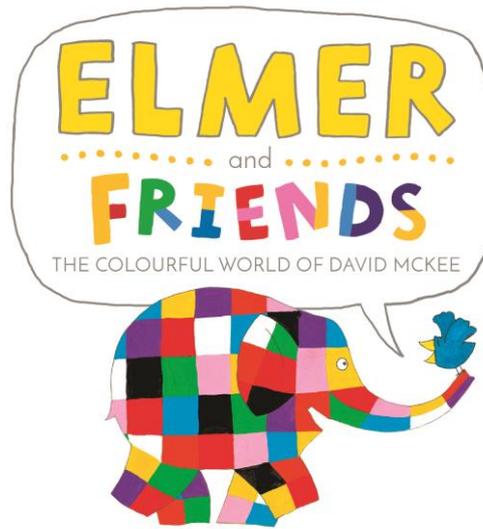


Press Release



Triumphant celebration of true colours marches into the River & Rowing Museum

Exhibition Open: 10 December 2020 – Spring 2021

Monday 7th December 2020

The first ever major retrospective of David McKee's striking illustration, **ELMER and Friends: The Colourful World of David McKee**, opens at the River & Rowing Museum on 10 December 2020. Visitors from across the region are invited to step into David McKee's colourful world in this playful exhibition from Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books and celebrating 30 years of Elmer the Patchwork Elephant.

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 magically enter Mr Benn's fancy dress costume-shop and spend quality time simply pouring over these joyful books.

Big and small fans of McKee's vibrant illustrations, many on display for the first time, can explore his world through multi-sensory elements including colour, texture, sound and magnifying glasses, including an interactive mirrored walkway. The exhibition will delight

younger visitors whilst taking older audiences on a trip down memory lane as they rediscover old favourites like *Mr Benn*.

Elmer remains one of the most widely read children's book series of all time, selling over ten million copies worldwide since it was first published by Andersen Press in 1989. Written and illustrated by celebrated children's author and artist David McKee, the Elmer books have been translated into more than 50 languages and now new books, toys and clothing add to the world of Elmer the Patchwork Elephant. Awarded a lifetime achievement by the Books Trust in 2020 as well as Illustrator of the Year at the British Book Awards 2020, this year has been a true celebration of David McKee and his work.

In the first book of the iconic series, Elmer discovers that when he tries to change his appearance in order to 'blend in' with the other elephants, they no longer recognise him, or accept him. This makes Elmer sad, and he experiences how it feels to be treated like an outcast, after being ostracised by his old friends. It's only when it begins to rain, and the grey paint that Elmer has covered himself with starts to disappear, that Elmer's 'true colours' are revealed, much to the surprise and delight of his friends, who preferred his multi-coloured and fun-loving self.

Sarah Lawrance, Collections Director at Seven Stories, said:

"Elmer's appeal has proven to be timeless and universal, opening up conversations around diversity and self-acceptance. Elmer is about celebrating your own true colours and having the confidence to be unique. Children's books help us discover the world and understand new and sometimes complicated things. The stories that we experience when we are young significantly shape our ideas and perceptions of the world, they help us to be curious and question things. We are living in a confusing political climate that children and young people can find difficult to understand. David's books are perfect for opening up conversations around diversity and being yourself. David's books are modern classics and Elmer's subtle message that it is ok to be different, resonates with children across the globe."

David McKee, author of Elmer said: "Elmer is really about accepting who you are, about celebrating difference. We are all different to a greater or lesser degree. We are all different, with so many differences, difference of colour, of accents, but also of size, shape and how we dress. The differences are what make the world so rich. It's strange because we humans seem to like difference in other things - in dogs and trees and flowers, but we don't accept it in people. If people aren't like us, we don't accept them. Elmer tried to be like the other elephants but in the end he has to be himself. I look forward to seeing the faces of all the children and families when they step into the exhibition at the River & Rowing Museum."

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.

Ends

For additional press information, interviews or photography please contact:

Charlotte Kewell, Head of Marketing:

charlotte.kewell@rrm.co.uk

Kerri Cicirello, Marketing Assistant:

kerri.cicirello@rrm.co.uk

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](#).

Website: www.rrm.co.uk

Email: museum@rrm.co.uk

Twitter: @river_rowing

Facebook/Instagram: @riverandrowingmuseum

About Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books

Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, works with children's books to create playful and profound experiences for children and young people, in order to fire their imagination and creativity, and deepen their understanding of themselves and the world.

Located in a converted Victorian warehouse in the Ouseburn Valley in Newcastle upon Tyne Seven Stories offers visitors seven floors of galleries, creative spaces, a specialist independent children's bookshop and a café to explore.

Seven Stories has a superb collection of artwork, manuscripts and archives by British writers and illustrators for children, from the 1930s to the present day, including work by such figures as Enid Blyton, Judith Kerr, Nick Sharratt, Philip Pullman and David Almond.

In 2020 Seven Stories, a registered charity, celebrates its 15th birthday in 2020 with a number of new and exciting exhibition and events.

Seven Stories is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and an Accredited Museum.

Website: www.sevenstories.org.uk

Twitter: @7stories

Facebook: [Facebook.com/7stories](https://www.facebook.com/7stories)

Instagram: @7stories

About Elmer

Elmer remains one of the most iconic and widely read children's book series of all time, selling over 10 million copies worldwide since it was first published by Andersen Press in 1989. Written and illustrated by celebrated children's author and artist David McKee, the

Elmer books have been translated into more than 50 languages and now new books, toys and clothing add to the world of Elmer the Patchwork Elephant.

David McKee

David McKee was born in Devon and studied at Plymouth Art College. In the early part of his career, McKee regularly drew and sold humorous drawings to magazines and newspapers such as The Times Educational Supplement, Punch and the Reader's Digest. David McKee has written and illustrated over 50 picture books for Andersen Press and has penned a number of children's classics including *King Rollo*, *Mr Benn*, *Not Now Bernard* and *Elmer the Patchwork Elephant*. David McKee loves to paint and now lives in the South of France but regularly visits London.

About Andersen Press

Andersen Press is a leading independent children's publisher, and home to some of the biggest names in the world of children's books, including the much-loved picture book characters Elmer the Patchwork Elephant and the Little Princess. Andersen Press is the publisher of many award-winning authors and illustrators including Melvin Burgess, Rebecca Stead, Susin Nielsen, Julian Clary, David Roberts, Tony Ross, David McKee, and Jeanne Willis. The company was founded in 1976 by Klaus Flugge.

Arts Council England

Arts Council England is the national development body for arts and culture across England, working to enrich people's lives. We support a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to visual art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. Great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us. In short, it makes life better. Between 2018 and 2022, we will invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery to help create these experiences for as many people as possible across the country. www.artscouncil.org.uk

Elmer and Friends: The Colourful World of David McKee is supported by:

