



12th March, 2021

Unique light show launches celebrations for Sir Walter Scott 250th anniversary

A spectacular light show will launch the international celebrations for the 250th anniversary of the life and works of Sir Walter Scott on Saturday 20th March, World Storytelling Day.

The night sky at Smailholm Tower, in the Scottish Borders, will be lit up by the world premiere of a brand-new short film of the Young Scott, created by video artist, Andy McGregor.

The launch event is being funded by EventScotland and organised by Abbotsford, home of Sir Walter Scott, on behalf of the global Walter Scott 250 Partnership.

An online broadcast of the event will introduce the Smailholm Tower light show to a worldwide audience from 6pm (GMT) on Saturday 20th March. The broadcast will be presented by Brian Taylor, former BBC correspondent and past President of the Edinburgh Sir Walter Scott Club. It will feature well known Scott fans including award-winning author and presenter Damian Barr, Scottish historian Professor Sir Tom Devine, TV presenter, author and journalist Kirsty Wark and Outlander author Diana Gabaldon.

Viewers will be able to access the show by visiting the anniversary website, walterscott250.com, at 6pm on Saturday March 20th.

Giles Ingram, Chief Executive of Abbotsford, Scott's home near Melrose in the Scottish Borders, said:

"Abbotsford is delighted to be leading a partnership of over 50 organisations who will be celebrating the 250th anniversary of Scott's birth from now until August 2022. World Storytelling Day seemed the appropriate time to launch the celebrations, as Scott is renowned as one of the world's greatest storytellers, and his global impact is reflected in the range and diversity of our partners."

"Smailholm Tower is next door to the farm where Scott lived as a boy, and his early experiences here continued to inspire him throughout his life. Scott's life and death is written on the Borders landscape, so Smailholm's intimate link with Scott gives it a particular potency and magic as we begin the celebrations of his 250th year."

VisitScotland Film & Creative Industries Manager Jenni Steele said: "Sir Walter Scott has long been considered the father of the modern Scottish tourism industry, who ignited an interest in Scotland as a visitor destination with his early works such as the poem *The Lady of the Lake* and later, his novel *Waverley*. His life and works are an important piece of the fabric of Scotland's rich history and continue to play an important role in drawing visitors to explore the locations connected to the writer himself, as well as the places brought to life in his work."



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With one in six people inspired to visit destinations they know from books, TV or film, the year-long programme of celebrations to mark this important milestone will help shine the spotlight on his legacy in the Scottish Borders, as well as right across the country.

“It is fantastic to see Smailholm Tower in the Scottish Borders and its rich associations with Scott take a central role in the launch event and we are delighted to be supporting the launch activity through Scotland's Events Recovery Fund. While people are not able to visit locations associated with Scott at the moment, we hope that these celebrations will provide inspiration to visit in the future. We look forward to supporting and promoting this programme throughout 2021 and as we look to celebrate the Year of Stories in 2022 we expect interest in Scott to only grow.

“Tourism and events is a force for good and has a part to play in not just providing jobs and economic benefits to every corner of Scotland but also bringing benefits to wellbeing and society.”

Russel Griggs OBE, Chair of South of Scotland Enterprise, said: *“It is fantastic that the story of Sir Walter Scott is being celebrated, 250 years on. Scott’s influence remains hugely significant, from his literary work to his magnificent Abbotsford home which has been one of the Borders’ most popular visitor destinations for many years.*

“With COVID-19 still with us, the 250th programme will be largely virtual, which should open it up to even more people to participate right across the globe.”

Alex Paterson, CEO of Historic Environment Scotland, said: *“Walter Scott remains an iconic and important figure in Scotland’s story, both historically and culturally and HES is looking forward to playing our part in celebrating the 250th anniversary of his life and works.*

“Smailholm Tower is a wonderful site and given Scott’s well-known connection to it, it makes for the perfect location to launch the programme commemorating one of our country’s best known cultural icons.”

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Issued by The Abbotsford Trust on behalf of the Walter Scott 250 Partnership. For further information, please contact Angela Stormont, Marketing & Communications Manager. Tel 07771 577784, email media@scottsassbotsford.co.uk

Notes to Editors

Smailholm Tower launch show Preview

To enable media to capture footage and images of this unique event in advance of its live online broadcast, we are inviting you to attend a preview showing of the light show on the evenings preceding the launch: **Wednesday 17th, Thursday 18th & Friday 19th March**. To capture the extraordinary setting and the projections on the Tower, we would recommend the optimum time for capturing images is around sunset, circa 6pm. Please contact Angela Stormont, Abbotsford Marketing & Communications Manager, on 07771 577784 or email media@scottsassbotsford.co.uk to make arrangements.

