

# Weaving two kilt businesses together

**Howie Nicholsby set up 21st Century Kilts in 1996 when he was just 18. He is the fourth generation of his family who have worked in the kilt industry, and he has really made his mark over the years, with the specially designed kilt pin and kilts made for the renaissance man.**

It was at Fashion Week in 1999 that he decided to make the kilt more accessible for people who have no clan affiliation or family tartan.

No man with any fashion sense will now wear a kilt with white socks and a sporran, according to Howie. He turned his back on the traditional gear which his father Geoffrey and mother Lorna were selling from the High Street and took a shop in Thistle Street where he entertained his customers to a personal service and developed his brand.

Last September in a move which closes the circle he moved back to the High Street to his father's old shop where the businesses are joined up again. Howie promotes 21st Century Kilts alongside the more traditional side to the business which is run by John Webster.

The list of who he has "kilted out" is like a list from Who's Who, with royalty and many star entertainers featuring there.

The kilts are made from any material including denim and leather, usually made to measure involving a personal appointment with either Howie or one of his roving assistants. And the idea is to wear the kilt as casual wear or on more traditional occasions, depending on the accessories.

And naturally being the best promotion for his own brand, Howie wears the kilt every day, even when cycling or paddle boarding. It was a loyal customer who inspired him to do that, the late Hamish Bicknell who began wearing kilts as a teenager. He lived in Storrington in West Sussex and when he died a couple of years ago he bequeathed his entire collection of 100 kilts made for him, either by Geoffrey the Tailor or 21st Century Kilts to Howie. Thirty of these kilts are now displayed in the shop, and in a way this is a kind of art installation.

Howie said: "He was very much an influencer and my mentor. In a way he was my inspiration to wearing a kilt every day. Now that he has passed away we are creating a memorial space for him. We have a beautiful archive and celebration of all the fabrics we have used over the years."

21st Century Kilts 59 High Street Royal Mile EH1 1SR will be conducting fittings by appointment in New York during Tartan Week.

<https://21stcenturykilts.com/about>



John Webster and Howie Nicholsby, partners in Geoffrey the Tailor and 21st Century Kilts. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)



John Webster, Anna Smart (four times New Zealand Champion

Piper) and Howie Nicholsby. Geoffrey the Tailor and 21st Century Kilts. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam



Craig Banks of Craig Banks Tailoring on Thistle Street, his son Charlie and Howie Nicholsby. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)



Howie and Charlie Nicholsby and Gail Porter who will be the Grand Marshal at the 25th Tartan Day Parade in New York on 15 April. Howie has designed an outfit for her to wear – it is under wraps until 2pm when the parade steps off. Photo: © 2023, Martin P. McAdam [www.martinmcadam.com](http://www.martinmcadam.com)

