

# HOUSTON TRADITIONAL KILTMAKERS EST 1909

## SPECIAL WEAVE TARTANS GUIDE



Houstons can provide special weave tartans not readily available to the market. If you are having trouble finding your desired tartan we can assist and source it for you through the Scottish Tartans Authority. Further to this we can have a **tartan designed** specifically for you by owner of Houstons, Ken MacDonald to alternatively you can design a tartan yourself using our exclusive 'My Tartan' design app available to download for free from the Apple App store. They are woven in 16oz heavy weight, 13oz medium weight, 11oz light weight or even silk fabric. You will also be given the option have your tartan Teflon coated which makes it stain proof and even beer proof! If you wish to have a kilt made in one of these tartans you will need to contact us direct. Special Weave tartans will take considerably longer to make. If your chosen tartan is not commercially produced tartan, the tartan must first be designed. If you have chosen to design your own tartan, it will cost more money than a commercially produced tartan. The process of purchasing a special weave tartan that you have designed can often take

longer as you will first have to finalise your chosen design with your tartan designer before the cloth can be woven. Once you have finalised your unique tartan design there will be a number of stages to have the cloth woven, finished and made into your bespoke kilt!

The time scale for creating a special weave tartan and having it made into a bespoke kilt can be anything from 3 to 6 months. Therefore, if you are looking to have your tartan woven for a specific date, we advise you get in touch as far in advance as possible! An express service will be made available to you for an additional cost. With this service your kilt will be delivered in 2 to 3 months or 3 to 4 months in high season.

The cost of a special weave tartan varies depending on the chosen design and the kilt finish. Prices range from £800 to £2000 including tax or will cost up to £1600 tax free if you live out with the European community. Tax free prices are available to any person out with the European Community e.g. USA, Canada, Japan, South Africa, New Zealand, Switzerland, Norway, Australia etc. If a British person has taken up residency for 2 years or more out with the U.K & EC countries they will qualify for tax free pricing and also residents of the Channel Isles. All Goods sent to customers out with the E.C. will automatically have the U.K tax taken off. Houston's VAT no 263 1138 84. Please note: some Countries may put an import duty tax on imported goods.

Customers must find out what their countries taxes are. For a quote please contact Houston Kiltmakers direct via email [shop@kiltmakers.com](mailto:shop@kiltmakers.com) or call us on +44 141 889 4879 outlining the specifics of the bespoke kilt you wish to have made.

You have countless options when creating your own tartan. You can have a clan tartan made with your own specific choice of colours to coordinate with a wedding colour scheme. Or you can combine your own family tartan with your bride's family tartan and create a brand new design to commemorate your special day using our My Tartan app! You can also use the croft weaver programme available on the Scottish Tartans Authority website [www.tartansauthority.com/tartan/tartan-today/croft-weaver-tartan-designer/](http://www.tartansauthority.com/tartan/tartan-today/croft-weaver-tartan-designer/). You can use this to create different images allowing you to view your chosen design in a variety of colours, ensuring you are happy with your chosen design. If you wish to have a design created by Ken MacDonald we can create an Electronic CAD image which is a digital image of what your chosen tartan will look like. Therefore if you are unhappy with the design we can make any necessary changes to achieve your desired design. To find out more about tartans and special weaves read on!

## **THE "RIGHT" TO WEAR A TARTAN**

“Often over the years one has heard people explaining they have the right or that they are entitled to wear this or that tartan.... in fact no such right , in any legal sense , exists for them or anyone else ....the only considerations which govern the wearing of a particular set are usage and good taste”

*Quote from Scottish Tartans Authority director Brian Wilton*

So the answer to the question “what tartan am I entitled to wear?

Is, "any tartan you fancy"

The sole consideration is good taste. Some tartans are appalling clashes of colours! Highland attire looks smart and feels great to wear. Perhaps Cary Grant’s advice for choosing a tie always dress to go with your eyes is also the best criterion for choosing a tartan.

*Quote from Alistair Campbell of airds, unicorn pursuivant of arms the court of the lord Lyon*

To make life easy to pick a tartan at Houston's we have over 100 tartan books, the only kilt shop in the world where you can see every commercially produced tartan, and have the facility to weave any tartan if a stitch count exists from our records... We have collated over 600 tartans any one can wear in 8 swatch books in colour bunch to make viewing tartans a lot easier for our customers.

