

## **From The Editor**

The main thing that has happened since I last put fingers to keyboard for this illustrious journal is the London WRG AGM, a lower turnout than in previous years meant that no one escaped without being volunteered for something. The main decisions made at the AGM were as usual were did we want to run digs this year, the usual sites came out on the list and the complete calendar can be found on page 11 as usual. On a different note, recruitment was discussed and it was decided to have a stall of some kind at cavalcade to try and pull in some new volunteers. Also discussed was the design for the new T-shirt, which is well in hand and the conversion of the back row of sets in LRY to temporary tool storage during the non-camp season.

As can be seen from the dates list London WRG has got a busy social schedule over the next few months with the regular summer barbecue, a social at the Great British Beer Festival and a visit to Legoland Windsor, more details on all of these events can be found on page 7.

On a completely different note, does anyone know why it always rains/snows when London WRG have a dig in Lichfield? Or do we just have a new rain god among our members?

As ever, any articles/information/gossip for the next issue of London WRG news would be gratefully received, the next issue should be due out around the end of June.

**Ed Walker**

### **Canalway Cavalcade, 1-3/5/99**

As usual London WRG are out to win the decorated boat trophy again and to help with this we are having an extra social on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April at the Doggetts to decide on what we should do. The theme this year is "Our waterway heritage" and any ideas on what we should do would be welcome. We are also possibly running the canal tombola game again (this may be in conjunction with the recruitment stand)

For those of you with more time on your hands KESCRG are on the lookout for people to help run site services over the weekend of the festival itself, contact Ken Parish on 01622 850378 if your interested.

### **He's Back!**

Yes, the wanderer returns, Matt Taylor has moved back down South (again!), cunningly timed so that he missed the AGM and got out of organising a dig this year.

### **London WRG Car Stickers..**

..have all sold out, but we still have a few normal and hard hat stickers remaining but they are selling fast!

Now available on the London WRG web page:

*[www.danevans.demon.co.uk/lwrg](http://www.danevans.demon.co.uk/lwrg)*

London WRG News to download,  
**in full colour!!**

## Hereford & Gloucester Canal, 13-14 February 1999

Speculation was rife all weekend – what was the National Star Centre? This sign was spotted as we hurtled through the country lanes of Gloucestershire on our way to Dymock. Was it a FAME school, a study centre for astrology or astronomy, or a place where all the lost Red Star parcels are sent? Our mission for the weekend, if we chose to accept it, was to find out what this mystery place was.

We spent a chilly Friday night in Dymock village hall before venturing out on Saturday morning to the dig site, which is an old hospital where a canal basin is being constructed. The plan is to demolish the hospital, construct the basin and an interpreter centre/tea shop and build houses on the rest of the site. The London WRGies task was to clear an old barn on the edge of the site that was full of old hospital equipment, and then to start taking apart the barn piece by piece, for reconstruction as the interpreter centre on the other side of the site. We set to work on this veritable treasure trove of equipment, emerging from the barn with wheelchairs that wouldn't look out of place on the Antiques Roadshow, a budgie cage, upright chairs, and a gaggle of zimmer frames. At London WRG we pride ourselves on our youthful members, so we practised amidst the mud with the zimmer frames ready for being London Oldies instead of WRGies. We began to remove the slate tiles for reuse, and Martin Ludgate remarked that we could look forward to a 'night on the tiles'. I guess somebody had to say it.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on the site operations were not going quite so smoothly. On arrival we had marvelled

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at the amount of heavy plant the local canal society were using, including excavators, diggers and dumpers, not to mention the fact they had a plant manager, a deputy plant manager, and a deputy's deputy. But this marvel turned to sympathy (or was that hilarity) when, by end of play Saturday, three excavators and one dumper were broken down. We kept well out of it in our little corner of the site, quietly dismantling our barn, and then snuck off back to Dymock in case we became embroiled in excavator maintenance for beginners.

