

28 June 2004

The Courtyard Development: The Fitzwilliam Museum relaunches with new facilities and galleries

The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge has just reopened to the public following the completion of a £12 million Courtyard Development which was supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

At the heart of the project lies a new four-storey building inserted into a redundant courtyard, a residue from successive, twentieth-century extensions to a museum which opened on its present site in 1848. Visitors to the Fitzwilliam this summer will be able to enjoy the enhanced facilities and new galleries which have been created.

With its combination of new construction and renovation the Courtyard Development, designed by John Miller + Partners, adds almost 3,000 square metres of new and improved accommodation to the existing buildings in ways which reflect the museum's priorities in the twenty-first century. These are to preserve the collections and ensure that they are made as accessible as possible, intellectually as well as physically, to the Museum's 300,000 visitors annually.

The Courtyard Development not only creates new public space and thus improved visitor circulation but also provides enhanced facilities including new galleries for temporary exhibitions, medieval and renaissance and 20th and 21st century art, an Applied Arts Study Room in the Ceramics Reserve, new IT resources and new education spaces, seminar room and studio. A larger shop and café are located in the new Courtyard at the heart of the Museum. In addition, new public and schools programmes have been developed, along with special resources to enable families to make the most of their visit.

Duncan Robinson, Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, is enthusiastic about the development: "The Courtyard has provided the catalyst for a whole series of improvements from one end of the museum to the other; from the lighting and the display of objects in the galleries to new facilities for research and teaching. Perhaps the best way to summarise this project is to recall the Founder, Viscount Fitzwilliam's original investment in 'the increase of learning.' Our hope is that visitors to the Fitzwilliam will now enjoy a significantly enhanced experience of the treasures housed in the Museum and we are particularly grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund and to all our other benefactors for enabling this vital development to be realised."

Liz Forgan, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund said: "It's wonderful to see one of Cambridge's favourite museums revitalised so visitors can see its world-class collections in a new setting. This combination of enhancement, innovation and improvement of existing facilities, made possible with Heritage Lottery Fund support, epitomises the exciting renaissance in museums that has been taking place across the UK in the past 10 years."

Further information on the Courtyard Development and the Fitzwilliam's collections can be found on the Museum's website: www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk.

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Funding

The £12 million project was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (£5.9 million), charitable trusts and individual donations, including £1 million from the bequest of Paul Mellon (Yale and Clare), a donation of £1 million from an anonymous benefactor and a further £1 million from Trinity College, Cambridge. The Friends of the Fitzwilliam collectively contributed more than £100,000 and very many individuals supported the Appeal managed by the Courtyard Development Committee under the chairmanship of Nicholas Baring. The Fitzwilliam Museum gratefully acknowledges this generosity.

The Heritage Lottery Fund

The Heritage Lottery Fund enables communities to celebrate, look after and learn more about our diverse heritage. From our great museums and historic buildings to local parks and beauty spots or recording and celebrating traditions, customs and history, HLF grants open up our nations heritage for everyone to enjoy. They have supported more than 15,000 projects, allocating over 2.9 billion across the UK.

For further information please contact Katie Owen, Senior Press Officer, Heritage Lottery Fund
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Fitzwilliam Museum Courtyard Development Project Team

Lead Designer/Architect:	John Miller + Partners
Quantity Surveyors:	Davis Langdon & Everest (London)
Structural Engineer:	Campbell Reith Hill
Services Engineer:	SVM Partnership
Main Contractor:	Amec Capital Projects

Project Managers:

Gardiner Theobald Management Services
Estate Management & Building Service, University of Cambridge

The Fitzwilliam Museum

The Fitzwilliam Museum not only houses the University of Cambridge's art collection but is also a public museum and art gallery with an international reputation. More than half a million objects and works of art are held in five curatorial departments: Antiquities, Applied Arts, Coins and Medals, Manuscripts and Printed Books and Paintings, Drawings and Prints.

The Fitzwilliam's treasures range from Ancient Egyptian, Greek and Roman antiquities to the arts of the 21st century and include masterpieces by Titian, Canaletto, Stubbs, Constable, Monet, Renoir and Picasso, one of the world's foremost Rembrandt print collections, Handel music manuscripts and the famous Fitzwilliam Virginal Book, one of the most significant collections of Korean ceramics outside South-East Asia, medieval illuminated manuscripts and outstanding collections of pottery, porcelain and medieval coins.

The Fitzwilliam Museum has a wide-ranging programme of temporary exhibitions and events and an award-winning Education Service. The Museum is open Tuesday – Saturday: 10.00 am – 5.00 pm, Sunday: 12.00 noon – 5.00 pm and Bank Holiday Mondays. Admission to the permanent collections and to temporary exhibitions is FREE.

Website: www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk.