



News Release

27 October 2008

MARY KING'S GHOST FEST SCOOPS TOP SCOTTISH TOURISM OSCAR!

The five-star, historic underground attraction **The Real Mary King's Close** came out on top once again winning another award for its unique and hugely popular paranormal festival – **Mary King's Ghost Fest!** It scooped the award for PR Excellence at the most prestigious tourism industry awards, The Scottish Thistle Awards.

At the glittering awards ceremony held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre on Friday 24th October, hosted by legendary Edinburgh-born comedian Ronnie Corbett, 'Mary King's Ghost Fest' beat off serious competition in the PR Excellence category from national agency and twice-nominated CM Porter Novelli (for launching 'Budongo' at Edinburgh Zoo and for their promotion of Edinburgh's Winter Festivals).

The Scottish Thistle Awards celebrate quality and innovation across a wide range of tourism activities. In the PR Excellence category the judges were looking for successful creative PR campaigns that captured the imagination of the media and contributed to the overall promotion of Scotland.

Mary King's Ghost Fest 2008 - a successful 10 day, city-wide festival – held for the fourth time this May, is organised and funded by The Real Mary King's Close. The festival explores the paranormal and supernatural side of some of the most haunted venues in Edinburgh, with the overall aim of raising awareness for the attraction and the city of Edinburgh, as a world-class heritage destination. The in-house PR and marketing team at The Real Mary King's Close and Continuum (owner/operator of the popular underground attraction) mounted a hard-working, wide reaching PR campaign achieving massive media coverage for Ghost Fest and the city through a variety of media. Strong strategic partnerships with key Edinburgh venues and leading paranormal groups, together with cross-promotion enhanced the festival. On a limited budget the Mary King's Ghost Fest 2008 PR campaign achieved terrific results, seeing a 54% rise in visitor numbers to the festival on 2007, 61% of whom visited Edinburgh because of the festival.

General Manager at The Real Mary King's Close, Stephen Spencer, said: "We are absolutely delighted to have won the PR Excellence award for Mary King's Ghost Fest. The Scottish Thistles are such prestigious tourism awards, it is a real honour and a great credit to The Real Mary King's Close and our PR/marketing team who have successfully organised and grown Mary King's Ghost Fest over the past four years into a hugely successful Edinburgh city-wide festival; now the biggest ghost festival in the UK.

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Stephen continued: "We worked very hard on publicising the 2008 festival, implementing an awareness-generating six month PR campaign, with a very limited budget. The staff here at The Real Mary King's Close, along with our festival partners, are thrilled to receive this recognition and are now looking forward to developing Mary King's Ghost Fest 2009, to see how it can be even bigger and better for local residents and visitors."

The Scottish Thistle Award is further testament to the success of this unusual festival and The Real Mary King's Close visitor attraction. Mary King's Ghost Fest also recently won an award for the second year running as Best Popular Paranormal Event at The Spiritual Connexions Awards and has been a finalist at the Scottish Thistle Awards for the past three years.

The Real Mary King's Close is grateful to its partners across Edinburgh who all worked hard to make Mary King's Ghost Fest the success that it is. As well as highlight events held at The Real Mary King's Close, event and venue support was provided by partner organisations including Mercat Tours, Edinburgh Playhouse, Cameo Cinema, National Library for Scotland, Camera Obscura, Ghost Finders Scotland, Full Moon Investigations, City of the Dead Tours, L.A Events, Edinburgh Bus Tours and The Scottish Mining Museum.

Plans are now underway for Mary King's Ghost Fest 2009, where there will be a range of spine-tingling events, including experiments, night vigils, workshops, talks and demonstrations into the supernatural, at an even bigger range of haunted venues across Edinburgh. Dates for the next festival will be announced shortly. See www.marykingsghostfest.com or for further information regarding The Real Mary King's Close, visit www.realmarykingsclose.com

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Notes to Editors

For further press information: Please contact Heidi Folland on 01904 527700 or email heidi@continuum-group.com

The Real Mary King's Close is open daily (except Christmas Day) with tours departing every 20 minutes from 10am. Pre-booking is strongly recommended due to demand. See www.realmarykingsclose.com or call 08702 430 160 for individuals or 08702 411 414 for groups, to book in advance and find out more!

The attraction consists of a number of underground Closes which would have originally been very narrow walkways with houses on either side stretching up to 7 storeys high and dating back several centuries. In 1753 the Burgh authorities decided to develop a grand new building, the Royal Exchange (now the City Chambers). The houses at the top of the Closes were knocked down and part of the lower sections were kept and used as the foundations for the new building, leaving a number of dark and mysterious underground Closes and ancient dwellings steeped in mystery.

Scottish Thistle Awards: The Thistle Awards are recognised as one of the top accolades a tourism business can receive, and reward Scottish tourism businesses that consistently strive for quality and innovation. Over 240 entries were received for this year's Awards and the panel of judges has been extremely impressed with the high standard of entries. For more information about the Thistle Awards visit www.scottishthistleawards.co.uk