



**PRESS RELEASE/PHOTOCALL – 10.45am – Thursday May 1st 2008
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The Real Mary King's Close Provides Inspiration To Two New Books!

The Real Mary King's Close, Edinburgh's unique and historic underground visitor attraction, has provided two new writers with the inspiration to write about the captivating experience they had whilst visiting the site.

Dale Smith, author of a new Doctor Who tie-in novel, 'The Many Hands' and Anne Forbes, author of children's 'The Underground City' book, both took inspiration from the Close and our costumed character tour guides.

The brand new Doctor Who book, 'The Many Hands', is a BBC publication based on the long running and ultra-popular television series. The book features the tenth Doctor, played by West Lothian-born David Tennant, and his companion Martha Jones, and details their adventure through Old Town Edinburgh in 1759. The book very accurately describes the fascinating history of Mary King's Close at this time. Dale Smith, author of the book said 'I visited the Close and found it to be a great afternoon. My tour guide was very knowledgeable and the whole experience was fascinating. I'd always known that there were underground streets in Edinburgh, and the idea that monsters might be hiding down there waiting to get you was irresistible, but then I came up to Edinburgh and took the tour, and I discovered that the real stories of the people who'd lived and died on Mary King's Close were just as spooky. Plus actually walking about down there made me realise just how scary those streets could be when the lights go out!'

'The Underground City' is a book based on the many myths and legends surrounding Mary King's Close, by Edinburgh-born author Anne Forbes. The Real Mary King's Close is joining forces with publisher Floris Books to give four Edinburgh schools the opportunity to experience The Real Mary King's Close, hear an excerpt of the book and meet the author

herself on the morning of Thursday May 1st. Stephen Spencer, General Manager of the award-winning attraction, said "Mary King's Close forms the perfect background to the magical events and mysterious characters of 'The Underground City'. But the truth is even stranger than fiction and we are delighted that these books give us the opportunity to showcase our authentic interpretation of life and death in Mary King's Close through the past four centuries." Anne Forbes said 'As a child, I remember my mother telling me that there were old streets and houses under the High Street. I always had a vivid imagination and the idea of an 'Underground City' fascinated me as did her tales of sealed cellars that no one was allowed to enter because people who had had the plague had died in them. The Close was very scary and creepy so it isn't surprising that the thought of a dark, dusty 'city' underneath the High Street stayed in my mind-as did thoughts of the ghosts of the plague. They came to life the minute I lifted my pen, as though they'd been waiting all those years ... the ghosts of Mary King's Close ...'

'The Underground City' and 'Doctor Who – The Many Hands' will be available to purchase in The Real Mary King's Close shop. In addition to meeting Edinburgh schoolchildren on May 1st, Anne Forbes will be joining staff and visitors at The Real Mary King's Close to celebrate the launch of her new book on Saturday May 3rd with a day of magic and fun! Anne will be signing copies of the book between 12 noon and 2pm and entrance to the shop is free. 'The Underground City' will be available at a specially discounted rate of £5.

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For further media information, images or to arrange a visit to the Real Mary King's Close please contact: Jenna Oxley or Heidi Folland on 01904 527700 or email joxley@continuum-group.com, or hfolland@continuum-group.com

NOTES TO EDITORS:

The Real Mary King's Close is an important historic site and quite unique, hidden beneath the Royal Mile. It 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!

Mary King's Close is open from 10am to 9pm (last tour) every day from March 21st to October 31st with the exception of the month of August when it opens from 9am. From November 1st to March 31st 2009 it is open from 10am to 5pm (last tour) Sunday to Friday and until 9pm (last tour) on Saturdays.

For further information call 08702 430160 or visit www.realmarykingsclose.com

Mary King's Close is operated by Heritage, part of Continuum - visitor attraction operators and specialists in the tourism and leisure industry. See www.continuum-group.com.

Floris Books is a publishing company based in Edinburgh and is the largest publisher of children's books in Scotland. For further information, log on to www.florisbooks.co.uk