

Do you actually know SS Great Britain?



The Writer

To my dear readers.

My name is Soumia Seradj, I am not an author. I am a parent who had the opportunity to work on this amazing community project with the SS Great Britain which was introduced by the Hannah More Primary School to us through the school's community group, "Bridging Gaps".



I am happy to work on this booklet to show and introduce all readers to the ship and its history in a simple and easy way for you all to read and understand straight away.

I have chosen some of the diverse people that were on board many years ago. I found them interesting and maybe you will too.

I hope you enjoy this booklet. I have included activities and games that any parent or carer can play with their children and young people, even adults between them!

Do you actually know the SS Great Britain?

The steam ship Great Britain (which is known as the SS Great Britain) was a wonderful and a huge ship of the Victorian age. This ship was a passenger and cargo ship. It was built on 19 July 1843 in Bristol. The ship never carried slaves. A lot of people in Bristol or around UK think it's a slave ship as Bristol is known for slavery history. The real fact is the ship was built 10 years after slavery was made illegal by the British government.

This amazing steam ship was built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It carried diverse passengers and crew of 33,195 people from Britain and around the world, travelling on a total of 47 voyages.



The ship had different classes which was the first, second and the steerage classes based on how much you paid for your ticket.

Beginning in 1845 there were five voyages going out from Liverpool to New York. Later on, in 1852, it changed to Liverpool to Melbourne because the ship changed ownership.

The SS Great Britain & Australia

At that time gold was discovered in Australia. People wanted to get rich, and the ship was their transport to Australia. The ship sailed for many years to Australia and some later passengers got the chance of free transport to Melbourne as the British government was paying for them to move and live there.

The British government decided to colonise Australia after Lieutenant James Cook mapped it in 1770. In 1788 Britain started by moving prisoners to there as it was far away. When gold was discovered there in 1851, the SS Great Britain and other ships began to move many more people from Britain to Australia from diverse backgrounds to start a new life as immigrants.

Indigenous Australians who were there before the British often died due to disease and illnesses like chickenpox, measles and more. This was transferred from people coming from Britain to stay there. Many were also killed by conflict.

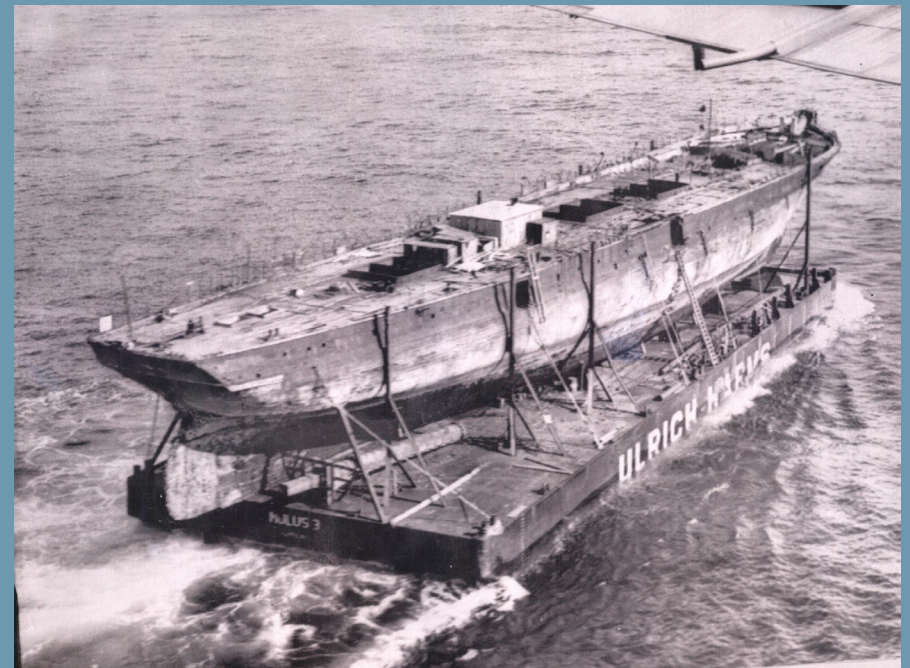


"Canvas Town, between Princess Bridge and South Melbourne in 1850's" - State Library Victoria

Recovering the Ship

In 1882 the owners of the Great Britain decided to take the engines out and use the ship only as a cargo ship. This means it was only used to move goods and not people. After a final few years carrying only cargo, this historic ship was left in the Falkland Islands in 1886. The ship was left there as it was damaged and it cost a lot to fix it. At that time no one was interested in taking care of it. The owner decided then to sell it to Falkland Island company.

In the Falklands the ship was used in a different way while stuck there. For example as a warehouse and then a picnic place. This beautiful steam ship was recovered on 19 July 1970 back to Bristol.



Things and the Ship

The Stunning Shell

I love this shell because of the colour, shape and uniqueness. This shell was a commemorative symbol from many years ago. This unique piece includes a lot of history. There is an



engraving of the ship and a person called Omar Pasha, who was a very successful Ottoman General. This shell was personalised with special information. It is held in the SS Great Britain Trust's collections.

