

Working with visionaries

Osborne Clarke & Brunel

Introduction

On a damp morning in 1833, Jeremiah Osborne, solicitor to the Great Western Railway Company, quite literally found himself pushing out the boat for his client. That morning he made history for the law firm now known as Osborne Clarke by slowly rowing Isambard Kingdom Brunel, one of the most inspirational and high-profile engineers of the 19th century, down the river Avon to survey the bank for the route of Brunel's great railway.

Over 170 years later, Osborne Clarke's philosophy remains the same: to do whatever it takes to deliver pragmatic, business-focused solutions to their clients so that they can realise their potential.

Jeremiah Osborne's firm helped Brunel make history. The solicitors provided a fundamental link in the chain of events that guided the new Great Western Railway Bill through Parliament in 1835, enabling Brunel to concentrate on what he did best – bringing his innovative ideas to fruition, and the Great Western Railway to life.

Today the legacy of helping visionaries realise their dreams remains and Osborne Clarke continues to help innovators, advising inventors and investors in cutting-edge technologies and construction projects where engineering innovation plays a crucial role.



Nurturing innovation

Osborne Clarke was one of the first law firms to embrace the technology boom in the 1990s, advising Netscape who brought the browser (and hence the World Wide Web) to the World and advising Verisign (a leader in digital and e-commerce security). Since this time the firm's reputation for advising technology companies has grown massively, its client list boasting leading names such as Yahoo! and Adobe.

The UK's universities are responsible for much of the research and development that leads to innovative ideas and businesses. Osborne Clarke assists the Universities of Bristol, Bath and the West of England in structuring research and joint ventures and in creating spin-out companies.

Building innovation

Constant innovation in the built environment is essential and usually impressive, because of the scale and logistics involved. Osborne Clarke has acted for many great engineering companies, starting with Brunel's Great Western Railway Company in the 1830s, and has advised on many projects where engineering has truly pushed the boundaries. The firm's connection with railways continues to this day acting as key adviser for Nishimatsu on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.

Other engineering clients include Diamond Light Source on the construction of the largest scientific facility* to be built in the UK for 30 years on the Harwell Chilton science campus, and leading wind farm

developer Fred. Olsen Renewables Limited with whom Osborne Clarke has worked on power offtake, construction and financing aspects of three of the largest wind farms to be built in the UK (Crystal Rig, Rothes and Paul's Hill).*

Funding innovation

Innovation needs finance to develop and thrive. Osborne Clarke is involved in various 'incubator' initiatives to help start-up technology companies grow. These include advising The Sulis Seedcorn Fund (supporting the early stage commercialisation of research generated by the Universities of Bath, Bristol and Southampton), as well as The Lachesis Fund, which invests in the technologies coming out of research teams at the Universities of De Montfort, Leicester, Loughborough, Nottingham and Nottingham Trent.

Osborne Clarke regularly advises established technology companies, and private equity and venture capital houses on corporate structures and funding to fuel future growth. Recent clients include 3i on the investment in Cloud Networks Limited (who put Wi-Fi kit into public areas to provide extended Wi-Fi networks) and Quester on investment in Global Silicon (designers of chips for MP3 players). The firm also advises on the structure and funding of spin-out companies from universities and technology multi-nationals, such as Hewlett Packard.

*See images 1 & 2

Brunel and Osborne Ward – a successful partnership

Brunel is famed as the creator of the Great Western Railway but the many lasting testaments to his genius include Paddington station in London, Temple Meads station and the Clifton Suspension Bridge in Bristol and the *Great Eastern* and *Great Britain* steamships.

The Great Western Railway Company appointed solicitors Osborne Ward (now known as Osborne Clarke) in 1835 to help steer the new Great Western Railway Bill through Parliament.

This London to Bristol link remains key to Osborne Clarke's practice today. The firm's Bristol base is in the commercial heart of the City, at Temple Quay, close to Brunel's great railway station. From Temple Meads, via the firm's offices next to Reading station, the journey to its City office in London Wall is around two hours.

Osborne Ward worked in partnership with Great Western to establish the railway. They prepared the Bill, which included attending weekly meetings of the Parliamentary Committee, as well as many regional meetings to canvass public support; they negotiated with landowners to survey and acquire property along the railway's route; and secured the capital necessary for the company to go before Parliament. And, in the spirit of partnership that existed within the firm in the 1800s (and continues today), the founding partners demonstrated their personal confidence in the Great Western by buying shares in the company.

It seems likely that Brunel's vision of his broad-gauge railway might not have succeeded without the close involvement of Osborne Ward in getting the Great Western Railway Bill passed through Parliament, and in giving this country "God's Wonderful Railway".