Back at the hall, out of a couple of carrier bags of groceries, Martin Ludgate produced a feast of chicken in an interesting sauce with veg and rice, and a homemade jam tart and custard.

We dragged our weary bones to the Beauchamp Arms (conveniently situated just in front of Dymock village hall!) in the throbbing metropolis that is Saturday night in Dymock, and joined the handful of locals who looked like they hadn't moved from their seats since the previous evening. This pub hit the national headlines recently. The locals, led by the church council, had clubbed together and bought the pub to stop it closing and had installed a landlord to run it. Then a couple of months down the line the council decided they were going to put the landlord's rent up, which he objected to and barred all members of the council from the pub. I think the current situation is 'stalemate', but he did welcome the extra business that we brought.

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We mulled over our day's work, and mused whether the heavy plant would be working by daylight. Suddenly the pub door burst open, and the week-long campers had arrived from their accommodation, ready for some ale following their three-hour long safety talk (two hours of it being how to use the toaster) at their accommodation in nearby Newent. The landlord's eyes lit up, and he merrily served the extra 25 or so customers. We bid them farewell at closing time, and at the prospect of another chilly night in the village hall, a contribution of £1 from Lesley McFadyen to put into the heater ensured a cosier sleep was enjoyed by all.

The following day we continued dismantling the roof and walls of the barn, leaving just an empty shell of what once part of a watermill on the site. We left the week-long campers to continue our work, heading out of Gloucestershire to join the Sunday night queue back to London. However, not before we all witnessed the sad parting of Martin and Lesley, who were to spend two days apart as Martin was staying on at the camp. All together now, ahhhhhh!

And what of the National Star Centre? Oh yes, we did eventually discover late on Sunday what its function was from local Adrian Fry who had joined us on the dig. He revealed it's where they teach disabled people to drive. Hmmmmm, we rather preferred our own imaginative uses for it, but at least our Mission was accomplished!

**Paula Kiernan**

### **London WRG go to the pictures or the Lichfield Canal joint dig with KESCRG, 6-7<sup>th</sup> March 1999.**

This promised to be an excellent dig with plenty of varied jobs on three sites for the large number of volunteers (20+) who turned up at the Hammerwych village hall on Friday night. After a few pints at the nearest pub to the accommodation we retired for the night.

Saturday started early with tea delivered to beds by Brian Amos and after the usual excellent breakfast we went off to site. The main jobs for the weekend were to be piling and backfilling the existing piling at the Darnford site and continuing the brick work at Tamworth road lock. On reaching site and warming up all the necessary plant the snow really started to set in and it was decided that it would be too dangerous to continue work. Total work carried out on site that day: moving 30 piles 50m down the canal. The opinion of the people on the Tamworth road site being much the same we left site completely at about 11.30am.

As there was a jumble sale in the accommodation that afternoon a number of people went off in the van to go canal spotting, but ten of us decided that it was too cold for that and went to the cinema.

The choice of films turned out to be "The Thin Red Line" or "Jack Frost", seven of us went to see the former which turned out to be a very gory but true to life portrayal of the horrors of war, but with no discernable plot. "Jack Frost" was a film aimed more at children where a boy's father dies in a road accident and is resurrected as a snowman.

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After a good dinner we adjourned to another pub, thanks to Matt for chauffeuring us around in the van, and sampled a few more pints. The next day came round way to quickly and it was decided that despite a cold wind and continuous rain we really had to do some work so on the Darnford site 25 piles were put in, about 10m of piling were backfilled and on the Tamworth road site brick work was patched up and various other tasks were done. At about 3pm we all decided simultaneously that we had had enough and we returned to the hall to clean up and go home.

All in all it was a good dig, any chance of having some sun next time we go up to Lichfield?