At Houston Traditional Kiltmakers we get customers visiting our shop from all parts of Scotland, the U.K., Europe and the rest of the world.

Our professional staff will advise on tartans you can wear from a choice of around 14,000 different tartans.

## Clans & Septs



*MacDonald Ancient Tartan*

### **Clans**

Clan is the Gaelic word for family and originally clans only belonged to the Highlands.

The clan system is closely bound up with Scottish heraldry. The best definition of a clan provided by a heraldic authority is contained in Nisbet's "System of Heraldry", published in 1722: 'A social group consisting of an aggregate of distinct erected families actually descended, or accepting themselves as descendants of a common ancestor, and which has been received by the Sovereign through its Supreme Officer of Honour, the Lord Lyon, as an honourable community whereof all of the members on establishing right to, or receiving fresh grants of, personal hereditary nobility will be awarded arms as determinate or indeterminate cadets both as may be of the chief family of the clan.'

A clan is therefore a community which is both distinguished by heraldry and recognised by the Sovereign. At the head of this honourable community is the chief. He is the only person entitled to display the undifferenced shield of Arms, i.e. without any marks of dependency upon any other noble house.

Chiefship is a title of honour and dignity within the nobility of Scotland. Any claimant to such a title must establish, to the satisfaction of the Lord Lyon representing the Sovereign, that he or she is entitled to the undifferenced arms of the community over which they seek to preside. It is the determining of chiefship which is among the Lyon Court's central work.

Many of the cases which have come before the Lyon Court in the last 50 years have related to the chiefships of clans. There are now about 140 clans that have chiefs recognised by the Lord Lyon.

A clan or family that has a recognised chief or head confers noble status on the clan or family which gives it a legally recognised status and a corporate identity. A family or name group which has no recognised chief has no official position under the law of Scotland. If you have a name of one of the 140 Clans you can wear any of the tartans under that clan's name. MacDonald for example has 23 different tartans under the one name

## Sept Tartan



*The surname Vance is a special weave tartan and is a sept of the Galloway District. (Galloway District Modern Red pictured above is a stock tartan)*

In Scotland, a sept is often a family that is absorbed into a larger Scottish clan for mutual benefit. For example, the Burns family is a sept of the Clan Campbell. There are a number of Burns tartans including Burns Clan (1930) and Burns Check (1959) however; members of the Burns clan are permitted to wear a Campbell tartan as Burns is a sept of the Clan Campbell. Each Scottish clan typically has a number of septs, each with its own surname. Septs have rights to wear clan tartans although they often have tartans of their own. You can do a search on [Kiltmakers.com](http://Kiltmakers.com) to find out if your family name is affiliated to any other clan. The image pictured above is stock tartan Galloway District Modern Red. The surname Vance is a special weave tartan but is a sept of the Galloway District. To find septs of your name and clan affiliations you can use Houston's tartan finder.

1. Go to [www.kiltmakers.com/tartan](http://www.kiltmakers.com/tartan)
2. Enter your name in the tartan finder. You will then be shown all variations of your clan tartan.

3. If we do not have your clan tartan or if you want to view your clan septs you can scroll down to find this.
4. Alternatively, your clan tartan may be a special weave in which case you can scroll down the page where you will see a button 'view special weave tartans' Clicking this button will link you to the Scottish Tartans Authority website. We have an established link to the Scottish Tartans Authority website who hosts the largest tartan database in the world. The link will take you to your special weave tartan. Picture below Vance special weave tartan obtained from [www.tartansauthority.com](http://www.tartansauthority.com)





## Irish septs



*Irish national tartan*

In Ireland, the word sept is used to refer to a group of people with both a common surname and common origin. In recent times, Irish septs are sometimes called clans, although Ireland does not have a clan system similar to that of Scotland. Related Irish septs belong to larger groups, sometimes called tribes, such as the Dál gCais, Uí Néill, Uí Fiachrach, and Uí Maine.

