



Introduction

For this project I adopted the nom de plume of *Izza Bard* www.brunel200.com

I hope that when you dip into this collection of Brunel poetic snapshots, that they conjure up memories of your Festival experience. If you missed the event this book will give you a flavour of the magic that happened over several, packed summer months, in Swindon 2006.

I am grateful for having had the opportunity to mix front stage and backstage at the Festival. I would especially like to acknowledge the support from the Brunel 200 Swindon Project Manager,* Helen Miah. For his expert guidance, thanks to Matt Holland, Swindon Festival of Literature Director * and also of “Artswords” Literature Development. Except in other people’s original work, I take responsibility for any views presented or inferred. I also take responsibility for any errors that may have by-passed proof-reading.

Big thanks also to those of you who have contributed to the poems. Many of you offered your Brunel-inspired thoughts and feelings, often when you were doing a hundred other things. The last thing you wanted was to have thrust under your nose, a pencil and card to write a “poem”! Thanks also to those who independently wrote original material – they are a welcome change of style and show how Swindon Brunel 200 inspired creativity.

200 years after the genius Brunel was born, through the platforms of Brunel 200 Celebrations, many Swindon people discovered and developed their own aspects of Brunel’s characteristics including: rarely taking “no” for an answer, taking risks and creating something positive from blank canvas. Many times over the seemingly impossible was achieved.

Swindon’s talent is definitely on track.

**Tony Hillier, *Izza Bard*
Swindon’s Community Poet
October 2006**

* www.swindon.gov.uk/artsandculture/brunel200.htm

* www.swindonfestivalofliterature.co.uk

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Brunel's 200th Birthday Celebrations at Steam Museum 9 April 2006

Poetry Getting up Steam

Stream of steam hits you
 as you step into museum tunnel entrance
 after overview pictures and maps
 you're guided through mock-up offices and stores
 where you overhear
 worker about to get pay docked
 admonished for being late twice this week
 you overhear
 storeman giving the brush-off to new broom request
 since the old one's not been yet returned

as if new to the Works, this first-time visitor is confused
 which shed to choose,
 like erstwhile apprentices lost in the Works

finally found the foundry
 found the right Pattern
 found notice re short-time working
 your job's on the line

GWR did it all, not by mirrors, but by notice
 You knew where you stood when you went to the lav
 Spelled out in black and white graffiti-proof metal

GWR Workmen's Lavatory Notice 1904
Workmen using this closet
Must on entry
Give their ticket number
To the attendant
If longer than ten minutes is taken
The whole time will be stopped
By Order
 By Golly

Western Bulwark, Viscount Portal
 and that's not all

Sir James Milne 7001
 Earl of Devon 5048
 With Milk Train Only in between
 to and from London

Hop on the Soccer Special
 see Swindon play Swansea
 for twenty one and six seventh December

The Thoughts of Edwin Nash

Worked five years Carriageside 1954-58
 puts Brunel before Churchill
 Brunel did it on his Todd
 Churchill had Government and Generals behind him

Brunel, a Genius. Never be another one like him.
 Built not just bridges but boats too
 Cut out Box Tunnel like a knife through butter
 with engineers and navvies not computers and CADs

Back in 54, thought had job for life
 got suspicious Trip Week
 witnessed London man dig bore holes Carriageside,
 24 Shop that was, Oasis that is now
 Analysed the samples they did
 Ed he thought something was up
 testing ground for future building he thought

Big job was the clear-outs
 23 Shop cut up old wagons wood or metal
 with acetylene torch

Tiring job was pushing wheels between Shops
 from Lifting Shop to Wheel Shop
 where wheels fixed to machine
 where big metal rings turned into tyres
 pressed onto metal wheels
 with retaining key on back

Another thing he heard
 was
 Chichester Flyer Speed Record got beaten

by Driver with one extra coach
 got told to keep it under his hat
 or he's be out on his ear
 'twas teamwork wot dunnit
 driver didn't fire up too often
 so fireman didn't get tired shovelling unnecessary coal
 all knew bad drivers made shovellers work harder
 best keep right side of driver

best keep on right side of driver
 as you refill tender from mile-long trough
 a giant water pooper-scooper dropped spot-on
 along the mile long trough at 60 miles an hour
 one long minute draught
 ambrosia for the Gods of Steam

"I cut a few of these up", Edwin casually observed
 standing before a genuine GWR Brake Van
 "I cut a few of these up"
 16-20-25 tonnes
 weight made up by ballast in the floor
 ballast melded after 40 years on track
 melded metal hooks and chains

where today teenagers cut up their burgers
 I cut up a few of these on Drive-in MacDonald's
 after shunted down from Gorse Hill Bridge

Then before us the secret crept out
 This wagon was a cut and shut case
 top had been re-welded to the bottom
 to replace the genuine article
 But genuine enough was the memory of
 acetylene torch cutting out the bottom first
 then slicing though the woodwork

with former railworker Edwin Nash wandering through Steam

the still left few

now Glynn's the man
 for thirty years he followed in Brunel's footplates

apprenticed fitter, turner and erector
 down at A Shop did erecting
 from Steam, to Diesel to Churchward Offices
 he trod his thirty year Brunel path
 an engineer who did what it said on the tin
 Glynn the Engineer made engines, engines for trains

all stopped twenty years ago last week
 his Big Family felt on its shoulder the economic hand of fate
 he'd followed his father into Works' trade
 his father who left the asbestosis way
 some workmate colleagues left by same route too
 yet thankful is he to stand in this Kingdom today
 on Isambard Brunel's Birthday

Glancing at the Wall of Names
 he spots many he knew
 he meets each Christmas with the still left few

he manages a smile as he wanders Boiler Shop today
 re-vamped as Outlet Village with its ringing of tills
 not able to hold a candle to the Boiler Makers' rivet gun roar
 he still meets at Christmas with the still left few

from a brief chat with Glynn

Brunel's Baby

Railway Village was Brunel's Baby
 He brought skilled workers from Midlands and North
 Housed them in the Barracks
 Before moving them into Railway Village houses
 Next came the Welsh workers to do refined furnishings
 When Barracks not good enough moved to Cambria Bridge Road
 Where still a Welsh community to be found
 Around their own Welsh Chapel
 While Barracks went to Wesleyan Church
 Then to via Rail Museum to Martha's Community Crossroads

with Steam Duty Manager Mike Crossland

poetic photograph

she posed before the Wall of Names
her unwell husband just out of frame

she pointed to her father Pugh
she pointed to her mother Tyler
on the Wall of Names
from Boiler Shop and Spring Shop
the Tylers and the Pughs

remembered on the Wall of Names
her unwell husband just out of frame

Giggling Helpfuls

Meet the Giggling Helpfuls
I met them
on Brunel's Birthday down Steam Museum
Met Giggling George aged six
Met Helpful Harry aged ten

They'd toured Steam with family
were taking a rest with that crew
and this, this is what they knew :
Brunel, though a bit thin,
Reminds them of Fat Controller
Brunel, good at making trains
had great imagination
Smoked like his trains he did
fifty cigars a day

Giggling George and Helpful Harry
Bright sparks the pair of 'em
Bright enough
to match train engine sparks flying onto trackside

Parents and Grandad add
Brunel Brilliant Engineer
Ahead of his time
Kind to his workers
A wonderful man

Man of vision
 Let nothing stand in his way
 Brushed aside disbelievers
 Worked hard
 Perhaps worked himself to death
 Gave his life to Rail

Grandad here, did his bit too
 Junior Porter at Birmingham
 Got commendation for saving cattle from burning train

With a Day Out like this to Steam Museum
 No wonder grandchildren Harry and George
 Seem to be touched by the Brunel Spirit
 and even find time for a giggle

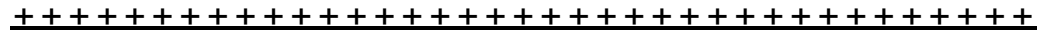
with Garry and his family from West Midlands

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

So off to Mad Hatter's Tea Party
 This Mad Hatter's
 Side-burned and high top hatted
 Hat high as an aqua duct plinth

Pass the proud pushchaired parents
 Perusing their prodigies
 As they Q&A re Brunel where he lived what he did
 Then under eights' parents hope to engineer that
 Lucky Ticket comes up and music stops
 At their infants' lap in this pass the parcel game

Meanwhile, from balcony exhib Battle of the Gauges
 Steam Cleaner looks on
 Between squirts and wipes of glass panels
 Cleaning black top hat icing fingerprints
 Left by invited culprits who ate Brunel Birthday Cake
 Which welcomed curious engineering culprits
 to whom Brunel would have raised
 his aqua duct plinth high, high top hat
 at this somewhat mad, Mad Hatter's Brunel Tea Party



Brunel still 'ere

A collection of poems written by the 200 people at the launch of Swindon Brunel 200 celebrations at Ridgeway School, Wroughton, 24 April 2006

Amazing Choir

Our choir is amazing
It's really good fun
It's all about steam
That's a train that runs

We sang at the Ridgeway and the Elendune
At the Junior Hall we're soon to be seen

Elizabeth Jagan and Laura Okkels

Big Up Your Junction

Think Brunel
Think Construction

Without that
You can't function

John

Keith and Winston, Cre8 Studios

Wroughton Junior School Pupils' acrostics

B runel was a very clever man

R an an engine which was

U nusual and very slow

N ow we needed an

E ven faster engine that will take you to

L ondon and back !

