Newbattle Abbey College savour second Celtic celebration

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The event, which took place on Saturday 21 May, featured a jam-packed programme of activities, performances and workshops, all of which went down a treat with the many visitors who flocked to the College's stunning 16th century main building.

Designed to celebrate Celtic culture and woodland heritage, the event was part-financed by the Scottish Government and the European Community Tyne Esk Leader 2007-2013 Programme, as well as the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

Officially opening the festival at 1pm in the Ceilidh Tent was Midlothian MP David Hamilton, who was thrilled to be part of such a cultural celebration. He said: "As a local man I was pleased to open this year's Celtic Festival. Last year's event was a great success attracting around 3,000 visitors and it was fantastic to see similarly large numbers here again today.

"I am proud of Midlothian's heritage and the history that it holds and this Festival is a celebration of this history. It is a proud moment for Newbattle Abbey College and, indeed, Midlothian, to see such a turn-out of local people to celebrate culture and biodiversity in the region."

The varied programme once again featured traditional music and dance, woodland trails, traditional arts and crafts – as well as several new features, such as the Children's Tent and Food and Drink Tent, which were amongst the Festival's most popular features. Herbs and foraged woodland food cookery demonstrations proved to be a winner with guests, whilst the hog roast was once again top of the menu for hungry revellers.

Traditional music, Scottish storytelling, local history, beekeeping and woodland trails were just some of the traditional Celtic offerings on the day, whilst Bollywood and Breton Dancers, as well as a Continental bakery and Indian cookery added a broader cultural theme to proceedings.

Local artists and dancers performed in the ceilidh tent, whilst the more creative visitors sought sanctuary in the craft tent where they got to grips with a variety of Celtic crafts and jewellery making. Whilst the adults were busy with the more practical activities, the children were kept amused with puppet shows and storytelling, as well as a visit from immensely popular entertainer, Mr Boom.

Ann Southwood, Principal of Newbattle Abbey College, said: "The day was a resounding success and we are grateful to all our performers, supporters and guests for making the day so memorable.

"I would also like to extend our thanks to special guests David Hamilton MP, for his kind words, and for officially opening our festival, as well as Provost Adam Montgomery. Without the assistance of the Heritage Lottery Fund, Midlothian Council, Scottish Government, the European Tyne Esk LEADER 2007-2013 Programme and Forestry Commission Scotland, the day would not have been possible and we are very grateful to them for their support for the Celtic Festival as well as our wider Pan Celtic Programme of activities and courses which runs throughout the year."

Colin McLean, Head of HLF in Scotland, said: “HLF was delighted to support this celebration of Midlothian’s rich heritage. From woodland trails to traditional music and storytelling, this hugely successful festival gave everyone the opportunity to learn about the heritage and biodiversity on their doorstep while enjoying a great fun day out.”

Marian Docherty, Depute Principal of Newbattle Abbey College, added: “Following on from the success of the first Celtic Festival last year, organisers have been committed to providing even more entertainment and activities to suit every member of the family – and I think today’s turn out and the number of happy faces proves that they have done exactly that.”

Newbattle Abbey College is Scotland’s only adult education residential College and one of Midlothian’s top tourist destinations with links to the Declaration of Arbroath, the Knights Templar, the Spanish Armada and Mary Queen of Scots. The College building itself is located on an ancient Iron Age settlement and retains part of a 12th century Cistercian Abbey.

Further information

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