



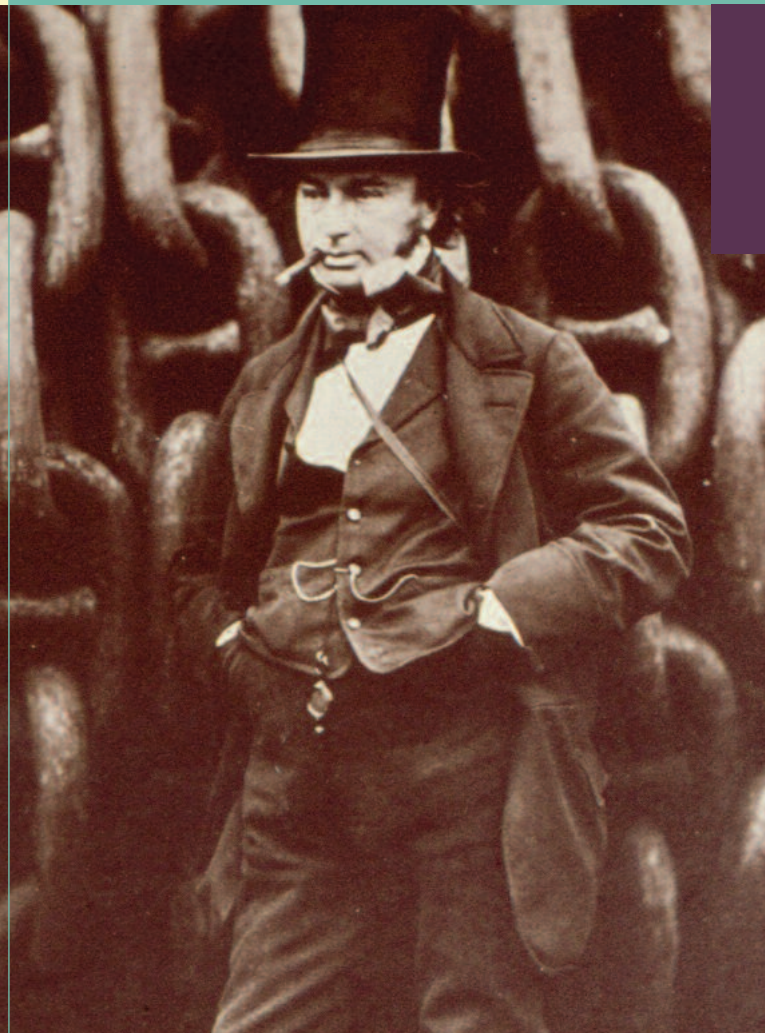
WALKING GUIDE

VICTORIAN BRISTOL

A guide to Victorian buildings in the city

www.brunel200.com





2006 marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, one of the most versatile, audacious and inspirational engineers of the nineteenth century.

Brunel 200 celebrates Brunel's life, times and legacy with exhibitions, learning programmes, publications, walks and trails, heritage and arts projects, competitions, debates, media programmes and talks in Bristol, the South West and beyond.

Bristol is home to some of Brunel's finest work including the original Great Western Railway terminus at Temple Meads (now home to the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum), the Clifton Suspension Bridge and the iron steamship *ss Great Britain*.

Victorian Bristol is one of a series of three guides to Bristol produced as part of the Brunel 200 programme. The other guides in the series are:

- Brunel's Dockside
- Brunel's Clifton

The guides are linked to the Bristol Legible City (BLC) way-finding information system, which includes walking maps and on-street signage designed to improve people's understanding and experience of the city. The BLC walking maps are free of charge and are widely available across the city. They can be found at tourist information centres, visitor attractions, libraries, hotel receptions, travel arrival points and many other sites.

See www.brunel200.com for full details of the Brunel 200 programme.

Enjoy your exploration of Victorian Bristol!