B runel built an engine and it

R an by steam

U ntil it ran out of coal

N ext came

E lectric clean

L ove steam

B runel, Brunel, I K Brunel

R unning on time

U can break it, you can fly

N ot a chance of being late

E verywhere around the world

L ines by Brunel

Brunel's Brains

Genius
Jean with us *
Steam Trains
Oil our brains

Engineer
Elephant's Ear
Lots to hear
Brunel's always here

* Jean Allen, of Swindon Society, is custodian of the town's history

**The world's first 200 second Brunel poem collaboratively created
by the 200 people who attended the launch of Swindon Brunel 200**

Brunel Poem

Brunel's Birthday is April ninth
He is the builder of a ship that still exists
He died when he was fifty three
He made railways, ships and trains

Wroughton Junior School Pupil

Brunel Trials

Brunel's building a track
yet he can't look back
And he's running out of time
and he's making a sign

Jessie, Sophie, Jordan

Busy Bees

This year we're celebrating
The birth of Brunel
Two hundred years ago
He never rested, Oh No
On the go every day building the Train
Engineer ? He was the Main

Two hundred years later
in two thousand and six
Children from Wroughton Junior created a mix

Ellenor Brain

Forget-me-Not

It's not my Bridge
The road's too high

Jean Allen, Swindon Society

(words ascribed to Brunel in Jean's cartoon re Whitehouse Road Bridge –
the most bashed bridge in Britain!)

Is Brunel's Number Up ?

Is Brunel's Number Up ?
asks Mr Deputy Mayor
Brunel a genius with the sums
Without sums you're lost
perhaps left twiddling your thumbs

Brunel started Swindon
yet found Swindon an uphill struggle
'tis now up to us to rise to the challenge
to smooth Swindon out

Cllr Peter Stoddart, Deputy Mayor, Swindon Borough Council

Lights, Camera.....Singing !

They're here,
the camera men are here filming
and we are here singing

filming, singing about Brunel

Vidia

Man builds Train

Brunel, Brunel, he was a man
Brunel Brunel, he built a train

Wroughton Junior School Pupil

Questions, Questions

Brunel ? not this early in the morning
Left a gap he did
'tween Railway and Old Town
As Town Centre Manager
I've got to fill it !

Oliver O'Dell, Town Centre Manager

Steam Songs

There was a man called Brunel
This year we are celebrating him
We wrote and sang steam songs

Daisy Marsh

The Great Western Railway

Thank you Brunel for building the Railway
You helped us a lot, back in your day

It took thousands of nails
And thousands of miles of track
So when we go, we can also come back !

Abigail Cowley and Shannon Midwinter

There is a choir

There is a choir from Wroughton Junior School
It went to every Festival
They sang and sang about Brunel

Lianne Southby

Thunder Choir

The choir is here and there
Thundering along
There rhythms of their voices
Seem to rattle out a song

Wroughton Junior School Pupil

T rains were nothing 1829

R unning 'til today because of Richard

A very long story

I n a race, everything changed

N ew things started and everything began

Wroughton Junior School Pupil

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making tracks

Poetry planted by Swindon's young people who created gardens in urban wastelands from May 2006

Making Assumptions

What's going on over there ?
They're doing something
Somebody's messing about
with Brunel West Car park Entrance

Oh Oh, looks dodgy
White van man parked up
Let's look closer
Bags of swag alright
Mind I don't get decked
Oh No, it's decking
Delightful decking

Poet Izza Bard's first reaction to Smash Garden Design Project

making tracks

volunteers smiles and tears
 Project 18 volunteers
 Walk corridors of flowers together
 Here since dawn, not tired yet

Planting wild teasel, red campion,
 corn and buddleia bud
 here twice a week
 but buddleia will be here forever

however
 of that we're not sure
 not sure if next year
 our garden ripped out

to let others design-plant another
 however, we planted some plants
 squashed some ants
 won't mention the ants in me pants

railway sleepers we've planted too
 in keeping with Brunel theme
 squeaky barra needs some oil
 heavy sleepers, heavy toil

hard work yeah
 hardest work is getting up in morning
 after that it's ...still hard
 can be, can be

we're putting something back
 against vandals
 who've taken something out
 they take out, we put back

unsure, sure we're unsure
 unsure if it'll all be a waste of time
 our garden design and hard work
 even tonight, some jerk
 might trash the lot
 think they're hot

volunteers smiles and tears
Project 18 volunteers
Walk corridors of flowers

with Project 18

no trouble

the Gang and Mark
were in the park
digging up some bark

I picked up a shovel
thought I was in trouble
thought people will smash it
when it's dark

**Original work by Joe, a member of BTCV Project 18 creating a
Victorian Railway Garden to brighten up West Brunel Car Park.**

Brunel 200

Train tracks running
through Swindon
lead to better places than this.

Brunel would improve what we've got
Kill concrete, plant flowers
then people will come here

Sean Penn, BTCV Project 18 Leader

eye for detail

bright against the summer grey sky
TWIGS flowers fly
in TWIGS' Brunel Poly Tunnel

you cannot see
 what in a few weeks launched will be
 a meticulously modelled painted plywood Great Western Train
 bringing scruffy Swindon car park back to life again

Therapeutic Gardening project member beavers away unseen prior to launch of model train in landscaped Brunel garden Summer 06

Smashing Space

No. Don't think garden
 Think space

space by straight-lined concrete car park
 needs wood and curves obviously
 and tree, needs tree
 so bare
 needs creativity

we smashing teenagers
 are moving on
 moving on life's journey
 we start on own
 on our own narrow path
 which widens to include our guide

we're teenagers
 we can do anything
 let's build a Box Tunnel we said
 so we did
 rose arch tree-lined Box Tunnel
 we're tough enough to get through that
 with a mentor as light at end
 helps to have a friend

Brunel invented ways to conquer
 problems he found on his way
 so with us today
 We're smashing teenagers building up
 building up a head of self esteem
 Oh you know what I mean

No. Don't think garden
 Think space,
 Our place we built
 we built to share with you
 Tough enough now
 to see it through

Izza Bard 200 starts to get to grips with concept behind collaborative garden creation between SMASH Teenage Project members and designer Geoffrey Carr, 4 May 2006

Random Garden

Random
 Random that garden is

Office-bound all day
 we work opposite we do
 Nationwide mortgages and all that
 Office-bound all day

Breaks, we sit outside on traffic-fume wall
 With that new wooden terrace garden
 picnic tables would be just the job

We work opposite we do. We see it all.
 Yesterday saw multi-storey car park suicide attempt
 How random is that. How bad was that poor sod's life ?

Today we see new garden diggers
 Who are they, prisoners or something?
 Working on the chain gang
 Yes. Yes. We've seen "Cool Hand Luke"

Suicide. How bad is that.
 New Garden. How great is that.
 Random
 Random, that garden is

with Haley, Laura and friend, 10 June 2006 re the Brunel Garden by West Brunel Car Park, Swindon.

Oracharpam

remember remember
 ninth June so hot
 I was digging a hole
 Where were you?

Half naked passers-by
 tried to distract us, but we dug on
 planting special-grown roses
 First Great Western "Oracharpam"
 Two foot deep holes, in the hot sun, son

Half-baked photographers
 and poets tried to distract us
 but we dug on.
 New garden needs water, tell Council that
 Tell Thames Water to fix its leaks
 We could dig holes for that
 We'd be able to hose again then

Don't look now
 There goes another half naked one
 So hot I'll have to take my top off too
 See my tattoo
 They're trying. Oh so trying, to distract us
 but we plant on, our eyes on spade
 no chance of shade, eyes on the future

Sent mate to shop for drink
 Pause for a roll-up before
 Digging in soil like concrete
 a hole that's round, wish it was softer ground
 Dig on, dig on, dig on Oracharpam

Remember Remember
 as you eye spy this Brunel rose
 ninth June so hot
 I was digging my future

They'll all want one

Forget Lost Gardens of Heligan
 Poet went in search of Lost Gardens of North Swindon
 Visiting as advertised on website referenced
 "North Swindon Centre by YIS or was it Splash.

Splash it was. Splashed egg on face

Marvelled poet did at their Water Fountain Garden
 but creative planting was in short supply
 Asked around "No. Not seen it mate"
 Librarian consulted website
 clarified Garden in Brunel North Car Park
 Town Centre One
 North Swindon Nil

Ssssh! Don't tell New WalMart
 North Orbital Borders
 we've got shed-loads of new gardens
 Town Centre

Don't tell 'em. Don't tell 'em.
 They'll all want one.

