



Newsletter

August 1996

Issue 301

Oh we do like to be beneath Spaghetti Junction . . .

Never mind the deafening noise, permanent shade and choking fumes.

Britain's most bizarre beach could soon be opened under Spaghetti Junction, one of the busiest motorway intersections in Europe.

Developers plan to use cash from the European Union to create what they are insisting could be a site of 'blissful tranquillity'.

Visitors will need to use a little imagination, however.

Their 'sunlight' will come from towering metal pylons because the six-lane M6 blocks out almost every ray from the real one.

Giant speakers will blare out the sound of seagulls and crashing waves to mask the noise of the traffic above.

At least there will be genuine pebbles and gravel, sloping gently towards – a canal. The extraordinary project is the brainchild of British Waterways, responsible for the canals which, unknown to most motorists, have a junction of their own below the elevated roads.

The money will come from the EU's Regional Challenge Project, which had already agreed to hand over £2.8million for up to 30 British Waterways schemes.

The Birmingham Beach development was not, originally, one of them, but has since moved to the top of the list.

British Waterways, which wants to highlight the appeal of canal holidays, explained: 'We didn't have to specify exactly what we were going to use the cash for, and after we got it we had a change of ideas and thought this was an especially exciting and challenging development.'

The authority, which had been

intending to spruce up the canalside for years, has now set aside £100,000 of the Euro cash. It hopes the beach will be finished in time for next summer.

The spokesman added: 'It might sound a bit barmy, but with a little imagination and a lot of hard work we will be able to turn this grey monstrosity into a lovely area.'

'Our aim is to make it a place where people can relax and enjoy the water

EU CASH TO BUILD BIRMINGHAM'S FIRST BEACH

in pleasant surroundings. We want to attract tourists as well as locals.'

Labour-run Birmingham City Council, which is considering helping to fund the idea, is slightly less starry-eyed.

'It will be quite picturesque, but I don't think we can really expect people to give up a trip to Blackpool and have a day here instead,' said Jim Quinn of the environmental planning department.

£8½m spend on Midlands schemes

A scheme by BW and its partners to create a 'beach' under Birmingham's Spaghetti Junction hit the headlines earlier this month. It's just one of 30 improvement schemes totalling £8.5m about to start throughout the Midlands canal network as part of the Regional Challenge Programme.

Last summer a joint bid was submitted for £2.8m of European funding under the programme, based on our Renaissance strategy. The bid was successful and all the schemes will benefit. They range from new visitor moorings and towpath improvements to

Spaghetti Junction's under-belly is a favourite haunt of Birmingham's drug-users, thieves and tramps. Few others venture there after dark.

Apart from the motorways, there is the noise from two main railway lines to contend with.

Even Caroline Lush, the landscape architect commissioned to effect the transformation, was in apprehensive mood as the project was launched yesterday.

'It is the most difficult development I've ever worked on,' she said.

'The area is dark, dank and dusty. There is hardly any natural light and the noise is sometimes quite deafening.'

Miss Lush, who works for the Ground Work Foundation, an environmental charity, admitted: '£100,000 may not be enough, but we can try.'

'The lights and the speakers will help, but I can't see how we can ever improve the view to the extent where people will be able to keep their eyes open and think they are sitting in a holiday resort.'

Daily Mail 4/6/96

refurbishing historic structures.

The Programme manager Ailsa Raeburn said, 'The Regional Challenge initiative is aimed at improving the area's canals so that more local people and visitors use them.'

'The Spaghetti Junction scheme is a good example. At the moment the area under it is rather dark and depressing. Our scheme will landscape the area, including providing a 'beach' feature which won't be for sitting on! The scheme will also highlight the area's transport heritage.'

BW newways - June 1996

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY

Established 1967

The objectives of the Society are to foster interest in canals and inland waterways, to assist in their preservation, restoration and development, and to give practical help on waterway projects.

