**Background on the Bristol Mirror article**

The following extracts are from an article published in the Bristol Mirror on Saturday 22 July 1843 about the launch of the SS Great Britain. We’ve included both images of the original article and the typed transcript. It was the paper’s main article but appeared on page 5 of the paper as the first few pages were dedicated to adverts.

Think about how the journalist (unknown) uses language to paint a picture of what it was like in Bristol on the day of the launch. Why not compare the article to one from a recent large-scale event?

A black and white logo

Description automatically generated with medium confidence

Diagram

Description automatically generated with medium confidence*“The far-famed Great Western steam-ship has contributed to raise public expectations regarding her gigantic successor and colleague, and in Bristol, the cradle of such enterprise, the feeling was naturally more intense then elsewhere. For many months it has been known that the most colossal of vessels was on the stocks. From dawn to eve we have heard the hammers ring against her iron sides, which we have seen gradually extending their huge bulk, and assume a defined form and beautiful proportions. The launch of such a ship as the Great Britain is likely to prove an era in nautical science, and it was deemed to be not unworthy of the highest patronage. The welcome visit of the Consort of our beloved Queen, on such an occasion, will render the 19th of this July a memorable period in the annals of our city.”*

This first extract offers background into why the launch of the ship was so important to Bristol. It explains that following the success of the PS (paddle steamer) Great Western, which was also designed by Brunel and built in Bristol, the launch of its sister ship was a special occasion and one that drew the “Consort of our beloved Queen”, Prince Albert, to Bristol.

A picture containing diagram

Description automatically generated*“To the lovers of the picturesque, there were various points of view, in the course of the day’s proceedings, of a most striking and gratifying character. The arrival of a special train, with electric speed and floating banners, beneath the noble roof of the Railway station, where both sides of the platform were lined with well-dressed persons and the interval between the platforms filled with serval battalions of infantry, the hearty reception of the Prince, were most animating. The houses in the city, with antique forms and varied outlines, hung with garlands thronged to the very attics and roofs with eager spectators; the streets spanned by laurelled arches; the long line of balconies at Clifton, crowded with ladies; the far nobler architecture of nature, her towering cliffs on one side of the Avon, on the other the green and woody dell; every sloping bank and rocky pinnacle covered with the throng, in holiday attire, presented an almost unrivalled scene, which reached its climax when the majestic vessel slowly issued from her dock into the river. Brandon-hill then seemed as if the industrious inhabitants of the city had hived off, and alighted on that neighbouring conical height. It was a mass of human beings, buzzing with eager animation and enjoyment. The river, thronged with boats and masted vessels, formed a picturesque foreground to the living amphitheatre, on which probably not less than sixty thousand spectators were piled.”*

In this section the journalist writes about Prince Albert’s journey to Bristol by train for the occasion. It goes on to talk about his arrival at the station, and then his journey down to the harbourside. Prince Albert used the recently completed Great Western Railway, designed by Brunel, to travel from London to Bristol. The writer then goes into great detail about what it was like to be in the city on the day. He described how the houses were decorated and that the streets, Avon Gorge, Brandon Hill and harbourside itself were crowded, as people tried to get a glimpse of the Prince and the ship.

*Diagram

Description automatically generated*

*“Mr. Everett, in the course of his appropriate and elegant address, made happy allusion to the magic wonders of mechanical art, as displayed in the great iron ship. Magical also was the speed and safety with which our illustrious Visitor was transported to and from the metropolis, a distance of 236 miles, to see and do all that he saw and did, and to complete his homeward journey in the space of twelve hours. A pilot engine travelled from Bath, at the rate of sixty miles an hour, to announce at Bristol his arrival in the neighbouring city. Such are the wonders of the modern locomotion by sea and land in our native England, and connected with our native town. The Great Western Railway, and its connecting lines, are steadily proceeding to a successful and prosperous completion, and we earnestly hope that the like prosperity may, ere long, be enjoyed by the spirited Company who have had the honour to connect distant continents by the speedy and sure communication of Ocean steamers, a Company whose course has hitherto been beset with difficulties, over which it must be the cordial wish of all classes of our fellow-citizens, and of all patriotic Englishmen, that they should ultimately triumph, and reap the merited reward of their enterprise and perseverance.”*

In this section, the article’s conclusion, the writer sums up the whole event, briefly touching on the speech that the Great Western Steam Ship Company’s director delivered at a banquet at Temple Meads before the ship’s launch. The article concludes by saying how modern (to the Victorians) technology such as the Great Western Railway, and now steam ships, were in allowing people to travel more and that they should be celebrated as a positive achievement.