Izza keeps town centre gardens a secret for as long as he can

leading questions

Train tracks running
 through Swindon
 lead to better places than this.

Brunel would improve what we've got
 Kill concrete, plant flowers
 then people will come here

Simon Penn, BTCV Project 18 Leader

Wicker Man

Dashing to work
No time to stop
Glance across

"What the....."
"Who on earth..."

Made from his opposite
This man of straw
Was anything but
Was man of steel
Dashing from work
No time to stop
Glance across

"What the..."
"Who one earth..."

Bloody hell

It's Brunel

Passers-by were treated, to a willow sculpture of Brunel by TWIGS a gardening group for mental health service users.

clever with TWIGS

nice
nice surprise

nice surprise in these stony surroundings

man and his train garden
sticks and train tracks

lovely
it's good
didn't notice that
say a brace of office cleaners

off the early shift

alright

bright and breezy shouts a West Indian Man on bike

it's that train bloke says 12 year old Darren

what do we call the town centre ? hints his dad

Oh Poundshop Alley, Darren responds

No. Brunel. Silly

It's Brunel

Isambard Kingdom Brunel

The greatest engineer that ever lived

He turned Swindon from a normal village to

A special Railway Town

Clever with twigs

Ism's Waistcoated 'n all

Nice. Double nice

Decorative

Nice way they've presented it

On scruffy land

oh I never noticed him

pretty good

Nice. Very nice

It's alright actually

Looks like he's got a bad back !

probably would have from all that work

oh 'im

we call 'im Nobby-no-Mates

well actually, we kid our friend

that that Straw Bloke is the only friend he has

say "Hello" to your friend, we tease ..and he does

bless

train tracks, teeth tracks

never on time

remarks passer by,

out with teenager brimming with orthodontic mouth

I've got a new name for him

"Bert Brunel" blurts out Belinda

(real name Jane)

it's really good

effective
 recognised him straight away
 surprised that Council would do that
 pleasantly surprised mind
 and not vandalised yet

I'm not awake yet, on way to work,
 He paused
 He folded his arms
 He took it all in
 Bigger work
 I'm going to study this a moment

Then he said
 I can see the hard work's gone into this
 They've grown a smile on my face this morning
 These gardeners whoever they are
 Said the 26 year old software engineer
 After studying the 200 year old heavy metal engineer

It's put a smile on my face
 wonderful
 great idea
 just hope the vandals.....

9 a.m. 28 May 2006 Izza Bard captures remarks from passers-by to the garden, created by TWIGS' members. It includes an 8 foot willow statue of Brunel.

The Cream of Swindon

British Rail tea, of course, formed part of Victorian Spread
 As did themed edible flowers in wine glass of elderflower jelly
 Rustic local game pie, more British Rail tea
 Topped off with cowslip-colour butterfly fancy cakes

Stainless steel Homebase-donated engraved spades
 Presented to each group on merit
 For achievement beyond wild imaginations
 For they tamed scruffy corners of Swindon

Exhibitions with latest technology
 Virtually wrote and displayed themselves
 Such was the beauty of the project
 These must be absorbed by more viewers

Mayoral chains held nothing back in their praise
 For the competence and confidence of each youth team
 Tonight and for long after
 They are the cream of Swindon
 They are the toast of Swindon
 They are Swindon

Awards Ceremony at National Trust Headquarters, Swindon for the Brunel Garden Project 22 June 2006

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in love with the impossible

in response to Andrew and Melanie Kelly's Swindon Festival of Literature
 lecture "Brunel, in love with the impossible" 8 May

Broadminded Brunel

Brunel, from what I can gauge,
 was a man of joined up thinking
 Joining South West together with rail
 and linking it to the Capital
 and rest of the country

Genius,
 the word and he were overworked
 Broadminded though he obviously was
 he was a man with
 small handwriting but big messages
 Big Brunel Clifton Bridge, Great Eastern,
 Paddington Station
 Felt the need to turn to artistic practices
 to escape from or cover over
 some of the horrors of the industrialised Age

He was an artist, he waved a brush
 and sketched to his heart's content
 apart from obvious bridges and trains
 IKB sketched detailed Yew tree topiary
 and ornate lampposts to die for
 which he sadly did before his planned retirement
 to his designed garden of dreams

Suffice it to say, Brunel was broadminded
 Broadbacked too tugging the great Great Eastern
 sideways for 3 months for its maiden voyage
 straining his patience and the massive chains
 in front of which he was famously photographed

Clearly his work was an inspiration to others
 not least of which was Turner's "Rail, Steam, Speed"
 and Parry's 1986 "Fire & Steel" Swindon Works
 closure film

Myths exploded
 meant the train he was meant to be on
 when he threw a sandwich from carriage window
 to mark where Swindon should be built
 just has to be exploded..
 for even if there were engines built,
 certainly there were no Swindon rails yet
 – he hadn't started yet

At least one project he delivered on time
 and within budget
 but most others hit the buffers
 where those parameters were concerned
 Not most sympathetic of bosses
 he may not have counted the cost or losses

Swindon Coffee was not Brunel's cup of tea
 he spat it out and hotelled in Bassett
 about which he also moaned

As captured by artist of the day
 ornate décor and fresh flower vases in
 enforced splendour of Swindon Railway
 Refreshment Room was undermined
 by tasteless fare and high prices
 mythologically giving Swindon a bad name
 from which it struggles to recover

But for Box Tunnel
 Swindon's Railway village would not be built
 as its excavated ...stone was used
 for these workers' houses
 broadly speaking

poetry of motion

his motion was poetry
 moving

moving steam trains over aqueducts
 massive liners over oceans
 moving minds over matters
 until arriving at solutions
 which challenged the status quo
 and almost single-handedly
 moved the Industrial Revolution
 a thousand revolutions

such was Brunel's
 poetry of motion

+++++

Inspired by Former Railworkers from 19 May

Another World

Step into another world
 Sunny outside this late May day
 But Inside, blinds are drawn
 To shed light on home-made interactive slide show
 Projected onto wall, for all
 To see past adventures
 With easy listening backing tape supplied
 And a quiz of members as children
 to keep us all guessing

Slides tell a story
 PMH demolished replaced with modern 3 stories

That flattened brick mess was Builder Bradley's HQ
 Look at it now. The refurbished Town Gard bandstand
 is about all that we can stand

Nip back now to when our Ken met our Di
 What a to-do that day
 All dressed up in our nines - Diana knocked us for six

Our world kept together by drawing the blind
 To each other being kind

**19 May 2006 Thursday "Lounge" Club of Former Railway Workers
 have a member-made slide show with all the trimmings.**

Built to Last

Built to last
 Built with pride
 Built to last with pride
 spirit
 carried over into the Lounge
 Built to last
 Built with pride
 Built to last with pride

Chargeman, you can put away your bloody whip
 Whip not needed these twenty years
 throughout which
 we've chosen to work hard,
 work hard for our mates
 Inside again now, inside "The Lounge"
 each week, Inside the "Lounge"

old shovel mouth over there
 you can't shut 'im up
 nor would you want to
 the Lounge is the place
 for the twenty year natter
 remembering our lines
 remembering our lines
 remembering our lines
 built to last with pride

Parts to Trip

OK, we know what date Trip's on
 In official GWR trainspeak :
 "Saturday after first Friday in July"

'Ow many 'ooters to Trip?
 Trip? I'll give you Trip
 Double work for wage clerks
 Double our wages more like
 Trip? I'll give you Trip

No women - No Trip.
 No women - No wages.
 No women - Sad men.

If it weren't for the Drivers
 If it weren't for the Firemen
 No destinations
 No travel
 No way
 Yeah but
 'Ow many 'ooters 'til Trip?

Masterclass

"'Ow many people worked in the Railways?"
 About half of them!

"'Ow do you spell Railway ?"
 I'm not sure but I know there's a tea in it
 With two official tea breaks a day
 workers responded with...
 bigger Mugs and unofficial breaks

If you 'warnted' something
 and it warn't in any Shops
 or you couldn't afford t' buy it
 mates' skills made it in the Works
 in that Cathedral of Engineering
 So you'd made yourself a "foreigner"
 welcomed home that night

Not a lot of people know this, but
 Swindon gardens are peppered with boiler tubes
 Someone's shaken them all over Swindon
 to add spice to the weekly washing
 keeping bloomers hanging high to dry
 Boiler tubes
 from railway lines
 to washing lines

Once a Railwayman

Once a Railwayman, always a Railwayman
 Worker up all hours with very sick child
 Fell asleep on paperwork at his desk
 Colleagues gently slipped papers free
 Slipped papers back later
 All work done
 Once a railwayman, always a railwayman

Postcard to Brunel

Wish you were here today
 Bring back trains on time
 Bring back re-incarnation
 Bring back Brunel

Remember Inside
 the workers looked at home there
 like they didn't want to go home
 a bond of blokes
 characters of all sorts
 Nicknamed
 "Luncheon Meat" and "Lurch"
 latter's boots, at Closure
 six-inch-nailed to Bench
 signed "Lurch Worked Here"

Wish you were here today
 Bring back Brunel

Are you listening ?

