

# waterway recovery group

NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING BODY  
FOR VOLUNTARY LABOUR ON THE  
INLAND WATERWAYS OF BRITAIN

date 18TH FEBRUARY 1993

## LONDON WRG NEWS      Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the London Waterway Recovery Group will be held at 19:30 on Wednesday March 10th in the upstairs room at the Rugby public house, Rugby Street, London WC1.

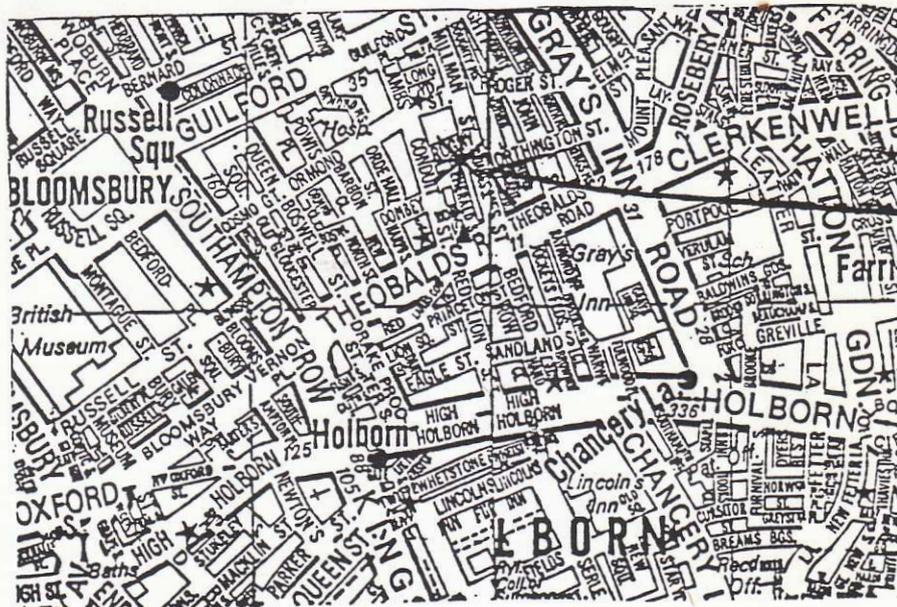
We will discuss any relevant subject that anyone who attends wishes to raise, such as:

- Where will we be holding working parties over the next year?
- Who will be organising them?
- Do we go digging too often, or not often enough?
- Are we happy with our commitment to the Dig Deep initiative?      FUND RAISING.
- Should we try to recruit more members, and if so, how?
- What work should we be undertaking and can we learn new skills?
- ✓ What equipment do we need?
- ✓ How do we pay for it?
- Should we be taking part in rallies and other events?
- What social activities should we organise?

Please turn up and give your views on these and any other subjects.

The nearest Underground stations to the Rugby are Chancery Lane, Russell Square & St. Paul's. (see map below)

Sandwiches will be provided.



HERE!

Breaking new ground on the **BASINGSTOKE 3-4/10/92**

Someone in WRG recently organised an "Ego-free Dig". Thanks to Tim's driving we came close to having an "Egg-free dig" recently. We have come close on numerous occasions to having a Volunteer-free dig. I have even heard a rumour about a Tuna-free dig somewhere. But has anyone ever held an Organiser-free dig before?

Well, Allan, who was originally going to organise this weekend couldn't because he was working away, and somehow no-one quite got around to volunteering to take over, but somehow a number of volunteers still managed to arrive outside Casey Jones at 7.30 on Friday night (force of habit maybe), the van duly turned up late and we got to the Standard of England in Ash before closing time.

Local work party organiser Pete Redway had a rather different job for us this time, removing a fence that had been illegally erected next to the towpath near the top of Deepcut locks by a someone who thought they owned the land. First our new brush-cutter was used to remove weeds growing in front of the fence (it also goes through wire-netting quite well, but it isn't so keen on concrete fenceposts.) Next Lesley & Sue kept the spirit of Greenham Common alive by their efforts with the wirecutters. Then the wire-netting was rolled up, along with large amounts of vegetation that was growing through it, and on one occasion a wasps nest was almost rolled up in it. Finally the fenceposts were dug out and the holes filled in using a Kubota excavator. By the end of the weekend Marcia, Martin & Ron were all trained Kubota drivers and were hauling out posts with ease and hardly breaking any.

On Saturday night Ron cooked an impressive amount of cottage pie (I think he must have used a whole cottage). On Sunday night he took the leftovers home for the dog, thus giving us an opportunity to dust down and re-use some very old jokes ("I say, Ron, this cottage pie isn't fit for a dog!" "I'm sorry, Tim, I'll bring you some that is.")

