La Luna

The grateful Inhabitants
To GEORGE THE THIRD
On His entering the 50th Year
Of His REIGN.
J. HAMILTON.
ARCHT

A Royal Dipping
This is a replica of the bathing machine used by King George III who was a frequent visitor to Weymouth in the late 1700s. The King spent 14 summers here with the royal family between 1789 and 1805. It is recorded that on viewing Weymouth Bay for the first time, His Majesty exclaimed
"I never enjoyed a sight so pleasing."
There can be no doubt that the King's visits to Weymouth made the town famous and helped establish the resort as a popular holiday destination. The King's Statue, situated on the seafront, was commissioned by the 'Grateful Inhabitants' of Weymouth and unveiled in 1810 to commemorate the royal patronage.
Bathing - A Serious Medical Occasion
The King suffered from a then unknown illness called 'porphyria', a chemical imbalance in the body that damages the nervous system. At the time the King's condition was not understood, and rumours abounded about the King's "madness". To aid his recovery, the King was advised to holiday in Weymouth and encouraged to bathe regularly in seawater, an activity thought to have health giving properties.
Georgians did not simply leap into the sea and frolic (although local children certainly did), bathing was a serious medicinal occasion. A bathing machine was pulled out into reasonably deep water by a horse. Attendants helped, or if necessary pushed, the bather into the water for a specified period of immersion. Women bathers wore special bathing clothing, men wore rather less. Some bathing machines had a hood, which could be pulled down for privacy.
This cartoon, entitled 'Royal Dipping', depicts the 'annual announcement' of the King's first bathe in Weymouth.
"Huzza and three cheers!"
Fanny Burney accompanied the royal party on their first visit to Weymouth in 1789 in her capacity as 'Keeper of the Queen's Robes'. She recorded the King's first dip in Weymouth Bay as follows,
'His majesty is in delightful health, and much improved spirits. All agree he never looked better. The loyalty of this place is excessive; they have dressed out every street with labels of 'God save the King'...[The sailors] never approach the house, nor see the King, or his shadow, without beginning to huzza , and going on to three cheers...Nor is this all. Think but of the surprise of His Majesty when, the first time of his bathing, he had no sooner popped his royal head under water than a band of music, concealed in a neighbouring machine, struck up 'God save great George our King'.
The original octagonal bathing machine used by the King on his first visit in 1789.
Further Information
What is believed to be the actual bathing machine used by the King in 1789 continued to be used by the public until 1916, when it was sold and converted into a summer house. It was presented to Weymouth Local History Museum in 1971. The original chassis is now exhibited at the Timewalk, Brewers Quay.
Weymouth Museum and the Timewalk are situated at Brewers Quay, Hope Square, on the other side of the Town Bridge. Telephone 01305 777622 or visit: www.brewers-quay.co.uk
Visit www.weymouth.gov.uk for more information on local history.
Grateful thanks to:
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