

MOSTLY GHOSTLY INVESTIGATIONS



THE SPOOKS ARE OUT THERE

Mostly Ghostly's new ghost walks are proving popular with both locals and visitors keen to explore the dark heart of Dumfries, reports Kathleen Cronie

At 6pm on October 26, the Mostly Ghostly team met with 22 brave and excited guests at the iconic Midsteeple in Dumfries for our much-anticipated Ghost Walk preview event. We could hardly believe the time had finally come. After almost a year of research, planning, promotion and development, we were about to showcase the Dumfries Ghost Walk and first-night nerves had set in!

Once we started, though, everything fell into place and we began to relax and truly enjoy the night. While weaving our way around the dimly lit closes and atmospheric locations, it was fascinating to see our guests' reactions. Each place possessed its own unique ambience, which helped to transport guests to a time when Dumfries was a decidedly more frightening place to live.

Derek, John, Mary and I took turns at sharing a range of grim yet entertaining tales, taking our guests through a rollercoaster of emotions. Moments of light-hearted humour contrasted with wide-eyed fear and horror, especially when exploring some of the inhumanity folk endured in Dumfries many centuries ago. We were particularly pleased that people were feeling involved.

Following our climactic account of witch burnings on the Whitesands, the group headed back to the Midsteeple for warm drinks and homemade cakes and tablet. We received some fantastic feedback and were elated.

With little time to draw breath, we put the finishing touches to our official Halloween launch night and felt the

nerves building up again as we headed into town. When we turned the corner to see everyone standing at the Midsteeple, the reality hit us. I introduced the walk, which I dedicated to my dear Gran, a keen local historian.

Both walks were very positive and even the weather held for us. The calm, crispness of All Hallows' Eve gave a cool eeriness to the night and again, we received excellent comments from participants – and there were some unexpected encounters. It seemed that the ghosts of old Dumfries were making their presence felt. My brother, Jamie (who deserves special mention for his stellar work on the Mostly Ghostly website) said his phone reset itself in Shakespeare Lane; one girl suddenly became ill in the Comyn's Court area, and there were reports of uneasiness on the site of the old Buccleuch Street Prison yard. Perhaps the most unusual occurrence, however, took place when we were telling the story of nine ill-fated women who were burned on the Whitesands after being accused of witchcraft. Some people reported smelling peat burning, while another person noted the aroma of cloves. Although peat is not a smell any of the team are familiar with, we are told it is very distinctive. Is it possible that people were tapping into the terrible events of April 13, 1659? I'll leave that for you to decide...

■ *For more information about Mostly Ghostly and the Dumfries Ghost Walks, see www.mostlyghostly.org or call 07751 722008.*