**Ed Walker**



What are Adrian and Marcus up to? Answers on the back of a beer mat please (preferably with a beer on top of it). (Ed Walker, BCN Cleanup)

### **BCN Cleanup, 20-21<sup>st</sup> March 1999**

The London WRG van contingent had a most unusual start to this dig. They missed 'last orders' in Pelsall! It wasn't all Martin's fault for being late at Waterloo. The main fly in the ointment was the cooker from Slough. Somehow Martin had been prevailed upon to collect this large beast which was lurking in its own trailer on a front drive in Slough. A major delay and much ingenuity went into the problem of how to attach the trailer to the van and the van's number plate to the trailer. String, penknives and a torch effected the union and we set off, the cooker letting us know noisily when it was turning right or left. It was soon noticed that the cooker was keen to see the sights and was turning within the trailer. Another stop, this time at a garage to buy tow rope to lash the monster down and we were off again. However a large cooker in tow did slow the trip enough for your concerned editor (or Ed) to ring to check on our whereabouts. It cheered us slightly to learn, on our arrival that the local hostelry was nothing to write home about and take-outs seemed to be the order of the day.

The following dry day saw a mixed crowd with many familiar faces working along the canal, starting at a blocked bridge hole at Goscote. The fishing tackle consisted of grappling hooks, kebs and rubber gloves, provided by BW. They also ran the variety of floats to collect the catch. Local boat-owners kindly provided tea and coffee and lunch was to be found

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in a local community centre. The canal was, I think, in a coal area - anyway the water and mud were black, and if you dug deep, stinking. The richest pickings were around the bridge holes (surprise, surprise!), anything on wheels being the local recycling favourite, especially bikes of all sizes, pushchairs and car and lorry tyres. However the local dumpers weren't narrow-minded and also threw in kitchen sinks (complete with draining boards), furniture of all sorts, road-signs and boards and even a full-sized china loo.

After a day of mud, wet and chill, a small band reconnoitred a couple of local pubs and agreed with the advance Friday party.

That evening a van load of explorers, stoically driven by Tim, went up the road to Pelsall Junction, just too far to walk, to sample the delights of that canalside pub 'The Royal Oak'. Surprisingly, one of the delights was a karaoke, and even more surprisingly, as the drink went down, different members of the group were up to do their party pieces. This culminated in a lively rendition of 'American Pie' by our one and only MARTIN LUDGATE with RHYS JONES. The DJ, with no persuasion kept the duo at the mike, and to be joined by Dan for a spirited version of 'Vindaloo' to be followed by 'Welly Tubbies' including Allan Scott as Tinky Winky, Dipsy as Dan, La-la (Rhys) and Po (Martin). Another first! The final number was most of the crowd giving it their all as Spice girls knowing what they really really wanted. We got back on high to find everyone

had already gone to bed! Another surprise!

Work continued on Sunday despite heads, but enthusiasm seemed to wane, dampened as it was by rain and hail. The Junction at Birchills was reached and various members of London WRG decided that 'George Stephenson' called more loudly than the cold and rain, and some poor fishing as the surrounding area improved

The journey home by van was, of course via Slough and the cooker only misbehaved towards the end when following motorists indicated something was amiss. The cooker had flung itself off its stand and was at a crazy tilt in the trailer. It was carefully pulled the remaining short distance back to its driveway, remounted its stand and a lighter vanload eventually got back home.

A weekend of surprises - and thanks to Martin for all the driving - but then no-one else had a trailer certificate - but would anyone else risk getting trained now they know the potential hazards?

