

# Famous Faces of Haddington



## Haddington: A Town of Superlatives

**I**n 1318, Robert the Bruce gave his seal of approval to Haddington by confirming its status as a Royal Burgh. To mark this 700th anniversary, Marie Macpherson, author of *The Knox Trilogy*, spotlights some of the superlatives that make Haddington one of the most interesting places to live in Scotland.



**The Bruce Charter** is the oldest document held by East Lothian Council archives. Before then, Haddington was one of the first chartered Royal Burghs created by David I in 1138. Unfortunately, the original charter has been lost or destroyed.

In 1296 the **Goat** was first adopted as the burgh coat-of-arms probably because the first provost, a skinner or tanner – appropriated the symbol of his guild – the goat – into the burgh seal.

**St Martin's Kirk**, the oldest surviving building in the town, dating from around 1100, is reputed to be the oldest church in Scotland.

**The Nungate Bridge**, one of Scotland's oldest bridges, dates from the 16th century, although a bridge has stood on this site since at least 1282.

The **Town House** is home to one of the most expensive pianos in the world. The Bösendorfer concert grand has been played by the world's most celebrated pianists.

**The Cistercian Priory of St Mary the Virgin**, established by c. 1158, was one of the richest and largest nunneries in Britain and Ireland.

**The Treaty of Haddington** signed at the abbey on 7 July 1548, betrothing Mary, Queen of Scots to the French Dauphin, is one of the most significant treaties in Scottish history.

**The Siege of Haddington** lasted from July 1548 to September 1549, making it the longest siege in Scottish history.

In 1598, the **worst fire in the burgh** was not caused by the marauding enemy but by a careless maidservant placing clothes too near the fire-place during the night.

Despite being burnt and ransacked, Haddington's large number of significant 18th century buildings affirm its reputation as one of the **best-preserved towns in Scotland**.

Haddington is one of only 50 towns in Great Britain to merit the prestigious **Council of Archaeology Stamp of Preservation Approval**.

In the early 15th century it was the **fourth largest** town in Scotland.

**Knox Academy** is the descendant of the medieval Haddington Grammar School founded in 1379. It features on the List of the Oldest Schools in the World.

The earliest record of a town piper is held in the burgh records of 1542 but there's an earlier carving of a bagpiper on one of the buttresses of **St Mary's Kirk**.

**St Mary's Kirk**, built in the 14th and 15th centuries, is the largest parish church with the longest nave in Scotland.

With its 150ft (48m) spire, the **Town House** is the tallest building in the burgh.

**Haddington Post Office**, dating back to 1603, was one of the very first post offices in Scotland.

**Haddington House** on Sidegate, dating from 1648, is the oldest domestic dwelling in the town in one of the oldest localities.

**The Ancient Fraternity of Gardeners**, founded in 1676, is the oldest fraternity of its kind. Its property contained an inn still known as the Gardeners' Arms today.

**The Corn Exchange**, built in 1854, is reputed to be the second largest in Scotland.

In 1948, the largest recorded flood on the **River Tyne** in historic times occurred on the night of 12th-13th August, when the Tyne rose to a level of 10 feet above normal.

'**Haddington Club**' formed in 1709 was Scotland's first properly instituted bowling club with one of the first public greens laid out in 1662 beside the Nungate Bridge.

The first – and best – James Bond, superstar **Sean Connery**, slept in a coffin when he worked in a joiners' workshop in Haddington.

2018 is also the **Golden Anniversary** of the first Haddington Festival held in 1968.