

## NEWS RELEASE



### **JUMP BACK IN TIME (ON AN ORANGE SPACE HOPPER) TO 1970... FOR SHIP'S 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY 'COME BACK' CELEBRATIONS**

For immediate release

CELEBRATIONS for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary this summer of the ss Great Britain's epic salvage and return to Bristol have a distinct 1970s feel.

The historic ship was raised from the seabed in the Falkland Islands on to a pontoon and towed almost 8,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean – possibly the world's most daring salvage operation to date.

In July 1970 more than eight million people viewed the operation on television, and 100,000 lined the River Avon to welcome the Victorian ship back home to Bristol.

Today Brunel's ss Great Britain is a multi award-winning museum and visitor attraction, attracting more than 170,000 visitors, schoolchildren and venue hire guests every year.

Fully conserved and restored, the ss Great Britain now looks the same – above her glass 'sea' – as she did on the day of her launch in 1843.

Highlights of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations, which start July 17, include:

- 'The Incredible Journey' exhibition
- A stunning animated documentary, re-telling the epic salvage and return
- Fun family trails, where visitors are challenged to become 'salvage heroes'
- 'The Incredible Journey' talks from volunteers (Tuesdays & Thursdays July 20 – September 9)
- The salvage story retold for families by storyteller extraordinaire Sarah Mooney (July 17, 18, 24 & 25)
- Members of the Brunel's ss Great Britain 'crew' in 1970-style wigs!
- A Brunel figure in a John Travolta-esque dance pose will adorn fridge magnets, beer mats and t-shirts
- Goggle-making workshops, inspired by the divers from the salvage

Visitors are also being encouraged to jump back in time to 1970, when fashion was big – from maxi dresses and Farah Fawcett hair to bold make-up and flairs [please see 1970 and Salvage Factfile below]

The ss Great Britain Trust staff and volunteers have collected hundreds of memories from those involved in the ship's salvage, and have run a Twitter campaign with extracts from oral histories and memory cards.

The exhibition not only features the animated documentary, a timeline of the salvage story and major events in 1970, but also orange space hoppers hanging from the ceiling of the Baker Gallery, within the Dockyard Museum, next to the ss Great Britain.

And on July 19 there is a 'Reunion Tea Party' at Brunel's ss Great Britain of the main people involved in the ship's salvage. The salvage was a highlight of their careers and lives. Most are now in their 70s. For some it will be the first time they will have seen each other for 40 years. Some have not seen the ship since 1970.

The ss Great Britain Trust's Director of Museum and Educational Services Rhian Tritton commented: "The 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations are all about showcasing the extraordinary events of 1970 and how a small band of dedicated people were able to save this historic steam ship for future generations to know and enjoy.

"We are truly indebted to their vision and determination in bringing home this national treasure, against all the odds. It was an extraordinary feat, and quite an adventure, for all involved. This summer we are retelling their stories through a 1970s-styled exhibition, a stunning animated documentary, and a fun trail which challenges families to become 'salvage heroes'.

"Also expect to see the great Victorian engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel – in a John Travolta inspired dance pose – on fridge magnets, beer mats and balloons. As well as recording invaluable memories, 'The Incredible Journey' is a truly fun and celebratory series of events for 2010."

'The Incredible Journey' animated film is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Knowledge Catalyst award.

The ss Great Britain is the world's first propeller-driven, iron-hulled, steamship, designed by Isambard Brunel, and launched in Bristol in 1843 as the world's first great ocean liner. Following a successful career as an emigrant clipper, and cargo ship, in 1886 she was damaged in a severe storm and bought by the Falklands Corporation to use as a storage hulk, before being scuttled in 1937.

- To view the trailer of the animated film visit [www.ssgreatbritain.org/movie](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org/movie) and follow the tweets on <http://twitter.com/1970Salvage>.
- To view the BBC Chronicle documentary 'The Iron Ship' please go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/chronicle/8628.shtml>
- Celebratory 40th anniversary events will take place from 17<sup>th</sup> July at Brunel's ss Great Britain. Other summer events, in addition to the exhibition, family trail and tours The Incredible Journey talks, include: Bristol Harbour Festival fun (July 31

and August 1); Crimean troopship and Victorian surgeon re-enactors (August 21 & 22); and Grandparent's Day treat (downloadable vouchers for FREE tea for two) on September 12. For details please go to [www.ssgreatbritain.org](http://www.ssgreatbritain.org).

