



NYC Tartan Week 2021

In light of continuing health concerns and travel restrictions, celebrants will be unable to gather for the principal events of New York City Tartan Week. The National Tartan Day New York Committee (NTDNYC) and sponsoring organizations have made the adjustments needed to keep Tartan Week within the current constraints.

The NYC Tartan Day parade will begin at 2 P.M. on Saturday, April 10, and can be viewed, free of charge, on the Facebook page of New York City Tartan Week. More details are available at www.facebook.com/nycaledonian/events/.



Additional Tartan Week events will be held from Thursday, April 8, through Sunday, April 11. **All these events are free of charge, but you must register for some.** Here's the lineup:

— A cocktail party sponsored by the Saint Andrew's Society of New York on Thursday, April 8, at 6 P.M. The program will include a presentation from Gary Maclean (Scotland's first National Chef), a virtual tour of Scotland, live music and surprise guests. Register at one.bidpal.net/sastartanday/ticketing.

— The New York Caledonian Club's annual Pre-Parade Ceilidh on Friday, April 9, at 7 P.M. Our ceilidh will be live-streamed on the Club's Facebook page. Featured entertainers will include Whisky Kiss, Shot of Scotch Premier Highland Dancers, NYCC Pipe Band piper Brian May, and lots more. More details are available at www.facebook.com/nycaledonian/events/.

— The Kirkin' o' the Tartan on Saturday, April 10, at 11 A.M. This pan-denominational service on the morning of the parade will include ministers from Scotland and the U.S., as well as remarks from the Scottish government. Register at one.bidpal.net/sastartanday/ticketing.

— The New York Caledonian Club's annual Post-Parade Brunch on Sunday, April 11, at 11 A.M. Brunch-time performances by traditional musicians in New York will be live-streamed on the Club's Facebook page. So cook up your full fry, tune in, and enjoy the sounds of Scotland as we bid Tartan Week 2021 farewell. For details, go to www.facebook.com/nycaledonian/events/.

What is NYC Tartan Week?

In 1998, the U.S. Senate proclaimed National Tartan Day on April 6—the anniversary of the 1320 Declaration of Arbroath, asserting Scotland's independence. The Senate proclamation led to Tartan Day celebrations around the U.S.

New York City joined in the fun. In 1999, two pipe bands marched in midtown New York, and then for two years there was a parade in Central Park. The 2002 "Pipes of Glory" attracted world-wide attention when some 8,000 pipers marched on Sixth Avenue behind Sir Sean Connery.

In 2003, Scottish-American organizations (including the New York Caledonian Club) formed the National Tartan Day New York Committee (NTDNYC) to maintain and expand New York's observance. The NYCC is one of NTDNY's four members, and NYCC treasurer Kyle Dawson is its President.

Each (pre-pandemic) year since 2002, pipe bands, organizations and others from the metro area and around the world have marched up Sixth Avenue, led by a celebrity grand marshal. The day of the parade—a Saturday near April 6—is designated NYC Tartan Day.

The parade has been joined (again, pre-pandemic) by a wide variety of programs and events before and after it—some one-offs and others annual fixtures. That period is known as NYC Tartan Week. Each year the NYCC sponsors on Friday night the "infamous" Pre-Parade Ceilidh, which brings together Club members and hundreds of guests, and on Sunday a Post-Parade Brunch with live music.

Sixth Avenue will be strangely quiet on NYC Tartan Day again this year, but the parade, and the rest of NYC Tartan Week, will be back, better than ever.



Rockin' at the 2019 Pre-Parade Ceilidh. Photo by Scott Stanger.

THE CHIEF'S CHANTER

Spring 2021



**84TH CHIEF
LORRAINE BELL**

Dear Members,
*I, Chief Lorraine,
have composed
This wee ditty
just for youse:*

We miss the Whisky, our Parade, the Westies and Kilts,
The mosaic of Tartans in our Scottish Quilt.
We miss the Vikings, the Guizers and Jarl Squads,
We miss all our friends from here and abroad!
This strange Land of Facebook and virtual Zoom
Is so artificial, we want release from this gloom!
Next year our Ceilidh and parties will be Craic,
So real-life gatherings, please Haste Ye Back!
There soon will be drams and live music at pubs,
We cannae wait to be together again
At events of the New York Caledonian Club!

Happy Birthday, Rabbie

With the 2021 installment of the New York Caledonian Club's annual Robert Burns Supper lost to the pandemic, several Club members gathered on January 25 at the statue of Burns on Literary Walk in Central Park to wish Scotland's bard a happy 261st birthday. As the weather warms up, why not stop by (mid-park, about 65th Street), say hello, and assure Rabbie that he, along with the Great Chieftain o' the Pud-din'-Race, again will be toasted in grand style next January?



Annual Meeting Set for June 5th

The New York Caledonian Club will hold its Annual General Meeting of members (AGM) on Saturday afternoon, June 5, 2021. There will be limited in-person attendance, and members who do not attend can participate via Zoom.

There are two main parts to the AGM. The Club's officers and committees will report on recent and planned activities, and members can ask questions and offer suggestions. The votes that have been submitted for officers and directors whose terms are expiring will be counted, and the winners announced.

The Club's members can vote for four officers—chief, chieftain, secretary and treasurer—and up to seven additional directors. Members who are interested in running for any of those positions should contact Lee Harwell, Chair of the Nominating Committee, at nominations@nycaledonian.org, on or before April 15. Members will receive additional information in April about the AGM (including the start time) and the election.

