

Maggie Dixon resurrected by Grassmarket festival muralist

A Scottish muralist will capture a local author on a giant 32 foot canvas installed in the Grassmarket throughout August, and in true festival spirit members of the public can also be included – if they turn up in period costume!

Edinburgh-born Chris Rutterford specialises in the production of epic artworks. He has set up a 'live studio' in the Grassmarket where he is painting author Alison Butler into a huge depiction of the execution of Maggie Dickson, a local character who survived the hangman's noose in 1724. Alison Butler wrote *The Hanging of Maggie Dickson* and will represent her in the painting.

Chris is inviting the public to get involved and will paint visitors' faces into the mural – especially those in period costume. The completed 32 foot high, double-sided mural will focus on the gallows on one side and a traditional horse market on the other as the Grassmarket has been used as both over the centuries. Chris says the mural aims to evoke the rich history, culture and spirit of this ancient and famous part of Edinburgh's Old Town.

"I'm really hoping that we can bring some history back to life and get local people involved too as that's what makes community art so special," he adds.

"My murals capture history in action and I think that's why people find them so interesting to look at. It's a huge honour to be invited to paint in such historically significant places and in effect become a little part of their history. It's going to be a busy month in the Greater Grassmarket but I'm really looking forward to it."

Chris will be painting the mural daily Monday to Friday and is

easily recognisable in his paint-spattered Jacobite outfit and distinctive red top hat. The trained illustrator and writer is making a time lapse video of the mural project and after the festival the mural will be split up and put on display at sites across the city.

Alison Butler has her first sitting for Chris at the alfresco Grassmarket studio at midday tomorrow, Wednesday 8 August, and will be available to explain Maggie Dixon's fascinating story to the public. Maggie survived the hangman's noose after coming back to life on her way to the graveyard and has been a popular local historical figure ever since.

Alison Butler says: "I'm deeply honoured and thrilled to be involved in Grassmarket mural. In writing my novel, the Grassmarket and Margaret Dickson have become very dear to me and Chris Rutterford's depiction of Maggie means her story will be heard over and over again. I couldn't ask for more."

The project has been commissioned by Greater Grassmarket Business Improvement District in order to provide some alternative entertainment during the festival.

"In August the Grassmarket is normally filled with markets every day, and following feedback from businesses and locals we decided to do something different this year," says Georgia Artus, Greater Grassmarket Project Manager.

"Working with Chris to create this piece of public art is a fantastic start to what will be a year's worth of activities delving into the stories of the local area. We can't wait to see the faces of visitors, locals and historical figures intermingled in the mural.

"Our area is filled with fascinating local businesses, selling everything from homemade gelato and antique bookshops to fossils and tweed, and we hope this project will encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the area."

Submitted by [Samantha McKay-Challen](#)

