

THE EYOT CENTRE

The Eyot Centre is a community centre situated on the banks of the River Thames just 300m from the historic Henley Bridge. As well as hiring out its extensive modern facilities to the public, it is also the home of The Henley Canoe Club and The Henley Dragon Boat Club. More recently it has become directly licensed centre for the Duke of Edinburgh Awards.

The Eyot Centre is a registered charity* which seeks to provide access to social and river based leisure activities primarily to the young people of Henley and surrounding areas.

Based in a picturesque location on the banks of the River Thames, the Centre aims to serve a wide community of differing abilities and social competences, by providing:

- Leadership and facilities for the local community to engage in regular paddle sport activities.
- Adventure weeks/weekends combining camping, hiking and paddle sports for local schools, colleges, youth groups and Duke of Edinburgh's Award participants.
- Coaching and training to individuals wishing to gain recognised qualifications in paddle sports activities.
- Fun and sporting challenges to disadvantaged groups to aid their self-development and team-building skills.

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Our History

Thamesfield and its grounds (the site on which The Eyot Centre stands) was originally purchased with money bequeathed by Viscount Hambleden for the young people of the Henley area. Following the purchase, The Thamesfield Youth Association was formed in 1943 to manage the Trust, one of the original Trustees being Ernest Makower, the Grandfather of the present Senior Trustee, Oliver Makower. Thamesfield and its grounds then became Henley Youth Club for a number of years.

The building became an onerous burden on the Trust and an agreement was reached with Oxfordshire County Council to run the House as a residential Youth Centre in exchange for a purpose-built Youth Club in the town and the retention of the freehold land housing TS Guardian, the Sea Cadet unit. A long-term lease was also set up on the land on which the current Eyot Centre stands. There was a building erected on this land in the early 1960's which was known as the Riverside Boat Centre.

By the late 1990's, the original Riverside Boat Centre building (erected 30 years before) was in a poor condition. In need of replacement, as it did not meet the modern requirements of its users, a major fund raising exercise began to fund a replacement building.

For 15 years members of the Centre, where canoeing had been the main sport, worked tirelessly to raise funds for the rebuilding. Despite two unsuccessful lottery applications, members and supporters of the club managed to raise over £100,000. In addition to the funds raised by the members, grant aid was forthcoming from Sport England, South Oxfordshire District Council and Henley Town Council. Following receipt of planning approval from Wokingham District Council, work at last began on rebuilding a new clubhouse, which was subsequently opened by HRH the Duke of Kent KG on 20 May 2008.

The present Charity, named The Eyot Centre, was set up in 2003 with Thamesfield Youth Association continuing to hold the lease from Oxfordshire County Council. It is the home to two thriving paddle sports sections and a water rescue service for community events.

The emphasis has, from the beginning of the original bequest, been on activities for young people and this continues with the current plans for the future of the Centre.

The Eyot Centre, Wargrave Road, Henley on Thames, Oxfordshire. RG9 3JD

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Henley Canoe Club – www.henleycanoecub.co.uk

Henley Dragons – <http://henleydragons.online>

Duke of Edinburgh – <https://eyotdofe.com>