Victorian Bristol

Queen Victoria ascended to the British throne in 1837, the year that saw the launching in Bristol of Brunel's innovative transatlantic steamship the *ss Great Western*.

During Victoria's reign the city would go on to see the completion of Brunel's Great Western Railway and its associated rail routes across the South West, the launch of Brunel's propeller-driven, steam-powered iron ship the *ss Great Britain* and, following Brunel's death in 1859, the completion of his magnificent Clifton Suspension Bridge, built as a tribute to him by his fellow engineers.

The guide

This leaflet provides a guide to some of the architecture of nineteenth-century Bristol that has survived into the twenty-first century. Although much dates from the late-Victorian period and therefore after Brunel's death, it also includes buildings that he would have seen during his time in

the city. The guide does not describe a particular route but focuses on the city centre districts of Temple, Old City, West End and St Michael's Hill, all of which are marked on the BLC map.

The number 8 and 9 bus services, operated by First, run frequently between Bristol Temple Meads station and the city centre and on to Clifton. Their routes are also marked on the BLC map along with some of the stops for the Bristol City Sightseeing open-top tour bus, which is in operation from Easter to September.

See www.bristolvisitor.co.uk for the open-top timetable.

1 The *ss Great Western* (private collection).
2 The *ss Great Britain* (*ss Great Britain* Trust, photograph by Mandy Reynolds).

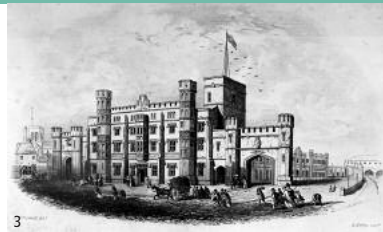


THE WALK

Bristol architects

Many of the most impressive buildings built or adapted in Bristol during the Victorian period were the products of well-regarded, locally based architectural practices such as the Paty family, Foster & Wood, W B Gingell and Henry Crisp. Architects of the day drew upon a number of stylistic revivals rather than developing a modern style for the modern age. The most popular of these were the classical and the Gothic.

The classical revival drew its inspiration from the elegant stone buildings of ancient Greece (480-323 BC) and to those of the ancient Romans who had added domes, barrel vaults, arches and brickwork to the traditional Greek style. Classicism had become fashionable again during the eighteenth century and continued to be popular into the nineteenth. Buildings included



porches supported by subtly curved columns, some topped with capitals carved in the form of a curled scroll or acanthus leaves. Further carving could be found in decorative friezes, cornices and pediments. The Gothic revival was in part a reaction against classicism and harked back to the pointed arches and vaulted stone ceilings first seen in twelfth-century church architecture.

However, construction methods, and the processing and distribution of materials had all advanced with the Industrial Revolution and Victorian architects and engineers

3 Exterior of Bristol station showing the now-lost right-hand portal. Traffic originally entered the site via the left-hand portal then passed under the line to exit by the right (Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives).

4 The passenger shed at Bristol station, illustrated by J C Bourne, published 1846 (Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives).

were experimenting in the most effective and creative ways of using iron, steel, glass, masonry and brick.

Temple Meads Station and Victoria Street

It is fitting to begin the guide to Victorian Bristol at the original **Great Western Railway (GWR) station** at Temple Gate (BLC map reference P6). This was designed by Brunel and has an impressive three-storey entrance in Bath stone in a hybrid revival style reminiscent of a Tudor mansion. It was completed in 1841, the year that the London-Bristol route was opened, and is

thought to be the first true railway terminus, with trains and people all inhabiting the same integrated space beneath a single roof. The booking hall was at ground level and passengers reached the platforms by climbing an internal staircase to the first floor, the track coming in 15 feet above ground level on brick vaults. A beautiful hammer-beam roof spans the 72 feet of what was once the passenger shed and is now used for conferences and exhibitions. The beams are largely decorative as most of the roof's weight is actually supported by the iron columns along the aisles. One wing of the





station façade was removed in 1878 to make room for an approach road.