Inside made us deaf
 Inside clogged our lungs
 But the Works was the work we knew
 It was something we had to do
 No questions asked
 We did our work
 To make trains
 that took others to work
 and for holidays

Inside made us deaf and clogged our lungs
 Paid our wages and made us mates
 Inside made us deaf, are you listening

Steam Hammer Meets Matchbox

Fourteen year old Hammer Boy 1941
 chucks his heart-shaped brass check into box
 as he steps into Workshop 18
 the Stamping Shop

His heart, with imprinted number 9080
 will get sorted and hung on its peg
 by another of the 10,000 GWR Workers;
 Harry has checked in

Wondering how his Shop predecessor
 Hammerman Poet Alfred Williams
 managed his four ton drop hammer
 Harry settles in to master his Steam Hammer

Within a few months he's the man.
 He's the man who delivers a heavy blow
 or a light blow
 more steam or less steam

Deftly with tongs he places his quarry on the block
 demonstrates his newly acquired skill
 by closing the opened upended
 matchbox lid

Yes. Fragile matchbox handled like a newborn baby
 stroked on its head by tons of hammer iron
 in the hands of
 Hammerman Harry

Offered on the block mate's watch
 to give deft hammer blow to
 Harry refused, but only out of modesty
 he could have done it almost every time

Every time from then on in
 Harry hammered out a 40 year career
 Tossed in box each day his brass heart
 Heart kept safe even today in the little busy workshop
 at Harry's home, Hammer Harry, the GWR Hammer Man

**Izza Bard's Old Walcot neighbour, Des Hacker, over eighty now,
 was known as "Harry" Inside.**

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Fire and Steel 24 May

Combined "Artsminds" meeting and Mechanics' Institute Celebration
 showing of Martin Parry's "Fire & Steel" film of Railworks closure.

soot you

Now was a century ago
 1957 could have been 1857
 as
 best suited new young clerk
 soon sooted in boiler room
 marched thru by boss
 under roof-high spark shower
 towards high office
 where confronted
 with bespectacled ageless man
 high desked overseeing
 rows of junior clerks perched
 to shuffle ledgers all day

so
 this new young clerk
 grew older 30 desk years
 Inside the Works
 On the clerks' side

former GWR worker

the GWR flier

unknowingly
 or does such genius know
 unknowingly, Brunel laid the eggs
 that grew too sculptured birds of prey
 in Swindon gardens today

last works' apprentice, Gordon
 clipped round cheek for cheek
 nicknamed "leaner" for leaning
 learnt his metalwork skill
 last years before the works big kill

scorched he's been by curling molten metal
 hot rivets he's been tossed
 others thought he didn't give one
 somehow Brunel didn't complain
 creative eggs were lain

when rolled forward thirty years
 spread-eagled sheet metal and rods
 were by Gordon to birds bent
 their garden tenders
 thought their birds were heaven sent

***Izza* responds to Artist, Gordon Dickinson's bird sculpture and
 tales of his time in the "Works"**

guess who

he made bridges, trains and track
 built ships and docks too
 but he didn't invent the loo

he created Swindon
 which was his biggest mistake
 but we should be grateful
 for all the work today
 or we wouldn't be here
 so we should all shout hooray
 on his birthday

anon young lad who watched "Fire & Steel" film with his dad

In control

Brunel B rown

Brunel R ed

Brunel U mber

N atural

E arth

L ines

Into steel

Into iron

Into form

In control

Janet Korsak, Coolscapes

+++++

Poems coming up from the track....from May 2006

we walked the line

we walked the line around the Works
 from Smithies' Shed to Engines' Stables
 from innocent farmers' fields
 to world's biggest Engineering Works
 from bare ground by track to 300 houses back to back
 with hospital, church and Institute to boot

we walked the line
we glimpsed the Inside Story

and under line in one of many tunnels
 emerging one end to make decision
 turn left with blue collar workers
 or right up steps with white collared clerks

we walked the line out town end of tunnel
 to bump straight into sad neglected Mechanics' Inst
 imagining stepping into its Reading Room
 to gain what GWR deemed useful information
 from books fondly given by "some kind friends"
 and into Theatre there to view that deemed
 "appropriate" entertainment

no mention there of shift work hot-bedding
 in overcrowded rented railway houses
 nor of how the Hospital, Trip andwere badged by GWR
 yet more truly worker-led and built
 with their hard-earned, train earned, weekly subs
 leading Swindon quick to follow Rochdale with Co-ops

no mention either of how quickly Dennis Thatcher
 eased into Council-owned, biggest and best
 Railway Village house
 as he tried not to be BP bored
 as his wife ran the country
 we visited aspiring Steeple Chase

twixt Old Town and the New,
 What a to-do ! Holy Rood too small
 for Old Town's established establishment
 When viewed besides Railworks' St Marks
 So that's how Christchurch grew its own proud spire,
 higher

we walked the line
we glimpsed the Inside Story

Pleased we'd donned strong boots
 we walked the line of open sewers
 back of ornate pretend back to backs Brunel designed
 ensuring best face faced the Line,
 with Elizabethan and Edwardian tinctures

TS Elliot's J Alfred Prufrock
 measured out his life in coffee spoons
 Swindon measures out its life in street names
 Railway Village marks many destinations on the GWR line :
 Bristol and Bathampton Road, Exeter and London Street.
 In Old Town, where Kent builder built, are Roads
 Ashford, Kent, Hythe, Maidstone, and Kent itself

So on we trudged, wanting to believe
 that Big Drawing Office windows were set low so,
 Little Brunel could enjoy more view,
 but we couldn't let ourselves believe, although
 Believe we did that long-skirted soiree ladies
 lifted their skirts over dirty dangerous train tracks
 until tunnels built prior to Soirees
 and library's move to New Mechanics' Inst
 Soirees held where today's Steam Museum holds functions

harder to believe
 was worker and children crowded railway village roads
 over spilled from two roomed, no kitchen,
 outside loo tiny houses housing too many sweating workers

we walked the line
we glimpsed the Inside Story

we peeked at tiny ticket hatch through which workers
 got their passes and privileges
 for Trip Week and other train journeys
 remnants of which linger today for those still left

Best always faced the tracks, Best village houses
Best Factory Offices with ornate stone-chiselled Steam Trains

Nellie or Dumbo would never forget
winching through high flying door, onto Mechanics' massive stage
kept warm by 600 Aida actors and the 1930 Xmas Eve fire

We will always remember tale of drainpipe-shinning nurse
escaping neighbouring digs to meet
her Mechanics' dancing partner she later married
whilst married couple on our Guided Walk
told of eye injury and tonsillitis mended in mini Hospital Emlyn Square
whilst others spared details of their hand and injuries down below

we learned a little of the Rise of Rodbourne
when considered alongside story of GWR
buying land in third party disguise to keep prices low
left wondering if it was Insider Trading
gave Guppy Rodbourne land buyer friendly hints
that Rail needed explosion of workers who'd need houses :
business will forever business be

we walked the line
we glimpsed the Inside Story

Last to 19th Century GWR Park stripped of its initial initials
by 60's someones to simply the "Park"
yet emerging again in 21st century: Catch Children's Fete quite soon

we walked the line
we glimpsed the Inside Story

Izza Bard joined twenty other people on the "Swindon's Secrets"
English Heritage/Mechanics' Institute Trust guided tour around
some of the Works and Railway Village 28 May 2006

Brunel

little man. big hat.
in the shadow
of your engineering
genius, all of us
are pigmies.

by John Richardson

Our Finest Thing Out*

Our Mechanics Institute is shut away
From us in Swindon Town,
Left to crumble, fall, decay.

Broken but proud, so much to say
Wearing her scaffold gown,
Mechanics Institute is shut away.

Opened in 1855 on the 1st May
By forward thinking workers, now
This monument's in sad decay.

First public library of her day
Where Swindon town has grown.
New libraries built. Mechanics shut away.

Can we trust the wise council of today
Who sold our building for a pound
and let her crumble, fall, decay?

A cardboard Brunel on display
In arts venues where he's known -
Mechanics Institute is shut away!

What more can Swindon people say?
Our secret history will never abound
If Mechanics Institute is shut away
Crumbling, falling to decay.

by Hilda Sheehan

** Based on Title of Trevor Cockbill's 1988 book written about The Mechanics Institute
www.new-mechanics.com/*

seven minutes

evening heritage / place;
 old tracks /
 hidden sounds of beastful machinery /
 breathing gasping heartbeat / blackened intimacy /
 footplate smell of rhythm /
 fabric of work; bread fire /
 women are invisible here she said /
 oily trace; a brush used / hands; hot pipe handles /
 leather boot and a blackened lamp. A man's enclave /
 steam smoke love dust and dirt /
 focused and absorbed / overalls and rag
 we travelled seven minutes up the line /
 and then
 back again....

