

News Release: 20<sup>th</sup> March 2006

## **ROLL UP TO THE EMPIRE MUSEUM FOR A TRADITIONAL VICTORIAN FAIR**

This Easter Bristol plays host to a lavish series of birthday celebrations in honour of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The British Empire & Commonwealth Museum, located inside his magnificent railway station at Temple Meads, is contributing to the festivities by staging a traditional Victorian Fair.

From 1<sup>st</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> April, visitors can stroll through side stalls and sweet sellers, and meet the characters and showmen from yesteryear. Brunel's panelled drawing room will be opened for spectacular daily shows and for families to enjoy cosy games by the fireplace. Visitors will be enchanted by the array of Victorian amusements from crazy mirrors, hook-a-duck, and a coconut shy, to skittles, balloon modelling, ghost stories, and a roll-the-penny game.

Daily shows include the extraordinary plate-spinning, ball-juggling showman Juan from the Bristol performance troupe Circomedia. The Magic Lantern show will also dazzle the crowds and on selected days the mischievous Punch & Judy will be asking the audience to get involved!

While music plays on, visitors can enjoy an English cream tea in the Café, or dip into some popcorn and candyfloss. A Victorian Fair is included within normal Museum entry so guests are welcome to tour the permanent galleries, which chart the rise of Queen Victoria's British empire. The Museum is shortly to announce details of the first ever public tours of Brunel's original Great Western Railway terminus, the world's oldest surviving purpose-built station.

The Museum is open every day 10am – 5pm. Events are suitable for all ages from three years upwards and advance booking is not necessary.

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## Notes to Editors

- **A Victorian Fair** is a free event included with normal Museum admission prices: Adults £6.95; Children (5-15 years) £3.95 Under 5s FREE  
Concessions £5.95; Family ticket £16.00

All full paying visitors are eligible for a 12 month pass allowing unlimited free re-entry.

Events Programme: Performances are repeated 3 times daily (11 am; 2.00pm & 4.00pm) on the dates listed.

<b>Live Show Programme</b>		9 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
1 <sup>st</sup>	Mr Punch	10 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Magic Lantern	11 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mr Punch	12 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
4 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch	13 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
5 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch	14 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
6 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch	15 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan
7 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch	16 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch
8 <sup>th</sup>	Showman Juan	17 <sup>th</sup>	Mr Punch

- **The British Empire and Commonwealth Museum** is the only Museum in the world to present the 500 year history of the British empire and to examine the legacy of Britain's colonial history on modern, multicultural Britain. The Museum opened in September 2002 and was short-listed in 2004 for the title of 'European Museum of the Year'. Its current special exhibition 'Pow Wow', about England's Tudor attempts to colonise America, was nominated for the 2005 Museums and Heritage Awards for Excellence.
- **Brunel 200** marks the 200th anniversary in 2006 of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel with a year of major exhibitions, educational programmes, publications, walks and trails, arts projects, competitions, conferences, debates and talks, and much more. Brunel was one of Britain's most audacious, versatile and inspirational engineers and the programme of activity will be focused upon Bristol and the South West, home to some of; his greatest achievements. Brunel 200 not only celebrates the creative feats of the past but also seeks to inspire the Brunels of the future; groundbreaking individuals and teams dedicated to thinking in new ways about the problems and opportunities of our time. Visit the Brunel 200 website at [www.brunel200.com](http://www.brunel200.com) for further details.

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