

EXPLORE THE **Borders** Magazine



Your gateway to the brilliant borderlands

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April - May
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EXPLORE THE **Borders** Magazine

Explore the Borders Magazine is produced bi-monthly with the twin objectives of promoting the tourism offer in the brilliant borderlands of Scotland and Northumberland - and the all important task of helping you plan ahead for your visit.

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Explore the Borders Magazine is free of charge and e-mailed to desktops everywhere.

You can make sure of a regular copy by getting in touch at the editor's e-mail below.

And if you have a story you would like to tell or an event coming up we would love to hear from you.

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Welcome to the brilliant borderlands

Spring is in the air, temperatures are on the rise (or at least on the horizon) and the south of Scotland has never been so inviting for visitors.

Winning the biggest haul of Visit Scotland Thistle Awards at the national 2023 awards ceremony represented a huge accolade for the region and there's more to follow.

In this issue we carry a special feature on South of Scotland Destination Alliance's future plans, anchored around its Responsible Tourism Strategy that will shape the way ahead for the next decade.

There's also plenty of ideas and information to help you plan ahead and make the most of your stay in the borderlands, where there's always a warm welcome waiting.

David Pike

Editor

The magazine that helps you plan ahead

Coming Up

7 Antiques roadshow is borders bound

The Antiques Road Show is coming to Thirlestane Castle at Lauder in July. A chance to book your trip to the event.



30 300 words

A challenge has been thrown out to youngsters in the borders to get creative and take part in the 300 Words competition.



Scotland Starts Here:
A Responsible Tourism Strategy for the
South of Scotland

2024 - 2034

Special supplement | 15-22



12-13 Ad Gefrin

Celebrating history and raising spirits - we take a close look at one of tourism's top newcomers in the region - the museum and whisky distillery of Ad Gefrin at Wooler.



28 A pub with a tale to tell



The Globe Inn at Dumfries is a special place. Dating back to 1610 it was Rabbe Burns favourite haunt. We take a look at it's fascinating story.

Your perfect travel companion

Whether its a day trip, a weekend break or an extended stay - it's essential to plan ahead.

And the borderlands of south Scotland offers something for everyone.

Explore the Borders is your perfect companion for information on places of interest, activities, where to stay and where to get a decent meal.

The promotional package is delivered by experienced journalists, writers and photographers, drawing from the key themes of :-

- Historic Borders
- Border towns
- Romans and Reivers
- Borderlines - News
- Active Borders
- Trips and Trails
- Homes and Gardens
- Arts and Crafts
- Stay in the Borders
- Good food guide

Explore the Borders Magazine also keeps you up-to-date with events and entertainments coming up for the two months ahead.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE RIVER TWEED



The Tweed Foundation is a charitable trust working to protect, improve and enhance the stocks of all native freshwater fish species within the River Tweed system. We are at the forefront in bringing a professional, scientific approach to fisheries management and are engaged in an extensive programme of biological monitoring, habitat enhancement and education.

RIVER  TWEED

www.rivertweed.org.uk

Red carpet roll out for BBC favourite

Fiona Bruce and the Antiques Roadshow team will be back on the road this summer, filming the 47th series of one of the BBC's most loved programmes.

And Thirlestane Castle in Lauder will provide a magnificent backdrop for the programme on July 2.

Open to the public as usual with ticketed events, the team are inviting guests to tell them about their treasured pieces ahead of the time by submitting pictures and information about their items through the Antiques Roadshow website below.

The team are on the hunt for a broad mix of antiques, family heirlooms and vintage treasures.

Every show features specialists in the fields of jewellery, silver, ceramics, glass, pictures, rare books, clocks and watches, and militaria, as well as a team of experts with knowledge of all things collectable – from retro toys to movie and music memorabilia, from ancient antiquities to costume jewellery, from mid-century furniture to vintage fashion.

Presenter Fiona Bruce, who will be filming her seventeenth series of Antiques Roadshow, says: "A new series of the Antiques Roadshow begins again and I, for one, can't wait.

"Travelling the length and breadth of the UK to see what the great British public have pulled out of their attics and off their shelves.

"I know we'll see items of great quality and value - but I'm always drawn in by a moving personal story too. They are what often stick longest in my memory.

"And I'm determined to improve my record on Basic, Better, Best. Surely I've got to get more of them right this year!"

• *Dating back to the 16th century, Thirlestane Castle is one of the oldest and finest inhabited castles in Scotland.*

It is home to some of the finest decorative plasterwork ceilings in Europe, as well one of the most extensive family collections of portraits and busts in Scotland.

More at www.thirlestanecastle.c.uk

www.exploretheborders.com



 ANTIQUES ROADSHOW

BBC - Antiques Roadshow

Applications are now open for free tickets and to showcase items for the event. To apply for both please visit

www.bbc.co.uk/antiquesroadshow

Wild, woolly, wide open spaces at Beirhope

It was a visit to the Scottish Borders that would turn out to be a life changing moment for Lynne and Alan Jobs.

A visit to view Beirhope Farm in the upper reaches of the Kale Valley, surrounded by the imposing Cheviot Hills, was to turn dreams of living in Scotland into reality.

“As soon as I arrived at Beirhope I could feel there was something special about the place. The setting is magnificent, way off the beaten track, and perfect for making the most of those natural settings,” said Lynne.

The couple owned horses but had no experience of farming; what took shape was a partnership with Mother Nature and the launch of Beirhope Alpacas.

Eight years on and Lynne is now in charge of one of the area's tourism hot-spots.

Beirhope is now home to a family of 25 alpacas and the starting point for breathtaking walks in the surrounding countryside - locations that boast five Iron Age hill forts, Roman roads and trails once used by the Border Reivers.

Last year it was a finalist for the Best Outdoor or Adventure Experience for the south of Scotland Thistle Awards - recognising the best on offer in the tourism sector.

The farm also offers off-grid, eco friendly camping and caters for special occasions all year round - *Santa and alpacas is now an annual favourite* - as well as group visits.

“We met some alpacas by chance and were captivated. They fitted the ambitions we had to develop Beirhope and we now have a growing family of them at the farm.

“We set about encouraging visitors from both the local community and the wider market to get closer to nature; providing facilities for people to immerse themselves in the sights and sounds of the countryside.

“We have grown steadily over the years and like to think we have something for everyone who travels to Beirhope. Alternatively, we can bring alpacas to people for weddings, fun days and fetes,” added Lynne.

The example set by Beirhope has produced other interesting spin-offs - not least the opportunity to farm the alpaca wool to produce and sell yarn (on sale at the Beirhope shop); a job handled locally by the Border Mill at Duns.

It comes at a time when visitor orientated activities is

becoming more and more important in the farming community.

Lynne was one of eight new destination leaders appointed by Scottish Agritourism last year as many farms look at ways to embrace diversification.

She took on the role of



destination leader and ambassador for the Scottish Borders and dedicates time helping and advising those looking to make diversification work.

Scottish Agritourism currently has 262 members, including 45 businesses based in the Scottish Borders. Current annual estimates show Scottish Agritourism to be worth £60m and farm retail £110m, figures that are targeted to grow to £330 by 2030.



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Centenary celebrations for one of Hawick's own

by David Pike

I never had the privilege of meeting Bill McLaren in person but, like hordes of other dedicated followers of rugby, there was always the feeling that you knew the man behind the microphone.

Walking around the Bill McLaren Centenary Exhibition at Hawick Museum in Wilton Park serves only to reinforce that feeling of familiarity.

Here, laid out before us, are the life and times of a sporting superstar - *Bill will forever be remembered as the 'voice of rugby'* - who

effortlessly balanced international fame with normal life in his home town of Hawick, as the man next door.

As a wee boy Murray Watson used to see Bill McLaren every week. "I used to pick up a bundle of Hawick Express from Bill at the newspaper office and deliver them to the newsagent next door to where I lived. I got a Hawick Ball for my trouble".

Working with Bill's daughter Linda Lawson, his guiding hand has helped make the Centenary Exhibition a reality...and an absolute joy to visit.

"Rugby is part of the DNA for Hawick folk and the town has had much to celebrate from the sport over the years. We have provided a steady stream of Scottish international players, hosted some amazing matches over the years and, at the top of the achievements list, we have Bill McLaren," said Murray.

From his earliest schools days Bill show prowess on the rugby field and was part of Hawick High School's 1st XV for three years.

He joined the Royal Artillery during WW2, rising to the rank of captain, and spent two years fighting the Germans in Italy: service that saw him in action at Monte Cassino.

When the war ended Bill was appointed as

governor of a prison for civilians in Milan - and while there played rugby for the Combined Services XV.

Demobbed and back in Hawick in 1947 he was back at Mansfield Park, Hawick's rugby home, where he earned a formidable reputation as a wing forward, resulting in selection for a Scottish Select XV and an international trial.

High hopes were cruelly dashed when Bill developed tuberculosis in 1948. He spent two

years in East Fortune Hospital and Sanatorium in East Lothian where he was one of six guinea pigs to receive the new miracle drug

streptomycin. Another factor in his recovery were weekly visits from his girlfriend Bette - soon to become Mrs McLaren.

He became PE teacher at Hawick's Primary and High Schools and as a rugby coach he inspired a steady stream of players who would go on to play for Scotland and the British Lions.

Bill also enjoyed working as a local reporter and was recommended as a potential commentator by the editor of the Hawick Express, John Hood.

It is him we have the thank for what was to follow...Bill made his debut behind the mike for a special match at Mansfield Park

featuring a South of Scotland XV against the touring Springboks in 1951.

The rest, as they say, is broadcasting history.

For nearly 50 years his unique style was pre-eminent in the rugby world.

The Centenary Exhibition offers its own broadcasting challenge inviting visitors to take up the microphone to describe Tony Stanger's winning try in the 1990 Grand Slam victory over England.

It was a commentary competition challenge taken up with gusto by local schoolchildren resulting in Cullen Smith, (Hawick) Seren Macdougall (Hawick), Isaac Hastie (Kelso) and Dan Johnston (Galashiels) turning in winning performances.



Picture Gallery (clockwise from top left) - A young Bill playing for Hawick; a recreation of Bill's study on display at the exhibition, Bill in his study at home, daughter Linda with a bust of her dad, teaching rugby skills to a new generation and rugby's best in broadcasting



Bill McLaren
Centenary
Exhibition **100**

Commemorating Hawick's own Voice of Rugby
01 March - 17 June 2024
Hawick Museum & Gallery

March: Fri-Mon 11am to 3pm (closed Tues - Thurs)
April - June: Wed-Mon 11am to 4pm (closed Tues)
Wilton Park Lodge, Hawick, TD9 1L1
Free admission - donations welcome

Ad Gefrin - celebrating history and raising spirits

Seventh century Britain was one of extreme turbulence: where power politics rubbed shoulders with religious rivalry throughout the seven kingdoms that ruled the land.

In Northumbria, stretching from the Firth of Forth to the Humber, a thankfully calmer picture of day-to-day life could be found at Ad Gefrin - *literally* 'at the hill of the goats' - and the location of an Anglo-Saxon royal palace.

It's discovery, a few miles north of Wooler, in 1949 was made thanks to aerial photography and was followed by extensive excavations; revealing a complex of timber halls and enclosures and prized artefacts.

It has also handed down a modern day tourism dividend, providing the inspiration for a £16m development that blends history with making whisky.

The 21st century Ad Gefrin, a magnificently presented Anglo-Saxon museum sitting alongside a whisky distillery at Wooler, is about to celebrate its first anniversary and has become a must visit destination for thousands of visitors.

The first year visitor target of 35,000 has been exceeded by 20,000 and Ad Gefrin was listed as one of the ten most exciting new museums of 2023 by the distinguished Smithsonian Institute in America.

We have business couple Alan and Eileen Ferguson, who found success in the transport haulage sector, to thank for the new Ad Gefrin, a project that is now making history in its own right.

They are determined to establish a world class visitor attraction and one that benefits both the region and the local community.

The Ad Gefrin Creative Design Challenge signalled a drive to support local businesses that has introduced the work of local artisans in the



Lifting standards

The long and painstaking road to world class malt whisky is underway at Ad Gefrin.

We are sure that will be worth waiting for.

In the meantime head distiller, Ben Murphy, has created four blended varieties that have proved very popular.

The range that includes Tacnora (above) that fittingly translates as Standard Bearer.

museum gift shop.

The museum itself is a re-imagining of the royal palace at Yeaveering where the story of 7th century life unfolds with a film presentation.

The museum showcases some of the finest examples of artefacts including the Castle Eden claw beaker (courtesy of the British Museum), brooches and items excavated from the Ad Gefrin site.

Distillery Tours and Tastings offer a fitting finale for visitors who are introduced to the crafting process using the finest malted barley and pure Cheviot water pumped up from 200m below the distillery.

