



## BRUNEL 200 CELEBRATIONS LAUNCHED

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**Embargoed to 00.01 Tuesday 12 April 2005**

A year long programme of celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 2006 was announced today by Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP).

The Brunel 200 programme celebrates Brunel's life, times and legacy and includes exhibitions, educational projects, publications and arts projects, which will take place throughout Bristol and the South West. Brunel 200 will also provide the lead for a series of national celebrations, making links with activities taking place across the country, including Brunel associated sites in London, South Wales and Portsmouth.

Brunel 200 is a partnership initiative, involving an extensive body of companies and organisations including Arts Council England South West, Business West, Culture South West, local authorities, heritage sites, schools and universities, travel and hospitality organisations, amenity societies, private businesses, arts organisations and community associations, along with Brunel enthusiasts.

Andrew Kelly, Director of BCDP and Brunel 200, commented:

'Brunel was one of the most versatile, audacious and inspirational engineers of the nineteenth century whose astounding feats changed the world and continue to shape the way we live today. This is both a celebration of his life and work and also a campaign to create the Brunels of the future – groundbreaking

individuals and teams dedicated to thinking in new ways about the problems and opportunities of our time.'

Many of the Brunel 200 events in Bristol will be centred on some of Brunel's finest achievements for the city, including the Great Western Railway, Clifton Suspension Bridge and ss Great Britain. (For a full programme of events please see the appendices).

In addition to the £2m budget for the Brunel 200 programme, another £15m is being invested in the Bristol Brunel sites with a new visitor centre at the Clifton Suspension Bridge, a renewed ss Great Britain, and the digitisation of a significant part of the Brunel archive at the University of Bristol. Major funding support comes from The Urban Cultural Programme (Arts Council of England and Millennium Commission) and includes an earmarked grant of £980,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for Brunel 200.

A wider celebration of Brunel's life and work is also in development under the Brunel 200 South West initiative, led by BCDP and its partner Culture South West. The partnership will oversee celebrations across the region, including the culmination of the Brunel 200 celebrations in Swindon in September 2006.

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Martyn Heighton, Brunel 200 South West Champion, added:

'We are already working with over 300 organisations and individuals on the regional celebrations and anticipate having a fantastic programme to complement that of Bristol. It is particularly heartening to see projects such as the Bristol-born Great Reading Adventure grow to become region-wide in 2006.'

Leslie Perrin, Chairman of Brunel 200, concluded:

'Brunel captured the public imagination like no other engineer and he remains an inspiration today to the people of Britain and to innovators of all kinds around the world. Brunel 200 will ensure that Brunel's achievements and continuing influence are celebrated throughout 2006 and beyond.'

For further information, please visit the Brunel 200 website at [www.brunel200.com](http://www.brunel200.com) (Live from 12th April 2005).

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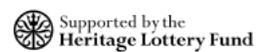
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## Images

Brunel 200 has a range of royalty-free images for use. Please contact Melanie or Andrew Kelly. These can be sent as high quality jpegs. The image library includes further examples from the Brunel graphic biography sent with this press release.

Brunel 200 is an initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership.



# NOTES TO EDITORS

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## Brunel 200

Brunel 200 is responsible for the overall 2006 celebrations. It is an initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP). BCDP is a partnership of Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West. It promotes long-term cultural development in Bristol. Projects include: At-Bristol, Brief Encounters Short Film Festival, Animated Encounters, Bristol Legible City, the new Bristol Festival of Ideas, and the annual Great Reading Adventure, when everyone is encouraged to read the same book at the same time. BCDP led Bristol's short listed bid to be European Capital of Culture in 2008. As a result of this work, Bristol was designated one of five British Centres of Culture. Creative Bristol is the name given to the initiative that aims to deliver as much of the proposed 2008 programme as possible. Brunel 200 is part of that programme.

Brunel 200 is funded by Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council and Business West. It is supported by funding from the National Lottery, including over £500,000 from the Urban Cultural Programme (Arts Council England and the Millennium Commission) and an earmarked grant of £980,000 from Heritage Lottery Fund.

