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Royal Armouries highlights key achievements for 2009

3 March 2010

Britain's oldest museum, the Royal Armouries, today (Wednesday, March 3) reports one of the most positive years in its long and illustrious history.

The Leeds-based museum attributes its success to a variety of factors, including close working with key partners Historic Royal Palaces, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Hampshire and Winchester Councils; plus major investment at the Tower of London and Fort Nelson in Hampshire and a vibrant events programme.

Led by a Board of Trustees and an experienced, professional management team, the Royal Armouries last year appointed Lieutenant-General Jonathon Riley as Director General and Master of the Armouries.

He said: "We have had a great year and could not achieve all that we are doing, both at our museums and in our outreach, educational and other work, without the support of our key partners."

Jonathon took up his appointment early in the current financial year (April 2009), after 36 years' service in the Army, latterly as Deputy Commander of NATO ISAF in Afghanistan. Jonathon was Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers in Gorazde, where he was awarded the DSO for bravery and distinguished conduct.

One of his first tasks was to raise the RA's profile, externally. As a result, the museum has enjoyed a highly successful period, achieving Museum, Libraries and Archives Accreditation, and expects to report a strong trading position at the end of the financial year.

Jonathon said: "In many ways it's not been an easy year but we've delivered an excellent events programme, resulting in happy visitors. It's a tribute to our staff that visitor figures have remained buoyant, in these difficult economic times."

Major highlights during 2009/2010 include:

Exhibitions:

The RA won widespread acclaim for staging the exhibition – *Henry VIII; Dressed to Kill* – at the White Tower, in conjunction with Historic Royal Palaces. The Tower of London exhibition, marking the 500th anniversary of Henry's accession, gave thousands of visitors the chance to discover the Tudor monarch at his youthful best, with passions for weapons and sport. The White Tower will stage a new exhibition from March 31 – *Fit for a King*.

Investment for the 21st Century:

Tower of London

As custodian of Britain's royal armours, the RA has unveiled exciting plans to give the iconic White Tower a historic makeover, to mark HM The Queen's Diamond Jubilee in 2012. The RA and Historic Royal Palaces (HRP) are inviting a range of partners to join them in presenting a bold and visionary gift to the nation, in the form of a fully restored and re-presented White Tower. Improvement include a magnificent Royal Gallery, showcasing 500 years of protective body-wear from the four corners of the globe.

Leeds

As Britain's first national museum with its HQ outside London, the RA houses 8,500 exhibits from the national collection at the purpose-built museum in Leeds. An exciting programme to upgrade the galleries has been announced, starting with the Tournament Gallery.

Fort Nelson, Hampshire

Home to the RA's big gun collection, Fort Nelson is currently being redeveloped in a £3.5m project, in conjunction with the Heritage Lottery Fund. The revamp – designed to improve the Victorian Fort, in a sympathetic and appropriate way, will include a new, glass-sided orienteur gallery – with guaranteed wow factor. The scheme also includes creating a state-of-the art classroom for the future.

For full details of all these projects – plus the RA's Dangerously Entertaining events calendar – visit www.royalarmouries.org

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Notes to editors

- Royal Armouries is the national museum of arms and armour and has sites in Leeds, HM Tower of London, Fort Nelson and Louisville, Kentucky. It is the first British national museum to open a permanent presence in another country
- Admission to the museum is free. However, there may be a small charge for some special events.
- Open all year daily, 10am-5pm. Closed 24-25 December
- **Ticket booking Line:** 0113 220 1985
- **Information Line:** 08700 344 344
- **Website:** www.royalarmouries.org
- The Royal Armouries Museum should not be confused with [Royal Armouries International plc](#), the private sector corporate hospitality business.