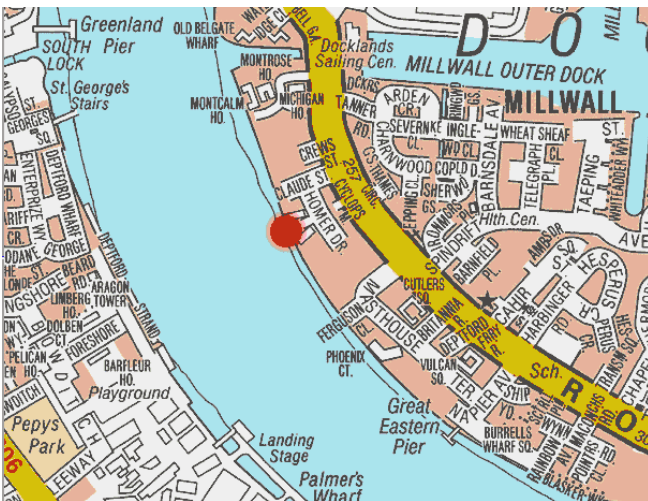
**Aileen Butler**

## Summer Barbecue

This years London WRG barbecue will be held at lunchtime on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> July at Dave Charlton's flat on the Isle of Dogs. This is usually an extremely fun event (as long as the weather is good!) and the view of the Thames from Dave's veranda is meant to be superb. Further details will be given in the next issue but I am sure that volunteers to help with cooking will be greatly appreciated. To assist with finding Dave's flat a map is attached below (the "spot" marks the spot) and his address is:

5 Poseidon Court,  
Homer Drive,  
Isle of Dogs,  
London.  
E14 3UG.

The nearest station is Mudchute on the Docklands Light Railway



## Great British Beer Festival

It was decided at the London WRG AGM that the social for the August Droitwich dig (see back page) would be held at the Great British Beer Festival at Olympia, more details next time.

# London WRG Social Activities

## Legoland Trip

Apparently a trip to Legoland makes a good day out - they have all sorts of things, including working Lego canals with boats!

The London WRG Legoland trip is planned for 16<sup>th</sup> October 1999. The opening hours are 10-6, so we'll probably get there sometime mid-morning. If we are lucky, we'll be able to use LRY, otherwise we'll car-share.

If we can get more than 20 people, we will get entrance at the group booking rate (namely £12.50 adult, £9.50 child, £8.00 senior), and will need to book it 2 weeks in advance. If we don't get that many people, it will be the usual admission fee of £16.50 (or £10.50 if you happen to be a member of the "Lego club", or indeed £13.50 if you happen to be aged between 3-15 (I think that means actual rather than mental age...), or £10.50 for over 60s). If we are not getting the group discount they only need bookings (not essential, but recommended) a few days in advance.

If you are interested in going on this trip, then please let Dan Evans ( dan@danevans.demon.co.uk ) know as soon as possible.

## London IWA Update

By the time you are reading this London WRG news there will be just two social meetings of the London Region to take place before the summer break.

On Thursday 20 May there will be an illustrated talk by the Droitwich Canals Trust, in Room 601, Civil Engineering Building, Imperial College, South Kensington starting at 7.30 for 8.00.

On Thursday 17 June the last social of the season will be slightly different. It will be an informally guided walk along the River Thames, meeting at Embankment Underground Station at 7.15 for a 7.30 departure. The walk will be approximately 2½ miles in length but will take a couple of hours as we may visit a hostelry or two along the way, as well as looking at various historic sites (and sights) along the way. It will finish in the vicinity of another tube station also on the Circle Line.

Meetings will resume in September, starting on Thursday 16 September with Mike Stevens giving his illustrated talk on the History of the Shropshire Union Canal.

If you would like information on any of these events please phone Alison Smedley on 0181 691 7215.

### From The Archives...

#### Ten years ago:

London WRG News reported on the AGM, which owing to an organisational cockup had had to be shifted from the 'Dickens' to the 'Rugby' at short notice to avoid a clash with a Masons' lodge meeting:

**"If the meeting you went to was full of men with rolled up trouser legs you (probably) went to the wrong one."**

...and the 'next time out' had a familiar ring to it:

**"The next working party will be on the Basingstoke Canal. It is claimed that this will be *our last working party ever on the Basingstoke*. (Now where have I heard that before?)"**

#### Five Years Ago:

The cover of London WRG news 22 featured - for the second time running - a drawing of a Transit van with clouds of smoke coming from under the bonnet. This was because - for the second time running - our old van 'NUH' had done just that.

