

## A few titivating facts and fancies

### *Did you know ...?*

Yes it's true, the BCN does have more miles of canal than Venice. The Italian city can boast less than 30 miles whilst Brum has over 35. If you include the adjoining Black Country as well – which is all part of the BCN – then, including the derelict bits, our area has *more than 5 times* the amount of canals than does our Venetian counterpart.

The red doors in bridges were to allow authorized users such as firemen to abstract water easily from the canal below.

The name Gas Street comes from the building of a retort here to extract gas from coke. John Gostling set up the business and called it the Birmingham Light Company. The city was an early – but not the first – user of gas for street illumination. Gas lighting continued until as recently as 1975.

All permanently inhabited buildings on the BCN were numbered.

Many of the bridges around Birmingham and beyond were made at the Horseley Iron Works of Tipton. The proprietor was Aaron Manby. A narrowboat named after him is currently being used by the Ikon Galley in Oozells Street for promotional and artistic purposes and is based in Birmingham, although the boat has since been renamed.

The origins of the name Oozells are vague and there are several possibilities, one of which may refer to the *oozells*, or high houses, built on a sandstone ridge in on Broad Street. The *lozells* were low houses.

Bill Clinton and Tony Blair met in the canalside Malt House pub during the G8 conference of 1998 whilst their wives lunched in a Broad Street restaurant that was formerly a bank.

The former Rum Runner pub, now Regency Wharf, was the base for glam-group Duran Duran in their early years.

Carriage manufacturers Mulliner, latterly associated with building motor car bodies for the likes of Rolls Royce, had a base in Broad Street not far from the canal.

Cadbury's made their chocolate in a city center factory but moved to Bridge Street in 1847 to take advantage of the canal and its transport facilities.

David Suchet, Timothy West & Prunella Scales, Timothy Spall and John Sergeant are just a few of the media personalities who are boaters and who have passed through the canals of Birmingham.