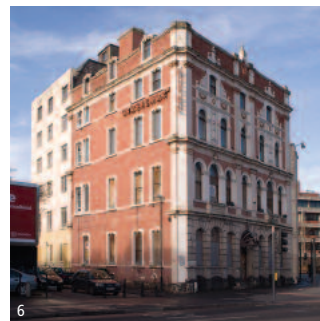
Brunel's GWR station ceased to be used as a rail terminus in 1965. It is now home to the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum, which offers pre-booked guided tours of the site that includes access to the passenger shed, the cavernous vaults and the mock-Gothic grandeur of the GWR Boardroom (see www.empiremuseum.co.uk/exhibitions/bruneltours.htm for details).

5 Temple Meads station, designed by Digby Wyatt (photograph by Ian Blanter).
6 The Grosvenor (photograph by Ian Blanter).

On the opposite side of the station approach road are some Jacobean-style offices originally built for the Bristol & Exeter Railway and designed by S C Fripp (completed 1852). Work on the present **Bristol Temple Meads station**, at the top of the approach road, began in 1865 and was completed in 1878. This was conceived as a joint station to serve the Bristol & Exeter and Midland Railway companies. Its architect was Brunel's colleague, Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt, who had co-designed Paddington station. The arched iron roof was designed by Francis Fox, whose father,

Sir Charles Fox, had constructed the roof at Paddington and was also involved in construction of the Crystal Palace. The station has a neo-Gothic exterior in pink stone with Bath stone dressings and a red-brick interior. The chocolate and brown extension to the east of the site dates from the 1930s.

The guide *Brunel's Dockside* will lead you west of the British Empire and Commonwealth Museum for a walk that includes the areas of Redcliffe, Harbourside and Spike Island. For now, turn right on Temple Gate, walking in front of the museum, and cross the road at the pedestrian crossing by Temple Circus, heading towards the Novotel Bristol Centre on the corner of Victoria Street (BLC map reference P6).



On your way towards Temple Circus you will pass two old and currently disused railway station hotels:

The Grosvenor (1875, S C Fripp) and the **George Railway Hotel** (c 1870). Victoria Street will lead you through Temple and on across the Bristol Bridge to the Old City. It was completed around 1872.

It was badly bombed during World War Two but some original sections remain including the row of buildings between Counterslip and Bath Street (shown as a short cul de sac on the map). Walking down Counterslip you can see the former **Tramways Generating Station** designed by W Curtis Green (1899), which is built in a mixture of red brick and Bath stone. On the curved corner of Bath Street is the former **Talbot Hotel** (c 1873), which has an attractive arched entrance, multi-coloured brickwork and a conical roof topped by a weather vane.

Old City

Many of Bristol's eighteenth and nineteenth-century commercial and legal offices were clustered along Corn Street (BLC map reference M4). Today the area is known more for its nightlife as a number of the buildings have been converted into



restaurants and clubs. **Lloyds Bank**, near to the Old Council House, was designed by W B Gingell and T R Lysaght and built between 1854 and 1857 in an extravagant Venetian style in Bath and Portland stone. It was originally the West of England and South Wales District Bank. The beautifully sculptured frieze on its façade is by John Evan Thomas who worked on the Houses of Parliament. On the ground floor the sculptures depict the five main towns where the bank did business: Newport, Bath, Bristol, Exeter and Cardiff. On the first floor are female figures representing Peace, Plenty, Justice, Integrity and other elements conducive to making money. Another impressive

commercial building on this street is the **NatWest Bank**, which was formerly the Liverpool, London and Globe Insurance building. It was designed by W B Gingell (1864) and its decorative details include caryatids (columns sculptured into female forms), firemen carrying axes and helmets, and the figure of Time holding an hour-glass.

Opposite Lloyds Bank is the **Exchange**. This was originally a meeting place for merchants, designed by John Wood the Elder in the eighteenth century, and was converted into a corn exchange in 1872. The clock was first installed in 1822 and later given two minute-hands, which can still be seen.