"So what?" I hear you ask, "didn't NUH always do that?"

Well, yes, but not quite like it did on the M25 in early 1994.

**A little technical information:** most 4-cylinder engines are either a 'straight four' (with vertical pistons) or a 'flat four' (with horizontal ones) or even a 'V-four' (with two pairs of sloping ones, inclined at opposite angles to the vertical in a V-shape) But not NUH - it's engine decided it wanted to be a 'three straight and one flat'...

Meanwhile, back at Boxwell...

**"On site we coped very well, we coped on the lock chamber wall, we coped on the upper wing wall and we coped on the overflow weir. In fact anywhere that needed coping stones we fitted them..."**

...and Basingstoke...

**"The last issue of London WRG News promised an opportunity to crawl up the inside of a paddle culvert on the Basingstoke. Well I'm sorry to disappoint you, but this proved to be totally incorrect. Pete Redway actually provided us with an opportunity to crawl up the inside of a bywash culvert."**

And 'Navvies' 143 contained the following letter:

**"Dear Sir,  
I think it is time that everyone stopped being so beastly to Tim Lewis. Don't you all realise that Tim is making a great sacrifice in donating all his photographs to this magazine. Why, if he wanted to, he could build an enormous media empire and become rich and famous like Harry Arnold. As it is, I understand that he cannot even find the cost of a razor blade, let alone one of those waistcoats with lots of little pockets.  
Yours,  
Jon Sims"**

The following issue brought a reply from Harry Arnold, beginning with the memorable words...

**"Are there no depths to which the waterways gutter press will not sink?"**

## **From The Archives**

...before confessing - among other things - that WRG founder Graham Palmer was in fact Harry's stockbroker and international bullion dealer, and advising Tim on waistcoats with lots of little pockets...

**"Mine cost £8.50 but let's not be dismayed by this enormous sum."**

Harry concluded by volunteering to found a fund to buy Tim a waistcoat, and suggested that Derelict Land Grant money might be available.

**Martin Ludgate**

## **Next Time Out**

Our next outing isn't a dig at all, it's the ever-popular London IWA Canalway Cavalcade festival over the May Day bank holiday weekend at Little Venice. As usual we plan to decorate a boat and enter it in the Pageant of Boats on the Saturday afternoon (the theme this year is 'Our Waterway Heritage' - make of that what you will!) and we will be running the Canal Tombola game to raise funds over the rest of the weekend. Some overnight accommodation will probably be available on the various boats owned by London WRG people that will be attending the festival, but don't count on it, and please do remember that they are all privately-owned boats, and not some kind of aquatic piece of WRG Plant!



## Next Time Out

To help us plan our activities for the weekend we are holding and extra social at the usual venue at Doggets Coat and Badge this coming Wednesday April 21<sup>st</sup>.

Our next 'proper' weekend dig is on May 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> on the Basingstoke, where we are working on installation of a water supply back-pumping system at Woodham Locks. This has been adopted as one of the projects supported by the 'Dig Deep' Initiative. With the four groups involved in Dig Deep all holding weekend working parties at Woodham this spring, plus three weeks of Canal Camps planned for this summer, great progress is being made towards giving the Basingstoke the water supply it needs, so that it can stay open all year. Already the first main job - installation of new bywash at Lock 1 to take surplus water - is nearly complete, and work has begun on the bywash at lock 2, where we will probably be working on May 22-23.

London WRG phonearound person for the May weekend is Dan Evans (phone 0181 560 1798 or e-mail dan@danevans.demon.co.uk) so make his day and ring him to volunteer before he rings you!

Experienced volunteers are also very much in demand for the Canal Camps on 10-17 July, 17-24 July and 24-31 July - please contact Canal Camps booking secretary Neil Edwards (daytime phone 01923 897999 or e-mail neil@waterways.org.uk) for more details.