## The Patience of a Saint      **WILTS & BERKS 3-4/10/92**

Kevin Saint's First attempt at organising a dig got off to an unpromising start as one after another of our regular diggers cried off with various excuses.. Just as he was getting to the end of his tether and the membership list, one or two of our experienced navvies weren't quite quick enough at thinking up alternative plans for the weekend, so a select group assembled at Casey Jones for a weekend on the Wilts & Berks Canal.

Our opinion of our organiser improved significantly with our arrival at Wootton Bassett well before closing time. The local canal society chap who was also a scout leader arrived in the pub and sold us all woggles (Why? It was National Woggle Day. Ask a silly question....) Kevin's organisational skills impressed us even more when we realised that he had arranged to meet in a pub that didn't appear to have heard of Closing Time.

Kevin could have organised some better weather the following day as arrived on site a mile East of Wootton, where about 400 yards of the canal had been dredged mechanically. Our job was to cut a trench through a dam across one end of the dredged section, insert a pipe and valve in this trench and fill in the trench, then waterproof the dam with plastic sheeting, so that this length can be re-watered and de-watered as required.

Meanwhile our skilled bricklayers were at work repairing the abutments of an old accommodation bridge over the canal. They showed how technically skilled they were by using a spirit level to ensure that the bricks were level. Sure enough, the bricks they laid were perfectly level. In fact, they were the only level bricks on the whole bridge.

Most of Sunday was spent struggling in vain (and in rain) to remove an enormous tree stump from the bed of the canal. We counted the rings and calculated that the tree must have been there since before the canal was built. It will probably still be there when the canal re-opens. Unlike most of us.

## **DIGGING DEEP...**

Dig Deep, as you probably know, is the joint initiative by London WRG, Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group (KESCRG) and the Newbury Working Party Group (NWPG), which commits us to completing certain projects, initially on the Wey & Arun, Thames & Severn & Neath Canals, with the aim of getting us doing more interesting and skilful work on canal structures and less of the scrub-bashing that has predominated recently.

The dig deep initiative was launched at the Big-ish Dig on the Wey & Arun Canal on 26-27 September 1992 when some 200-plus navvies cleared scrub from a mile or so of canal bed near Lee Farm Lock, near the Southern end of the canal. This dig also featured the unveiling of the London WRG Brush-Cutter, which those who have stayed awake in our recent AGMs will remember that we decided to buy in 1990, then again in 1991, then again in 1992. Well we've got it now, so we'll have to talk about something else at the 1993 AGM. Those people who were not privileged enough to operate this machine were (once they had signed in triplicate) provided with saws, slashers and some ingenious long wooden poles with saw blades on the ends which allow short people to cut off high branches. And woe betide anyone who failed to return the exact same long-handled saw that they had booked out. Beats me why they're so worried, as judging by the number engraved on the handle they've got at least 789 of the things. Mind you, someone who tried to return a saw that they hadn't taken out got in worse trouble.

### **...on the WEY & ARUN CANAL 14-15/11/92**

London WRG's first Dig Deep date when - surprise surprise - we spent all Saturday scrub-bashing. Saturday night was enlivened by the pub pianist at the Foresters, who, despite all the odds, did somehow manage to hit the right note occasionally. The evening was brought to a climax by London WRG's rendering (or should it be rending) of Jerusalem. Fortunately the Foresters always closes on time.

On Sunday some of us carried on scrub-bashing, encouraged by the discovery of a new technique for getting bonfires going (called keeping Tim away from them) while our trained brickies actually did do some work on part of the Dig Deep project - rebuilding the sides of Lee Farm Lock, which is now almost complete. Anyway virtually all the scrub has been removed from the canal bed for over a mile north from the lock, so they'll have to find us something different to do when we return in July. And no Wey & Arun dig would be complete without a lengthy stint of brick-cleaning, on this occasion by Lesley & Sue. Beats me why they have to buy dirty bricks in the first place.

### **...and on the THAMES & SEVERN CANAL 16-17/01/93**

Our first dig of 1993 and our first on a new site, Boxwell Spring lock on the Thames & Severn Canal, near Cirencester. Saturday was spent building a dam across the head of the lock chamber so that it can be drained, while a man with a digger removed most of the towpath-side lock wall down to water level ready for rebuilding. We also cleared roots and rubble from the weir that forms the top of the bywash, and succeeded in persuading Darryl to crawl down the bywash culvert to see what he could see. What he could see was, rather unexpectedly, a pair of eyes looking straight at him. Without pausing to find out what the eyes belonged to, he reversed out of the culvert at lightning

speed and had to be sedated with Wadworths 6X while we speculated on what he had seen. Suggestions ranged from a large rat to Tim Lewis, the organiser, who might have crawled in at the other end of the culvert. (What do you mean. there's not much difference?)