Captain Matthews' Watch Chain

Captain Matthews was the captain who sailed the ship for the first voyage from Liverpool to Melbourne. Showing love for his wife, he took her hair and made a watch chain from it so that he can have something from her while sailing a long time. Here is a picture of her hair as a chain.



A Piece of Dinner Plate from the Royal Charter

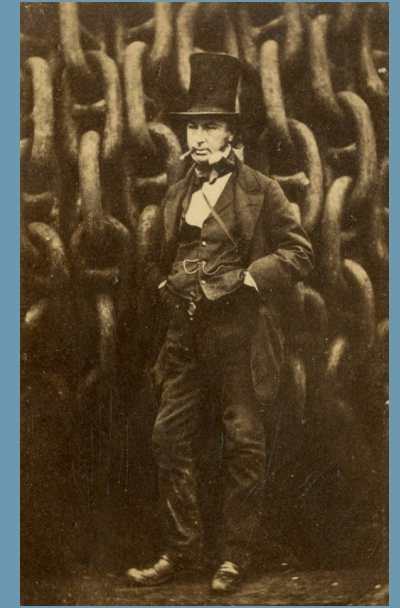


The Royal Charter was the sister ship of the SS Great Britain. This piece of plate has a special drawing of a Liver Bird and a picture of what looks like a Kangaroo, drawn by a someone who might not have seen a Kangaroo in real life.

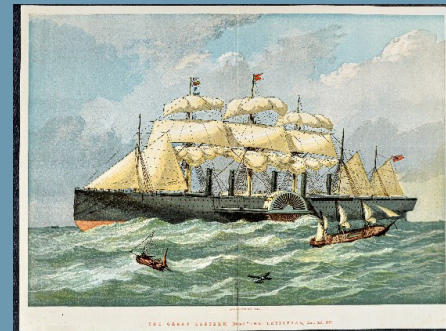
People and the Ship

Isambard Kingdom Brunel

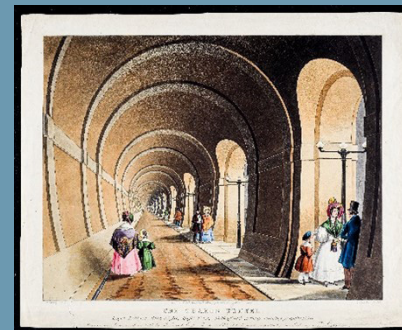
Isambard Kingdom Brunel was born the 9 of April 1806 in Portsmouth. He is a very famous engineer in the UK. He was influenced by his father, the French engineer Marc Brunel. Isambard died at age of 53 years old.



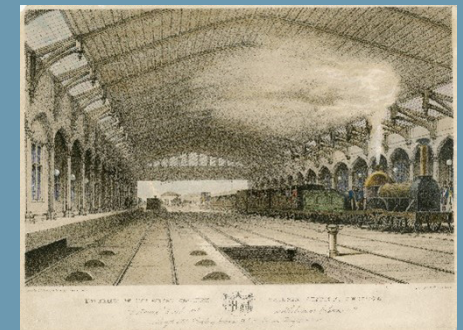
Here are some of his projects:



The Great Eastern Steam Ship



The Thames Tunnel
(with Marc Brunel)



The Great Western Railway

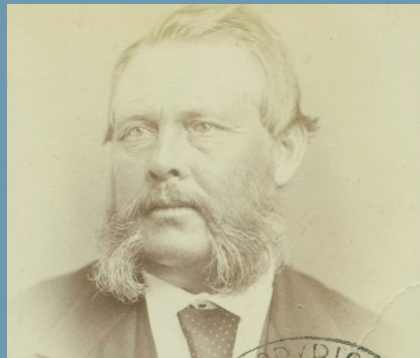
William Jones

William Jones was a black man who travelled in the SS Great Britain in 1862. He was a passenger who had the opportunity to make some money using his skills. He worked in first class as a barber. He was known as a very talented man as it was very hard shaving people clean with the razor while the ship was moving. His talent didn't end there as he was also a poet and a public speaker. Look at the statue of Barber Jones working on board.



Captain John Gray

Captain John Gray was born 8 December 1819, he was the longest-serving captain of the SS Great Britain. He served for 18 years, and completed 27 voyages from the United Kingdom to Australia and back. He died in a mysterious way, during the last voyage from Australia his crew was looking for him and never found him. Some people think he fell or threw himself from the ship. He was a great captain and he used to treat the ship as his own child.



Ann Unsworth

Ann was the first paid female crew member. She joined the SS Great Britain in 1858 and served for 10 voyages. Ann had to look after the first class females by taking care of their personal needs. She was a hard worker as she was always busy tidying up to 43 beds daily, cleaning toilets and more.

