

Report of the River & Rowing Museum Foundation for the year 2009/10 to be delivered to the Annual Town Meeting, Thursday 22nd April 2010

I am delighted to report that the Museum has received over 104,000 visitors for the year to the end of March 2010. This figure is less than 3% below our record and has been achieved despite the appalling weather in December and January, which caused such havoc throughout the country.

Our education work remains a priority and in June we were awarded the prestigious 'Learning Outside the Classroom' quality badge. We continue to work closely with local schools and the Henley College and to co-operate closely with other local community organisations including, NOMAD, The Henley Society, Henley Rowing Club & Upper Thames Rowing Club (and their youth development schemes), The Henley Festival, The Henley Youth Festival, The Henley Literary Festival, The Education Business Partnership and others.

We were delighted to unveil the 'Henley Hoard' and show this Iron Age find of 32 gold coins. This has been acquired with the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

'Water, Water Everywhere', an exhibition on flooding on the River Thames was opened in July 2009 by Lord Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency. He also launched the Thames Learning Group, led by the RRM, which widens access to learning opportunities from source to estuary. Alan Titchmarsh opened the "Ratty's Refuge" garden in the Museum grounds, translated from the Chelsea Flower Show in 08. We are grateful to the Town Council, the Wildlife Group and the Environment Agency for their help with its installation. We have already conducted trial education visits and conducted tours and these are now incorporated into our regular during the summer. We have continued to work with the "Transition Towns" initiative in Henley and have held a second hydropower conference. These are all further steps towards the RRM making an active contribution to the wider environmental and conservation issues of the day. We are also delighted to have hosted the RSPB Bird Watch and plan for this to be an annual event.

As a registered charity the Museum Foundation continues to seek ongoing financial support and we are grateful to those who continue to support us despite the present harsh economic climate. The Invesco Perpetual Henley Gallery continues to receive support from both Invesco Perpetual and the Henley 100 Club. Equally the Schwarzenbach International Rowing Gallery has benefited from ongoing support from The Henley Royal Regatta, British Rowing, and our growing "Friends of Rowing @ RRM". The Arbib Foundation continues to support the education centre that bears its name. We have now been licensed for civil wedding ceremonies and this increase our venue hire potential.

We hosted events to mark the '2012 Open Weekend' in July and have taken a leading role in "Our Sporting Life", a project recognised by LOCOG with their Inspire By mark and part funded by the Museums Libraries and Archive Council (DCMS). OSL – Henley, the first of over 100 community exhibitions, was opened in March and will continue here to mid July. A series of taster days will be organised by SODC whose support has been vital in enabling us to stage this exhibition.

The Museum continues to play a leading part in the Henley Partnership and especially the tourism group. We are actively working on the plans for 2012 and are in touch with many groups, both within the town and throughout the 'Dorney Corridor' to ensure that Henley plays an active part in and benefits from this once in a generation opportunity.