

East Neuk Festival

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FESTIVAL EXPLORES THE ORIGINS OF MASS TOURISM TO SCOTLAND'S ST ANDREWS AND EAST NEUK WITH SIGNIFICANT EXHIBITION AND LABYRINTH

*"So raise your prayers higher and abase yourself yet lower. If you collapse, don't worry, you will be carried. If the tears in your eyes blind you, you will be guided. Sing loudly and perhaps you will be heard."
...So the guide book advises.*

Not the usual sort of advice to weary visitors reaching their final destination, but words of wisdom to those religious tourists of the Middle Ages who flocked in their thousands to see the holy relics (an arm bone, three fingers, a tooth and a kneecap) of the Apostle and Martyr St Andrew. From the tenth century, along with Rome and Santiago de Compostela, St Andrews in far-flung Scotland became a prized destination for pilgrims worldwide. They came in their thousands in search of redemption, year after year, for hundreds of years. Nowadays, the thousands are generally in pursuit of golf rather than spiritual deliverance, but the Pilgrimage legacy nevertheless resonates throughout the region.

THE EXHIBITION

The celebrated East Neuk Festival, renowned for its top-notch chamber music, is creating a special exhibition exploring the heritage of pilgrimage to this area of Fife. As the basis of the exhibition's narrative, curator **Ian Gray** has written a fictional guidebook ('published' 1440AD) for would-be pilgrims and their trip of a lifetime – complete with tips on preparation, appropriate attire and behavior: *"do not gossip, gamble, go whoring or play bag-pipes (they are everywhere in Europe but nowhere more so than in Scotland!)"*. And, since the main objective of a pilgrimage was to seek spiritual enlightenment and purge all



sins, the experience was intended to be one of hardship and adversity rather than pleasure: *“Un-armed pilgrims are the preferred target for every pick-pocket, mugger and murderer in Christendom. Wild animals and dangerous dogs will attack you. Insects will bite you. The driving rain will chill you, and the sun will be as a foretaste of Hell.”* The greater the suffering and endurance, the better the chances of a miracle!

The Pilgrimage exhibition will be on display at the Crail Community Hall for the duration of the festival (28 June-1 July 2012).

THE LEGACY

Pilgrimage was simultaneously the making and the destruction of the mass tourism industry in Fife. The economic impact of the holy hoardes flocking to St Andrews in the Middle Ages determined much of the building development, town planning, transport infrastructure and hospitality services within – and beyond – the city’s confines. Not only was the city named for the apostle, but also the great Cathedral was erected to house the relics. The layout of the town was designed solely to accommodate the crowds, with a one-way flow along North and South streets to keep the ‘traffic’ moving and Market Street between as a centre for food, drink and souvenirs. To the north west of St Andrews today’s village of Guardsbridge began as a thriving centre of hospitality – the last overnight stop before the final destination. Other East Neuk holy sites, such as St Fillan’s Cave in Pittenweem and the Isle of May, also made the arduous journey worthwhile. And Scotland’s Queen Margaret even paid for the establishment of a free ferry service to take pilgrims safely across the Firth of Forth (North Queensferry in Fife and Queensferry in Lothian are named for this crossing). However, come the Reformation, the pilgrimages stopped abruptly and mass tourism disappeared completely. Today, the Abbey ruins and place names are some of the poignant reminders of what disappeared.

THE LABYRINTH

For thousands of years the labyrinth has been a symbol of human involvement with nature, as well as representing a journey – literally, to the centre of the labyrinth and back, and psychologically, a spiritual exploration. In medieval times labyrinths were walked symbolically to represent the journey to the holy sites by those who could not make the actual pilgrimage, while labyrinthine designs were (and are) found on amulets and protective lucky charms. East Neuk artist **Hilke MacIntyre**, whose original designs have enlivened the Festival’s promotional material since its beginning, has been commissioned to create a huge labyrinth for the floor in the Crail Community Hall, detailing landmarks of the region in her own inimitable style for visitors to make their own symbolic journeys.

THE SAND SCULPTURE

Another popular highlight of the East Neuk Festival is the giant sand sculpture in Crail High Street created by **Jamie Wardley** and the **Sand In Your Eye** team. In past years, visitors and paparazzi have flocked to see a surging steam engine and the huge bust of a brooding Beethoven crafted entirely from sand and water. The subject of this ephemeral work of art in 2012 is ‘Pilgrims’ to complement the exhibition – just one of several other sand-inspired projects at this year’s Festival devised by the team to involve the whole community.

THE MUSIC

The whole ethos of the East Neuk Festival is to embrace the character and history of this beautiful corner (*neuk*) of coastal Fife and reflect it back in the programming. The Festival

is a highlight of the summer season for audiences and performers alike and boasts a roster of world-class musicians and assured, imaginative, yet accessible programming: 2012 Festival artists include the esteemed **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**, legendary **Leipzig** and **Hagen String Quartets**, pianist **Llŷr Williams**, and **Paul Hillier's Theatre of Voices**. The chamber concerts take place in appropriately intimate churches dotted along the coast, as well as more unusual venues such as the huge potato barn that will host a musical extravaganza of vision, sound and light this year. Specifically entwined with the theme of pilgrimage and travel is Paul Hillier's 'Seafarer' concerts, featuring medieval songs by the celebrated visionary, composer and polymath **Hildegard of Bingen**, whose music worshipped the church and the saints, along with other songs of wandering and pilgrimage.

In medieval times the tourists came to St Andrews and the East Neuk for religious reasons. Nowadays they come to see the magnificent legacy left by archbishops, kings, queens and town planners over the centuries. They come for the abbey ruins, unspoilt beaches, award-winning restaurants, charming fishing villages and because St Andrews is the 'Home of Golf'. And, of course, they come for the East Neuk Festival at the end of every June: a 2011 Festival survey showed that almost 75% of visitors quoted the Festival as the key reason for visiting Fife and the economic impact on the region amounted to £720,000 generated by the Festival over its five-day run.

EAST NEUK FESTIVAL Box Office: Hub Tickets T. 0131 473 2000 www.hubtickets.co.uk
Festival information: www.eastneukfestival.com

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