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Paul Herbert
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MEETINGS

1st Thursday each month at 7.45pm
St John's Ambulance Hall,
King's Park Road, Southampton

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

1st August 1996
Members' slides

5th September 1996
In Cressy's Wake by Tony Conder,
curator of the National Waterways
Museum, Gloucester Docks

3rd October 1996
The Cotswold Canals Trust
Bruce Hall, Chairman of the Trust

7th November 1996
Programme of Waterways Films,
Ordnance Survey Cine Club

5th December 1996
Annual Inter-Society Quiz and
American Supper

6th March 1997
Talk by Mrs Audrey Smith
IWA Chairman

3rd April 1997
BW Customer Relations
Jim Kelly

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A Lazy Summer

July's meeting served to emphasise how various people's ideas of a lazy summer differ; although entitled 'A Lazy Summer', Gill and Paul Herbert's slide show seemed to be anything but.

A three week round trip from Norton Junction, using the Grand Union Canal, Lower Stratford Canal, River Avon, River Severn, Gloucester & Sharpness, Worcester & Birmingham, Birmingham & Fazeley, Coventry and North Oxford Canals, in one of the hottest summers for many years must have been very hard work, but no doubt very enjoyable.

Luckily for members of the Society, Paul and Gill had time to record their journey quite comprehensively, and this was certainly the closest we had looked at the Southern Stratford and River Avon. There were also many interesting details about the route and several stories of happenings along the way.

This was a thoroughly enjoyable evening for the members present, even if they did feel a bit exhausted when they went home.

Canal Society Library

Our librarian, Sue Lewis, is waiting for your visit at any meeting to borrow any of the many interesting books on the waterways and related subjects. The use of the library has increased this year - see what others have found interesting.

Subscriptions

Now that the AGM is a thing of the past, it is time to remind members that subscriptions became due in June. Those of you who have yet to pay: Laura Sturrock will be pleased to see you at any meeting. Alternatively, you may send her a cheque payable to the Southampton Canal Society (her address is on the left). The cost is a miserly £5.50 for a single member or £8.00 for all the family. That can't be bad for 12 monthly meetings, the chance to meet a friendly crowd of fellow enthusiasts and a newsletter. (*I'm not so sure about the last - Ed*).

Aqueduct Wins Institution Award

Surrey County Council has been awarded the Institution of Civil Engineers award for the new aqueduct at Ash on the Basingstoke Canal.

The judges said they were impressed by the technical complexity of the design as well as the aesthetically pleasing appearance of the aqueduct. They added that the aqueduct 'was considered to be a scheme that advanced the cause of Civil Engineering and was truly worthy of such an award'.

The beauty of the aqueduct has been enhanced on the outside by being formed to resemble the hull of a boat; this effect was achieved by pouring concrete onto wooden boarding, which when removed left an impression in the concrete.

The aqueduct was designed by Surrey County Council's Engineering Consultancy Division, built by Alfred McAlpine Construction (who have been awarded a commendation for the construction of the aqueduct) and was funded by the Department of Transport. It took nine months to build. The structure has now been put forward for the national design award.

Basingstoke Canal News, Summer 1996

Many Happy Returns

The members of Southampton Canal Society congratulate Capt Norman Lucas on becoming 90 years old at the end of July. Norman has attended Society meetings almost from the start of the Society.

Canalside Water Fair

The Chichester Canal Society are holding their Fair with a best dressed boat and crew competition. It will be held on Sunday, 25 August 1996 at the Canal Basin, Chichester. A day out for all the family

New Society Members

The Society would like to welcome the following new members:

Chris & Lyn Beahan
Ken Earley
Alan Glass
Brian & Maureen Greenham
Robb Unsworth

IWA EXPRESSES ALARM AT BW FUNDING CRISIS

The Inland Waterways Association has expressed renewed concern at the mounting backlog of maintenance waiting to be tackled by British Waterways. Fears of serious accidents and waterway closures were heightened following the publication of British Waterways' Annual Report which states "the Board has now informed the Government that it considers the level of funding proposed for 1996/7 and beyond is insufficient and that consequently the safety and integrity of the waterway network will be put at risk". The IWA considers this to be one of the most alarming statements expressed in a British Waterways' document in recent years.