All in all a visit that would have King Edwin and King Oswald offering a royal toast.

Coming Up

April 2-14: Enjoy extended opening hours and themed activities throughout the Easter School Holidays.

April 6 to 27: Ad Gefrin's new Spring Lecture Series will take place every Saturday with experts leading talks and workshops on a range of subjects:

April 6, 10.30-12.30pm:

Margaret Watchorn, a prominent figure in Northumberland's musical heritage, will lead a 90-minute singing workshop entitled 'Crossing the Border - traditional songs from the North East'. Tickets are priced at £20 per person and are available to book here.

April 13, 11.00-12.30pm: Dr. Alan Rutherford OBE will share insights from his illustrious career spanning five decades in the whisky industry.

April 18: Join Wendy and Stuart Findley, the creative force behind Acle Early Medieval Re-enactment Society, for a hands-on Anglo-Saxon embroidery workshop.



Ad Gefrin

WHERE

Wooler, Northumberland, NE71 6NU

GET IN TOUCH

Tel: 01668281 554
e: info@adgefirin.co.uk
w: adgefirin.co.uk

OPEN

From 10am to 6pm every day apart from Tuesday when the centre is closed.

Absolute classics at Dabton House



Dabton House is proud to announce an unforgettable weekend of classical music that promises an extraordinary experience for classical music enthusiasts.

Set against the picturesque backdrop of Dumfries and Galloway in South West Scotland, Absolute Classics brings a unique offering of classical music to Dabton House in May, featuring renowned musicians and rising talents alike.

Guests are invited to immerse themselves in either a one night, or full weekend of classical music indulging in dinner, bed, and breakfast while enjoying intimate concerts featuring the emerging musicians of Dumfries and Galloway.

Founded in 2014 by the visionary Artistic Director, Alex McQuiston, Absolute Classics has become synonymous with excellence in classical music presentation.

Over the years, the organisation has showcased some of the finest classical musicians to audiences while also nurturing and supporting emerging talents.

From celebrated performers like Evelyn Glennie, Tamsin Little, and Peter Donohoe to rising stars such as Hugo Eedle and Catriona Arthur, Absolute Classics has consistently delivered unforgettable performances.

The event at Dabton House will feature a diverse lineup of performances over the weekend by emerging artists, all from Dumfries and Galloway and having studied at prestigious conservatoires.

The schedule for the event is as follows:

Friday, May 17: 6:30 PM - 7:30 PM: Iona McDonald Concert

Saturday, May 18: 11:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Will Archibald Concert

6:30 PM - 8:30 PM: Hugo Eedle, Catriona Arthur & Lewis Menzies Concert

Sunday, May 19: 2:30 PM - 3:30 PM: Callum Walton Concert

The intimate concert room at Dabton House, the Drawing Room, offers seating for up to 35 guests, providing a cozy and immersive setting for each performance.

Pianist Yuki Negishi has been invited to join the event, adding an extra layer of musical excellence to the performances.

For tickets and further information, please visit Absolute Classics Event - Dabton House email info@dabtonhouse.co.uk or call +44 7552 736 599.



A special supplement reporting on the most ambitious announcement ever made for the tourism sector in south of Scotland



We want to tell you OUR story

Tourism leaders from across the south of Scotland have unveiled an inspirational strategy for growth over the next ten years.

Led by the South of Scotland Destination Alliance, the region aims to become the country's fastest growing visitor economy by 2034 - growing the visitor economy by £1 billion to £1.7 billion and creating a further 6,000 jobs along the way.

Backed by a strategic partnership that includes Dumfries & Galloway and Scottish Borders Councils, South Scotland Enterprise and Visit Scotland, the strategy will spearhead initiatives and developments to establish year round appeal for visitors - a region that is **GO TO not go through**.

It was warmly welcomed by tourism providers from south of Scotland who attended the launch at Easterbrook Hall in Dumfries. In this special supplement we take a look at the strategy's key points.

Tops for tourism: left-right Steve Rogers, Head of Economy and Development, Dumfries and Galloway Council; Scottish Borders Council Leader Euan Jardine; Councillor Scott Hamilton, Scottish Borders Council's Executive Member for Community and Business Development; David Hope-Jones, Chief Executive of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance; Tourism Minister Richard Lochhead; Karen Jackson, SOSE's Director of Strategy, Partnerships and Engagement; Mark Rowley, SOSE Strategy Manager Tourism and Gordon Smith, VisitScotland Destination Development Director.



Making south Scotland the GO TO destination

The South of Scotland's tourism sector is on the up...and over the next ten years the sky's the limit.

That was the upbeat message from the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) to delegates attending its third annual conference.

The event, held in The Crichton's impressive Easterbrook Hall in Dumfries, provided a launchpad for a 10-year strategy that aims to deliver:-

- **Increasing tourism spend by £1 billion to £1.76 billion by 2034**
- **Creating a further 6,000 tourism-related jobs over the next decade**
- **Developing a year-round destination**
- **Increasing the number of higher-spending, longer-staying international visitors**

The new Responsible Tourism Strategy builds on the success of the initial five-year Covid recovery strategy that has exceeded its targets two years early.

It has been shaped, with input from hundreds of businesses, organisations and communities across the Scottish Borders and Dumfries & Galloway.



This is an exciting time for the south of Scotland, a region that plays a unique role in our tourism industry.

The magnificent performance in the national Thistle awards points to a region brimming with potential to attract visitors into Scotland as a gateway to the country.

And it has the attractions to match...from the Great Tapestry of Scotland in Galashiels and the Trimontium Museum in Melrose to picturesque Port Logan near Stranraer.

After the knocks of Brexit, the pandemic, Ukraine and the cost of living crisis, tourism is bouncing back, faster than any other sector and it's important that we build on that momentum.



Our Responsible Tourism Strategy sets out where we all want tourism in South Scotland to be in ten years time - a game-changing moment for Team South.

**David Hope-Jones
Chief Executive of the
South of Scotland Destination Alliance**



The South of Scotland welcomed more than 5 million domestic visitors in 2022.

This helped to contribute £324 million to the local economy and support 10% of local jobs.

The benefits of tourism for the Borders were on clear display at last year's UCI Cycling World Championships, held at Glentworth Forest in Tweeddale.

The event attracted international audiences in addition to a boost of over £8 million to the region's economy, bringing employment opportunities for young people from across the Borders.