One hand shows the old Bristol time, which, with the coming of Brunel's railway and the need to synchronise train schedules, was adjusted to London time, indicated by other hand, just over ten minutes ahead.

Corn Street leads up to Broad Street. At 13-14 Broad Street is the former **Bank of England** branch building designed by Charles R Cockerell (completed 1847). It has fluted columns and unadorned capitals in the Greek Doric style. Cockerell was the Bank of England's



7 Lloyds Bank on Corn Street (photograph by Ian Blanter).

8 The Exchange clock (photograph by Ian Blanter).

9 The former Grand Hotel, now the Thistle (photograph by Ian Blanter).



official architect and at the same time as he was working on the Bristol project he had also been commissioned to design branches for Liverpool and Manchester. On the other side of the street is the former Grand Hotel, now the **Thistle Bristol Hotel**. It was designed by Foster & Wood and completed in 1869. It has an Italian Renaissance design reminiscent of the buildings of Venice. The ground floor – which was originally occupied by shops – projects out to the street while the rest of the building stands back. A little further down Broad Street on the opposite



side of the road is the former **Guildhall**, completed in 1846, which was designed in the Gothic style by Richard Shackleton Pope. The sculptures of leading Bristolians on the front are by John Evan Thomas.

At the bottom of Broad Street is a beautiful Art Nouveau building from 1900-01 belonging to the former **Edward Everard printing works**. Art Nouveau was characterised by the use of flamboyant curves and flowing lines, taking its inspiration from nature but using manmade materials. The figures you can see

depicted in the mural are the printers Gutenberg and William Morris, the Spirit of Literature and a woman holding up a lamp and a mirror to represent Light and Truth. The mural is made from Carrara-Ware marble tiles and was designed by W J Neatby who worked for Doulton & Co. Edward Everard designed the typeface in which his name is written and the building itself was designed by Henry Williams.

Behind the Exchange on Corn Street lie St Nicholas Markets and St Nicholas Street. Here can be found the stone-fronted **St Nicholas Chambers** (Ponton and Gough, 1866) decorated with carved dragons, the **Elephant pub** (Henry Masters, 1867), the Gothic **Gresham Chambers** (Ponton and Gough, 1868) with its sculpted heads, and the remains of the cast-iron **Queen Victoria Fountain** (1859). Also on St Nicholas Street is the former **Fish Market** (1873) by Pope and Son, which has an extension on Baldwin Street that was built in 1897.

10 The Edward Everard printing works (photograph by Ian Blanter).

11 The Old Fish Market (photograph by Ian Blanter).

12 St Mary-on-the-Quay (photograph by Ian Blanter).



The red-and-yellow-bricked **Old Fish Market** pub at 59-63 Baldwin Street is housed in the former Bigwood's fish merchants (1894) and was designed by W B Gingell.

To the west, Baldwin Street leads in to Colston Avenue. This road was formed in 1892 when the northern section of St Augustine's Reach – a man-made channel dug in the thirteenth century to divert the River Frome – was filled in. One of the first Bristol churches to be completed during the Victorian period was **St Mary-on-the-Quay** on Colston Avenue, built in 1839 and designed by Richard Shackleton Pope. It resembles a Greek temple

and originally would have been set close to the water's edge, as its name suggests. It was built for the breakaway Catholic Apostolic Church founded by the Scottish evangelist Edward Irving but is now a Roman Catholic church.