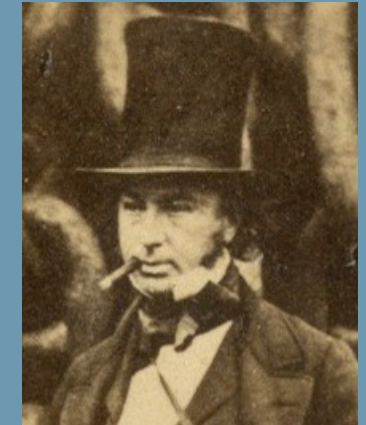
Some Games for You to Try:

Children can use people from the ship to create stories

Choose who you want to be:



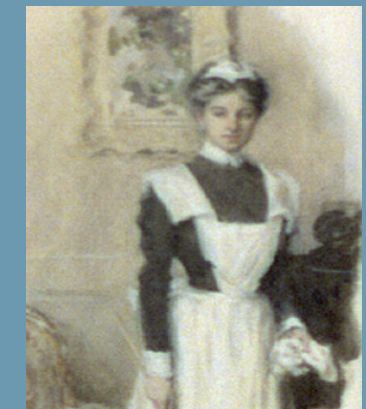
Captain John Gray



Isambard Kingdom Brunel



William Jones



Ann Unsworth



Captain Gray

Why have you chosen to be captain of this ship?

What destination will you take the ship? Why?

Do you think Captain Gray loved the ship?

An idea: I would love to sail and explore a lot of countries and different cultures.



Ann Unsworth

Do you think you can work on board? If yes, what would you do to entertain the other ladies?

What benefit do you get from working in first class in the Victorian age?

An idea of what you could do as Ann: I would go to stearage and experience their life for a day.

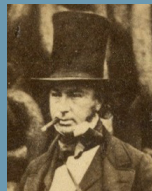


Barber Jones

Have a think what life was like if you were Barber Jones.

What you want to do while travelling on board as him?

Here is an idea: I would spend time with the first class passengers and learn the skills of privileged people.



Isambard Kingdom Brunel

What did Brunel create?

Do you want to design something?

Would you like to be an engineer like Brunel?

Here is an idea: I would design a flying car.

Flag Games

Ships carry many flags in their rigging (ropes used to hold up their sails). Some of these flags have the meaning of letters and can be used to arrange messages to show to other ships.

Try to write your name or another word or message using these flags:

FLAGS AND PENNANTS
 < SINGLE & INTERNATIONAL MEANINGS >

A  Divers/Friendly underwater demolition personnel down. Intn'l - Diver down. Keep well clear at slow speed.	J  Semaphore message. Intn'l - I am on fire. Dangerous cargo. Keep well clear.	S  Flag Hoist Drill signal. Intn'l - My engines are going full speed astern.
B  Weapons practice. Fuelling or transferring explosives. Intn'l - Taking in, discharging or carrying dangerous goods.	K  Personnel working aloft. Intn'l - I wish to communicate with you.	T  Time indicator. Intn'l - Keep clear of me. I am engaged in pair trawling.
C  Affirmative. Intn'l - Yes. (Affirmative).	L  Radhaz/Hero warning. Intn'l - You should stop your vessel instantly.	U  Anchoring, Mooring & Weighing. Intn'l - You are running into danger.
D  Degaussing. Intn'l - Keep clear. I am manoeuvring with difficulty.	M  Medical/Dental Guard Duty ship. Disregard my movements. Intn'l - My vessel is stopped.	V  Streaming/Recovering towed sonic devices - not including minesweeping equipment. Intn'l - I require assistance.
E  Intn'l - I am altering my course to Starboard.	N  Your movements not understood. Not keeping Visual watch. Intn'l - No (Negative).	W  Flag Hoist information addressee. Intn'l - I require assistance.
F  Flight operations. Intn'l - I am disabled. Communicate with me.	O  Man overboard. Intn'l - Man overboard.	X  Exercise completed. Intn'l - Stop carrying out your intentions & watch for my signals.
G  Guide. Intn'l - I require a pilot.	P  General recall. Position indicator. Intn'l - Recall. All persons to repair onboard. Vessel about to sail.	Y  Acknowledge OTC's location. Visual Communication Duty Ship. Intn'l - I am dragging my anchor.
H  Helicopter operations. Intn'l - I have a pilot onboard.	Q  Boat recall - own boats or those addressed. Intn'l - Vessel is healthy. Request free pratique.	Z  Intn'l - I require a tug.
I  Going alongside in Port/Anchor. Intn'l - Altering my course to Port.	R  Going alongside for Replenishing/Transfer/Fuelling at sea.	

I will put my name as an example using the flags:



Thank you for reading this booklet, I hope you enjoyed it! You can always look for more information about the ship's history online and you can visit the SS Great Britain and live the experience. This ship has a massive history and you will always get to know more things.

Images courtesy of the SS Great Britain Trust
ssgreatbritain.org

Victorian maid image
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs

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