## Tartans Anyone Can Wear



*Ancient Bute*

*Modern Bute*

*Autumn Bute*

*Grey Bute*



*Black Bute*

*Midnight Bute*

*Hunting Bute*

*Weathered Bute*



*Glencallum Bute*

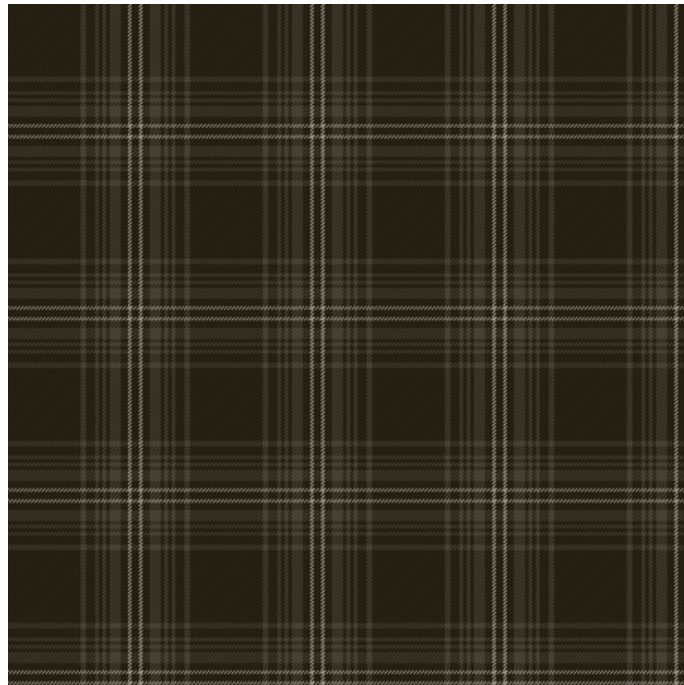
*Straad Bute*

*Scottish Heather*

*St Mirren*

If you do not have family or clan tartan to choose from you can choose a tartan that anyone can wear. You can choose from a range of national tartan such as Scottish National or American National. Nowadays people tend to choose a tartan to coordinate with wedding or colours or purely for its aesthetic value. Greys in particular are currently in vogue and very popular amongst kilt buyers. Pictured above is Houston's own Bute Heather Tartan Designs which are predominantly woven in greys, purples and blues. As well as being in vogue, grey tartans are also very prestigious and have been worn by prominent figures in Scottish history.

John Brown was the personal servant of Queen Victoria in Scotland during her reign. A very famous portrait painted of Brown was painted of him wearing a grey Balmoral kilt. Further to this, the ‘Clan Originaux’ pattern book confirms the genealogy of a grey tartan known as Stewart Mourning. This particular tartan was created after the death of Prince Albert and worn by Queen Victoria. There are only a few hundred tartans that are privately owned and require permission to be worn by the owner.



*Stewart Mourning Clan tartan Special Weave est. 1800*

## Tartan

### What tartan can I wear?

Most customers will choose a clan tartan based on a family name. This could be either a person's own surname or that of a parent or grandparent. However; you can wear any tartan for any occasion.

Traditionally hunting, ancient and weathered tartans were worn with tweeds and day jackets for outdoor functions, hunting and highland games. Dress and modern tartans were worn with formal functions and black tie dinners.     *Variations of MacDonald Tartan*



