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Edinburgh Riding of the Marches: A Tradition Reborn in the Heart of Scotland

Edinburgh Riding of the Marches

Edinburgh, 17.09.2024, 19:35 Time

USPA NEWS - The historic Edinburgh Riding of the Marches was a spectacular even held on Sunday 15thSeptember 2024, with thousands gathering in the capital for a day of pageantry, tradition, and community spirit. This iconic event, which dates back to the 16th century, celebrates Edinburgh’s rich cultural heritage and the city’s ancient rights and boundaries.

The Edinburgh Riding of the Marches is a historic reenactment of an historical practice where the city's boundaries were checked on horseback. This year's event featured over 280 horses and ponies ridden seasoned riders from the 29 Common Riding Towns of Scotland to community riding groups partaking in the festivities.

Key Highlights of the Edinburgh Riding of the Marches 2024:

- **The Riding Route:** The route started at 0930hrs and will taking the 280 riders from the outskirts of the city where they reenacted the riding of the boundaries or 'marches' of the city, to include several thrilling gallops and canters, before making their way through iconic landmarks such as Craigmillar Castle Park and Holyrood Park, before finally making their way up the historic Royal Mile, offering participants a breathtaking view of Edinburgh’s architectural and natural beauty. Spectators were warmly encouraged to line the ride route to cheer the horses on as they pass by, with key viewing points and timings as follows:

- **Royal Mile Entertainment:** Families, residents and visitors are all invited to join the celebration and enjoy the free entertainment from 1230hrs, taking place on the Royal Mile between North Bridge and South Bridge. This year's acts showcase Scotland's vibrant cultural traditions and include The Jacobites Ceilidh Band who will be attempting another Record-Breaking Ceilidh on the Royal Mile with audience participation, St Ronan’s Silver Band, Erskine Stewart Melville School Pipe Band, George Heriot’s School Pipe Band, George Watson’s College Pipe Band, History Matters Re-enactment Team and Wild Knights Jousting & Tournaments who will be performing a Border Reiver act for audiences, bringing the story of the lawless clans who dominated the land bordering Scotland and England between the 13th and 17th Centuries.

- **The Procession:** The grand procession made its way up the Royal Mile, the most historic road in Edinburgh, with 280 riders taking part. Dressed in traditional attire of the Scottish Common Riding Towns, the riders will be wearing sashes representing the various Towns, whose own Marches and festivals run each year from April through to the final event of the year in Scotland’s capital city. Leading the cavalcade of horses was the 2024 Edinburgh Captain Robbie Houstoun carrying the Edinburgh City Banner accompanied by Lass Kirsty Symon. Ahead of the horses were the mounted members of Scotland's Cavalry, The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, High Constables of Edinburgh, Members of the Incorporated Trades of Edinburgh all bearing the flags of the Trades and the ancient Blue Blanket, said to have been the battle flag at the Battle of Flodden, The Company of Merchants of the City of Edinburgh and Members of the Edinburgh Exiles Society.

- **Ceremonial Elements:** Key ceremonial moments included the presentation of the “City of Edinburgh Banner” to the Lord Provost, a symbol declaring that the Marches of Edinburgh have been inspected and all is well, harking back to the protection and freedoms so fiercely upheld during the 16th, 17th and 18thCenturies.

- **Commemorative Events:** Special events have been held leading up to the Riding, including historical talks and guided tours of Edinburgh’s historic sites, aiming to educate and engage the public on the significance of the Riding and its place in Edinburgh’s history.

- **Notable Participants:** Lord Provost Robert Aldridge once again be taking part in this historic event on horseback, for the second year running, reflecting the ancient custom when the inspection of the City’s boundaries would be ordered and led by the Lord Provost of the day. He was joined by Lord Provost Consort Colin Cunningham and Norma Cuthbertson Executive Assistant to the Lord Provost and Clerk to the Lieutenancy, both whom also took part in the 2023 event on horseback.

Quotes:

- **The Rt Hon. Robert Aldridge, Lord Provost of Edinburgh:** “I’ve very much looked forward to the historic Edinburgh Riding of the Marches on the streets of Edinburgh. “Much more than a colourful re-enactment of an ancient tradition, the Riding is about

appreciating the history of the city we live in and celebrating being a citizen of Scotland's great Capital City."

- Sam Lockhart, Press Officer for the Edinburgh Riding of the Marches: "This year's Edinburgh Riding of the Marches is particularly special as we continue to expand and include more of the Edinburgh community in this historical event. We're excited to see new faces and welcome back old friends as we ride through the city."

"The Edinburgh Riding of the Marches is a free event, open to all. Whether a lifelong resident or a visitor to the city, this is a unique opportunity to witness one of Scotland's lesser known storied traditions and become part of Edinburgh's living history."

For more information on this and future event, including the full schedule and route details, visit www.edinburghridingofthemarches.com or follow on Facebook @Edinburgh Riding of the Marches and Instagram @EdinburghRide.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-24877/edinburgh-riding-of-the-marches-a-tradition-reborn-in-the-heart-of-scotland.html>

Editorial office and responsibility:

V.i.S.d.P. & Sect. 6 MDSiV (German Interstate Media Services Agreement): Robert Swinney

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