If you cannot attend the preview of the light show we can supply professional video footage, photographs and text for your use. Material will also be available on the Walter Scott 250 website: www.walterscott250.com



Interviews can be arranged on request with several people including:

- Professor Sir Tom Devine, Scottish historian;
- Damian Barr, award winning author and presenter;
- Kirsty Archer-Thompson, Abbotsford Collections & Interpretation Manager;
- Giles Ingram, Abbotsford Chief Executive;
- Representatives of Walter Scott 250 Partners and supporting organisations;
- Experts on Sir Walter Scott.

To arrange interviews please contact Angela Stormont, Abbotsford Marketing & Communications Manager, on 07771 577784 or email media@scottsassbotsford.co.uk.

EventScotland: EventScotland is working to make Scotland the perfect stage for events. By developing an exciting portfolio of sporting and cultural events EventScotland is helping to raise Scotland's international profile and boost the economy by attracting more visitors. For further information about EventScotland, its funding programmes and latest event news visit www.EventScotland.org. Follow EventScotland on Twitter @EventScotNews.

EventScotland is a team within VisitScotland's Events Directorate, the national tourism organisation which markets Scotland as a tourism destination across the world, gives support to the tourism industry and brings sustainable tourism growth to Scotland.

For more information about VisitScotland see www.visitscotland.org or for consumer information on Scotland as a visitor destination see www.visitscotland.com.

Further information on the Walter Scott 250 Anniversary: www.walterscott250.com

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Celebratory Light Show

The light show to launch the 250th anniversary celebrations was created by artist Andy McGregor and his team: Artist & Illustrator, Jenny Soep; Composer and sound designer, Hamish Brown; Fiddle player, Morag Currie; and 3D Animator, John Butler.

It will be beamed on to two facades of Smailholm Tower and uses 3D images, music and quotes from Scott to tell the story of how his imagination was inspired by the land and the Borders tales which triggered his creativity. This ultimately led to his decision to *"make my bread by storytelling... and honest bread it is... I will dig in the mines of my imagination to find diamonds."*

Further information on Andy McGregor & previous work: www.andymcgregor.com

The Walter Scott 250 Partnership

The Walter Scott 250 Partnership comprises a diverse range of international organisations including: Scottish Clan associations in the UK, America and Australia; universities in Scotland, America and Germany; museums and visitor attractions across the UK; and a wide range of other organisations including a distillery, historical societies, geological society and owners of the Dandie Dinmont terrier, named after a character in Scott's novel *Guy Mannering*.



The Partnership also has support from several public bodies including the Scottish Government, South of Scotland Enterprise, VisitScotland, EventScotland, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Borders Council and the South of Scotland Destination Alliance.

The current list of partners and supporting organisations is attached to the email that was issued with this press release.

The celebrations

A wide range of events are planned by the various Partners in the run up to Scott's anniversary on August 15th and for the 12 months after this date.

Events include storytelling, theatre productions, opera, a Dandie Dinmont Derby, exhibitions and talks. Due to the Covid pandemic many events will be online, enabling people from all parts of the UK and beyond to enjoy the celebrations, while others are still to be confirmed or are planned for later in the year.

Events will be added to the Walter Scott 250 Partnership website as they are confirmed. For the latest list see: www.walterscott250.com

The Abbotsford Trust

The Abbotsford Trust was formed in 2007 following the death of Dame Jean Maxwell Scott, the last descendant of Sir Walter Scott to live in the house. The Trust's Patron is the Duke of Buccleuch and it also has one of Scott's descendants among its members.

The Abbotsford Trust aims to preserve, protect and improve Abbotsford and its surroundings for the benefit and enjoyment of the public and also aims to enhance knowledge and understanding about the life and works of Sir Walter Scott.

Website: www.scottsabbotsford.com

VisitScotland

VisitScotland is Scotland's national tourism organisation. Its core purpose is to maximise the economic benefit of tourism to Scotland.

The organisation's key objective is to contribute to Scotland Outlook 2030, the national tourism strategy ambition of pursuing a sustainable and responsible tourism agenda.

This will be supported by five overarching strategies: Marketing, Events, Quality and Sustainability, Inclusive Tourism, International Engagement.

Spending by tourists in Scotland generates around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices).

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