**Jill Carter recalls her journey on the footplate of a steam engine,
 Swindon & Cricklade Line, Wiltshire's only standard gauge
 heritage railway, Summer 2006**

In Response to Queen Victoria

I would like to respond your majesty to the poem penned by you,
 But I am overwhelmed and flattered and I don't know what to do.
 You wrote of my achievements and how Swindon grew to be,
 A place of pride, joy, and growth and attained prosperity,

The thing that makes Swindon great is the people and their past,
 The ability to redesign themselves and adapt to changes fast,
 As with this Old Town Festival of which I'm proud to be a part,
 Like you I feel a warming glow that encapsulates ones heart,

The people have a vision of how the Festival should be,
 So it's followed through with gusto by all the Committee,
 Now will you charge your glasses and raise a toast for us all to see,
 For a long and happy retirement, to Queen Victoria, your Majesty.

Isambard Kingdom Brunel 1806-2006

**Swindon's own Queen Victoria (Mary Ratcliffe) wrote a poem commemorating her last
 appearance at the Old Town Festival June 2006. One of the Brunel's of the Day (Robert
 Barrow) pens a response.**

Glimpse of a Great Man

by David Howell

Mummy, he looks like a steam train...

He does! Look...

There's the funnel on his head, helping something small to look as big as it deserves

And smoke from his cigar, puffing and billowing away with a vengeance

And his waistcoat buttons like the rivets round the pot-bellied engine...

Mummy, he looks like a steam train...

In his pockets are the passengers

Round and rich coin-people, jingling with smug and wealthy pride...

Portly and punctual watch-people, tick-tock-tapping their feet...

And their chain of hanger's-on...

Mummy, he looks like a steam train...

And his shoes as shiny as rails,

He's set on a path, determined, unflinching

And he'll get where he's going faster than anyone else

Leaping streams, lassoing towns, lunging right through mountains...

Mummy, he looks like a steam...

Darling, don't, it's rude to stare...

The Builder of Things

by David Howell

I built a bridge, but I'm still isolated –

stuck behind cogs and whirrings and skirls of steam.

And a tunnel straight through I forced, but

my mountain of guilt still stands between us.

Barges carry the passengers, the coke and the baggage,

and all the while, my messages don't travel well.

Railroads span the length and breast of this world, but

Don't think my reach is any further than my fingertips.

Keel and anchors I have forged, but simple ties are unmade –

I have no way to link and chain you to me.

Nobility and royals seek me out, to hear my every plan, but

genteel conversation cannot help me convey to you a single thought.

Daring spirit have I shown, when time is all that challenges –

only then am I brave, for your eyes keep me coward.

Making, forging, founding, building... and yet my hands cannot speak for me.

Building homes, but not our own.

Reaching out, but not to you.

Ushering in a new age, but

Not a new man.

Everyone will remember me, but

Life, I forgot to do.

What did I build...?

IKB anagram

Some bloke...
 Taking cash off the top of flexible credit father
 To manufacture the doggy St. Paul's by Nelson
 A doctor makes a move to own it all
 And gets Rasputin involved in the making...
 A horsey question for a baker made good
 Which could lead to support rot for leading make
 And the medic claims he creates armament gravity

Isambard Kingdom Brunel
 sKimmIng rubBer loan dad
 a barKing dome mr n BuILds
 m.d. emBarKs on a ruling bId
 BrIng mad monK as builder
 asKing lord Bunn, am I mr ed?
 risKing Brand beam mould
 dr: I maKe ur Bombings land

Straight-edge monarch wants deer
 Which leads me to attack leg-joint's illegal loam
 Hammer friends annoy idiot thief, Bert
 Shiny cherub killed in Belarus
 Precariously holds bleak gal's muscles
 So alright, meet beneath the overflowing lettuce
 Hiding the fact that I'm salivating

King ruloR demands BamBI
 I Bombard anKle's mud ring
 nalls maKe dumb roB grind
 gold Baba murder in mInsK
 dangles morbId Kim braun
 oK B under brimmIng salad
 masKIng around m'driBble

Building society sombre and won't admit "no-ing"
 The haphazard scree between the monarchs
 Which hides the hooks in my half
 And our ordinariness is just copying
 For even a photo fools the antelope
 And the visceral rock group disheartens

BanK grim or denIals dumb
 random ruBble amId Kings
 unmarKed go barBs in mIld
 normal Is marKed dubBing
 elKs roamIng nr dud BamBI
 lurId Band maKing sombre

David Howell, (Stage Door, Wyvern)

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on the rails

Dorcan Performing Arts Group (DPAG) from June 2006

cow pats on the back

hot hall full local lasses and lads
 and there's a World Cup match on now too

plywood props people corridors fill
forty up on stage at once

suddenly cow pats all over the place
leafy pastures at Swindon
beside Brunel's billiard table

done their bit, they sit, in the wings
concentrating on dramatic things
making dreams come true
but this is no dream you're talking Dorcan
Dorcan Performing Arts Group
D.P.A.G. it's all in the initials
the initial ideas and invitations to join D.P.A.G

Dreaming are those people who think
"Young people smoke fags and drugs don't they?"
"They sniff glue, sip alcohol"
"Oh Yes they do". "Oh No they don't"

They turn up to rehearse
Learn lines, learn more lines
Deliver real Railway Lines
Turn up, make the moves
Make better moves
Then show us their moves

Words and actions, actions and words
Junction to junction, massive compunction
resistance is useless, you'll join us as
to Dorcan young people, we raise
our top hat and rails
about rail skill, real skill
real dreams that have not gone up in smoke

Izza Bard pops in to DPAG Brunel show rehearsals

Brunel Bloke

not bad for bloke feeling my age
fancied stint acting on stage
came in for small part

feeling so fine
 came out of the sidings
 on to Main Line

Bob Barrows (of a certain age) expresses how pleased he is to play the older Brunel in DPAG Show July 2006

Dancers' Eye

nerves run high
 like
 an electric fie

rush, stress, calls, smiles
 and cries
 like a messed up pie

"Get on stage"
 The lights dim down.
 We take our place.
 Lights shine our face

the Glim
 we feel the Glim
 the beat of the music

mind's blank
 body numb
 spirit free

Emeline Nsingi Nicos

the man

Mike's the man
 'e opens and closes the show
 e's an open and shut case
 he's the man

part

too shy for the stage
 my work's on the page
 collecting the sub I'm at the hub
 of it all
DPAG has something for all

Gail Watling, Cast Representative, DPAG,

all sewn up

No time to go out
 Red hot needle
 nips in and out
 No time to go out
 Red hot needle
 nips in and out

Actors need dressing
 Costumes need pressing
 It's all so stressing
 Being so, sew impressing

You ask why I do it
 I'll tell you why
 Local people on stage
 Brings a tear to my eye

I'll let needle cool
 down a few weeks
 Then I'll pick it up again
 Give it a few tweaks

Lynne Reddaway, seamstress and props DPAG June 2006

trapped free

words on the page
 brought to life up on stage

under the light
we melt every night

but all worth it
when you feel
the rush
no time to blush

all focussed on me
don't feel trapped
I simply
feel
free

Laura Goodenough

Breaking Brunel Barriers

All these bloody Brunels
Everywhere backstage corridor
You bump into another Brunel
All these bloody Brunels

you
you Brunel wife
you Mary Alma Brunel
You look the part
You look more than the part
You look the business
You are the business

DPAG and the other crews
taken Brunel further
further than he ever knew he could go

Izza Bard backstage with DPAG 8 July

what's best

what's best ?
 what's best ?

best on stage
 feeling the Spotlight Rush
 This time the Brunel Buzz
 best, best
 best on stage

lots of other things
 I haven't tried
 Tried stage
 it's great for a person my age
 nearly fifteen

years of stages ahead of me
 I'm ready for them all
 'cos I've done it
 been on stage

ignited by the Spotlight Rush
 best, best
 best on stage

Izza Bard with Emily Barker (nearly 15)
 immediately after the her DPAG performance

The Swindon Footlights

My wife's in the chorus
 My two sons are in it
 I did it years ago
 I didn't sit on my ownio
 Fiddling with transistor radio

I did my bit on stage
 Now they're following in father's footlights
 They're not sittin' at home on't Todd
 In front of Gameboy I pod

They're making mates
 Treading new footplates
 Finding new footlight friends
 Poss-ible life friends

My two sons are at it
 Together they're ensemble

father de-briefs after the DPAG show "Top Hat and Rails"

peacock proud

the lad dun good
 saw show here last week
 today we wanted to reverse the polarity
 DPAG did that

If not here
 He'd be at home in bed
 Or face to face with a computer
 Not face to face with
 Hundreds of Wyvern audience faces

This youth made us proud
 Today seen the real youth
 Seen the real youth
 Dancing on stage
 Sent us through the roof
 The lad dun good

Family grouping share their thoughts after the Brunel Arts Youth Showcase, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon 8 July 2006

After Show Lament

Ah sigh here I am going back to myself,
 The sideburns are shaven and the hat's on the shelf.
 The suit is hung up for the very last time,
 The fob watch in its box looking pristine and prime.