South of Scotland Destination Alliance's ambitious new Responsible Tourism Strategy was developed through collaborative work between the Scottish Government, local authority areas and many local organisations and businesses.

The plan will put the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway on the map as 'must visit' areas, and I will do my utmost to support this over the course of the year.

**Richard Lochhead MSP
Tourism Minister**

A strategy that sets the highest standards

The Responsible Tourism Strategy, developed jointly by SSDA, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Scottish Borders Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council and Visit Scotland, sets out 22 priority areas for action built into four key objectives:-

- Inspire visitors to come to the South of Scotland
- Develop the visitor experience with a focus on quality
 - Support business to succeed
- Act responsibly for long-term collective benefit

In his keynote speech formally announcing the launch of the strategy, David Hope-Jones, Chief Executive of SSDA, said: "Tourism in the South of Scotland is enjoying significant success, with ambitious economic and job creation targets achieved two years early.

"For the first time ever, the South won more national Thistle Awards than any other region at Visit Scotland's annual event that showcases the best of Scotland's tourism industry.

"Now is the time for us to come together, map out the next ten years and grow our visitor economy by £1 billion. This new strategy needs to be owned by everyone and we shall be reporting quarterly on how we are doing.

"We want south of Scotland to be the GO TO region and not go-through. It is a truly remarkable region that offers something for everyone and has a fabulous story to tell.

"That will be a fundamental objective as our Responsible Tourism Strategy unfolds," said David.



This is a hugely important piece of work and shows the strength of ambition in our partners in the South of Scotland to create a responsible tourism destination for the region.

Dumfries and Galloway, and the Scottish Borders create a truly incredible visitor destination.

The strategy presents an opportunity for the region to raise its profile to the world and grow visitor demand in line with the needs of businesses and local communities.

Our vision is for Scotland to be one of the most economically, environmentally, and socially sustainable destinations in the world.

We look forward to working with our partners to deliver this bold new approach for the South of Scotland."

Michael Roughead
Chief Executive of Visit Scotland



This is a very useful document to enable us to plan our way forward.

All too often visitors to our region pas through and we need to encourage them to stay. It would be to our mutual benefit; helping our economy and allowing tourists to enjoy the spectacular scenery D&G has to offer.

Cllr Ian Carruthers
Chair - Economy and Resources Committee



Dumfries & Galloway



I welcome this strategy and it is a good example of partnership working where we have a common vision. It is an ambitious goal, but one that we will tackle together for the benefit of visitors and our economy.

Cllr David Inglis
Economy and Resources Committee



From incredible heritage to fantastic events throughout the year, our product is unique in Scotland and worldwide.

The South of Scotland's new responsible tourism strategy is vital to delivering and promoting this region nationally and globally.

The tagline 'Scotland Starts Here' resonates deeply, and I can think of no better place to start a journey into our wonderful country than the South of Scotland.

So, we are effectively gatekeepers and reputation managers for the beautiful country we live in.

They say you need to state something a hundred times before people will listen and take it in.

So, for the 100th time, I will declare that the South of Scotland often talks about punching above its weight, but we need to stop saying that because we are a HEAVYWEIGHT region!

Cllr Euan Jardine
Leader, Scottish Borders Council



Copies of the Responsible Tourist Strategy and the associated action plan can be downloaded here ...

<https://sosrep.dumgal.gov.uk/scotland-starts-here>

A region for all the right reasons and seasons

One of the key objectives of the Responsible Tourism Strategy is to develop the South of Scotland as a year-round destination.

The region currently has a comparatively short season and dedicated moves are being put in place that will provide greater economic benefit and enhanced year-round employment.

Having capacity throughout the year and across the region provides the opportunity to spread visitors seasonally and geographically.

Extending the season is not an easy task and will not happen overnight: not all businesses wish to open year-round.

A collective approach is being introduced enabling the tourism sector to take incremental steps to achieve results.

This will involve bringing new visitors in through the shoulder months and off-season, and ensuring there is a quality experience on offer when they do.

Key objectives include:-

- **Undertaking a baseline seasonality audit and track progress annually**
- **Facilitating local collaboration between businesses to support the development of a year-round offering, in which visitors can be signposted to attractions, restaurants and accommodation which are open, whenever they visit**
- **Identifying potential clusters – these could be locations, themes, activities, events – and work with businesses and communities to develop a seasonal offer, where relevant maximising our natural capital**
- **Marketing the region as a year-round destination, highlighting the key offerings in each season to relevant target segments within a 2-4 hour drive.**

Achieving goals set out in the strategy is seen very much as a regional team effort involving strategic organisations and tourism providers.

Following months of discussions and consultations throughout the South of Scotland the Strategy was shared with businesses and communities as the final part of the exercise.

And the feedback was overwhelmingly positive with:-

- **84% felt there had been an inclusive, transparent and fair consultation in the development of this strategy**
- **93% of respondents who in putted to the consultation felt their views are represented in the strategy**
- **95% saw themselves being involved in the delivery of the strategy somehow**
- **97% saw themselves benefiting from the strategy**

Quarterly updates from the South of Scotland Destination Alliance will help keep Team South Scotland up to date on progress.



I have always said that tourism is in everything the South of Scotland does.

So, when South of Scotland Enterprise was formed in 2020, one of our first major investments was to commit £2.7million over a five year period to help set up the South of Scotland Destination Alliance.

It confirmed SOSE's desire to be ambitious and bold for our region, and to highlight that Scotland Starts Here.

It also provided vital support to help the tourism and hospitality sector to begin the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

While there remains challenges, there are many more opportunities, as was demonstrated at the recent SSDA conference in Dumfries.

The conference highlighted that two main targets after COVID - of establishing a £750million visitor economy and increasing the associated number of jobs by 6,500 in the South – have been achieved two years ahead of schedule.

This has allowed even more ambitious targets to be put in place for the coming few years, which are included in the new South of Scotland Responsible Tourism Strategy.

The Strategy aims to grow tourism spend in the South of Scotland from £1billion to £1.76bn by 2034, and support a further 6,000 jobs in the sector to 20,000 FTE by 2034.

All the partners are absolutely committed to the new Strategy, which will deliver the best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities and our environment.

Prof Russel Griggs
Chair for South of Scotland Enterprise
& South of Scotland Regional
Economic Partnership



The Thistle Awards are back

After a hugely successful first year, the South of Scotland's regional Thistle Awards are back for 2024.

Showcasing the finest in Scottish tourism and hospitality across the region, nominations are now open.

