

# Camilla G. Hellman

*In the second instalment in a six-part series on prominent women in the Celtic community, we connect with Camilla G Hellman (MBE), President of the American-Scottish Foundation*



**A**lthough Camilla Hellman describes herself as a “hodge-podge” - a mix of many different cultures - she has a real affinity for Scotland, due in large part to her heritage on her maternal grandfather’s side.

“My great-grandmother was an Allen,” she notes over the phone from her office in New York City. “Before that, we were Traills, linking back to Orkney.”

Hellman grew up in the south of England and enjoyed frequent family visits across Scotland during her childhood summers.

“I always loved going up to Scotland; taking the overnight train and visiting the islands, especially Mull and Skye.”

The powerhouse leader has a smorgasbord of experiences and accomplishments to her name, including an MBE (Member of the British Empire), which she was awarded for transatlantic relations.

A lover of the arts, Hellman first came to the United States as a music industry professional.

“My background is in marketing,” she explains. “I went from representing musicians and artisans, to working as an agent and importer of luxury brands in the field of home decor. I later accepted a position as the Director of Marketing for London-based Luxury Channel.

“I believe that you need to take the same approach with regard to marketing a charity as you do with any commercial product; ‘respect of brand’ and a distinct identity are essential. As I wanted to do more with regard to helping others, it was only natural for me to bring these kinds of ideas to that field.”

Over the years, her goals “migrated and changed,” and she began spending more time on her not-for-profit endeavours.

Her first contact with the American Scottish Foundation (ASF) came in 2002.

“That year, I attended the Tartan Day

Parade with several of my ex-pat friends. It was a celebration of the largest massing of the pipe bands in the U.S., and Sixth Avenue was awash in tartan. I remember thinking that I would like to be involved, perhaps as a volunteer. Little did I know what I was getting into!”

It was around that time that Hellman started spearheading the British Memorial Garden (later renamed the Queen Elizabeth II Garden) in Lower Manhattan.

As the project required the sourcing of Scottish stones - brought over from Caithness and Morayshire, and later cut in the shape of the British map and outlining the country’s different counties - she reached out to the ASF.

During her tenancy as President of the British Memorial Garden (2002 – 2009) she first got involved with the New York Tartan Day Parade, joining the Events Committee in 2006. Only three years later she was appointed as the ASF’s Director of Development, and began assisting the planning committee for the National New York Tartan Day Parade. The ASF is a founding member of the signature event.

In her new role, she looked to expand the Foundation’s platform of work, most notably in the area of arts and heritage. “I wanted to help the organization bring greater clarity to its core message and aid in growing its platforms.”

Today, Hellman is the President of the American-Scottish Foundation. Founded in 1956, the group’s mandate remains to act as a bridge between the United States and Scotland.

“We have an extensive program of events - one that is always evolving. Whether it is delivering conferences, such as an energy forum or a roundtable discussion, or helping grow the Tartan Day Parade or Tartan Week events, we do our very best to grow the relationship between those two countries.”

The rewards, she shares, are numerous.

“I love the idea of developing the ASF as a portal of information, and helping different organizations to better deliver their message. We have also been able to assist many young people further their personal and professional ambitions, mostly through our Lord Malcolm Douglas Hamilton Bursaries.”

Youth, she adds, are a key focus for many Scottish-North American organizations.

*“We are fortunate to have a vibrant and active community and we are excited by the opportunity to grow their participation.”*

Fifteen years ago, the ASF - along with the Chicago Scots - formed the North American Leadership Conference.

“Our gathering is a way for leading members of the Scottish-American community - which includes the Detroit St. Andrews Society and COSCA - to connect, share best practices, and further discuss new ways and means to engage current and future generations. We work closely with the Scottish Government, which has been very supportive and encouraging of our efforts. It is incredible to witness what can happen when we all work together towards the same goals.”

By way of example, she points to NYC Tartan Week.

“The parade, in particular - which takes place on April 6 this year - sees people of all ages and backgrounds celebrate Scotland’s rich cultural legacy. I am very proud of the role the ASF plays in helping to promote and preserve Scotland’s wonderful heritage.”

[www.americanscottishfoundation.com](http://www.americanscottishfoundation.com)  
[www.nyctartanweek.org](http://www.nyctartanweek.org)