

#NYCTW Tartan Day Parade led by Sir Billy Connolly

6 April each year is when Scotland comes to Sixth Avenue, and the NYC Tartan Day Parade is a celebration of all things Scottish by Americans, but it includes many Scots who take part.

Last year the committee chose a woman for the first time, KT Tunstall who rose to the challenge and wowed Manhattan with her enthusiasm for the task.

This year the Grand Marshal was none other than Sir Billy Connolly and everyone looked forward to a great day out as the musicians paraded down Sixth Avenue after a Pipes and Drums performance at Bryant Park. He waved and smiled to everyone and responded to shouts of How's going Big Yin with the typical Nae Bad that you would expect.











He was accompanied by his wife Lady Pamela Stephenson and members of his family. Lady Pamela judged the dogs competition before the parade, taking care to look at each and every dog before making her choice. There were Dandy Dinmonts, Golden Retrievers, Westies, Scotties, Shelties and Wolfhounds. It was quite a sight!

Sir Billy was dressed in the weathered MacLean tartan in a kilt outfit created by Howie Nicholsby of 21st Century Kilts.

Howie is of course 'the kilt guy' at 21st Century Kilts in

Edinburgh's Thistle Street. And yes, helped Billy and Pamela to create the outfit which Billy wore so well.



Howie Nicholsby

His wife, Charlie Nicholsby, was singularly responsible for the Big Yin saying yes to her invitation and is the cause of all this year's excitement.

Charlie said : "This is the ultimate privilege to have Sir Billy Connolly as Grand Marshal at the Tartan Day Parade. I asked him by way of some mutual friends and he very quickly agreed to do it.

"I am absolutely delighted that he is – and that he will be accompanied by his wife, internationally acclaimed psychologist, Dr Pamela Stephenson, who will judge the Scottie dog competition before she and the Big Yin step off in the parade.

"My husband Howie was Grand Marshal in 2014. It was an amazing experience which we shared with our boys. We are sure Billy and Pamela will very much enjoy themselves and I will be there to ensure that it all goes as smoothly as possible. We are very excited and I am sure the crowds on the day will love seeing him."



Sir Billy viewed the parade from an open top bus
Louise Marshall was the official piper with the Edinburgh Napier University deputation. She lead them off and played If it wisnae for your Wellies for Sir Billy Connolly who watched on from an open top bus towards the end of the parade.

She wore the university tartan in red and black. She said : “I went to New York last year and performing there in the parade with the Fair Trade Tartan group was one of the highlights of 2018.”

A lifelong piper she will be playing her late father’s pipes – and while Louise is the official piper to the Lord Provost of the City of Edinburgh and Hibernian FC, her father was the piper at Gretna Green for 44 years. Louise also led the 35 piece all-female ‘Divas & District Pipe Band’ to open and close the Edinburgh Hogmanay Street Party 2018.



Louise Marshall piped her way up Sixth Avenue and ended with a rousing version of one of Sit Billy Connolly's best known songs, If it wisnae for your wellies....

Anna White went to the US for the first time this year as a Tartan Day rookie, and she set up a pop up version of ScotlandShop at the Algonquin Hotel.

She will not be alone as one of her staff will accompany her – and also Tam the Tailor who was already on tour in the US.



Anna White of ScotlandShop who dressed Doddy Weir with Tam the Tailor

There are a couple of things to know about the NYC Tartan Day Parade. It is always held on the Saturday nearest to 6 April as it can be since that is the date decreed in 1998 the U.S. Senate to be National Tartan Day to recognise contributions made by Scottish-Americans to the US. In 1999, two pipe bands and a small group of Scottish Americans marched from the British Consulate to the UN in the first parade. Since then, the event has grown and now includes hundreds of pipers, thousands of marchers and many more thousands cheering from the sidelines.

The National Tartan Day New York Committee was formed in 2002 to organise the Parade and co-ordinate all the associated activities which surround it. There are now so many it has become Tartan Week, but 'week' means anything, so far, from 7-21 days.