## Highlights of the Brunel 200 activities in Bristol include:

- On Brunel's birthday weekend, 8-9 April 2006, there will be a procession and street party culminating in the switching on of the new lighting scheme at the Clifton Suspension Bridge.
- Major exhibitions at ss Great Britain, At-Bristol and the City Museum and Art Gallery covering the story of Brunel's life and work, the science and engineering of Brunel, and the art of the industrial age.
- A Brunel 200 charity ball.
- Widespread promotion of engineering, architecture, design and the arts.
- Bristol's annual Great Reading Adventure in which everyone will be encouraged to read *Around the World in 80 Days*, chosen because of its Victorian theme of optimism as well as because Jules Verne, its author, sailed on Brunel's ship, the ss Great Eastern. This will become a South West regional project for 2006 as part of the Brunel 200 celebrations.
- Massive education programme ensuring that every school child in Bristol will be able to learn about Brunel, visit the exhibitions and Brunel attractions. Other educational projects include reopening the competition to design the Clifton Suspension Bridge for schools; work to encourage more people – and especially women – to go into engineering; and the placing of 400 artists, scientists and engineers in residence.
- A recreation of the Royal Dinner of 1843, which launched the ss Great Britain.
- Free distribution of 100,000 copies of a 96pp graphic biography of Brunel's life and work for readers aged 11 and upwards. Other publications include *The Brunel Book*, with 16 newly commissioned essays and 250 illustrations.

The Brunel 200 website at [www.brunel200.com](http://www.brunel200.com) includes extensive background information about Brunel as well as news of activities planned for the celebrations. It was launched on 12 April 2005 and will be regularly updated.

## Brunel 200 South West

Brunel 200 South West, a joint initiative of Bristol Cultural Development Partnership and Culture South West, will create, co-ordinate, market and promote regional activity outside of Bristol. It aims to bring together regional agencies and the cities, towns and communities touched by Brunel. Potential hotspots for Brunel 200 events include the Swindon Railway Village and Works, Bath, Newton Abbot (site of Brunel's atmospheric railway trials), Torbay (proposed site of his retirement home) and the Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash. Martyn Heighton is the Brunel 200 South West Champion, responsible for the bicentenary celebrations in the rest of the region. He is based at South West Tourism, Woodwater Park, Exeter EX2 5WT. An audit of Brunel 200 South West is available on the Brunel 200 website and also at Culture South West – [www.culturesouthwest.org.uk](http://www.culturesouthwest.org.uk).

There will also be a programme of arts projects to be announced in May.

# STATEMENTS OF SUPPORT

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'Brunel 200 is a great opportunity to share the excitement of visionary engineering projects with the public. I hope the celebrations can help to show young people how engineering, and one person's vision, can make such a big impact. Maybe we can revitalise interest in engineering and inspire more people – including women – to join the next generation of engineering superstars.'

**Kathy Sykes, Collier Chair for the Public Engagement of Science and Engineering, University of Bristol**

'Isambard Kingdom Brunel was a truly inspirational figure, both in his own time and for us today. The Brunel 200 campaign, celebrating in 2006 the 200th anniversary of his birth, will focus attention on the versatility of this remarkable man and parade the fantastic range of his engineering legacy. Just as Brunel's magnificent railways and ships ushered in a new age of rapid international travel and changed the perceptions of the Victorian public forever, so should Brunel 200 enthuse a twenty-first century audience to reconcile the best of modern technology with the arts.'

**Sir Neil Cossons, Chairman, English Heritage**

'Darwin told us where we came from, but it was Brunel who took us where we wanted to go. He deserves to be feted for his genius and vision and Brunel 200 will be a wonderful way of showing everyone why he must be regarded as our Greatest Briton.'

**Jeremy Clarkson, writer and broadcaster**

'Isambard Kingdom Brunel was a spectacular builder of Victorian Britain, and I look forward to celebrating his 200th birthday.'

**Adam Hart-Davis, writer and broadcaster**

'The anniversary is a great opportunity not only to celebrate Brunel's astonishing achievements but also to use the galvanising effect of his name. Some of the engineers, entrepreneurs and visionaries of the future will be inspired by the Brunel-related events of 2006.'

**Professor Eric Thomas, Vice Chancellor, University of Bristol**

'Bristol City Council is looking forward to playing its full part in the Bristol 200 events which celebrate the life and achievements of an engineering genius. It is to Brunel that Bristol owes so many of its regional, national and international road, rail and maritime links which remain an important source of its commercial, business and cultural success to this day. Brunel 200 will help to inspire us all to maintain that success and to build on it for the future.'

**Nick Gurney, Chief Executive, Bristol City Council**

'The recollection of Brunel's life and work offers a fantastic opportunity for business. His application to detail, his ability to build teams to deliver his projects, and his great vision for integrated transport, are perfect examples for present day commerce. He made his projects beautiful as well as workable, and he continues to inspire us today. In celebrating his work, we will use Brunel 200 to inspire the making of the next generation of Brunels so that Bristol and the South West continues to prosper.'