Future innovators

Innovation needs to be nurtured in order to develop and thrive. Osborne Clarke is committed to helping develop new ideas and businesses, and is involved in various initiatives to help start-up technology companies form and grow.

Set Squared is a collaboration between the Universities of Bristol, Bath, Southampton and Surrey. This initiative helps create new technology businesses, and supports both spin-outs and the wider business community through its business acceleration centres.

For many years the firm has co-sponsored and advised the winners of the University of Bristol's annual New Enterprise Competition. This £30,000 prize fund is designed to inspire and generate new high-growth businesses and to stimulate entrepreneurial talent among the University's staff and students.

So who or what companies would Brunel class as his peers today in terms of their ability to bring innovative and visionary ideas to fruition?

Here are some suggestions:

BlueSpace

www.bluespace.com

A radical solution to secure email communications.

Cambridge Display Technology

www.cdtltd.co.uk

Manufacturer of polymer light emitting diodes for display screens.

ClearSpeed

www.clearspeed.com

A fabless semiconductor company, that designs and develops microprocessors and related products that offer significant increases in the performance of computing systems.

G-Nostics

www.g-nostics.com

They have a genetic test, 'theranostics', which predicts a person's response to a drug, part of the next generation of personalised medicine, where drug therapies are tailored to an individual's genetic make-up.

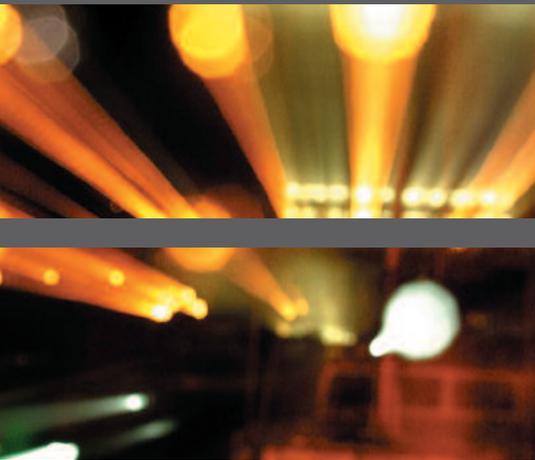
LastMile Communications

www.lastmilecoms.com

A pioneering high speed wireless information network system using existing roadside architecture.



About Osborne Clarke



Osborne Clarke is a European law firm that provides a range of business-focused legal solutions.

Delivering a personal service, tailored to a client's needs, is one of the keys to Osborne Clarke's success. Operating specialist, client-centred teams that combine a range of legal disciplines and deliver an efficient and cost-effective service is another. The firm also works hard to gain insider knowledge across a series of industry sectors, particularly in technology, media and telecoms. This enables them to provide clients with legal solutions that make a real impact.

1. Portrait of Isambard Kingdom Brunel by John Callcott Horsley, c. 1843 (Bristol's Museums, Galleries and Archives).

2. ss *Great Britain* surrounded by 'glass sea', 2005, photograph by Mandy Reynolds (ss Great Britain Trust).

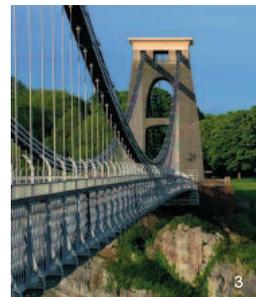
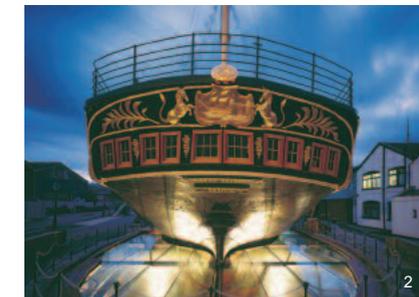
3. View of Clifton Suspension Bridge.

Celebrating Brunel

This year, Brunel 200 launched a year-long programme of celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the birth of Isambard Kingdom Brunel. The programme celebrates the great man's life, times and legacy, and includes exhibitions, educational projects, publications and arts projects, which will take place across the UK.

Osborne Clarke is proud to be actively involved in Brunel 200. Brunel captured the public imagination like no other engineer and he remains an inspiration today to the people of Britain and to innovators of all kinds around the world.

Apart from its involvement in Brunel 200, Osborne Clarke is promoting a number of Brunel-inspired initiatives. The firm is hosting a public exhibition of Brunel's life and works at its offices at 2 Temple Back East in Bristol as well as organising and funding the relocation of Brunel's bronze statue from Broad Quay to the public area outside its Bristol office – thus returning Brunel to his spiritual home close to Temple Meads station (and near to his lawyers!).



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