

# **Take a moment to linger by the Mercat Cross**

If you are a visitor or somebody who lives here all year round you may walk past the Mercat Cross without noticing it too much.



© Martin McAdam

The Mercat Cross has had a makeover in time for this month's festivals. Photo Martin McAdam

Please stop and have a look at it as it has been restored by the City of Edinburgh Council in time for this years festivals. The work was supported by Historic Environment Scotland, Graciela Ainsworth Sculpture Conservation and Historic Buildings Restoration Ltd.

All the heraldic decorations on the Cross have been repainted and repaired. The asphalt roof has been replaced and the stonework repointed with traditional lime based mortars by local apprentices.



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There was a rededication ceremony earlier in the year with the Royal Regiment of Scotland forming a guard of honour beneath the Cross. The Lord Lyon read out a proclamation and prayers were offered by Rev Calum MacLeod, Minister of St Giles. HM State Trumpeters sounded a fanfare and the National Anthem was sung.



Photo of the rededication ceremony  
[www.iangeorgesonphotography.co.uk](http://www.iangeorgesonphotography.co.uk)

After the ceremony the Rt Hon Lord Provost Frank Ross addressed the hundreds of spectators who had gathered on the Royal Mile to watch. He said: "The Mercat Cross has been at the heart of civic life for centuries. It has witnessed all manner of historic announcements, celebrations and proclamations over the years, including news of the end of World War II and the Queen's accession to the throne in 1952.

"It's incredibly striking to see images of it surrounded by hundreds of people, horses and carriages and the bustling trade of Edinburgh's 19<sup>th</sup> century Old Town. Now, the Mercat Cross is back at its finest after careful restoration of its stonework and repainting. The investment will help to preserve its character for many more years to come."

The Right Honourable Lord Lyon King of Arms, Joseph Morrow,

added: "The restoration of the Mercat Cross has been an excellent example of collaborative work. It has been used for different types of Proclamations over a long period of time and I am delighted to be able to take this chance to celebrate the excellent work of restoration which has been done and which enhances the High Street."





Edinburgh's Mercat Cross is topped with a carved unicorn, Scotland's national animal. The plinth the unicorn sits on is thought to date to the 15<sup>th</sup> Century but the Mercat Cross in its present form, wasn't built until 1866, as a replacement to the original which was demolished in 1756.

In 1885, a new octagonal base with a raised platform was built underneath the cross, paid for by MP William Gladstone whose family hailed from Edinburgh. The Latin inscription above the door was composed by Gladstone and reads:

*"This ancient monument, the Cross of Edinburgh, which of old was set apart for public ceremonies, having been utterly destroyed by a misguided hand... and having been avenged as well as lamented, in song alike noble and manful, by that great man Walter Scott, has now, by favour of the Magistrates of the City, been restored by William Ewart Gladstone."*

While some other local authority areas have removed their

Mercat Crosses over time, Edinburgh's refurbished Mercat Cross will continue to be used for ceremonial events, Royal proclamations and civic announcements.