We drove back to the hall, stopping to drop off some of the tools in a shed owned by a friendly chap who is in the process of restoring the old water-mill that he is living in. He's nearly finished it, but he doesn't know what shape to make the water-wheel and he can't find any plans. We thought of suggesting that if he was going to re-invent the wheel, he might consider making it circular. A fruitless (and beerless) search for a pub that opened early was followed by lashings of spaghetti bolognese followed by apple crumble. New recruit Alison made an early bid for the Most Promising New Recruit award for 1993 when she offered to bring some of her home-made wine to have with the meal on the next dig.

Sunday was spent doing the inevitable stint of scrub-bashing, while trying hard to persuade Darryl that he really did want to become Dig Deep co-ordinator for the Thames & Severn project (He must have thought we had it in, for him that weekend)

### Organised chaos on the **BASINGSTOKE 6-7/2/93**

A dig that will surely put its organiser in the running for the Organiser of the Year award for 1993 started badly when the van was over an hour late because the driver had left his bed at home and had to go back for it and then got lost on the way to Waterloo. But worse was to come. Two people failed to turn up, which meant that we had about 30% more food than we needed.

Things seemed to be improving as the 3 people in the van arrived reasonably early at the Standard of England, where they met the local organiser Pete Redway and Alison, the fourth member of the party, arrived.

Saturday was spent scrub-bashing on the non-towpath side of the canal near the Brickworks Arm at Up Nately and installing scaffolding under a bridge so that the towpath can be temporarily widened over the canal to allow dumpers to be driven through the bridge. It would have been easier if someone had had a spanner that fitted the bolts on the scaffolding. The remaining 3 members of the party arrived, although 2 of them announced that they would only be staying till Saturday night, which pushed the food surplus up to around 50%. Then Allan spotted an enormous hole in one of the back tyres of the van. Then we couldn't find a jack or a spanner to fit the wheel-nuts. Eventually Pete reappeared and lent us a jack and a spanner and we changed the wheel and returned to the accommodation, where we found that the room we were sleeping in was to be used for a table-tennis match. When we had moved our stuff to the other room and were just about to start cooking the meal, some chaps appeared in the kitchen and announced that they were about to start setting up a bar. Some of our less charitable readers might at this point suggest that London WRG would welcome this with open arms. Well, I'm sorry to disappoint you, we really did want to cook our meal first. (And anyway they were charging for drinks.) So Mrs Thornton was summoned to sort out the argument and duly sent the bar staff on their way.

A fine meal was eventually produced, probably the only real success of the weekend, accompanied by Alison's home-made wine and featuring Martin's first ever attempt at treacle tart, then we repaired to the Standard. More scrub-bashing followed on Sunday, plus a little bit of an argument with a local resident who, for some reason, couldn't see that hacking down and burning all the vegetation in site really was environmentally friendly and a major contribution to conservation work.

## London WRG Festival of Garlic and **XMAS PARTY** 16/12/92

As usual this was very well attended, considerably more so than any of our digs in living memory. As a bit of a change this year we didn't use a pub, we held our party at the London Canal Museum and organised our own food and drink. Unfortunately, we rather over-organised it and ended up with rather more food than we had any chance of getting through. The standard of food was impressive, as were the quantities of garlic used in some of the dishes and Bob Keaveney won the catering award for his garlic bread, which should ensure that, whatever problems the London Canal Museum may face in the difficult times ahead, infestation by vampires will not be one of them. Bob also won the Organiser award for the second year running as he still hasn't managed to organise the booze-up in a brewery that he promised to organise in 1991.

The event made a profit of about £60 for London WRG funds, in addition to making a donation to the museum for lending us their room. The surplus drink (gasp!) has been stashed away for next year's raffle prizes and the surplus food that wasn't eaten by Winnie the next day went into the London WRG News editor's freezer. Most of it came out a week later and was taken to another party, at the end of which there was, strangely, even more food left over, so this was taken back to the freezer. At this rate by next December there will probably be so much stuff in the freezer that we won't need to make any ourselves.

Our next working party is on the Chelmer and Blackwater Navigation, helping Chelmsford IWA restore the basin and lock at the top end of the navigation in Chelmsford.

