

Press Release



10 December 2020

Museum welcomes visitors back to a wondrous winterland of colour this Christmas

The River & Museum has opened its doors again in time for this fabulously festive Christmas. With the arrival of Elmer and Friends from Thursday 10 December, visitors are invited to enter a colourful, playful world of delight and imagination. The exhibition, the first ever major retrospective of David McKee's striking illustration, [*ELMER and Friends: The Colourful World of David McKee*](#), brings with it a burst of excitement and an explosion of colour, the perfect backdrop for this festive season.

Explore David McKee's world through multi-sensory elements including colour, texture, sound and vision, using magnifying glasses, and an interactive mirrored walkway to see things differently. The exhibition will delight younger visitors whilst taking older audiences on a trip down memory lane as they rediscover old favourites like *Mr Benn*.

Many of McKee's vibrant illustrations are on display for the first time. As well as original illustrations from the Elmer series, this celebratory and feel-good exhibition will feature

original artwork from favourites including *Mr Benn*, *Not Now, Bernard* and *King Rollo*, together with the opportunity to spend quality time simply pouring over these joyful books.

This playful exhibition from Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, celebrates 30 years of Elmer the Patchwork Elephant, with a selection of these widely read children's books available in the Museum's Shop, from Elmer's Christmas to Elmer and the Lost Treasure, as well as puzzles and toys.

Sarah Posey, Director of the Museum, says "We're absolutely delighted to welcome back visitors near and far to the Museum this Christmas. It seems very fitting that we should reopen with our exquisite Elmer and Friends exhibition, with David McKee's imagination offering us a combination of excitement, inclusion, colour, optimism and nostalgia – all very fitting for this festive season at the Museum."

Magical Family Fun

There's even more than Elmer at the Museum this Christmas! Discover the magic of the festive season as Christmas approaches at the Museum's [Christmas Magic Family Fun Day](#) on Monday 21 December. Hear wintry tales and uncover seasonal traditions in these special family sessions with things to make, colour and create. Wear your best Christmas jumper and look out for Father Toadmas!

Toddlers' favourite [Tiny Toads](#) is back with a Christmas special on Thursday, 17 December, 10.15-11.00 am. This festive session will feature the exclusive film premiere of 'Storytime with Maddy' with seasonal theme, with Christmas things to make, colour and create and a visit to the galleries to see the object that inspired the session. These popular weekly sessions will be back in the spring, with [pre-booking required](#).

Treasure Trove of History, Art, Rowing and Nature

With all the [galleries](#) open again, the Museum is the gift that keeps on giving this Christmas. Visitors young and old can delve into local history, or international rowing; enter the enchanting Wind in the Willows permanent exhibition with its 3D models recreating the adventures of Toad, Ratty, Badger and friends – a family favourite; learn about the environment in the stunning surroundings of the Museum. Or appreciate the works of prolific artist, John Piper, with an exclusive [John Piper Christmas Curator's Tour](#) taking you around the Museum's dedicated gallery on 18 December.

Support Local

The [Museum's Shop](#) is bursting with delightful gifts and local produce of the highest quality with the finest gins from Hobbs of Henley, honey from Honeys of Henley, chocolates from Gorvett & Stone, contemporary prints from Nicola Metcalfe amongst others. With a bargain or two to be found in the Christmas Bonanza Sale in the Museum's Thames Room, it's well worth a visit. [Gift cards](#) are now available online. For the person who has everything, why not give the [gift of becoming a Friend](#) of the Museum this Christmas and support your local Museum at the same time?

The Icing on the Christmas Cake

Take time to stop and smell the coffee, or chocolate, in the Museum's [Chocolate Café](#).

Delicious breakfasts, hot soup lunches, Afternoon Teas, or simply a cosy cup of coffee and a cake are all available at the Café, with festive favourites including mince pies and gingerbread available, to add to the Christmas spirit.

Ends

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Fans of *Elmer, Mr Benn* and other David McKee favourites can enjoy the exhibition at the River & Rowing Museum from 10 December 2020 – Spring 2021.

Pre-booking is essential for entry to the exhibition and the Museum as a whole.

Visitor safety remains the Museum's priority and the Museum has worked closely with Seven Stories to maximise this throughout the exhibition. Measures include limited numbers to ensure safe social distancing, a carefully managed one-way route, hand sanitiser stations dotted throughout the exhibition and constant cleaning of seating and contact areas.

Museum, Shop and Café open Thursday to Monday; 10am – 5pm for the duration of the exhibition.

Open 7 days per week in December (excluding 24-26 and 31 December and 1 January 2021). Book your exhibition tickets in advance at rrm.co.uk

To find out more about What's on at the River & Rowing Museum, [subscribe](#) to their e-newsletter.

Notes to Editors:

The River & Rowing Museum inspires escape and exploration, telling the many stories of the River Thames and celebrating the wildlife that calls it home. Beyond its beautiful riverside location in Henley on Thames and award-winning building, the museum's doors open onto art, history, conservation and the international sport of rowing. The galleries include interactive displays and stories and objects of international significance, including the family-friendly 'Wind in the Willows' gallery and a dedicated gallery to the work of Modern British artist John Piper. In addition, the Museum hosts a lively programme of temporary and visiting exhibitions from partners such as the National Portrait Gallery, the Ashmolean, Seven Stories, the V&A and the Hayward Gallery in London. Working closely

with organisations in our area, the Museum's Community Gallery showcases a wide variety of local projects. Twice shortlisted for Family Friendly Museum of the Year, the Museum is a registered educational charity, and welcomes children and adults who taking part in its engaging and inspiring learning and events programme. The museum's Chocolate Café terrace overlooks Mill Meadows, and its shop celebrates local suppliers, specialising in children's books and games, fashion and craft.

As a charity receiving no ongoing public funding, the Museum relies on its visitors and supporters. Please help support the Museum's future by [becoming a Friend](#) or [making a donation](#).

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