South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) has announced that Peebles Hydro in the Scottish Borders will host this year's Thistles on October 3.

Tourism and hospitality businesses across the South of Scotland are urged to throw their hat into the ring and enter the awards that celebrate the brightest and best in their sector.

Spearheaded at national level by VisitScotland, in collaboration with regional partners, the 2024 awards mark the 30th anniversary of the initiative.

Last year saw the first ever South of Scotland Thistle Awards take place, culminating in a fabulous awards celebration at the Cairndale Hotel in Dumfries and attended by the leading lights of tourism and hospitality from right across the region.

And success didn't end there, either – the South of Scotland triumphed at the national finals, taking home six Scottish Thistle Awards, double the number scooped by any other single region.

The 2024 South of Scotland Thistle Awards, will again be sponsored by Caledonia Park and Fishers and delivered by the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA), supported by South of Scotland Enterprise.

During the initial stages, members of the public can show their support and appreciation for a hotel, restaurant, visitor attraction or event.

Formal entries must be submitted by the closing date of April 28, 2024, and a regional shortlist is expected to be announced in July.

Regional winners who scoop a trophy at the awards event at Peebles Hydro in October will go on to fly the flag for the South of Scotland against their fellow regional winners from the rest of Scotland at the national Scottish Thistle Awards.

David Hope-Jones, Chief Executive of the South of Scotland Destination Alliance (SSDA) said: "The South of Scotland Thistle Awards are heading to the Scottish Borders for what promises to be a very special event at Peebles Hydro this October. They shine a very welcome spotlight on the remarkable achievements of our local tourism and hospitality businesses, whose hard work and dedication to quality and excellence really put the South of Scotland on the map as a thriving visitor destination."

Information about how to enter for a Thistle Award can be found at <https://www.ssdalliance.com/thistles/>



Diary dates |

EUROVISION

SONG CONTEST

PARTY


SAT 11th MAY

DUNS VOLUNTEER HALL
7PM TILL LATE


A Heart for Duns

LIVE
MUSIC


DUNS VOLUNTEER HALL



CHAMELEON LADY
19 APRIL




ABBAMANIA
31 MAY

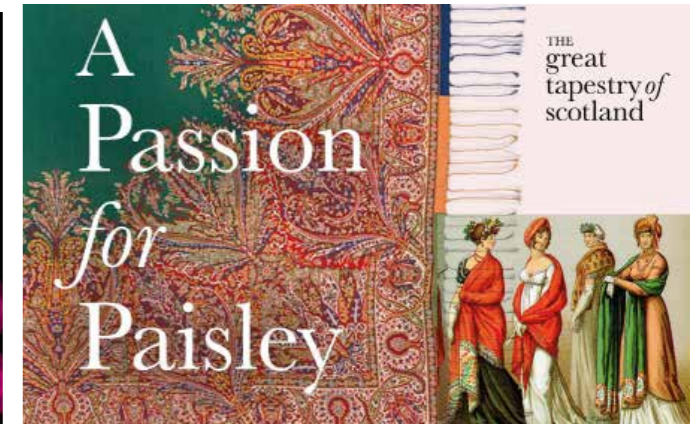


ULTIMATE ROCK SHOW
26 JULY

BOOK TICKETS & SEE THE FULL LINE-UP OF
LIVE MUSIC EVENTS ON OUR WEBSITE

www.aheartforduns.org





Did you know that the Edinburgh Kashmir shawl industry predated the Paisley industry by forty years?

In fact, Edinburgh weavers were the first in Britain to create replicas of the Kashmir shawls brought back from India, the first recorded being in 1767.

Uncover the long-forgotten legacy of Edinburgh's vibrant weaving industry with a display of historic shawls from Heriot-Watt University's Textile Collection.

"A Passion for Paisley" - a special exhibition taking place now until July 12, 2024, at the home of The Great Tapestry of Scotland in Galashiels - is your ticket to explore the intricate threads of history, culture, and fashion that have woven Paisley's enduring legacy.



The Great Tapestry of Scotland

14-20 High St, Galashiels TD1 1SD

The Great Tapestry of Scotland visitor centre is open 09.30-17.00, Tuesday – Saturday.

Tapestry Gallery is open 09.30-16.30. Last ticket is at 3.30pm
Adult entry £10.50. Opening times will vary on a seasonal basis.

More at www.greatapestryofscotland.com

Celebrating literature and life at the Borders Book Festival

Diaries at the ready, book lovers!

Borders Book Festival, a favourite on the literary calendar amongst audiences and authors alike, is back this June at its spiritual home of Harmony Garden, Melrose, in the Scottish Borders.

Running this year from Thursday 13th to Sunday 16th June, the annual extravaganza will feature over four days the very best and brightest voices from the worlds of literature, entertainment, politics, sport, health and lifestyle

There's more than 100 events planned, offering something for every taste, whim and interest.

Festival Directors Alistair Moffat and Paula Ogilvie have given just a few hints at some of the big names appearing this summer.

They include best-selling novelist David Nicholls, acclaimed author of, amongst others, *One Day*, which was a huge hit on publication back in 2009 and was recently released as a Netflix mini-series to rave reviews.

Also in the line-up is children's writing royalty Sir Michael Morpurgo OBE, now celebrating 50 years since first being published and author of more than 150 books.

He is co-founder of the charity Farms for Children, President of Booktrust and former Children's Laureate (2003-2005).

The full book festival programme will be unveiled on Wednesday 24th April, after which tickets will go on sale at www.bordersbookfestival.org.

The Baillie Gifford Children's Programme takes place throughout the day on the Saturday and Sunday (15th & 16th June), bursting at the seams with events to inspire, excite, educate and expand young minds – plus it's great fun for the adults, too!



Alistair Moffat, Director of the Borders Book Festival, said: "It's spring at long last, and it's that wonderful time of year when we open our June diaries and look ahead to four light, warm (hopefully rain-free) days, spent in a haze of bookish chat, food and drink village indulgence and long-overdue catch-ups amid the marquees."

"This year the Borders Book Festival will offer literature alongside lively discussion, comedy twinned with quiet contemplation, political debate set against personal life stories, and sporting prowess on display alongside stars from stage and screen. There really is something for everybody, and we can't wait to let you into the full line-up!"

