

Barometer

Good week for Country-cottage buyers

Falling house prices mean locals are at last starting to be able to afford cottages in beauty spots, according to coastal estate agents

British holidays

More than half of holiday-makers are staying within home shores this summer, according to Laterooms.com. It's a good thing, as 61% of children have never been to Scotland, says a Travelodge survey

Martians

Nasa scientists are excited by evidence of water—or, at least, ice—on Mars,

following a spacecraft probe

Bad week for Booze hamlet

The Royal Mail has stopped all postal deliveries to the Yorkshire village because health-and-safety officials say the road to it is too steep for staff to climb

Train times

One in 10 trains runs late, and Great Western is the worst offender with one-fifth behind schedule, says the Office of Rail Regulation

The Mary Rose

A new theory suggests the 16th-century ship sank because the Spanish crew did not understand Admiral George Carew's order to close the gun ports

Soane 'time capsule' gets £6m revamp

AMBITIOUS plans have been announced for a £6.2 million expansion of one of London's favourite curiosities, Sir John Soane's Museum, in time for its 200th anniversary in 2012. So far, £2 million has been raised towards the 'Opening up the Soane Project'. Tim Knox, museum director, says of the appeal: 'It's a gauntlet—a challenge—thrown at the feet of everyone who loves Soane's strange and idiosyncratic creation and wants it to survive.'

Soane insisted on his death in 1812 that the three Georgian town houses at 12–14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2, which he transformed into his home, studio and museum, were opened free to the public. The museum attracts 93,000 visitors a year (www.soane.org). But the sheer volume of people is threatening its future. Soane brilliantly manipulated space, colour and light to create a series of evocative interiors, including a basement crypt and catacombs, a sarcophagus



Tim Knox and Dan Cruickshank at the launch. (Below) Design for a corridor by Sir John Soane

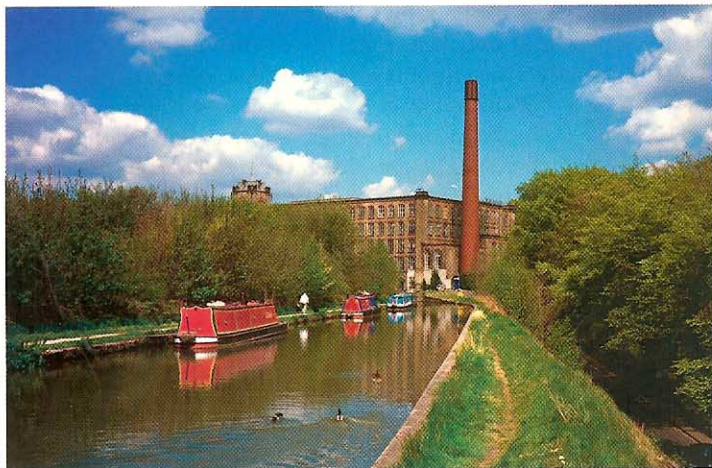
and Monk's Yard, and elegant Georgian rooms. Mr Knox says: 'It's in exactly the state Sir John left it. It's the supreme example of a historic house and an extraordinary time capsule.'

The key aims are to improve visitor access and facilities. Several lost elements of Soane's original arrangements will be reinstated, including the re-creation from contemporary watercolours of his private apartments and model room. These will be a setting for hundreds of artefacts not currently displayed. Other features, such as the Tivoli Recess (presently a lavatory) will be reinstated, and No 14 will house staff offices and educational and research spaces.



Canals busier than in Industrial Revolution

THE number of boats on Britain's canals is greater now than it was at their heyday during the Industrial Revolution, according to British Waterways' annual report. Unable to compete with rail and road haulage, they suffered decades of neglect, but 60 years after they were brought into public ownership, Britain's 2,200-miles of canals, rivers, docks and reservoirs are seeing another boom, driven by leisure, plus a £60-million restoration programme. Boat numbers have risen to 31,000, with 11 million people visiting the waterways for boating, angling, cycling, walking, visiting pubs or simply feeding ducks. Robin Evans, British Waterways' chief executive, says: 'The waterways are being enjoyed in ways that few people could have imagined when they were built 250 years ago. It is the adaptability of the network that holds the key to the future.'



Canals, such as the Macclesfield in Cheshire, are ever more popular

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