

NATIONAL TRUST FOR SCOTLAND MEDIA RELEASE

26 July 2019

Chance to discover Culzean Castle's subterranean secrets

Culzean Castle is renowned for its splendour and history but less well known are the mysterious caves below. Conservation charity the National Trust for Scotland, which owns and cares for the property, is offering a unique opportunity for the public to don hard hats and explore Culzean Castle's subterranean secrets. With limited spaces, the weekly guided tours are a must-see summer attraction for those who like to see Scotland's history from a different angle.

Shrouded in mystery and boasting a fascinating history, there is evidence of human activity in the caves since the Iron Age. The caves predate the construction of the castle by several millennia and their existence shows that the rocky outcrop has been an important site for humans for thousands of years.

From being used as a smuggling hideaway in the 1700s - when it's thought contraband made its way ashore from the Isle of Man and was hidden along the Ayrshire coast - to the tale of a piper who entered the cave and was never seen again - the caves are rich with intrigue and secrets.

An archaeological dig organised by National Trust for Scotland last year uncovered Iron Age artefacts and the remains of a mysterious hidden door. Pottery, glassware and 18th century wine bottles were unearthed during the excavation, deepening understanding of how the caves may have been used.

Gareth Clingan, Operations Manager for Culzean Castle & Country Park, said: "The caves are an extraordinary part of Culzean's colourful history and it's always a treat to be able to take the public in and show how humans have continued to use them for hundreds, possibly thousands of years."

Tours will be guided by the Trust's expert rangers, who will take visitors through the chambers sharing their knowledge of the caves' extraordinary past. Tours will take place throughout the summer with booking being taken for 28 July, 9 August, 15 August, 24 August, 22 September and 6 October.

For more information and to book, go to www.nts.org.uk/visit/events/explore-culzeans-caves

Hollywood actor, Billy Boyd recently visited Culzean Castle and heard about the caves. Video footage of his experience can be viewed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mT7omIBtv3M>.

ENDS