The winner of this year's prestigious £25,000 Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction, last year won by Lucy Caldwell for *These*

Days, will once again be announced at a special event at the book festival, having recently been taken under the wing of The Abbotsford Trust, a fitting return for the Prize to the home of Sir Walter Scott himself. For more information on the long list of twelve titles, go to: www.walterscottprize.co.uk/news-and-media/

The Box Office opens at 12 noon on Wednesday April 24 with tickets available at www.bordersbookfestival.org or by calling 0131 290 2112.

For further information and to keep in touch visit:

FACEBOOK: <https://www.facebook.com/bordersbookfestival/>

TWITTER/X: <https://twitter.com/BordersBookFest>

INSTAGRAM: <https://www.instagram.com/bordersbookfest/>

An important new green chapter for Borders Book Festival

The Borders Book Festival is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and environmental impact by implementing a number of net zero goals.

These include zero waste to landfill, e-ticketing and making a donation to planting trees for every ticket purchased, to a commitment to no single use plastics on site.

In addition the availability of water refill stations and encouraging sustainable travel initiatives such as electric vehicles for author transport and festival goers the use of public transport or even cycling to the event (bike racks are available on site) are all on the Festival's eco programme.

Organisers are also committed to giving priority given to local contractors and suppliers to help minimise emissions.

Festival Director Paula Ogilvie said: "2023 was our biggest festival yet, with almost 40,000 people coming through the festival site and a combined in-person and online audience of almost 3,000 for our schools events in September.

"Against that backdrop we are more aware than ever of our beautiful environment and are committed to limiting the impact of the festival on our area wherever possible.

"From November onwards, it really is all-go here at BBF. We meet and speak with dozens of publishers from the UK and beyond, and juggle authors' schedules, publicists' plans and travel schedules galore to try to work out who can make it to beautiful Harmony House to join us for our very special festival.

"We're very lucky to be one of the festivals that authors are very keen to come to – well-known for our warm welcome, great hospitality, and, of course, fabulous audiences – so it all comes down to timing and travel plans and logistics!

"This year we'll be welcoming around 100 authors from all around the UK and sometimes beyond, with events ranging from literary fiction and history to science and politics, health and wellbeing to memoirs from well-known faces from all walks of life.

"And of course our family festival has become a firm favourite on the festivals calendar: this year we're beyond delighted to be welcoming Sir Michael Morpurgo, OBE, celebrating more than fifty years in print."

"But BBF is, of course, about even more than books.

It's about the unrivalled atmosphere in Harmony Garden at the height of summer, when the days are long and warm and the food and drink village is in full flow and everybody is mingling and chatting and enjoying every part of our beautiful part of the world has to offer," said Paula.

• **The full line up for the 2024 Festival will be previewed in the June/July issue of Explore the Borders Magazine.**



National Park bid goes live

It's official! The Scottish Borders is now in the running to be Scotland's youngest National Park.

After years of engaging with Borderers from all sectors and walks of life to shape the initial proposal, the Campaign for a Scottish Borders National Park (CSBNP) has made a robust case in its submission to the Scottish Government (see www.scottishbordersnationalpark.com/thebid/).

Says CSBNP spokesman Malcolm Dickson: "All Borderlands areas share the same challenges: low productivity, below average incomes, sluggish employment, a low proportion of graduates, an ageing and flatlining population, and inadequate – and in places, non-existent – infrastructure."

"We know there are no perfect solutions to the challenges that our rural communities, especially farmers, face."

"However, we believe that our proposal goes some way to help address both National Park-related issues such as visitor management, and coordination of funding applications, as well as the wider challenges of habitat restoration, infrastructure improvement, housing, greener transport and energy, and jobs, skills and training."

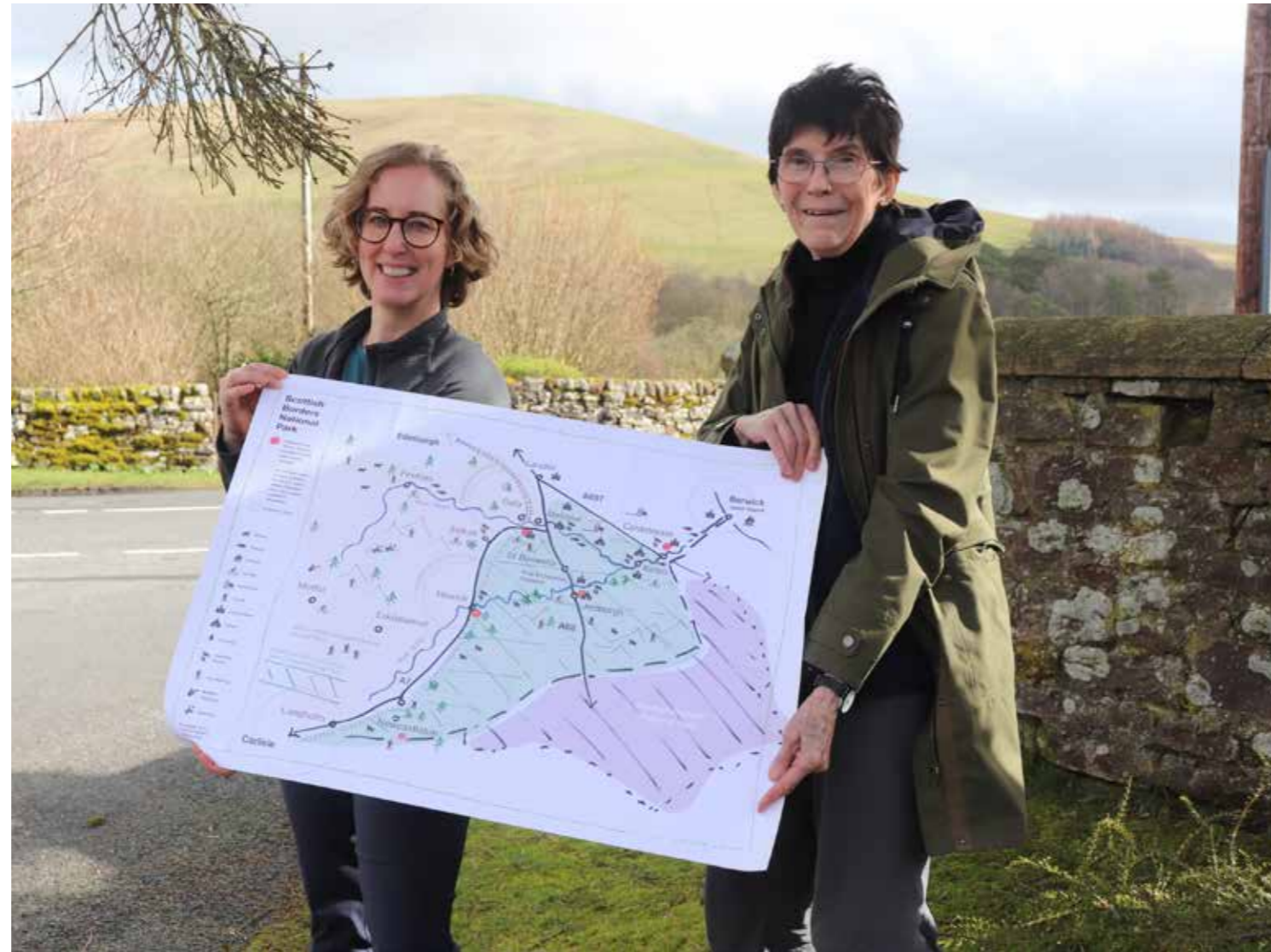
"When the Scottish Borders achieves NP status, the National Park Authority (NPA) should have an elected majority of local representatives. The key will be for farmers and other sector representatives with local knowledge and hands-on experience to be willing to serve on the NPA board."

