and 13th- and 14th-century struggles with the English, both the fictionalized and factual versions.

**3.** *Whiskey Galore! (1949)*. Inhabitants of a fictional Hebrides isle have run out of whisky under World War II rationing. When a cargo ship with 50,000 cases of the Water of Life is wrecked off its coast, the islanders take a rather strong interest in the salvage. Produced by England's esteemed Ealing Studios and filmed on Barra in the Outer Hebrides with islanders playing many of the extras, the film is based on Sir Compton Mackenzie's even better novel, in turn drawn from an actual incident on Eriskay in 1941. **(continued on page 4)**



*(continued from page 3)* They don't make 'em like this anymore, and I don't understand why.

**2.** *Gregory's Girl (1980)*. Bill Forsyth's masterpiece (my opinion) captures the anxiety, pain, and occasional bliss of the teenage years more honestly, and about as humorously, as any film I know. John Gordon Sinclair as the awkward, infatuated Gregory and Dee Hepburn as the unattainable Dorothy are perfect, if sometimes too real for viewers' comfort. Numerous digressions from the main plot feature flawlessly cast secondary characters – Gregory's sister, his schoolmates (Robert Buchanan as Andy is my favorite), a teacher, the coach and a penguin (!) – each of whom steals the show briefly and then drifts away.



In *Gregory's Girl*, Gregory savors a few minutes with Dorothy.

**1.** *The 39 Steps (1935)*. My favorite Alfred Hitchcock movie, and one of my favorite movies, period. Robert Donat is wonderful as Richard Hannay, a character created decades earlier by Scottish novelist John Buchan. Hitchcock makes Hannay an early incarnation of his trademark innocent hero, framed for a murder, who struggles to suss out the murderers and to clear his name while he's on the lam. Although the film opens and closes in a London music hall, Hannay does his sleuthing and running from the authorities in the Highlands. Since it's Hitchcock, Hannay gets a suspenseful train ride (on *The Flying Scotsman*) and a skeptical blonde companion (Madeleine Carroll).



In *The 39 Steps*, Scottish police search for the innocent Richard Hannay.

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