WRG will be holding a national Training Weekend on the Hereford & Gloucester Canal on the late spring bank holiday weekend on 29-31 May, with instruction in various useful skills for canal volunteers. Contact Mick Beattie on 01253 864034 for more details and to book yourself in; contact Martin Ludgate (phone 0181 693 3266 or e-mail editor@navvies.demon.co.uk) if you want a ride from London in the minibus.

Our next dig will be on 12-13 June on the Wey & Arun Dig Deep scheme, which is working on bringing the Malham-Rowner stretch of canal up to navigable standard and providing it with a water supply as part of their Loxwood Link Extension Project. Most of 1998's work was concentrated on Malham Lock; this year we move on to Rowner Lock. Aileen Butler (0181 467 1292) will be doing the organisational thing for London WRG's this weekend.

After that, it's back to the Hereford & Gloucester on 3-4 July. Although in theory our commitment under the Dig Deep scheme was to restoration work on House Lock at Oxenhall, we are probably more likely to be working on the H&G Canal Trust's current main work site at Over, where they have just nine months to turn a replica of the Somme into a restored basin with slipway, backpump, wharf and overspill. And if they don't complete it on time, they will be in breach of the planning agreement under which the canal is being restored as part of a housing development, and they may lose the section of canal. So it's all hands to the wheel, shoulders to the grindstone and noses on deck, or something like that.

**Martin Ludgate**

For up to date information check the newly redesigned London WRG web pages:  
[www.danevans.demon.co.uk/lwrg](http://www.danevans.demon.co.uk/lwrg)

## London WRG Dates List

**Working Parties:** Transport available Friday evening in the London WRG minibus; meet outside Burger King at Waterloo station; normally at 19:00 but may be earlier or later depending on distance. Contact Tim, Martin or Lesley for details.

Date	Location	Organiser
22-23/5/99	Dig Deep on the Basingstoke.	Dan Evans
12-13/6/99	Dig Deep on Wey & Arun.	Aileen Butler
3-4/7/99	Dig Deep on Hereford & Gloucester.	Alison Smedley
24-25/7/99	Thames & Severn (TBC)	Adrian Fry
14-15/7/99	Droitwich (TBC)	Lesley McFadyen
11-12/9/99	Wilts & Berks, North Wilts branch (TBC)	Maria & Clive Alderman
2-3/10/99	Dig Deep on Wey & Arun.	Dave Moor
23-24/10/99	Lichfield	Ed Walker
6-7/11/99	WRG Reunion (Mont?)	-
4-5/12/99	LWRG/KESCRG Xmas dig (Droitwich?)	-

**Note:** Digs marked “Dig Deep” are on projects where work is being co-ordinated under the Dig Deep Initiative, a scheme involving ourselves and three other mobile groups (NWPG, KESCRG and WRG BITM).

**Social Gatherings:** Wednesday night, normally 10 days before each dig i.e. May 12<sup>th</sup>, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, June 23<sup>rd</sup> etc. at the **Doggetts Coat And Badge** pub, southern end of Blackfriars bridge about 19.30 till 23.00. We are usually in the bar just above bridge level. Social on August 4<sup>th</sup> at Great British Beer Festival.  
**Extra Social:** April 21<sup>st</sup> at the Doggetts to organise the LWRG entry to the decorated boat competition at Cavalcade.

### Other Events:

1-3/5/99	Canalway Cavalcade, London IWA rally at Little Venice.
29-31/5/99	WRG training weekend, Hereford & Gloucester.
26-27/6/99	BCN challenge.
11/7/99	London WRG barbecue, lunchtime at Dave Charlton's.
27-30/8/99	National Waterways Festival, Worcester.
16/10/99	Legoland trip?
15/12/99	LWRG Xmas party, Dan's flat.

### Who to contact:

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Phone: 0181-367 6227

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