As befits a major trading port, there are a number of grand structures built to store merchandise along the quays of the Floating Harbour. Among the most exotic is **The Granary** (1869), on Welsh Back off the eastern end of Baldwin Street near the Premier Travel Inn (BLC map reference M5). This was designed by Ponton and Gough. It is ten storeys high with a different window treatment for each floor, a battlemented roof, and multicoloured brick and stone. The railways made the transportation of building materials much easier, allowing for more variety in colour as supplies were



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sourced from different parts of the country. The Granary is one of the best remaining examples of Bristol Byzantine, a style that combined elements of Gothic, Moorish, North Italian and Venetian design. A variation on this style can be seen in **Colston Hall** on Colston Street designed by Foster & Wood and completed in 1873 (BLC map reference K4). You can see other fine Victorian warehouses overlooking the Floating Harbour at Welsh Back, many of which have now been converted into apartments.

More modest waterfront Victorian structures include what is thought to be Bristol's earliest transit shed, now the **Severnshed** restaurant, on The Grove near Redcliffe Bridge (BLC map reference K6). Built around 1865, this is an iron-framed building that would originally have been open-ended to allow the swift unloading of goods headed for the warehouses or for transportation. Later iron-framed transit sheds include the 1894 building designed by Edward Gabriel that has been converted to house the **Watershed Media Centre** on St Augustine's

13 The Granary at Welsh Back (photograph by Ian Blanter).

14 Severnshed restaurant (photograph by Ian Blanter).



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Reach (BLC map reference K5). A more detailed description of the Harbourside area of the city can be found in *Brunel's Dockside* guide.

St Michael's Hill and West End

Crossing to the other side of the city centre, at the junction of Queen's Road and Whiteladies Road stand the impressive **Victoria Rooms**, originally a public hall and political meeting-place and now owned by the University of Bristol (BLC map

reference F3). The building was designed by Charles Dyer and completed in 1842 in a monumental, neo-Corinthian style (the most ornate classical form) with a giant portico and a pediment decorated with Minerva in a chariot driven by Apollo. Opposite is the **Royal West of England Academy** designed by John Henry Hirst and Charles Underwood with an Italianate colonnaded façade. It was completed in 1857. Walking down Queen's Road, back in the direction of the waterfront, you will pass a



number of shops dating from the Victorian period, a few of which retain their original frontage.

The restored façade of the former City Museum and Library on the corner of University Road and Queen's Road was inspired by the Doge's Palace in Venice. It was designed by John Foster and Archibald Ponton (1866). The original structure was destroyed during the blitz and the façade fronts a post-war building which now houses **Browns** restaurant. Next to this is the Bristol's Museum and Art Gallery (1899-1904) built in Portland stone in a Baroque design

by Sir Frank Wills (BLC map reference G3). Baroque was the name given to a seventeenth-century style derived from traditional classicism that used extravagant curves and shapes, and rich materials.

Taking a detour up University Road you will pass the former museum's lecture theatre (Stuart Colman 1874), the Eastern Orthodox Church (Henry Rising, 1888) and the end of Elmdale Road where there is a row of Gothic villas from 1883. At the top of University Road is **Bristol Grammar School**. Founded in 1532 it moved to this location in the

1870s. The Great Hall was designed by Foster & Wood. The walls are of local red rubble with stone dressings. If you get the opportunity to head out towards the Clifton Downs, you will see another impressive school building from the same period. **Clifton High School** on Clifton Park Road was designed by Stuart Colman and opened in 1875 (BLC map reference C2). It is in red brick and an early example in Bristol of Queen Anne architecture, a slightly fanciful and flamboyant style of the later-Victorian period. There are a number of beautiful Victorian villas, terraces and semi-detached houses in Clifton, particularly around The Promenade, and it is an area well worth exploring. See *Brunel's Clifton* for a circular work around the village and out to the Clifton Suspension Bridge.



From Bristol Grammar School, returning to Queen's Road, cross to Berkeley Square and follow the paths to Brandon Hill and **Cabot Tower** (BLC map reference G4). The tower was completed in 1898 to commemorate the 1497 voyage from Bristol to Newfoundland of the Genoese explorer and merchant John Cabot. The tower was designed by William Venn Gough who took his inspiration from a

15 Victoria Rooms (photograph by Ian Blanter).

16 Browns, the former City Museum and Library (photograph by Ian Blanter).

17 Cabot's Tower on Brandon Hill (photograph by Ian Blanter).

tower in the Loire dating from the time of Cabot's journey. The climb up the narrow internal staircase will reward you with magnificent views across the city and beyond.