I take off the shoes looking gleaming and black,
And tentatively place them side by side on the rack.
The shirt however is not to be seen,
For Alma has thrown it in the washing machine.

The cigar is put away looking tattered and broke,
For it's no good to me as I don't even smoke,
The cravat as I fold it I am feeling quite sad,
As I think of the good times that all of us had.

But why do I feel this as it's only a part,
There's another production so don't take it to heart.
But there's still the confusion, the thought, the concern.
I know what it is it regards the Wyvern.

A small number of you have been on that stage,
So maybe for you it wasn't as much of a rave.
But the rest of the cast were at sixes and seven,
In our own minds we felt we were in heaven.

The people to thank they measure Ten fold,
To companies like Patheon for being so bold.
Andy at the Wyvern and the rest of the crew,
It gave us an insight of what you all do.

BCA gave to us a large quantity of books,
By the author Steven Brindle which got lots of looks.
But the biggest thanks goes to all those background,
The wizards of lighting, special effects and the sound.

The tutors who taught you all that they know,
To give you the ability to put on that show.
Your props and your costumes they were there ready for you,
Sewn, altered and perfected by ladies so true.

The music was supplied by the Musty family so strong,
What a rocking good rhythm I still remember that end song.
And let's not forget Gail, who is always taking your money,
If you say you ain't got it she'll say, You trying to be funny!

And so to our Gina to whom nothing's too much,
The attention to detail that certain little touch.
She was there from the start and her commitment is true,
Because Gina believes in every single one of you.

My final big thank you is to the man at the start,
A great engineer of whom I played the part,
I admire and respect him as all of you can tell,
The great, the fantastic, Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

by Robert Barrow who acted Brunel Role for DPAG

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Building Bridges Show, Wyvern Plaza and Theatre, July 7th

Asbo-Free Zone

We zoned out Friday
broke every rule in the book
loud music, dangerous diabolos
stabbing stilts, felt tip graffiti
loud music, loud music

Crowds and crowds and crowds of us
posse after posse after posse
and nobody so bossy
they slapped an ASBO on us
that was the Brunel bonus

Theatre Square innit
We wuz innit

Official musical and theatrical Brunel extravaganza in the Theatre Square Plaza outside Wyvern Theatre where for the rest of the year an ASBO rules out congregating teenagers.

Yellow Dancing People

Once upon a time
I went Wyvern

watched jugglers
juggling

Alice can see a strange man
strangely dressed
Stephie can as well
with her Willy

Maria gets blinded
by a diabolo
LOL
Robin's leg fell off

Yellow dancing people
with drums
We'd never before met
Swindon Dholies

Daisy's skirt keeps
blowing about
makes her not happy
Now Alice will draw this

YAY !!!

Yipee4Zippy and mates

Now

The music has stopped playing loud
And I'm staring at a cloud
Now the music is loud

LOL *

* LOL is text speak for "laugh out loud"

Chainsawchik at Brunel outdoor musical extravaganza

getic

punjabi in the place
all up in here

this group thrills
this group fills
this group
is
colourful
different
energy
ener
ener
getic
getic
energetic

stroke of the stick
hits home POW
adrenalin rush
better-than bling-rush
POW

culture in ya face
culture in ya ears
punjabi no fears

punjabi in the place
all up in here

The Swindon Dholis (Punjabi Drummers and Dancers) young people after their high-powered performance

never nothing on

very
enjoyable
evening
lots
of
things
going
on

better
 than
 tele
 where
 there's
 never
 nothing
 on

Vicky Scott, enjoying music and street performances

thinking out loud

I think
 the Brunel 200th celebration
 on 7/7/06
 has brought all cultures
 together
 to celebrate all that is good

especially
 since it's a year ago today
 since the London Bombing

with SD

'cos

I'm feeling
 very happy now
 It's lovely weather

The music is good
 People are happy and enjoying themselves here

Otherwise
 be at home
 annoyed 'cos so hot

Out side

'cos
of Brunel Fest

It's Friday
TGFI
Thank God it's Free
Free Friday

with Christopher

sunny and loud

leaves blow
so do ear drums

sun shines
so do performers' costumes

wind cools
so does Becks

anon man

TLC R us

rehearsal for hours
we blossom like flowers
we've got the power
to entertain
charity money gain
we are full of tlc
we are the tlc

Anon members of the Thamesdown Ladies Choir (tlc)

inside story

take jam sandwiches to work
take one overflowing white-metal furnace

put them close to each other
put toasted sandwich in mouth

wash down with a brew of tea

**Former Rail Worker inmate salivates this poem during interval of
"Building Bridges"****floor frying**

coppersmith apprentice,
hot hard work
steel floor

fifteen round fires, fifteen furnaces
lined up in workshop
round beds of coke

braised steel flanges
on copper pipes
with brass solder

steel floor, boots on but still hot
hell under your feet
fry 'n egg on floor

**with Alec Woodward and his wife, who came along to the Brunel
show because "we just like the theatre" proving once again that
when you're in Swindon you're never more than half a street away
from a Railworks' connection.**

Backstage

and from the sparkling mad professors....

Feel?

Mad or what

Crazy geeky

Crazy as a clown
Crazy as old people you see on the street

Then we got our marching orders
To shut-up backstage
And strut our disciplined stuff on stage

and from a volunteer waiting in the wings....

Oh my God
Daughter's out there
Hope she does well
Build up is exciting and fun
It's loud
They're all impatient

I'm stuck here with the lipstick
Ready to top-up half time

with dbrown

tlc

tlc announced by Town Crier in green
If you had've been there
you would've seen
tlc sing in reply :

*"Fine
In the pink
Sunshine in our eyes
It's good to be alive
It's good to be all smile
It's good to beguile"*

jazz singers superb
town centre by the kerb
atmosphere
positive steps
taken by tlc singing and
in fine Brunel tradition
ending
on a positive note

with j.brown01 and Thamesdown Ladies Choir (tlc)

stage door

busy buzz
 not your normal buzz
 not your normal one company buzz

this is a hive of buzzes
 from swarm of dramatic groups
 full of workers, a few queens
 but the drone sent home
 no room for drones in drama
 Wyvern backstage
 brimming with front door material

there's a speed to it
 a musical momentum
 slow, slow, slow
 building, building more
 signing in at the stage door
 signing in, signing in
 signing in some more
 at stage door

a pause
 music stops

signing, signing,
 signing out, signing out
 signing out at stage door

that's why I'm staged here at the door
 'cos that's the stage I'm at

them? Swindon's dramatis personae?
 they're at another stage
 they're Brunel-bursting through the Stage Door

Izza Bard briefly connects with Stage Door

Bridging the Gap

Another world
Other worlds opened up to us in Swindon
in Brunel July

Another world, Wyvern World:
Outside you have the thumping dholis
in Foyer you have the jazzy Sun Arise singers
Inside. Yes, that's inside
Inside you have
a medley of railway songs and dances from the Shows
from Kentwood Choir to Western Players
through Janice Thompson to Judith Hockaday

Against a lit-up night sky backdrop
in a packed musical evening inside and on Plaza Wyvern
there was just left enough time to catch
that midnight Train to Swindon
from that packed auditorium platform
We were ready to receive performers
from Rushey Platt with Love
A heady mix of the old Light Programme
and latter-day Radio Two
This time the applause was un-canned
almost uncanny as

Gems from old films sung to us then stunned silence as
gems from Swindon Viewpoint videos cried out to us
like splices from an old standard eight film show
Stunned silence greeted Swindon artist, Bill Cox,
works apprentice turned metal sculptor, Gordon Dickenson
unearther and preserver of heritage, Martha Parry
Giving views of Brunelian Swindon

Wouldn't it be lovely if some of their dreams came true
the ballet highkicker implied

"I'm getting Asboed in the Morning
Ding Dong Christchurch bells gonna chime
Kick out the youngsters, for they're all monsters
But get me to the court, get me to the court
For gawd's sake get me to the court on time"

Evening dressed to thrill OTTC sang their rivets out

after filmic Gordon D likened railway loss
to ripping heart from Swindon

With silver top hats and pelvic thrusts
we heard of a light on over in Faringdon
heard there's a light in the darkness of everybody's life
Let's do the Swindon Time Warp Again

Kentwood Choir saw us out with that old refrain
to Swindon :

*"When you're down and troubled
and your buildings have been rubbled
you need a friend
and as well
you need Brunel"*

I vow to thee my country music is our first love
for Swindon's artistes conducted by red salwar kameez
conducted with gusto
the rhythm of life, the rhythm of rails
proving, that through Box Hill and art
both tunnels and bridges can be built
over any of Swindon's troubled waters
for tonight we made a fresh start

**Izza Bard puts his own take on the "Building Bridges" evening of
music and film as he sat in darkened auditorium**

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Brunel Arts Showcase, Wyvern Theatre, 8 July

ruskin trackers

top hat, top hat
top hat and turn
top hat and turn

ruskin trackers
tracked that, tracked the ska train

tracked it there, tracked it back
 took each Wyvern seat with 'em all the way
 track and turn, track and turn
 top hat track and turn
 twist, twist, twist back and turn

Ruskin Dance turned
 raw ruskin talent
 into refined fit for dance purpose.
 Pattern maker's delight

pattern that, pattern that
 pattern the Ruskin Trackers

Ruskin Junior School Dance Club

backstage revealed

Incredible

Fired up
 Ready to go

Nervous
 Nervous nice time

Stressed
 Stressed nice time

Incredible

Izza Bard listens backstage at Brunel Youth Arts showcase and Building Bridges 7 & 8 July 2006

Brunel the first time....

