Back to Synopsis

'London Bridge' at Havasu, Arizona Title 215

On my way to Houston, before the Apollo 14 launch, I reported on one most unusual event. An American millionaire, Robert P. McCulloch, on a visit to London, decided that a London Bridge would be an ideal attraction for his new town, Lake Havasu City, in Arizona. He liked the grandiose Tower Bridge with its two sections of the road, the bascules, which can be raised to let steamers pass below. He was convinced it was the 'London Bridge', bought it for £1 million to be re-erected at Havasu—at least so I was informed when I went to Arizona. What he had bought from the City of London, was however the old 'London Bridge', a multiple-arch bridge composed of large Cornish granite blocks.

I saw it nearly completely rebuilt, stone by stone, in Arizona, the blocks having been shipped from London's Surrey Docks to Long Beach Harbour in California and from there trucked 550 km over the desert. The granite was still black and covered with soot, accumulated since 1845 when John Rennie (1761-1821), one of England's great engineers, had built it. The desert Sun of Arizona will soon bleach it and the desert sand storms will give it a gentle sand-blasting, so that in a decade or so, it will again stand in its original pristine condition, to last for several more centuries, I wrote.

The Colorado River, instead of the Thames, will flow below the bridge, once it has been completely erected. It was considered cheaper and easier to rebuild it on dry foundations and divert the river, than using the alternative of sinking foundations into the flowing Colorado. When I saw it, it was still standing on dry desert sand as the picture showed which was published with my story in the *Daily Telegraph.* In Fleet Street, my report was thought to be a good 'local story'.

From Arizona I drove on in my hired Hertz car to two great research laboratories of NASA, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, JPL, in Pasadena, California, near Los Angeles and the AMES Laboratory near San Francisco. At JPL I saw the painstakingly detailed computer design of the spacecraft for unmanned exploration of the solar system, all of them individually constructed and engineered by hand at JPL.

They had started with *Ranger* and *Surveyor* for the Moon and followed with various *Mariner* spacecraft for the exploration of Mars. Future *Viking* spacecraft to look for life on Mars, due to be launched in 1973, were still in the early stages of conception.They were planned to eject a *Lander* from Mars-orbit, which would move over the Mars surface and with its long scoop collect samples of soil. These were to be analysed on the spot in the *Lander* for photosynthesis and bacterial growth, before similar Russian experiments could be carried out. But the results were negative.

See also watercolour Title 165, inside Front Cover

Back to Synopsis

To.. Science in USA and Flood Danger in Europe - Britain's Decimal Currency. Title 216