

# MOSTLY GHOSTLY INVESTIGATIONS



Paranormal investigation group Mostly Ghostly is inviting you to join its first ghost walk and explore the darker side of Dumfries for a Halloween fright night with a difference.

**Andrea Thompson** hears some of what's in store for those who dare

**Photography by Phil Rigby**



## TAKE A WALK ON THE DARK SIDE

**R**obert the Bruce, Burns, body snatchers, witches on the Whitesands, restless spirits, murder, torture and all manner of grisly goings-on... these are just some of the features of the new Dumfries Ghost Walk which has been developed by the town's paranormal investigation group, Mostly Ghostly.

Since launching their group on Halloween 2008, intrepid ghost hunters Kathleen Cronie, Derek McCall, John Hill and Mary Wood have travelled to all manner of spooky locations, from the famously haunted to the more mysterious, and attempted to communicate with spirits – occasionally scaring themselves witless in the process.

For the last year the team has also been busy delving in to the dark heart of Dumfries and has developed a walk around the town to share their findings. The ghost walk venture

will be launched on Halloween, October 31, to mark their second anniversary, and while it's set to be a hit with those interested in the paranormal, Kathleen says it's not just a fright-fest, but an entertaining and informative way to learn more about the town's fascinating history and impressive architecture.

"The idea of a ghost walk came to us while reflecting on the many eerie stories and legends connected with Dumfries and its rich, turbulent history. We've uncovered disturbing tales of persecution, murder, horrific punishments and witchcraft, and we'll be presenting these stories in our own unique way, providing a darkly intriguing experience that is fun, educational and interactive."

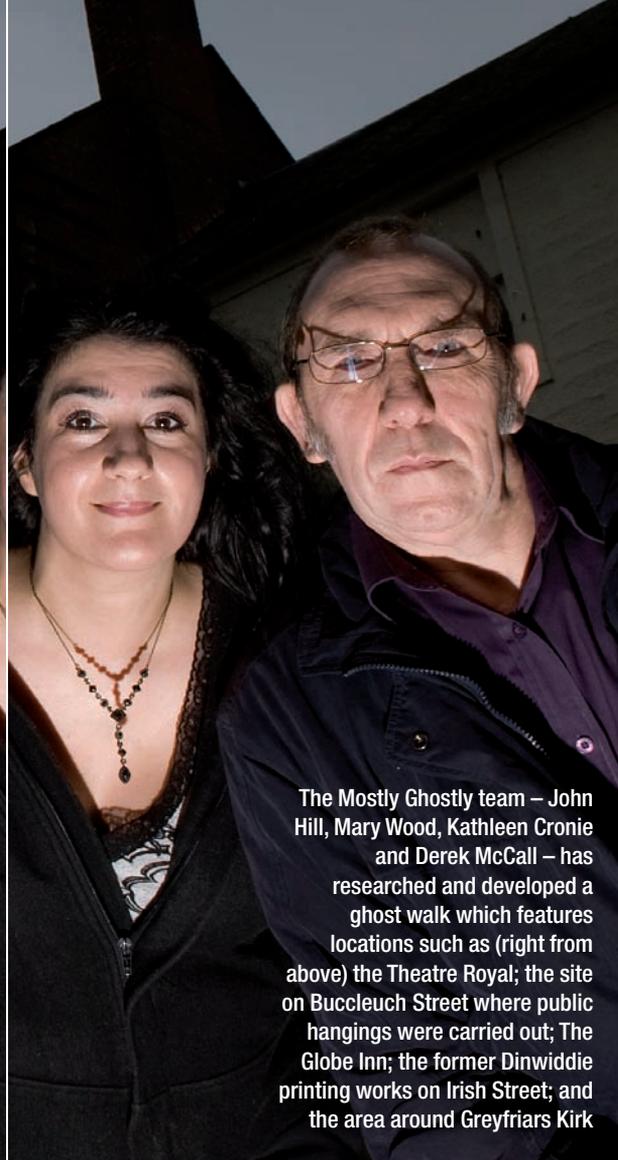
Starting from the town's landmark Midsteeples, the walk will be divided into different sections, taking participants on a

journey back to Dumfries's dark past. The Crime and Punishment section, for example, will reveal the locations of hidden historical locations, such as the tollbooth vaults under Burtons and the town's first jail, where Thomas Cook stands today, and the site of the last public hanging in Scotland – the execution of Robert Smith in 1868.

Cholera brought death and destruction to Dumfries with two epidemics, and walkers will visit the site of the cholera hospital set up during the first outbreak in 1832.

"During the second outbreak there was a black cloud over the town which stayed for 10 days, so people thought there was something spiritual going on; they felt they had been deserted," Derek says.

Mary will tell walkers about the mysterious noises and haunted happenings in



The Mostly Ghostly team – John Hill, Mary Wood, Kathleen Cronie and Derek McCall – has researched and developed a ghost walk which features locations such as (right from above) the Theatre Royal; the site on Buccleuch Street where public hangings were carried out; The Globe Inn; the former Dinwiddie printing works on Irish Street; and the area around Greyfriars Kirk



English Street, including the sounds of horses' hooves and hysterical laughter heard near The Pancake Place, while the Theatre Royal, Scotland's oldest working theatre and favourite investigation spot for Mostly Ghostly, is set to be a highlight for walkers with its reputation for spectral activity. Both Derek and John had terrifying encounters during the group's most recent visit there.

"It was pretty full-on," says Kathleen, "and we'll be talking about our chilling first-hand experiences."

At The Globe Inn, favourite watering hole of Robert Burns, Mostly Ghostly members will tell the tragic story of Anna Park, who died while giving birth to a child, reputedly fathered by the Bard. The spirit of a woman is said to haunt the pub, which celebrates its 400th anniversary this year, and there have been reports of a ghostly woman in white.

William Hare, of the infamous bodysnatching duo Burke and Hare, fled to Dumfries on his way to Ireland after turning King's evidence against his partner in crime.

"Word got out that he was in the town and on February 6, 1829, there was the biggest riot ever seen in Dumfries, with a mob baying for his blood," says John.

"If they had got their hands on him they would have torn him limb from limb."

Ghostly-goings on in Irish Street and



headless horsemen in Castle Street will also be revealed, and the walk will take in Comyn's Court and the site of Greyfriars Monastery where Robert The Bruce murdered John 'The Red' Comyn before the high altar in 1306.

Mostly Ghostly is also looking forward to telling the story of Dumfries's 'witches' and the nine women who were convicted of witchcraft and executed – by strangling and burning – on the Whitesands in April 1659.

Exploring the past, Kathleen hopes, will also help with the future of Dumfries: "One of our aims is for the ghost walks to encourage the regeneration of the town centre, providing an interesting alternative for

both locals and visitors who want to learn more about the town and do something different in the evenings."

■ There are two ghost walks on October 31, at 7pm and 9pm, leaving from the Plainstones at the Midsteeple. Tickets are £6 for adults, £4 for children, concessions for OAPs and students. A family ticket (two adults and up to three children) is £16 and there's a 10 per cent discount for private bookings for groups over 20 (based on adult price). See [www.mostlyghostly.org](http://www.mostlyghostly.org) or call 07751 722008. Next month we'll be giving you the chance to win tickets for one of Mostly Ghostly's walks. 