

Berwick Bridge 400: Celebrating the bridge designed to serve Spittal, Tweedmouth and Berwick and link two kingdoms

A programme of free activities, entertainment and experiences for all the family is planned for the weekend of 3rd and 4th August to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the opening of Berwick Bridge.

The events will take place between 10.00am and 4.00pm each day at several locations in Berwick and Tweedmouth, linked by the old Bridge that will provide a safe, vehicle-free route between the sites. Admission to all the activities throughout the weekend will be free of charge.

The programme begins at 10.00am on Saturday 3rd August with an opening ceremony at a marquee on the riverside green in West End, Tweedmouth. The Lord Lieutenant of Northumberland, Dr Caroline Pryer and the Mayor of Berwick-upon-Tweed, Councillor John Robertson are among the guests invited to take part. Thursdays Singers will perform “Berwick Bridge’s Birthday Song”, composed specially for the occasion by Alison Coates, and the ceremony will end with the Blessing of the Bridge conducted by the Right Revered Mark Wroe, Bishop of Berwick, the Very Revd Dr Susan Brown, Minister of Greenlaw and Chaplain to HM the King in Scotland, and the Revd Canon Dr. Sarah Hills, Area Dean of Lindisfarne. A commemorative wreath of flowers representing England and Scotland will be cast from the bridge into the waters of the Tweed and a bridge plaque unveiled.

On the opening day, Berwick’s historic Quayside will be the setting for 17th century re-enactments and street theatre scenes telling the story of the planning, building and opening of the Bridge. The three scenes will be performed by past and present members of The Maltings Youth Theatre. After each performance Berwick Archivist Linda Bankier will lead family-friendly history and story walks across the Bridge. There will also be music representing both sides of the Border, with performances by Berwick Pipe Band and Spittal Northumbrian Pipers.

A Quayside market on Sunday 4th August will feature street food traders and some twenty stalls selling a wide selection of crafts, food and drink produced by artisans and small businesses from north Northumberland and the Scottish Borders. Some of the street food traders will be attending on both days of the event.

During the celebration weekend, the marquee on the green in West End, Tweedmouth, will provide the stage for a variety of performances by local musicians and singers. The programme ranges from jazz and blues to baroque music and choral singing, and a performance by the “Shindiggers” special needs drumming band.

On both days of the celebration weekend, the Queen's Garden in Tweedmouth will be the location for a variety of free art and craft activities for all the family. These include creative arts workshops with Berwick Bridge 400 artist in residence Annie Lord, and artisan papermaking experiences with artist Lucy Baxandall using locally sourced materials from around Berwick Bridge. Berwick Museum and Art Gallery with artist Claire Beattie will be offering the opportunity to try your hand at Gyutaku, the ancient Japanese fishermen's skill of "fish printing".

On Sunday 4th August, visitors to a 17th century period encampment on Palace Green can learn about life in Berwick at the time of the building of the Bridge. Re-enactors from "Time Bandits" and "The Gilde" will also present displays featuring replica 17th century weapons on the nearby riverside fortifications, beside Wellington Terrace. In association with the Berwick Bridge 400 celebrations, this year's Berwick Civic Society exhibition in the Main Guard is entitled "Berwick's Bridges". Part of the exhibition explains the work being carried out on the Bridge by Northumberland County Council in 2024. The Main Guard is open, free of charge, from 11.00am to 4.00pm daily (except Wednesdays) until 30th September.

Frequent updates about the celebration weekend will be posted on the Berwick Bridge 400 Facebook pages and Visit Berwick website. The full Berwick Bridge 400 weekend programme will be launched in the week beginning Monday 15th July and copies will be available at a fund-raising event being held in the Town Hall on Saturday 20th July.