It was a hot Wyvern afternoon
 Show was to start soon
 Then it's over so quick
 At of the fingers, a click

Never heard of him before
 Now want to know even more
 He was so small
 He was visionary
 an 'e had a French dad

It was a hot Wyvern afternoon
 learning started so soon
 I will not rebel
 against Isambard Kingdom Brunel

anon audience member

(with apologies to Bobby Goldsboro "Summer the first time")

encore, encore

encore, encore
 give me more, give me more
 it was fine, it was great
 but I bet
 there's more to come
 from theatrical Swindun

dig deeper dig deep in school
 that's where you'll find dancers
 even more cool
 actors with improved lines
 singers hitting all the notes

I'm not being snotty
 what I've seen today wasn't grotty
 but
 Swindon Give Me More
 Give me more
 Encore. Encore

anon audience member

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Brunel Festival 7-16 July

Luncheon Meat Luncheon Launch

Swindon

enough of a town to throw a sandwich at
 so let's now return the compliment that
 grew Swindon to encompass canal, build railway and M4
 and today toss Brunel another historic sandwich
 from these not Barracks but Apartments
 toss to the feet of the great man's statue
 a Street Festival Launch lunch of luncheon meat
 tossed to the great man's feet
 while we eat to pause on Brunel Festival Run
 half-done, biggest half yet to come
 catch that statue while we know where it is
 ensure it does not take the Tabernacle Northampton route
 rest a mo as under guidance
 of the dashing young Brunel Sergeant, Helen Miah
 we raise a glass to cheer
 the Brunel Festival Is Well And Truly Here

**Izza Bard creates and delivers this to the assembled company then
 throws a symbolic cardboard sandwich at the feet of Brunel statue
 at Town Centre Festival launch at "The Apartment" 4 July 2006**

Shoppers Stoop to Conga

fantasy dressed dancers
 congooaad through the town

speechless shoppers
 soon slipped back into shopping worlds
 soon shop-swallowed like spongy jelly fish

swindon's largest conga
 was not going to lower prices or expand choice

right on first count, wrong on second
 dancers congooaad-on

a good find

found in Brunel's scullery
the caravan gallery

see www.spiralflight.co.uk/

stewards' mix

transparent in our hi-viz vests
dull, tedious
water-bottle wallahs

talking to people
made lot of new friends

left out not centre stage
transparent in our hi-viz vests

Bestival

Awesome in your ears, Punjabi in the house
On MacDonald's stage, People of all age
Watch mesmerised, jugglers, Scratch Choir
Hour after hour after hour
Watch Swindon Dance @ Brunel Fest
where you only get the best

kicking, kicking the moon

kicking the moon
with floorslide bingo
Old Boy's the real deal
mother effer showing little effort

perplexing rotations, weasel groin strain
man they're at it again

scuffed pumas, grubby hat, frizzy afro in the House

throwdown, throwdown, his style'll shock ya
now there's a new crew cumin thru'
ten years in the making too

kicking, kicking the moon
says it all, Brunall

Hip Hop Crew jibe at the Old Master (Banksy) after a McDonald's Stage "throwdown"

flagging but not flagging

It's coming together
They're now braced with black train braces for it
Pass a flag

It doesn't come from nowhere
while festival carnival Town Centre Parade floats its stuff
put no foot wrong in rehearsal after rehearsal
hidden in rehearsal room

Three lots of eight to get those flags down
No foot wrong, pass flag. It's coming together

Observations of dancers training for the big day "Whistles and Flags" street performance on 17 July in Exeter Street, Railway Village – another World Premiere

signalling something

one two three four five six seven eight
one two three four five six seven eight
wave red flag on pole sweep, sweep, sweep
one two three together. Jump. Arms. Arms

step step. click fingers, click, click, click, click

keep time. Keep time. Keep that train dancing on time
 sit-specific piece, Exeter Street piece
 youth dancing create from nothing

No. Not from nothing. From their young years Dance Agency Training
 From nothing in hot Sunday afternoon @ Community Crossroads
 Former Rail Museum. Former Barracks dormitories Welsh Railworkers
 They pick up the Brunel Connection Vibe and dance describe
 Take the space. No apologies. Own it. Take the space. Flag the space

Individuals dance-trained, train dance for hours
 Hot afternoon creating another Brunel in the Street Dance Surprise
 Red flow the flags, stretch go the muscles, *tanger* goes the beat
*Tanger** goes the GWR Street Beat. Inspiring goes routine.
 Better every time. Red flow the flags.

Swindon Dance teenagers tenaciously rehearse for Exeter Street performance with international musician Barry Ganberg playing on railway scrap instrument. *"tanger" is coined word of one of the sounds*

Expressive Art

the 1159 in the distance lets off one, wanky-can skanky-man organic
 bead, Love bead in spray can flicking the bead

professional painters paint professional, loads of can-fessional; we don't
 paint it out, we give it a colourful shout, so youth don't get left out

100 metre Brunel mural painted on Churchward hoardings

tag virgin

first time no-tag tag virgin
 popped your cherry coloured paint
 battleship grey council greened
 steam train grey now seen on hoardings

loading it up promised boardings
 swords hands rhythm cans
 just began, catch as quick can
 quick scan two hundred boxed cans

sprayed now I can tag now

**expressive art does what it says on the....can, Churchward
 hoardings 15 July**

they're that good

Gandinis flow black cosies day-glo orange clubs
 they flow so you enter their trance
 forget it's a swinging musical juggling dance
 back to back, transfixed, trans bloody fixed

world class juggling "Gandinis" in Swindon outside Debenhams

fun hours

fat hour
 with Fat Controller
 India eight, Alicia five
 cut and pasted
 to out-do
 the whole Blue Peter Team

in Brunel Shopping Centre
 where mum and grandma went
 for a quiet time to be spent
 resulting in

a whole hour
 our clever children
 built Brunel new
 Top Hats to die for

colour texture
 tissue cotton wool

glitter and paint
 novices we ain't
 Give us the tools
 and we'll create that
 winning Brunel Top Hat

Izza Bard spots some busy "Bs" (India and Alicia) on a Sunday afternoon making best use of Bridge Building Workshop "Arty Party", Brunel Centre 9 July

Ain't 'eard of 'im ?

(Created for, and read live, on BBC Radio Swindon, 16 July 2006 – by Tony Hillier Izza Bard)

1000 listeners BBC Radio Swin- don
 Now you've got your radio switched-on
 I'd like you to tell,
 about that Bloke Brunel

*That Bloke Brunel
 ain't heard of 'im where you bin !*

OK you say you've heard it all before
 But just before, you eat your toast
 Let me tell you about the most
 Hugist 1000 Fireworks Finale on-in Swindon tonight
 (bang – oohh - aaahh – weee - bang)
 Faringdon Road Park they'll light up bright

Park and Ride at Copse 1000 space Car Park
 'cos anybody whose anybody is up for this lark
 The real Deal is the noon-all day Children's Fete
 1000 children get a free piece of cake

listen now to another lark - from Dark to Park
 1000 Old Swindon piccies in a tent in the Park
 Dash now to your shoe-box hidden away all day
 Bring 'em to Park – bring 'em from Dark to Park
 So bring 'em along your old Swindon photease - please

*That Bloke Brunel
 ain't heard of 'im where you bin !*

Big Brunel Graffiti going on now for teenage
 1000 spray cans free by Outlet Village
 While up that "Inside" end of town
Get a BOGOFF ticket to stream thru' the door @ Museum Steam
 (that's Buy One Get One For Free
 to the 1000 people not heard that acronym before)
 Festival Programme's got a voucher in
 Get ya programme from noon Park Faringdin

oh Yay and just to say
 Brunel born near quarter o' thousand years ago today !

