



## SS Great Britain Talks Programme



### Commander Philip Unwin, RN

Philip Unwin retired from the Royal Navy in 1996 after a career which included ship command, and moved to the Bristol area that year when he was appointed Deputy Naval Regional Officer, Wales and West of England. He retired for the second time in 2006 and became involved with the SS Great Britain Trust the following year, becoming a Guide and External Speaker in 2008.

#### Talks Offered

He offers three talks. The first, '*The SS Great Britain – the Concorde of her day*', covers the conception of the ship, the four phases of her life, her salvage in the Falkland Islands and return to Bristol.

The second talk, '*The Incredible Journey*' is a more detailed account of her salvage. He recommends that, for a first occasion, audiences hear the 'Concorde' talk and hear the salvage talk if they wish subsequently for more detail. Both these talks can be tailored to between 45 minutes to an hour, as required.

The third talk, '*Brunel's Ships*', covers Brunel's three ships, the Great Western, Great Britain and Great Eastern. It lasts for about an hour and, after dealing relatively briefly with the first two ships, covers the construction and life of Brunel's leviathan, the Great Eastern, and her management and mismanagement, in more detail. The content can be adjusted, depending on whether the audience has heard his other talks.

#### Areas Covered

He has spoken to a wide range of audiences, both professional and non-professional groups, in the wider Bristol area and is happy to accept engagements up to 65 miles or so from Bristol.



**John Cooper**

John Cooper was Head of Education at two national museums, the National Army Museum (1976-81) and the National Portrait Gallery (1981-2001). Having retired from full-time work and moved to Bristol, he continued to write, and lecture for the Gallery to a variety of audiences including groups from the National Trust, Historical Association, National Association of Decorative and Fine Art Societies, University of the Third Age, Women's Institute and Open University. In 2002 he wrote *Great Britons*, the Gallery's book supporting the hit BBC2 TV series, featuring a chapter on Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

## **Talks Offered**

### **Isambard Kingdom Brunel: I alone am hung in chains 50 minutes**

Tall hat, cigar, muddy trousers, massive chains: it's a famous and powerful photograph, truly iconic. How revelatory is Robert Howlett's photograph of Brunel's life, work and personality? How did it come about? How does it relate to other photographs and paintings of him and his immediate family? Do his own writings and the words of others suggest a different Brunel?

John uses his background as historian and art historian and years of experience lecturing in national museums to discuss the authentic images in paintings and photographs, relating them to Brunel's character and achievements, the development of his reputation, and the collections of the SS Great Britain Trust.

## **Areas Covered**

John will travel anywhere within reasonable reach of Bristol.



**Brian Aston**

Brian spent 45 years in local Government as a Chartered Civil Engineer, specialising in Highway Design and Construction, initially in the West Midlands and later in the South West. Being a Civil Engineer, he was naturally interested in Brunel and his many projects, and was anxious to be involved in something associated with the 'great man'. Consequently he joined the Visitor Services Volunteers in 2008.

## **Talks Offered**

### **The Story of the SS Great Britain 50 minutes**

Brian offers a talk covering the history of the SS Great Britain from its conception in 1838 to the present day.

## **Areas Covered**

Brian offers talks in the south of Bristol and the north of Somerset.



**Ian Caskie**

Ian was born and raised on Merseyside, where he spent many an hour watching the arrivals and departures at Liverpool's busy Pier Head in the 1950's and 60's. This led to his lifelong passion for ships – especially ocean liners. He was a Primary Head Teacher and School Improvement Adviser in Bristol for many years, and has been a Visitor Services volunteer with the SS Great Britain Trust since 2007.

## **Talks Offered**

### **SS Great Britain: from launch to 're-launch' 50 minutes**

Ian's enthusiasm for his subject is clearly evidenced in his illustrated talk which tells the ship's remarkable story from her original design through the different phases of her working life. It also describes her incredible salvage and return to Bristol in 1970, and finally her restoration, preservation and 're-launch' as a multi-award winning museum of international renown.

In building SS Great Britain, the second of his three great ships, Brunel successfully combined and adapted the very best of cutting-edge technologies to create the world's first transatlantic liner – a true wonder of the Victorian age.

She was the first ocean-going steamship with an iron hull, and the first driven by a propeller. This extraordinary ship, launched in 1843 as the largest and fastest afloat, transformed shipbuilding and sea travel forever.

## **Areas Covered**

Ian is based in the Bristol area but willing to travel anywhere within England and Wales.



## **Dr Terry Chivers**

Terry Chivers served an engineering apprenticeship with Stothert & Pitt Ltd in Bath before going to Cardiff University to study Mechanical Engineering and Graduated with a 1<sup>st</sup> Class Honours degree before going on to study for a PhD. His career has included work at the Ship Division of the National Physical Laboratory and the CEGB and its successor companies. He subsequently formed his own consultancy company and was privileged to be appointed to provide the engineering oversight for the replica engine on the SS Great Britain.

### **Talks Offered**

#### **“The SS Great Britain: a Brief History and Aspects of Preservation and Restoration”**

Duration of the talk will be tailored to meet requirements from 20 minutes to one hour.

Terry offers a talk which includes a general history of the SS Great Britain together with some technical aspects of the ship and its restoration. The technical aspects include the need for environmental control to limit hull corrosion and how this has been achieved whilst also enhancing the visitor's experience. The construction of the original engine and also that of the installed replica engine is also addressed. The talk can be tailored to meet the requirements of a specific audience in terms of both the detail of the content and duration.

### **Areas Covered**

Terry lives in mid-Gloucestershire and is prepared to travel.



**Cyril Routley**

Cyril Routley retired from teaching at Nailsea School in North Somerset in 2000 but later fulfilled the role of Examinations Officer there for a further two years (2002-4). In 2009 he was invited to join the small group of speakers at the SS Great Britain Trust who were offering talks at that time to interested groups and societies. He has a range of talks covering other subject areas and by virtue of visiting many clubs and societies, he has been able to publicise the SS Great Britain to a much wider audience base.

### **Talks Offered**

#### **A Life on the Ocean Wave 50 minutes**

Cyril gives an insight into aspects of life on board the ship as experienced by passengers sailing to Australia over 150 years ago. It is based on the accounts written by the passengers themselves during their respective voyages to a new life.

### **Areas Covered**

Cyril is available to travel to venues within 25 miles of North Somerset where he lives although he does occasionally travel further afield.