From Brandon Hill you can walk down to St George's Road via Brandon Steep. On the corner, at the back of the Council House, you will find **Brunel House** designed by Brunel in consultation with Richard Shackleton Pope (BLC map reference H5). The building was completed in 1839 and has been much altered since then but it

retains its impressive four-storey Greek revival façade, a style used by Pope at St-Mary-on-the-Quay. Brunel House was originally the Royal Western Hotel, which was planned as a stopping off point on the transatlantic route that linked Paddington station to New York via Bristol. It became a Turkish bath in 1855.

Follow St George's Road to Park Street and walk down towards College Green and you will pass the former Royal Hotel – now the **Bristol Marriott Royal Hotel**



(BLC map reference H5). It is built in limestone in the Italianate style and was designed by W H Hawtin in 1864. The statue of Queen Victoria in the turning circle outside is by Joseph Boehm. It dates from 1888 and commemorates the queen's 1887 Golden Jubilee. The extension to the east of the site was built during renovations in the early 1990s.

You have now had a glimpse of some of the Victorian architecture in Bristol's city centre. From College Green you can catch the number 8 bus to Clifton and the suggested

18 Brunel House, the former Royal Western Hotel (photograph by Ian Blanter).

19 Queen Victoria's statue by College Green (photograph by Ian Blanter).

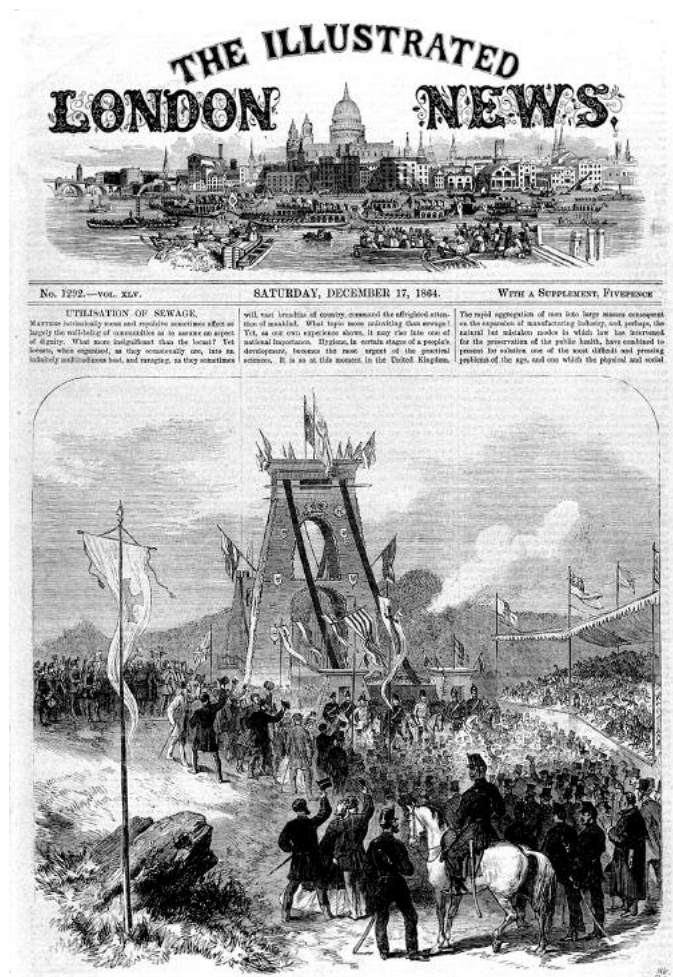
starting point of *Brunel's Clifton*, a walk lasting approximately one and half hours. Alternatively you can walk down to Pero's Bridge on the waterfront and pick up the route of *Brunel's Dockside*. You will see more Victorian buildings on these tours along with many other sites of interest.