*Modern*

*Ancient*

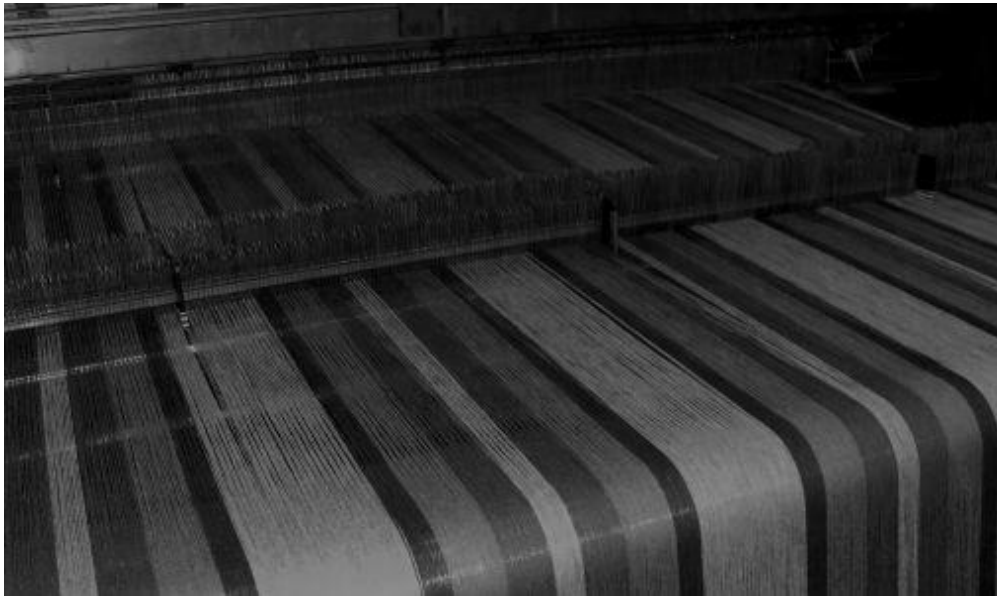
*Weathered/muted*

*Hunting*

*Dress*

Nowadays people tend to choose tartan for its aesthetic value, a family or clan connection; or to coordinate with wedding colours.

## Weaving Looms



A special weave tartan is very rare and at Houstons we make sure that we use only the finest craftsmen and equipment to create your one of a kind piece. We have a friend who has a single and double width loom with a traditional selvage finish reserved solely for the use of Houston Kiltmakers. It takes one full day to weave a special weave tartan. Using a traditional loom to produce Scottish tartans only adds to the authenticity of your bespoke piece. Choosing to have your kilt stain proofed will also help to preserve your kilt for many years so it may be passed on through the generations in your family as an heirloom is your wish.

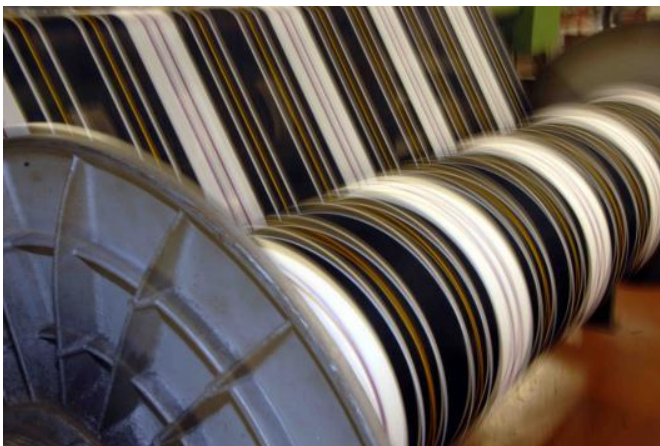
## Preparing the Yarn

When preparing the wool yarn for your kilt we begin with your chosen colours. All yarn used for making kilts comes from sheep in New Zealand and Australia. Once the sheep are sheered the yarn is clipped, washed clean and sent to the yarn dyers to be spun and dyed.



## Warping, Weaving and Finishing

Once the yarn is dyed it is sent onto the weaver. The weaver then adds all colour yarns to the drum for warping. Yarns are wound on by colour. The yarn is then fed through a weaving machine to be woven.



Once the tartan is woven it is cut off and sent to the finishers to be washed, checked and fully finished.



If you wish you can request to have your kilt Teflon coated for an additional cost. Teflon coating ensures your kilt is rain, stain and even beer proof! The wool has the same handle and is fully breathable, making them safe to wear to rugby and football matches. For more information see page 19.



The tartan is then sent back to the mill for a final inspection and then sent on to one of our kilt makers.



## Types of Tartan

### **Modern**

Modern tartans are woven in rich, dark colours. The colours are always stronger and can be worn with navy blue or black jackets.