#### **‘THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY’ 1970 FACT FILE:**

- November 1967 Ewan Corlett’s letter in ‘The Times’ challenges the nation to save the ss Great Britain;
- 1969 ‘Union Jack’ Hayward agrees to fund the salvage attempt;
- January 11, Risdon Beazley and Ulrich Harms take on the salvage contract;
- March 25 1970, the salvage team arrives in Port Stanley, the Falkland Islands;
- April 7, the ss Great Britain floats for the first time;
- April 11, she is berthed on to the salvage pontoon Mulus;
- April 24, the ship leaves the Falklands;
- May 2, the ss Great Britain arrives in Montevideo, Uruguay;
- May 6, the world’s media descends to capture the start of the ss Great Britain’s incredible journey across the Atlantic Ocean;
- June 18 a RAF Nimrod flies over the ss Great Britain, pontoon and tug, in the Bay of Biscay;
- June 19, a photo taken by the plane is published in the Daily Express;
- June 23, she arrives in Avonmouth with an escort of smaller vessels carrying the media and well-wishers;
- July 1, she is floated from her pontoon;
- July 5, the ss Great Britain is towed up the River Avon (one day after the planned date);
- July 15, UK dockworkers vote to go out on strike, but in Bristol they agree to help bring the ss Great Britain into her birth;
- July 19, she returns to her Dry Dock (the same day and month she was launched by Prince Albert in 1843);
- The salvage operation was underwritten by millionaire Sir Jack Hayward.

#### **‘THE INCREDIBLE JOURNEY’ IN NUMBERS**

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|---|----------|
| • Number of days from salvage to homecoming:                        | 117      |
| • Cost of salvage in pounds (1970):                                 | 175,000  |
| • Number of crew on tug:  | 20       |
| • Number of mattresses used to plug the ship:                       | Unknown! |
| • Age of ship at rescue in years:                                   | 127      |
| • Date in July (1843 & 1970) she left and returned to her Dry Dock: | 19       |
| • The voyage number:  | 47       |
| • Tonnage of pontoon:   | 2,667    |
| • Exact nautical miles travelled (on her last voyage):              | 7,400    |
| • Times ship and Clifton Suspension Bridge are seen together:       | Once     |

#### **1970 FACT FILE:**

- Fashion – Maxi dresses are the big fashion story;
- Food – Prawn cocktail and tuna bake are the dishes de jour; Favourite sweets were love hearts, space dusts, Barratt’s shrimps and golf ball bubble gum; Milk costs the equivalent of 5p a pint and beer 10.7p a pint;

- The media – ‘The Goodies’ and ‘Monty Python’s Flying Circus’ split audiences; Children’s favourites include ‘The Clangers’, ‘Tom and Jerry’ and ‘Top of the Pops’; BBC launches the Nine O’clock News and BBC Radio 4 becomes a wholly speech network; Editor of ‘The Sun’ Larry Lamb introduces its first topless ‘Page 3’ pin-up on November 17 (20-year-old German Stephanie Rahn);
- Films – ‘On Her Majesty’s Service’, ‘Catch 22’ and Walt Disney’s ‘Aristocats’;
- Books – Publication of Germaine Greer’s ‘The Female Eunuch’;
- Music – Hits aptly include The Beatles ‘Let It Be’ and the Jackson Five’s ‘I Want You Back’, with Mungo Jerry taking pole position on July 19 with ‘In The Summertime’; Simon and Garfunkel release their final album ‘Bridge Over Troubled Water’ and The Beatles break up. Michael Eavis holds the first Glastonbury Festival, headlined by T-Rex; 600,000 people attend the Isle of Wight Festival – the largest rock gathering of all time;
- Engineering – Concorde is still in development, with the first test flight in 1969; the first Pan Am Boeing 747 jet lands in Heathrow heralding a new era in global travel; Apollo 13 is launched on a mission to the moon; the Aswan High Dam in Egypt is completed;
- Births – Matt Damon; Debbie Gibson; Queen Latifah and Naomi Campbell;
- Deaths – Jimi Hendrix dies of barbiturate overdose in London; Philosopher Bertrand Russell aged 98;
- Politics – Prime Ministers are Harold Wilson (to June) and Edward Heath; Richard Nixon is the US President; 18-year-olds can vote for the first time in UK elections;
- Popular toys – Barbie, Sindy and Action Man;
- Vehicles – the Ford Cortina Mark iii is Britain’s biggest seller and Ariel introduces a three-wheeled motorbike;
- Money – the last year before decimalisation; the average house in Britain costs £5,000; British Petroleum (BP) discovers North Sea oil;
- World affairs – April 29 the USA invades Cambodia to suppress the Viet Cong; May 9 sees huge demonstrations against the Vietnam War; Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is adopted by 43 signatory nations;
- Other 1970 phenomena – the first New York marathon, the stylophone, x-ray specs and Farah Fawcett Shampoo.