*That Bloke Brunel,
 ain't heard of 'im where you bin !*

nb Another Record Made BBC Presenter, Sandy Martin, issued challenge to Izza Bard and Group "Zeya" www.zeyamusic.com to compose music and convert the poem to perform a song live on air. Thirty minutes later and the Brunelian impossible challenge was achieved!

high points of Children's Fete

Swindonians found it was never too late
 to stroll through GWR Park wrought iron Gate
 to find new excitement at the Children's Fete
 New excitements linked to past pleasures
 Brunel would've been proud on several measures

A much appreciated fun-long day for young and young at heart
 Many, many volunteers played their part
 Committee members, chair movers, and sponsor shakers
 Arriving early you could throw a punch @ conventional Punch & Judy
 Make last minute Parade costume adjustments
 Find tent to suit your tastes for refreshments

There was no looking back
 after Mayor and Queen Victoria arrived at head of Parade
 throughout the day it was "Look over there at that ...
 Sea Cadet assembling his boat. No wait. Look over there at...
 those Whistles and Flags dancing down Exeter Street

Careful. Mind. Blondin might fall from his tightrope

as maypole ribbons also fly high
 Look on stage at Silchester Choir hit high Bridge Brunel Notes
 Tea Ladies, complete with Hilda Ogden headscarf served high tea
 and thigh high were summer shorts and skirts
 majorettes' mace flew sky-high too
 as if it was an everyday thing to do

Swindon Jake's jugglers use stratosphere, when, without fear,
 they cleverly clubbed cigar from comrade's mouth getting cheer
 as non-violent high point to their act

One could go on as long as Milton's Paradise Re-gained Poem
 But revolving acrobatic Heliosphere woman dangles floodlit and sunset lit
 around-the-Park-in-80 Minutes hand held, rope tethered Balloon
 All this and much, much, much, much more with
 Pyrenees-high pyrotechnics steam engine lighting up St Luke's spire sky

on Children's fete

never seen
 anything
 like it before
 most marvellous thing I've ever seen in the Park
 pity not seen it used like this before
 best day we've ever seen

by Colin who has lived adjacent to Park for 35 years

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The Little Man in the Big Hat

World Premiere of a Youth Opera by the Janice Thompson Performance
 Trust September 17

Janice

Janice
 is
 all round
 super

flowers for Gelene

friendly
 funny
 bubbly
 cheerful
 helpful
 enthusiastic
 clever

**as a former Trust member, professional music student, Gelene,
 returned to share her talents with less experienced performers**

scene after the show

aligned on church pew
 leaning forward to get in the poem
 happy girls dressed as boys
 brown cord hats
 ecstatic velvet waistcoats
 reverse men in drag
 happy with that

kisses

audience stunned as curtain comes down
 at end of the show
 composer and writer
 both blow lots of kisses
 to this warm bunch

joyful making

from confidence exuded by young singers
 just before the first night
 writer knew it was going to be

WONDERFUL

Betty and I enjoyed it

Joyful making

so much so

forgot I'd written it myself

from composer Betty Roe and libretto Marian Lines

So what was it like young actors ?

Tiring

Stressful

Five hour rehearsals

Really fun

Exhilarating

Gutted it's finished

after months of hard work

Eager eyes

leaning forward for more

more whatever sized people

in whatever sized hats

Opportunities for Many

"Very good Show"

comment Janet's parents, declaring an interest,
agreeing it's a warm band of musical thespians

Since she was young, twelve

if we remember right

she's been engulfed by music

from giving two bob music lessons

in our the front room

to steering 140 people in Annual Wyvern Gala Shows

Janice has been in the forefront of the fight-back culture

not letting lonely computers get all their own way

giving Swindon Youth opportunities

for live musical performances

that's Janice

that's Janice

thanks Janice

fast fotos

Smile
 How quick is that
 Cellophane sepia mounted photos
 ready to take home after the show
 Brunel would admire the speed
 of this train-track of photos
 Broad Gauge
 Broad Smile

the work goes on

Amongst post-show chatter
 as high as Clivedon Suspension Bridge
 the clearing up immediately begins
 Hats, costumes, costumes
 Lights, props
 Costumes, costumes, costumes
 A box full of boaters
 and still the work goes on
 well after this poem ends

now about the next show.....

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Verse from Railway Village Pubs September 2006**Glueps Odyssey**

can't do somersaults and loop the loops
 in the Glueps
 its front room size, gymnastics won't allow
 nonetheless this pub for beer and ale
 draws drinkers to front door, just to inhale
 the Hop Back brews chalked on board
 Crop Circle, Summer Lightening
 and Odyssey, no problem to afford

in Glueps, get verbal gymnastics not just Quiz Night
 traditional welcome here, as every customer's right

musings at Gluepot Pub September 2006

weatherspoon wither

treasure now
 for Gluepot
 could be Weatherspooned within the week

gone would go
 wooden wide barrel booths
 numbered against any occasion
 gone would go generations
 of regulars' regular drinks

gluepot steadfastly sticks to its customers
 customers not supping on sticky wicket
 comfortable they be in barrelled booths
 not a prit stick in sight

let Weatherspoon wither

more Gluepot Pub musings September 2006

steve on a roll

roller skated round Mechanics
 as a boy
 sold rolled Advers
 to rolling stock railworkers
 stacked up skittles for a shilling
 bowled for dad in later years
 voted first time in Mechanics
 as a man

chatting at the Gluepot bar with born-in-Railway-Village Steve

the Baker's buzz

electronic acoustic Irish singers
 settled on stools early Monday eve
 appreciative but not a pin-drop audience
 lots to listen, lots to talk
 lots of buzz in Baker's Arms
 joining in with song
 no matter drinkers
 might get words wrong
seven Spanish angels
*took another angel home**

* - song lyrics by Seals/Setser and sung by Willie Nelson

live music at Baker's Arms, 18 September 2006**thick with voice**

after
*railroad, steamboat, river and canal **
 new backing singers on this tonight
 so thick, thick, thick with voice
 the voice of Wild Rover
 ain't got a penny
 got a Prodigal
 got a song
 in Baker's
 Arms

* lyrics from Jim Reeves' "Yonder Comes a Sucker"

live music at Baker's Arms, 18 September 2006**Rose of Care**

lilting love song
 backed up by two guitars
 Rose of Clare *
 made the pub care

care to listen
and clap glasses
onto bar
with care

* *My Lovely Rose of Clare song by Chris Ball*

live music at Baker's Arms, 18 September 2006

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Brunel's Kingdom – a concert drama World Premiere

Music by Robin Nelson, libretto by Alistair Service, conductor Robin Nelson, with Swindon Choral Society, Ruskin Junior School Choir, West Forest Sinfonia at Steam Museum, 23 September 2006

"fortune favours the bold"

mouths open and close,
on cue, on time
in precise sequence
like intricacies of Brunel-Gooch Steam engines

"that Bridge my first child"

Ruskin tots, sing up with the best of them
Words crafted voices raised and lowered
Instruments guided in Choral craft

Choral speaking train journey
Non-words, words mouth sounds mix
Percussion kids
Hiss plonk, drip of water

We played the game
Pleased to play the game,
the train game, knew it was a train
Comfortable in our complicity
We big audience, *mass of Box Hill*

* words in italics taken from script in programme

Shed Tears

packed audience from far and wide
and by train, same train heard rattling past
the Workshop Museum auditorium window
heard by audience, mid music,

train seen and heard by concert pianist
found herself facing the window
dealing with the cues produced by train timetable
and any early autumn leaves on line

far and wide, like Avebury contingent
and holiday makers hot-foot from Italy
who wouldn't have missed this World Premiere,
for the world

nor would the rest of us
ensconced in this wide Shed that made the Brunel train
this Shed that listened today to Choral tribute
this Shed that remembered the songs of workers
slogging away with slippery hot metal
with only 347 days to Next Trip, so said the sign

we audience treated today
to a Choral Trip of a lifetime
our life time
Brunel's lifetime

Fun to let it out

Scary when we first came in
Such a big audience
Everyone staring
Worried what they'd think

But it was fun to let it out
We knew we'd practised
We felt safe in our teachers' hands
We came in on cue
We knew what to do
Sang our hearts out too

Then came the cheeky bit
Hidden saucepans lifted up
Plastic milk bottles and a cup
We beat them in tune
Wooden spoons, elbow room
Fun to let it out

Ruskin Junior School Choir speak of their experience straight after their fantastic professional performance, up there with the other professionals.

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two evaluation poems

September 2006

well Brunel

well Brunel
 did you go well
 like proverbial
 bat out of ...
 Box Tunnel

well Brunel
 your poetry rocked
 and shocked
 Passengers never knew
 you
 could squeeze so many poems
 into so many orifices
 but you did
 you achieved the impossible

a poems every other year since birth
 sufficient to release you lightly now
 from those heavy burdensome chains
 around your shoulders
 in that over, overexposed,
 petrified photo of you

your literary legacy now floats
 as nourishing miasma
 over hundred prompted poems
 from you to us
 from us to you
 Goochy, Goochy, Goochy, Goo

