

## St Mary's Bang Goes the Borders Science Festival

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Hundreds take chance to see science in action



"Bang Go The Borders" St. Mary's School science day on Saturday. Up close with all sorts of creatures including toads (this one eventually grows as big as your head!), spiders, scorpions, snakes and giant snails.

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HUNDREDS of children from across the Borders flocked to Melrose on Saturday for the first Bang Goes the Borders science festival at St Mary's School.

Scientists from all over Scotland brought the wonders of their laboratories into the school to entertain, educate and amaze.

Festival organisers, Dr Sara Shinton of Shinton Consulting and Andrew Morris of St Mary's School, put together a programme with 25 activities spanning aspects of science from brain-controlled computers to CSI:Melrose. Children had the chance to handle snakes and toads, learn how Melrose Abbey was built and take home a variety of their own scientific creations – some more palatable than others!

“There were some great moments during the day,” said Dr Shinton, “particularly seeing kids explaining to their parents how their immune systems worked because they'd learnt to make a scab in a cup, or the process of digestion after mashing, mixing and squeezing a breakfast until they created a perfect poo!

“Sarah Jayne Boulton from Newcastle University and Rebecca Sowden from Glasgow Academy absolutely thrilled the kids because they both clearly love being scientists and their enthusiasm was infectious.”



An estimated 700 people attended on the day which showcased the cutting edge science happening in the Borders as Drs Lisa Macintyre and Sara Robertson from Heriot-Watt University in Galashiels explained their research into pressure garments and compression hosiery which help to maximise recovery from burns, and magical thermochromic materials, such as liquid crystals, which change colour with heat.

Many of the children took the opportunity to try on a bullet-proof Kevlar helmet and hammer away at some carbon fibre.

All the events were free, something the organisers had worked hard to achieve.

“The turn-out today has shown how strong the interest in science is amongst kids in the Borders, but it isn’t always easy to get along to science shows and centres.” said Andrew Morris.

“We were determined from the outset that the event should be free, and thanks to generous sponsorship from the Society for Applied Microbiology, the Institute of Physics in Scotland and Rathbones, we’ve been able to offer everything we hoped without charging.

“We are so grateful to the scientists who donated their time and all the workshop materials.”

Some of the biggest names in Scottish science – Glasgow Science Centre, the Royal Observatory and the universities of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Napier, Heriot-Watt, Strathclyde and Newcastle – ran events.

“Science can suffer from an image problem, but everyone who came along on Saturday met researchers and did lots of experiments,” said Dr Shinton. “We hope everyone who came will be inspired by what they’ve seen and be a little more curious about the world around us and how it works.”

The festival was opened by local MP and Scottish Secretary Michael Moore.

“This was a brilliant, engaging and well-organised day and demonstrated to everyone involved how central science is to every part of our lives, from medicine and sport, to the gadgets we use and the clothes we wear,” he said.

“Science is vital to the Scottish economy and I encouraged all the young people at the event to get involved with science at school and recognise that it is happening all round them.

“Many people from across Scotland gave up their time to come to Melrose and make science relevant for young and old alike – the organisers deserve a lot of credit for a great event.”

The day was deemed such a success that the organising team is already looking to the future.

“There’s obviously an appetite for science events in the Borders and St Mary’s School looks forward to welcoming everyone back next year when there will be an even bigger bang in the Borders,” said Mr Morris.

Sara Shinton added that the Secretary of State for Scotland opened the event and attended one of the Physics workshops! The goodie bags were a HUGE success and IOP is now plastered across the Borders.

Many thanks for the funding which made a huge impact on the day and has boosted our ambitions for 2012.