*MacDonald of Clan Ranald Modern*

### **Ancient**

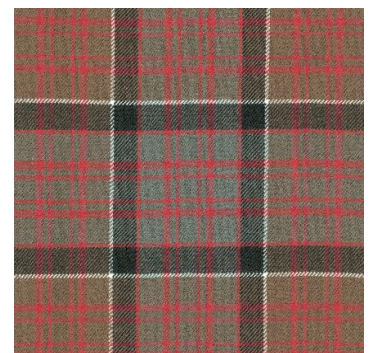
Ancient tartans are woven in soft, lighter colours. Ancient tartans can be worn with black or a range of tweed jackets.



*MacDonald of Clan Ranald Ancient*

### **Weathered or Muted**

Weathered or muted tartans are woven in faded and muted colours. This gives the tartan an older appearance. In olden days, these tartans were coloured by natural pigment dyes.



*MacDonald of Clan Ranald  
Weathered or Muted*



## Hunting

Hunting tartan tends to be woven in darker colours, more commonly in green for a camouflage effect.



*MacDonald of Clan Ranald Hunting*

## Dress Tartan

Dress tartans are basically any of the above tartans woven with lots of white through the design. Dress tartans are generally worn by women.



*MacDonald of Clan Ranald Dress*

## Kilt Weights

Kilts come in several weights of cloth. The 110z cloth is very light weight and more suitable for ladies skirts, gents trousers, waistcoats, children's kilts and some professional dancing kilts. For gent's kilts, we recommend anything from 130z medium weight to 160z heavy weight cloth this being the real "Rolls Royce" of kilts. All of our kilts are 8 yards, traditionally handmade in pure wool. The heavy weight 160z kilt cloth sits, swings and looks a million dollars, compared to a 130z medium weight kilt, and it is NOT any warmer. It is the weight of the jacket which makes the heat difference. All of our Houston's jackets are super light weight and stain-proofed.

**19 oz** kilts are generally for regimental wear but are available in around six tartans.

**16 oz/17oz** kilts are the largest range available with a choice of around 14,000 tartans. Heavy weight kilts are the best as the kilt sits and swings better. Heavy weight tartans can also be Teflon coated making them stain proof. Contrary to popular belief, heavy weight kilts are not any warmer than medium or lightweight kilts. It is in fact the top half of your outfit such as your jacket and waistcoat that generate heat. The majority of jackets are heavy weight however; Houston's have perfected their own super light weight jacket which has a great cut and comfortable fit.

**13oz** Medium weight kilts are normally produced for Irish and Welsh national tartans. Medium weight kilts come in a choice of around 1000 tartans

**11oz** light weight cloth would normally be woven for ladies skirts, gents' trousers and waistcoats, children's kilts, children's trousers and ties. Kilts do not have a hem around the bottom of the garment however; children's kilts can be cut for growth. A hem of around 2 to 3 inches will be added, and can then be let down when the child grows a bit taller.

**8 oz** fabric is used to make coordinating ties or bow ties and also ladies dresses.

**Wool**, like the 110oz lightweight cloth can be used for ladies and gents' trousers and waistcoats.

**Silk** is available in 80 tartans and can be used to make ties, bow ties, waistcoats and ladies dresses.

**Cotton and Poly Cotton** can be used to make napkins and shirts. It is also used for school uniforms and corporate wear.

**Poly Viscose** is a washable and stained proof fabric generally used for school uniforms, children's highland wear and corporate wear.

### Teflon Coating

Houston's also have an exclusive service of Teflon coating tartans/kilts to make them stain resistant, this service can only be done at time of ordering the kilt on all our own Cloths. All kilts are individually hand tailored to your own specification in a range of 6 different available kilt finishes from handmade kilts through to machine-finished kilts.



Teflon Coating

Teflon coating ensures your kilt is rain, stain and even beer proof! The wool has the same handle and is fully breathable, making them safe to wear to rugby and football matches.

We calculate that over the life span of your kilt you will save approximately £180 to £260, not having to get your kilt dry cleaned as often. This also helps the environment. The Teflon coating lasts a minimum of 18 dry cleans

## FURTHER HELP AND INFO



Owner of Houston's Ken MacDonald has had his own kilt for over 30 years and it is well maintained due proper care and storage.

For further information on tartans as well as advice on what to wear and how to wear it please view our helpful video clips at

[www.kiltmakers.com/tv/](http://www.kiltmakers.com/tv/)