

## What is the Royal Armouries?

- The Royal Armouries was traditionally the **arsenal of the Crown**, a working store of military materials to be drawn on by the Monarch in times of war.
- Today it is part of the **culture industry**, the **National Museum of Arms and Armour**.
- The Royal Armouries moved its unique collection out of the **Tower of London in 1996** and travelled north to Leeds. Although it seems like the perfect location for a collection of arms and armour, the Tower had serious limitations and space was a major problem.
- It moved into a multi-million pound new build on a **brown field site**, a modern building for an ancient collection. The whole project cost **£42 million** and over half of that came from the **private sector**.
- It was one of the first **Public Finance Initiatives**, a partnership between Government and business. It was seen as being a good way of putting private money into large public capital spending projects. **Leeds County Council** and the **Leeds Development Agency** also contributed as they were keen to **redevelop** large areas of derelict land very near the thriving city centre.
- Today a similar project would probably be funded through the **National Lottery**.
- Because of the way it had been funded, it was necessary to **charge** when the museum first opened. Some of that private money had to be paid back! It was expensive, £6.95 for an adult, £3.95 for a child.
- Today the museum is **free**. In 2002, museum entry fees for national museums were abolished by the Labour Government. Visits went up by a quarter (25%) from 249, 106 in 2001 to 308, 822 in 2002.
- The Armouries is an important part of the region's **leisure and tourism** business, and part of the **urban regeneration** of Clarence Dock. In addition, the Museum houses a private company (RAI plc) in the **conference, event management, exhibition and corporate hospitality** business. That is a lot of business under one roof!

## Who Visits the Royal Armouries?

- **Families** – it can be a full and fun day out
- **Academics** – our study collection is internationally important

- **Students and school groups** – often for handling sessions
- **Special interest groups**
- **Corporate clients**
- **Tourists** from a wide range of countries
- **Veterans Groups**
- **VIPs**

That's a very wide range of people under one roof!

Each group expects something different from the museum and each brings their own ideas as to what the Royal Armouries should be and what it should do. It can be difficult meeting these expectations.

We try and meet those expectations and hopefully exceed them through good customer service. The key tools we use to provide this are:

- Staff
- Housekeeping and amenities
- Value
- WOW factors

**Staff** have to be available, identifiable, well presented, knowledgeable and approachable.

**Public Amenities** have to be clean and available and the museum has to comply with legal standards of accessibility in the Disability Discrimination Act.

**Value** – a visit to the museum has to be valued in some way by the visitors. Without a monetary value, this can be very difficult to assess! The museum is certainly value for money (being free!), but is it value for the time and effort actually getting there? The values that people put on a resource like the Royal Armouries can be very varied indeed. A Veteran from the Second World War would probably place a different value on the collection to a Key Stage 3 schoolchild! And yet both can be said to value their visit.

**WOW Factors** – we use key objects from the collection to hook visitors into the museum. Although each visitor probably decides for themselves what they think is the most impressive thing in the collection, we think that the **Hall of Steel**, **Henry VIII's unique armours**, the **Indian Elephant Armours** and our **Interpretations** (trained actors demonstrating key military skills from the past

and helping interpret the collection for a diverse audience) are our main WOW factors.

### **Making a Visit**

- We use our **Web-site, television and radio adverts, educational mail-outs** and **advertising hoardings** to help market the museum. Our Education and Interpretation teams often visit schools and local groups or attend national events to raise awareness of the museum and encourage further visits.
- We have a **Bookings Officer** available through e-mail, fax and telephone who takes bookings for group museum visits and school groups visiting the **Education Department**. The Education Dept. saw over 12, 000 teachers and children last year!
- **Risk assessments** are available for all groups and are provided by the Bookings team. A **map** of the museum, an **itinerary** for the day including **Frequently Asked Questions** and an **interpretation sheet** detailing the daily list of live performances (including jousting!) are also provided.
- Although entry is free, the museum still needs to know how many people come through its doors – we issue visitors **tickets** as people come in to keep count and provide a point of first contact with the museum.