**John Savage, Executive Chairman, Business West**

'Brunel's disease was that he couldn't help himself, always wanting to find a different and better way. So he introduced screw propellers, double skinned hulls, wide-gauge railways and the tennis racquet beam Tamar Bridge. Or perhaps his most important invention is his R&D method of step-by-step development. His disease is our heritage and a shining example to Design and Technology students. And we should learn from his bravery and boldness if we are to be successful in our technological age. Happy 200th birthday to the greatest Briton.'

**James Dyson, engineer and inventor**

# BRUNEL BIOGRAPHY

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Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born in Portsea, Portsmouth on 9 April 1806. His father, Marc Isambard Brunel, was a French royalist who had fled France in 1793 during the Reign of Terror and was knighted in 1841 for his contribution to British engineering.

Brunel travelled to France in 1820 to study engineering at the College of Caen in Normandy and the Lycée Henri Quatre in Paris. He also served an apprenticeship with Abraham Louis Breguet, a master-craftsman skilled in the making of watches and scientific instruments. He returned to Britain in August 1822 and joined his father's drawing office.

Brunel was formally appointed the resident engineer of his father's project to build a tunnel beneath the Thames in January 1827. Despite his youth and lack of experience, he gained the respect of his men through his dedication, hard work and bravery. After many years delay the Thames Tunnel was eventually opened to foot traffic on 25 March 1843. It was the first tunnel to be built under a navigable river and was hailed as the eighth wonder of the world. In 1869, it was converted to carry the East London Railway. Today around 14 million train passengers travel through it each year.

In January 1828 Brunel was seriously injured during a major flood at the tunnel. He spent part of his convalescence in Bristol, where he heard of plans to build a bridge across the Avon at Clifton. In March 1831, one of Brunel's designs submitted for the Clifton Suspension Bridge competition was formally awarded first prize and a ceremony to mark the laying of the bridge's foundation stone took place on 21 June. The Clifton Suspension Bridge was not completed until 1864, built as a tribute by his fellow engineers to Brunel who had died five years earlier. Although built for pedestrian and horse drawn traffic, the bridge was so ingeniously constructed that it is now capable of carrying around 4 million cars a year, and has become a major route to the region's motorway network. It is also a structure of great beauty.

In 1832 Brunel began his association with the Bristol Docks Company where he was engaged with schemes for improving and modernising the facilities for the next 15 years. He worked at other docks during his career including Plymouth, Cardiff and Milford Haven.

In March 1833 Brunel was appointed chief engineer of the newly formed Great Western Railway (GWR) and started surveying the route from London to Bristol. He would go on to hold engineering appointments with many other railway companies in the coming years, including supervising projects in Italy and India. He was usually involved in every detail of their construction: not only devising the route, track, carriages and engines, but also the architecture of the stations, the colour of the livery and the decorative details on the lamp posts. The London-Bristol section of the GWR was opened on 30 June 1841 and is the subject of an application for World Heritage Status.

In 1836 Brunel was appointed engineer of the Great Western Steamship Company and work began in Bristol on his first ship design, ss Great Western. She was an oak-hulled paddle steamer and the first steamship to provide a regular trans-Atlantic service, heralding a new era of ocean going transport. Construction began on her sister ship, the ss Great Britain, in 1839 at the Great Western Dockyard. She was the largest and most powerful ship to have been built to date and the first propeller driven, steam powered iron ship to cross the Atlantic. The ss Great Britain is the forerunner of modern passenger liners, and made regular voyages carrying thousands of passengers to the USA and Australia. Following her distinguished but occasionally ill-fated career, she returned to Bristol in 1970 from the Falklands and now is one of the major tourist attractions in the city. A £11m lottery funded restoration programme is due for completion in 2005.

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In 1853 work began on Brunel's most ambitious maritime project: the ss Great Eastern. She was conceived as the biggest steamship yet to be built, one that would be capable of carrying 4,000 passengers at a time on a non-stop trip to Australia. The ss Great Eastern proved uneconomic as a passenger ship but had a new lease of life when she was used to lay the first successful trans-Atlantic telegraph cable.

During this period, in addition to his numerous railway projects, Brunel was also working on the construction of his final engineering triumph, the Royal Albert Bridge at Saltash, and devising a pre-fabricated hospital for the Crimea.

Brunel collapsed on 5 September 1859 during preparations for the sea trials of the ss Great Eastern. He died at his Westminster home ten days later and was buried in Kensal Green Cemetery on 20 September 1859.