On 20-21 March and 16-17 April we will be "digging deep" on the Thames and Severn Canal.

On 8-9 May we may be working on the Wilts & Berks, but this, and most of the remaining dates, will be decided at the AGM.

29th-31st May, the late Spring Bank Holiday weekend is our annual 3-day long-distance dig, which this year is on the third Dig Deep project, on the Neath Canal in South Wales.

I have also received the following details from Marion Waters on some work taking place on the Bow Back Rivers in East London organised by Newham Council:

#### Waste Watch Week

Thurs 18 March - Thurs 25 March

Debris removal from rivers and towpaths.

#### National Spring Clean Up Week

Friday 16 April - Sun 25 April

Painting at City Mill and Carpenters Locks, installing railings and towpath clearance

#### BT Environment Week

Sat 22 May - Monday 31 May

Debris removal from rivers and towpaths.

There is also the IWA's National Canal Cleanup Weekend on 27-28 March, when IWA branches all over the country work on their local canals.

Come along to the AGM for more details of London WRG's involvement in these activities.

**Working Parties:** Friday night start; meet outside Casey Jones at Waterloo station; normally at 19:00 but may be 30 minutes earlier or later depending on distance. Contact organiser of dig or overall co-ordinator Tim Lewis for details.

27-28/02/93 Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation organiser Tim Lewis  
 20-21/03/93 Thames & Severn Canal - *heslie.*  
 17-18/04/93 Thames & Severn Canal  
 08-09/05/93 To be arranged *T+S.*  
 29-31/05/93 Neath Canal  
 19-20/06/93 To be arranged *— Chesterfield.*  
 10-11/07/93 Wey & Arun Canal

You will notice that only the first working party currently has an organiser. This does not represent a decision by London WRG to dispense with organisers. (although judging by recent events on the Basingstoke Canal that might not be a bad idea) It is because the organisers for these digs will be decided at the AGM. So come along if you don't want to get volunteered for all of them in your absence.

**Social Gatherings:** Wednesday Night, 10 days before each dig i.e. 7/4/93, 28/1/92 etc. at the Founders Arms, Bankside, London SE1 (on the South bank, 100 yards East of Blackfriars bridge.) about 19:30 till 23:00. Note that 10/03/92 is not a social; it is our AGM.

**Other Events:** further details from Tim Lewis, Martin Ludgate or Lesley McFadyen.

10/03/93 AGM at the Rugby, Rugby St., London WC1.  
 1-3/05/93 IWA Canalway Cavalcade rally at Little Venice.

#### Who to contact:

Tim Lewis, 5, Herongate Road, Wanstead, London E12.	Overall London WRG Co-ordinator  Phone 081-530 7926
Martin Ludgate, 35, Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB	London WRG News  Phone 081-693 3266
Lesley McFadyen, 35, Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB	Membership list  Phone 081-693 3266 (eves) 071-405 8400 x402 (days)

**Finally,** Apologies for the non-appearance of the flashy computer graphics promised last time. All I've found so far that might be any use is a large drawing of a bulb of garlic. And when I try to type my surname it objects and gives me four options: "Luddite", which is someone who smashes up machinery, "Ullage", which means "wasted beer", "loquat", which is some kind of Japanese rose-tree and finally "Loudest". Is it trying to tell me something?

- C 31-1 J. Aug. H+G or Chichester
- 11-12 Sept W+A
- AGM 2-3 Oct I+S or Big Dig where?
- 23-24 " I+S
- 13-14 Nov. W+B
- 4 - 5 Dec BASINGSTOKE?
- 22-23 Jan. T+S
- 12-13 Feb W+B
- 5-6 Mar W+A
- 26-22 March T+S
- 16-17 April ~~W+A~~ Hatherington.
- 7-8 May W+A
- 28-29-30 May N+T

LONDON WRG NEWS

Working Party

Waterloo station

Contact organiser of Big Dig

Laws for details

27-28/03/93 Chris

20-21/03/93 Thomas

17-18/03/93 Thomas & Severn Canal

08-09/93 To be arranged

25-31/03/93 North Canal

16-20/03/93 To be arranged

10-14/03/93 Way & Ann

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100/93 AGM the Rugby

1-3/03/93 IWA Canisway Cav

Who to contact:

Tim Lewis

5, Herons Road

Wansley

London E12

Phone 081-520 7326

London WRG News

Martin Lucgate

35 Silvester Road

London SE22 9PB

Phone 081-685 3286

Lesley McFadyen

53, Silvester Road

London SE22 9PB

Phone 081-685 3286 (eves) 071-405 2400 (days)

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