The AGM affords members a great opportunity to learn more about the Club, contribute their input, and get to know more Club members. We hope you'll join us.

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With contributions from others - thanks!

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Some Recommended Scottish Crime Novels

Now that you've watched all those Scottish films that we recommended in the Winter 2021 issue, this is a great time to curl up with some Scottish crime fiction. Here are three of the editor's favorite series of Scottish crime novels.

Even though Scottish-born Arthur Conan Doyle modeled Sherlock Holmes on a medical school professor at the University of Edinburgh's medical school, the genre of crime fiction—police, private detectives, or amateur sleuths solving murders against a background of multiple suspects, false clues and multiple sub-plots—did not take hold in Scotland until late in the twentieth century. William McIlvanney's 1977 novel, *Laidlaw*, and the Laidlaw series that followed are generally credited with jump-starting Scottish crime fiction.

Much of Scottish crime fiction fits a genre that's been dubbed tartan noir: the main characters are not all that sympathetic, the crimes tend to be brutal, and the criminals often are deeply disturbed. Tartan noir takes after classic American crime writers like Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler more than it does English detective novels.

Here are three of my favorite series of Scottish crime fiction. The protagonist in each is closely tied to a different place in Scotland.

Ian Rankin: the Rebus Novels (Edinburgh). While studying literature at the University of Edinburgh in the 1980s, Fife-born Ian Rankin started to write noir-ish crime novels that featured a hard-drinking, hard-boiled Edinburgh cop named John Rebus, whom Rankin endowed with an obsession for nailing perps, a quick and tart tongue, and a disregard for convention that lands him in trouble with his superiors. Last year Rankin published the 24th Rebus novel.

Rebus (also a Fife native) knows Edinburgh inside out—the seamy and the opulent, the crooks and the do-gooders, the ancient monuments and the sleek office towers. Taken together, the Rebus books are a sort of guidebook to contemporary Edinburgh and its surroundings. There are virtual tours of Rebus's Edinburgh, and his favorite pub, the Oxford Bar, is a landmark.

Rankin has won pretty much every award for crime fiction,



Ian Rankin

and he richly deserves all those accolades. Rankin, more than anyone else, has inspired a genre that now boasts dozens of very good Scottish crime writers.

With two dozen Rebus novels to choose from, where to start? The books run chronologically, with Rebus aging in more-or-less real time. I would start at or near the beginning with *Knots and Crosses* (Rebus #1) or *Strip Jack* (#4), then maybe *Black & Blue* (#8), *Fleshmarket Close* (#15) and *Exit Music* (#19). Get the U.K.-published versions rather than the Americanized ones if you can; there are some fun, peculiar terms and expressions that get edited out for the U.S. audience. And fair warning: you may find it hard to stop after just one Rebus novel. Or five. Or ten.

Denise Mina: the Alex Morgan novels (Glasgow). Denise Mina became interested in criminal behavior and mental illnesses as a university student, and much of her work implicates that inter-relationship. Mina has published fifteen crime novels plus graphic novels, plays, short stories and TV documentaries. Her crime fiction includes stand-alone novels and three superb series: (1) the Garnethill trilogy with



Denise Mina

Maureen O'Donnell, a childhood abuse survivor who works with victims of domestic abuse, (2) a trilogy with police detective Paddy Meehan, and (3) five novels with journalist Alex Morgan. All three main characters are women, and Mina's feminist views infuse her characters and narratives.

Mina's crime novels are hard-core tartan noir. They are set mostly in rough parts of Glasgow, where her characters lead grim lives, and there's plenty of gore in the crimes and the descriptions of them. As her website puts it, Mina writes about a "city where the boundaries between the law-abiding and the criminal worlds are very blurred, including in [Alex Morgan's] own family." *(continued on page 4)*

(continued from page 3)

The Garnethill trilogy, the earliest of these three series, is probably Mina's most celebrated work, and I highly recommend those. But I liked the Alex Morgan novels even more, and I would advise anyone giving Mina a one-shot trial to go with *The End of the Wasp Season* from that series. *The Long Drop*, a standalone novel based on real-life serial murders, is also excellent.

Peter May: The Lewis Trilogy (Isle of Lewis, or Eilean Leòdhais for you Gaelic speakers). May had spent parts of five years on Lewis as the creator of a Gaelic television series when, beginning in 2009, he wrote three crime novels set there: *The Blackhouse*, *The Lewis Man* and *The Chessmen*. The central character in all three, Fin Macleod, was born and raised on Lewis (with Gaelic his first language) but moved to the mainland, where he joined the police force. Almost twenty years later, Macleod is dispatched to Lewis to help investigate a murder. He ends up staying, reconnecting with old friends, foes and places, and delving into his past.



The Lewis Trilogy

These crime novels aren't mainstream tartan noir. The Hebridean settings, while certainly bleak, also have a deep beauty. And the books are largely about the tensions and conflicts between the old ways of life on the island and encroaching modernity, like historical novels except that they introduce the reader to a different place rather than a different era.

The Lewis books are in sequence. I think the first, *The Blackhouse*, is the best of the lot. But May has a flair for inducing you to keep on reading—just one more chapter, then one more after that. When you finish *The Blackhouse*, you may want to keep going.

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