We hope you enjoy exploring Bristol.

Timeline of Brunel in Victorian Bristol

Year	Brunel in Bristol	Other events in Bristol
1837	Launch of hull of the <i>Great Western</i> in Bristol (19 July). Work begins on Royal Western Hotel.	New Custom House opens. Election of Hon F H F Berkeley MP (Lib) who campaigned for a secret ballot (held seat til death in 1870). William West opens Giant's Cave passage.
1838	<i>Great Western</i> crosses the Atlantic in 15 days from Avonmouth to New York (April). Work begins on Temple Meads. Brunel answers criticisms of broad gauge. Isambard III born.	Great Western Cotton Works mill in operation. Foundation stone of Victoria Rooms laid.
1839	Great Western Steamship Company builds the new Great Western Dockyard and Engine Factory. Construction begins on <i>Great Britain</i> . Royal Western Hotel opens.	St Mary-on-the-Quay completed. Foundation stone for Chatterton Memorial laid.
1840	<i>Great Britain's</i> hull redesigned for screw propeller. Opening of GWR line from Bristol to Bath (31 Aug).	Bristol Cathedral reopened after restoration. Hall of Science opens in Broadmead.
1841	Bristol Temple Meads station completed. Full London-Bristol route opened (30 June). Consulted by Merchant Venturers on Clifton Water Works scheme.	Christ Church Clifton consecrated. Amalgamation of Fripp & Fry and Thomas soap companies.
1842	Opening of Bristol to Taunton section of Bristol & Exeter Railway (1 July). Urges new measures to overcome silting of Floating Harbour.	Victoria Rooms completed. Major exhibition at the Mechanics Institute.

Year	Brunel in Bristol	Other events in Bristol
1843	Launch of <i>Great Britain</i> at Bristol (19 July).	Foundation stone of new Guildhall laid. Founding of Crew's Hole tar and creosote works. Stage coaches between Bristol and London withdrawn (reinstated 1849).
1845	Maiden voyage of <i>Great Britain</i> . Work begins on new lock at South entrance of Bristol Docks.	Athenaeum and Bristol Stock Exchange founded. Death of Bristol artist W J Müller.
1847	Great Western Steamship Company bankrupted.	Bank of England building in Corn Street completed. Bristol County Court established. Jenny Lind sings in the city.
1849	New lock completed at Cumberland Basin, spanned by tubular swing bridge.	New Exchange market completed. Cholera epidemic.
1855	World's first postal train runs along the London-Bristol route.	Iron bridge crossing the Avon near rail terminus destroyed by steam barge. Bristol Agricultural Society dissolved.
1863	Temporary Clifton bridge with partially laid planking first crossed on 3 July.	Bill for constructing dock near mouth of Avon rejected in Parliament. Butler & Co (tar distillers) founded.
1864	Opening of Clifton Suspension Bridge (8 Dec).	Avonmouth pier built for railway connection to Hotwells. Typhus epidemic and summer drought. Launch of <i>Royal Sovereign</i> , the largest iron sailing ship built in port to date.



Brunel 200 is a partnership initiative initiated and managed by the Bristol Cultural Development Partnership (BCDP – Arts Council England South West, Bristol City Council, Business West). South West activities are being developed in partnership with Culture South West. Brunel 200 is part of Science City Bristol.

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Text by Melanie Kelly. With thanks to Marion Giles, Mark Pearson and Gillian Fearnough for their help in compiling this guide. Additional material taken from Andrew Foyle's *Bristol* published by Yale University Press in the Pevsner Architectural Guides series (New York and London, 2004).

Cover image credit: British Empire and Commonwealth Museum photograph by Ian Blanter.
Designed by: Qube Design Associates Ltd
Printed by: Doveton Press

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