"Our bid is currently being appraised along with the four applications from other parts of Scotland."

"The successful bid or bids will be announced in the summer, after which there will be a long evaluation and consultation stage so that local businesses and residents can have their say."

"National Park designation for the Borders would not solve all the entwined problems of the region's environment and its communities. But it would help."

"Whether this bid is successful or not, we would like this document (see our website) to communicate, to at least some degree, the fascination and importance of the landscape, its cultural heritage and its potential for the future."



A National Park for the Scottish Borders - how it benefits YOU

The Borders needs more people to visit, stay longer and use our excellent but in many cases underused attractions and facilities. It needs more working age people to put down roots here and use our local businesses and services to keep them going.

A slimline, cost efficient NPA operating as a project manager has the potential, as already demonstrated through CSBNP projects like the Twelve Towers of Rule, to:-

- Raise the region's profile and put the Scottish Borders on the map
- Boost visitor numbers and spend over a much longer season
- Breathe new life into smaller towns and villages by attracting more home workers and young families including leavers and returners to settle and work
- Encourage all Borderers to get out and about to improve their physical and mental health
- Coordinate cluster group grant applications for large and small scale initiatives to boost biodiversity as well as different sectors ie farming, food and drink and tourism
- Promote the region's natural and cultural heritage to engage and encourage healthier and happier residents - and happy and healthier visitors
- Promote/encourage rural diversification including housing development for rental/purchase.

Left: Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity Lorna Slater meets CSBNP team leader Professor Jane Bower and members of the campaign team outside Hermitage Hall during the Scottish Government's New National Park's team visit in March.



With thanks to Simon Clew (Jedburgh Abbey above) and Frank Wielbo for the charming meal time shot (right).



Stepping back in time at The Globe

by David Pike

If walls could whisper what fabulous tales The Globe Inn at Dumfries would tell.

Acclaimed as Scotland's most historic pub, The Globe's venerable age is more than matched by its reputation as the favourite howff (meeting place) of Robbie Burns.

It was here, after a hard days work collecting taxes, that the Bard would head for a pint and a night out with the lads ... and lasses.

Burns had a short, he died at the age of 37, but extremely flamboyant life; his writings, dating back well over 200 years, continue to have global appeal.

Burns Night is celebrated annually around the world and his poems such as A red, red rose (Bob Dylan's favourite), A Man's a man for a' That and Tam o' Shanter are universally acclaimed.

It is said that American President Abraham Lincoln always carried a copy of Burns work with him.

When Burns moved to Dumfriesshire in 1788 he was already a famous writer, having recently published the Kilmarnock Edition of his 'Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect' (1786) and having been lauded in some of the smartest salons in Edinburgh.

And it's not hard to imagine him as the centre of attraction at The Globe.

Once you put a foot across the front doorstep you know you have entered

somewhere extra special.

Look right and you can see the snug and the bar where he shared time with the locals, his bedroom and writing desk upstairs at The Globe and a specially commissioned stain glass portrayal of Tam o' Shanter.

The building was taken over by tourism entrepreneurs Prof David Thomson who grew up in Dumfries and his partner Teresa Church (they were also behind the revival of the nearby Annandale Distillery - see Explore the Borders issue 5) and had it beautifully restored.

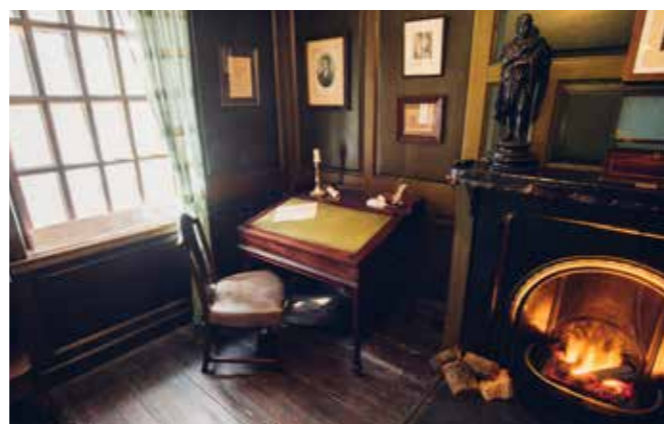
Not surprisingly it is home to The Burns Club, established in 1887, whose members meet there every week.

And The Globe is at the heart of the Burns Trail, a magnet for fans from all over the world.

Booking a tour takes followers to where Burns lived, loved and held court - a close look at authentic items owned by Burns and a chance to sit in his chair and view the poems he scratched into the windows.

No doubt he would have approved the The Globe's passion for whisky - there are 300 brands to choose from behind the bar - as well as its menu of fine food.

Conveniently located just off the High Street in the town centre there's a warm welcome waiting for visitors to The Globe.



The Globe Inn
56, High Street, Dumfries, DG1 2JA

tel: +44(0)1387 323010
e: m.brett@annandaledistillery.com
w: www.globeinndumfries.co.uk

Playing a trump card for south of Scotland tourism

Explore the Borders has one key objective - to promote the brilliant borderlands and, in doing so, enhance its destination appeal.

The Explore project - led by a team of experienced writers, journalists and photographers - is delivered to a regional, national and international audience, through the Explore the Borders Magazine and its sister website www.exploretheborders.com.

Together they are establishing a leading digital platform to share a moveable feast of information designed to inform, inspire and help visitors plan ahead.

We believe this is best achieved as a team effort - working closely with established strategic tourism organisations and the tourism sector at large.

If you have a story to tell, an announcement to make or would like more information about how you can join the Explore project we would love to hear from you.

You can get in touch at...

editor@exploretheborders.com



Time to get creative with words

Internationally renowned authors have joined forces to support new initiative to inspire future literary greats from the Scottish Borders.

The initiative will establish a national storytelling centre at the Great Tapestry of Scotland building in Galashiels.

Acclaimed authors Sir Alexander McCall Smith, Julia Donaldson, Jackie Kay, Damian Barr and Alan Windram (a former Galashiels pupil) are backing the idea to reach out to youngsters from 7 to 15 years in Scottish Borders.

The Great Tapestry of Scotland's 300 Words project is a creative writing competition designed to enrich the five-star visitor centre's legacy for celebrating the people's story of Scotland: supporting the Curriculum for Excellence by engaging children and young people in the creative process.

The competition encourages children of all abilities, from across the Scottish Borders, to write their own imaginative fictional tale inspired by the intricate details within The Great Tapestry of Scotland (one of the world's largest community artworks, and variously described by visiting children as 'ginormous', 'amazing', 'beautiful', 'epic' and more).

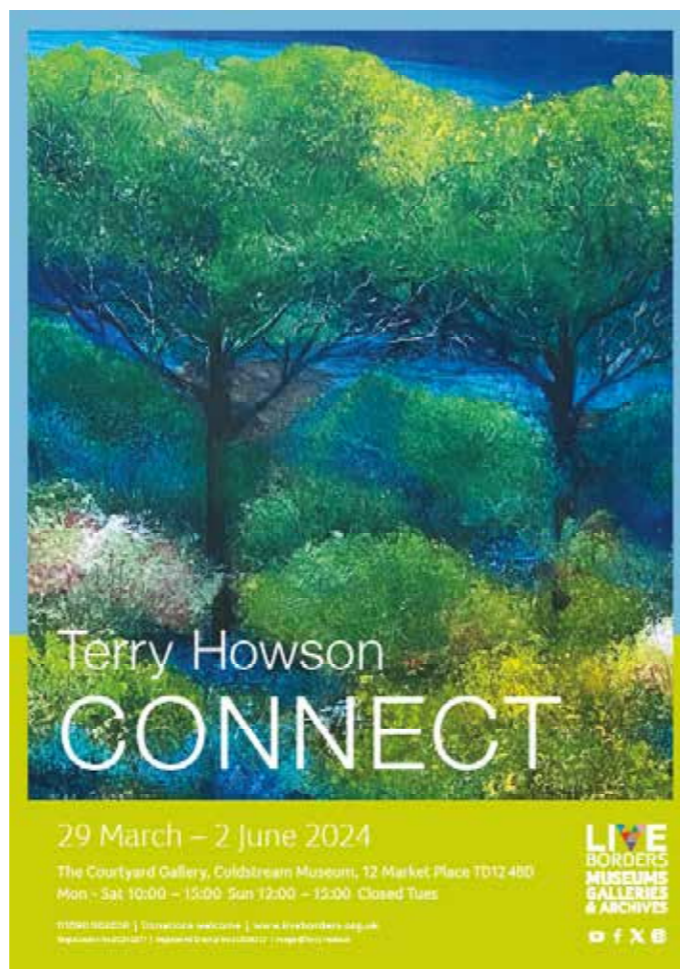
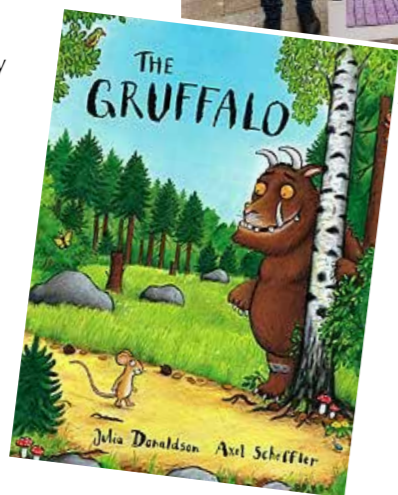
The project gives them the chance to appear alongside globally renowned authors at one of Scotland's leading book festivals, and, thanks to the Borders Railway Community Partnership, three lucky winners will receive tokens worth £250 to spend on books for their school.

Winners will be revealed at a special event at the Borders Book Festival in June, featuring alongside an exciting programme of established authors and illustrators.

Launching the call for competition entries, Centre Director Sandy Maxwell Forbes said: "With Scotland's outstanding literary heritage at our roots, visually compelling storytelling at our heart and one of the world's longest tapestries just bursting with inspiration in our centre, we are thrilled to launch the 300 Words competition.

"We are looking forward to hosting a special event for to celebrate the winners at the brilliant Borders Book Festival," she said.

Entries for the Tapestry's 300 Words competition close on Friday, May 3, 2024.



Monteath Mausoleum Public Open Days 2024

Guided Tours of this hidden gem in the Scottish Borders landscape will take place from 10am to 4pm on the following days this year:

Sunday 31st March & Monday 1st April

Sunday 5th May & Monday 6th May

Sunday 26th May & Monday 27th May

Saturday 29th June & Sunday 30th June

Sunday 4th August

Sunday 25th August & Monday 26th August

Sunday 8th September

The mausoleum is just off the A68, 3 miles north of Ancrum. The site is open for walkers and cyclists every day. A key to the crypt is available from Ancrum Pantry, Ancrum, Jedburgh or LilliardsEdge Holiday Park, Jedburgh for a small fee.

See our website for further details

www.friendsofthemonteathmausoleum.org.uk





MICHELIN
2022



A FEAST FOR ALL THE SENSES

There's nowhere in the world like The Globe Inn in Dumfries - the favourite haunt of Scotland's national bard Robert Burns, who lived, loved, and entertained here.

One of the most historic bars in Scotland, with an impressive collection of more than 300 whiskies, it is also home to our Michelin-listed, award-winning destination restaurant, 1610.

We look forward to welcoming you for lunch, dinner, coffee or cocktails, for a dram or for date night, or for our eight-course degustation menu.

We also have a range of private and corporate dining options.

The
GLOBE
INN
Burns' Favourite Howff

The Globe Inn, 56 High Street, Dumfries, DG1 2JA
globeinndumfries.co.uk - 01387 323010



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