



## “QUAY NOTES” - March 2006

(News, views and information for residents of Merchants Landing)

[www.mlra.co.uk](http://www.mlra.co.uk)

### Gordon's Bristol Bites

#### THE NEW CUT

The tidal waterway just over Commercial Road from Bathurst Basin is entirely man-made. It was dug out over the period 1805-9 to divert the river Avon and allow the creation of a Floating Harbour along the route of the rivers Avon & Frome. Ask almost anyone in Bristol and they will tell you that the Cut was dug out by French Prisoners of War. There is some element of truth in the tale, but not a lot. As this was the time of the Napoleonic wars there were French prisoners in this country. Many were incarcerated in a prison in Fishponds, a building still existing in the Blackberry Hill complex on Manor Road. Some were brought over to help in digging the Cut and lodged in buildings which still exist in Willway Street, close by Park Furnishers in Bedminster. They were NOT held in Redcliffe Caves. In fact the vast majority of the excavating was done by English & Irish labourers (navvies); men who earned their living travelling the country digging the canals that enjoyed a brief hey-day as the preferred means of transport before the railways. We know this because when the work was complete the contractors laid on a big celebration, with food and drink for their workers. It finished up with a riot between the English & Irish. So what changes?

#### Burns Night



The whole evening was superb!

Small tables set for four were laid along the walls of the saloon, and a large trestle table in the centre. At the top table Campbell McKenzie presided, with his daughter Fiona on one side and Caroline on the other. There were 64 people there, including members of the Cruising Club, piped aboard with Scottish airs. After Campbell's words of welcome, cock-a-leekie soup was served. (In fact, it was a real communal effort, as everyone had a task, whether planning, preparing or serving food, reading or performing).

The haggis was piped in by David Thorogood and suffered a dramatic death under the hands of the MC. It quickly found its way onto plates with lashings of neeps, tatties and gravy (the last being not really traditional, we learned).

Campbell gave a wonderful speech about the Immortal Bard, Mike toasted the Lassies and Caroline replied. After pudding, there were readings. Gordon's rendering of Burn's toothache poem was so Scottish, that it was incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Fiona's and Campbell's songs were beautiful. By the time we came to Auld Lang Syne, it was nearly eleven.

It was the best party we have had here since the garden party out the back two years ago, and certainly the best time we have had on the John Sebastian.

Susan Hart



No names have been included with the photographs in case those caught by the camera wish to remain incognito! Ed.

### Your Committee Members

Mary Rackham	5 Merchants Quay	9297562	Janetta Mitchinson	3 Trin Mills	9276209
Scott Bowie	7 Merrick Court	9294689	Michael Hart	2 Challoner Court	9215291
Caroline New	10 Bathurst Parade	9256740	Hazel Hill	4 Byzantine Court	9294962
Shirley Stark	8 Wapping Road	9293953	Sandy Conway	1 Draycott Place	9293454



The following toast was given at the Burns night dinner

### The Lassies of Merchants Landing



*Who can find a virtuous woman in Merchants Landing, for her price is above rubies.  
The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need to look elsewhere.  
She is dressed in bright garments and she rejoiceth in her clean toilets.  
She welcometh the postman in the morning, but she scorneth the smokers by the offices at noon.  
Her heart singeth when the dustbins are emptied and the litter has gone from her door.  
She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and gossip delighteth her heart.  
She walketh forth by the harbour and looketh well to the ways of her neighbours.  
She gathereth birds to her feeders with gladness, but the cats she sendeth empty away.  
She considereth the garden and planteth it, and pots spring up under her feet  
The daughters of Poole's Court and the Point have done virtuously, but she exceedeth them all.*

### Forthcoming events.

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April - A guided walk around the docks led by the infamous "Pirate Pete".  
Meet outside 10 Bathurst Parade. Cost will be £ 2 or 3 depending on numbers.  
The intention is to have a Sunday roast at the Louisiana at the end of the walk.  
No dates yet but there will be a Summer Party and a talk by John Bates on Collectables. Also  
planned is a garage/car boot sale, so start putting aside all those unwanted items!**

John Ashford has very kindly produced an updated database of the services used and recommended by residents. It will be posted on the website shortly, and covers everything from windows to cleaners. If you have any recommendations, or find that a particular service is no longer valid, please let me know.



### Brunel 200 events

1<sup>st</sup> April 9 lives of Brunel opens at the Maritime Heritage Centre. The key exhibit is a full size replica of the Iron Duke, a loco that pulled the last ever broad gauge train.  
8<sup>th</sup> April Dancing demonstration on the spit in Cumberland basin. Not sure what time.  
8/9 April Free party on the suspension bridge. I am not sure exactly what is involved!  
9<sup>th</sup> April Fireworks and switching on of new lights at 9pm



### MLRA Committee meeting

The next meeting will be held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 06. If you have any items for the meeting, please let a committee member know.

9<sup>th</sup> June The engine in the SS Great Britain will be officially started. Trials should commence in May.

**Gourmets take note.** The new Café/Bar opens on 27 March. I am assured it will be the place to eat.

### Quay Notes

Next edition will be out on 1 June 2006. Contributions, photos etc are welcome. Don't be shy! Put pen to paper.

Contributions to 5 Merchants Quay or preferably to rackham@onetel.com