

12/09/05: For immediate distribution

PIRATES HOIST THE JOLLY ROGER OVER THE EMPIRE MUSEUM

The West Country's most infamous buccaneers are set to gather next month in Bristol as part of an eleven-day festival celebrating the region's rich and colourful association with piracy.

'Pirates of the South West' will see notorious pirates such as Bristol's own Blackbeard, Cornwall's Lady Killigrew and Devon's Eric and Maria Cobham portrayed by actors in performances and events recreating the Golden Age of West Country piracy. The festival is the latest in the British Empire & Commonwealth Museum's annual events programme and aims to provide a range of pirate-themed activities for families during the school half-term holiday, which runs from 22nd October to 1st November.

Piracy has continued to fascinate long after the end of its major period of activity between the 16th and 18th centuries. Another featured character, Bartholomew Roberts, who captured more than 400 ships, declared "A merry life and a short one shall be my motto!" Blackbeard reputedly married 14 times and had 40 children. But it's not just the male sex that enjoyed a life of piracy. Maria Lyndsey was so enamoured when meeting Eric Cobham for the first time and hearing of his brutal acts on the high seas, that she married him the very next day! Lady Killigrew plied a Spanish ship's crew with drink in a Falmouth tavern before murdering them with the help of her servants.

The Museum hosted a hugely popular pirate event earlier in the year and according to festival organiser Lucy Bradley "it's the younger visitors that want the most blood-thirsty action and the chance dress up as a fearsome pirate."

In addition to pirate performances the holiday programme offers storytelling, shanties, treasure hunts, demonstrations and a pirate bouncy castle. All events and activities are included within the normal price of admission to the Museum. Further details can be obtained by calling 0117 925 4980.

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For further information and pictures please contact:

Feisal Khalif (ext.204) or Lucy Edwards (ext.230)

Tel. 0117 925 4980

Fax. 0117 925 4983

Email: feisal.khalif@empiremuseum.co.uk (or) lucy.edwards@empiremuseum.co.uk

Notes to Editors:

- 'Pirates of the South West' runs from 22nd October –1st November 2005

Timetable	
Saturday 22 nd and Sunday 23 rd October	Pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a pirate puppet.
Monday 24 th , Tuesday 25 th and Wednesday 26 th October	Pirate show "A Merry Life"; pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a treasure map.
Thursday 27 th & Friday 28 th October	"Meet the Pirate"; pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a treasure map.
Saturday 29 th & Sunday 30 th October	Pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a pirate puppet.
Monday 31 st October	Pirate show "A Merry Life"; pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a treasure map.
Tuesday 1 st November	"Meet the Pirate"; pirate trail; pirate bouncy castle; stories & songs; make a treasure map.

- **"A Merry Life" pirate show:** A thoroughly entertaining way to learn all you need to know about some of the most blood-thirsty and successful local pirates. Bristol's own Blackbeard fronts the cast, which also features Lady Killigrew, the murderous Cobhams and local rogue Bartholemew Roberts. Be prepared for audience participation, songs, fighting, punishments, and much, much more.....

- **Meet the Pirates:** your chance to close up and personal with selected pirates as they rove the galleries enthralling visitors with tales of their vagabond and murderous lives.....meet them if you dare!!
- **Pirate activity trail:** learn how to tie knots, send a message with flags, make your own treasure map, dress Polly the Pirate and learn some fascinating facts on your way round – for example, did you know that Blackbeard had a ship’s musician, and that he liked to let off stink bombs in the hold of his ship?!
- **Pirate bouncy castle:** younger visitors can let off some steam on our brand new inflatable, which features a 15-foot high pirate head, complete with parrot!
- **Stories & songs:** our storyteller will enchant the youngest visitors with tales of life as a pirate, and will even teach them a sea shanty or two to sing in the bath!

- **The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum**

The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum is the only national museum to present the 500-year history of the British empire and impact and legacy of this colonial history on modern, multicultural Britain. The Museum opened in September 2002 and was short listed in May 2004 for the title of ‘European Museum of the Year’. The Museum is a registered charity and is independent of local or central Government.

British Empire & Commonwealth Museum
 Clock Tower Yard
 Temple Meads
 Bristol
 BS1 6QH