

Historic Scotland launch 2012 programme

✖ Historic Scotland is celebrating the start of this year's visitor season by announcing its packed programme of exciting events, and they kindly invited The Reporter to Edinburgh Castle this evening to hear all about it. It was very windy up there at the top of Castle Hill, but we were reassured that the Castle would withstand the weather as it has for hundreds of years.

✖ Hugh (left) took great care in explaining that his wonderful coat was made from pure silk, and was manufactured to an absolutely authentic design. He said that Historic Scotland do a great deal of research into historical costumes from which he and his colleagues benefit.

The Castle is yet again the top paid visitor attraction in the UK. The castle, which is run by Historic Scotland, saw 1,302,826 visitors go through its doors in 2011, an 8% increase on the previous year. The figures follow on the back of a hugely successful year for the visitor attraction which saw it record its highest ever numbers of visitors on record in July and August and finish the year as 'Best UK Heritage Attraction' at the British Travel Awards.

But as well as Edinburgh Castle here in the capital, we also have Craigmillar Castle which attracts around 20,000 visitors each year, and which we were recommended to visit.

Scotland's finest heritage attractions will play host to a variety of entertaining events from jousting at Linlithgow Palace to medieval mayhem at Caerlaverock Castle and spectacular historic re-enactments across the centuries at Fort George from the marching soldiers of the Roman period to the fighting troops of the 20th century.

At castles, palaces and abbeys throughout Scotland, visitors will be transported back to days gone by and will come face to face with the people of the past through all of history's eras. Hundreds of costumed performers and re-enactors will be portraying characters including Iron Age hunters, Roman soldiers, kings, queens and courtiers, Jacobites and Redcoats, Renaissance nobles, knights on horseback, and WWI servicemen.

Stephen Duncan, Historic Scotland's Director of Commercial and Tourism said: "Our diverse events showcase our spectacular past at some of the most iconic, historic sites in Scotland, including Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle, Urquhart Castle, St Andrews Cathedral, Dallas Dhu Distillery, Aberdour Castle and Gardens, Arbroath Abbey and Holyrood Park.


"Last year's events were very popular and with many people choosing to take a staycation this year, they provide a great day out for all the family to find out about Scotland's history and heritage in an exciting and entertaining way.

"Nothing can beat the excitement of witnessing dramatic battle re-enactments, hearing the clash of swords, the thunder of hooves and the roar of musket fire. Our programme also features drama, comedy, music and dance with events which showcase the splendour of Renaissance courtly life, to musical performances and living history cameos."

This year's events programme, which supports the Year of Creative Scotland 2012, kicks off with an Enchanted Easter at Stirling Castle on Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th April, from 12:00 to 4:00 pm. You will be able to meet a 1,000 year old wizard, watch spectacular jugglers and jocular jesters and learn all about James IV's personal alchemist who tried to fly from the castle walls. The event is included in the admission price.

The events range from very large-scale, dramatic shows featuring hundreds of performers to more intimate living history presentations featuring perhaps just one historic

character.

There are lots of fun activities for children, from  storytelling sessions to dressing up in period costumes and puppet shows. Hands-on activities give them the chance to try their hand at skills, games and crafts from the past, giving them an interactive way to learn about Scotland's great history and heritage.

If you love the outdoors, the Rangers Service has activities all year round with a variety of fun, interactive, nature-focused activities for kids and their parents to enjoy.

Most of the daytime events are included in the normal admission price for the attraction so they offer excellent value for a memorable family day out. And becoming a Historic Scotland member – which works out at less than £7 a month for families – means that visitors can experience nearly all of the programme's daytime events for free.

For further details of Historic Scotland's 2012 events programme visit www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/events