

Celebrating 250th anniversary of Sir Walter Scott

This year is the 250th anniversary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott, and on Saturday there will be a light show at Smailholm Tower in the Borders to launch the international celebrations.

EventScotland is funding the celebratory event which is organised by Abbotsford, Scott's former home. The event will be broadcast [online here](#) from 6pm on 20 March 2021 in a programme presented by Brian Taylor, formerly of the BBC and former 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.



At Smailholm Tower seeking inspiration in preparation for the Sir Walter Scott 250th anniversary celebrations, which start this weekend, is 10-year-old Jayden Stormont, from the Scottish Borders. Jayden, who lives close to Scott's home Abbotsford, near Melrose, where his grandmother works, took a trip to Smailholm Tower, the location that inspired Scott as a child and the venue for a spectacular light show to launch the international anniversary celebrations this weekend (Sat 20th March). At sunset on World Storytelling Day, Saturday 20th March, the Tower will be lit up by the world premiere of a brand-new short film of the Young Scott, created by artist and

director, Andy McGregor. Photo Phil Wilkinson

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.

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."

1. 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."*

A wide range of events are planned by the various Partners in the run up to Scott's anniversary on 15 August and for 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



Smailholm Tower Scottish Borders Picture caption: Seeking inspiration in preparation for the Sir Walter Scott 250th anniversary celebrations, which start this weekend, is 10-year-old Jayden Stormont, from the Scottish Borders. Photo Phil Wilkinson