National Chairman, Audrey Smith, said "We have become increasingly worried that an ever tightening

squeeze on funding from the Treasury has left BW unable to fulfil its statutory obligations in terms of safety of waterway structures and maintenance of canals and river navigations. This Government policy of short term political expediency will leave future generations to bear the cost of major repairs which should be funded by proper maintenance regimes now. The Government must make more funds available to eliminate the backlog of repairs immediately. Anything less will hit tourism businesses hard as waterways close and famous landmarks are sealed off for safety reasons."

Mrs Smith added "In May this year, the IWA organised a flotilla of over 40 boats on the River Thames in central London to deliver a strongly worded message to Members of Parliament

at Westminster. British Waterways' report supports our every word. Quite simply, unless this Government is able to provide proper funding for essential maintenance of our historic network of inland waterways, we shall end up losing our national network and priceless heritage. For example the Anderton Boat Lift has been out of commission for so long that the structure requires almost virtual rebuilding, and millions of pounds have been lost to the local economy whilst this unique structure rots away. The present breach on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal is causing great financial hardship for many of the waterside businesses along its length and it would seem that unless urgent action is taken the Caledonian Canal will be closed within months."

IWA 24 July 1996

A Navigational Problem - Who is Bigger?

The following is an actual radio conversation released by the US Chief of Naval Operations, 10-10-95

Hail: Please divert your course 15 degrees to the North to avoid a collision.

Reply: Recommend you divert YOUR course 15 degrees to South to avoid a collision.

Hail: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Reply: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Hail: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER ENTERPRISE, WE ARE A LARGE WARSHIP OF THE US NAVY. DIVERT YOUR COURSE NOW!

Reply: This is a lighthouse... Your call.

Inland Waterways Protection Society Newsletter, June 1996.

Bugsworth Basin

Work carried out by the Inland Waterways Protection Society continues on this basin in "the wilds of Derbyshire." This small Society has been slowly working towards restoration of the former transshipment basins situated on the upper Peak Forest Canal. According to a recent newsletter, work is in hand to overcome the problems with leakage near the entrance which have beset the scheme for a number of years. A new water supply now means the basins are now filled with water. The site is well worth a visit the next time you are in the area.

SOUTHAMPTON CANAL SOCIETY SALES STAND

| | | | |
|--|-------|--|---------------|
| Enamel Society Members Badges | 75p | Notelets, with line drawings (by Brian Evans) of canal and Romsey scenes | £1.00 |
| Embossed Ball Point Pens | 50p | Screen Printed Tee Shirts | £6.50 |
| GEOprojects Maps | | with Society logo across chest | |
| Basingstoke Canal | £3.00 | in Navy Blue - medium, large & extra large | |
| Oxford Canal | £3.75 | in Red - medium | |
| Kennet & Avon Canal | £3.75 | Embroidered Sweat Shirts | £15.00 |
| Grand Union Canal (each) | £3.75 | with Society logo on breast | |
| Map 1 Birmingham - Fenny Stratford | | in Navy Blue - large | |
| Map 2 Braunston - Kings Langley | | in Royal Blue - medium and large | |
| Map 3 Fenny Stratford - Thames | | Cotton Shopper Bags | £2.25 |
| Map 4 Leicester Line - Soar - Erewash | | with screen-printed Society logo each side | |
| The Thames Map | £3.75 | Colourful Tea Towels | £2.50 |
| London - City and Docklands Atlas | £3.75 | Decorated Mugs | £2.25 |
| The Broads | £3.75 | Decorated Trays (two sizes) | £1.00 & £2.95 |
| Birmingham Canal Navigations | £3.75 | | |
| Waterway Jigsaws (192 pieces 10" x 13 ³ / ₄ ") | £3.50 | | |