

BRUNEL'S
SS GREAT

BRITAIN

A BIT ABOUT BRUNEL



Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born on 9 April 1806 in Portsmouth. He had an English mother (Sophia Kingdom) and a French father (Marc Isambard Brunel).

Aged just 14, Brunel was sent to France to study mathematics and engineering at some of the best technical schools in the world.



On his return, aged 16, he went straight to work at his father's office. By the age of 20, he was the Chief Engineer of the Thames Tunnel but was nearly killed when the tunnel flooded in January 1828.

In 1829, Brunel entered a competition to design a bridge across the River Avon at Clifton. After a few changes, his design, based on an Ancient Egyptian style, won the competition.

Work on the Clifton Suspension Bridge was stopped in 1853, with only the towers constructed, due to a lack of money. The roadway was built, and the bridge finished in his memory, after Brunel's death. It still carries traffic across the gorge today.



In 1833 Brunel was appointed the Chief Engineer of the Great Western Railway; the first railway line between Bristol and London.

In the 1830s Brunel invested in the Great Western Steamship Company and set about designing better and faster ships to cross the Atlantic. His first was a paddle steamer, the Great Western. Next came the SS Great Britain, then his third and final ship, the gigantic SS Great Eastern.



Brunel's SS Great Britain is considered by many to be his masterpiece. As well as being the world's first great ocean liner, she was the first iron-hulled, screw propeller-driven steamship.

In 1855 Brunel designed and built the first prefabricated hospital, which was used in the Crimean War. The hospital provided improvements in sanitation and ventilation and it was praised by the famous Victorian nurse Florence Nightingale.



Brunel died on 15 September 1859, aged 53. He is still remembered as one of the greatest of Britain's engineers.