

## From The Editor

It's been a busy couple of months in WRG in general and for London in particular. What with the usual slew of digs in various parts of the country, other events like cavalcade, WRG training weekend and Martin's birthday have meant that hardly a weekend has gone past without an event of some kind! The next few months promise to be slightly quieter but with boating, canal camps and the national it is still all go.

As many of you will have heard Canal Camp bookings are well down this year, to such an extent that a number of camps have already had to be cancelled. So if anyone has a spare week during the summer they will (probably) be welcomed with open arms on a canal camp, especially as we all know which end of a shovel to use!

I hope everyone has a good summer, the next issue will be out later on in the year, after I have moved to my new flat in London.

**Ed Walker**

### Internet Update

Our own Internet guru, Dan Evans has set up a London WRG e-mail list, mainly for the discussion of digs and various social events. The address of this list is [londonwrg@ukwaterways.net](mailto:londonwrg@ukwaterways.net), if you want to join contact Dan by e-mail at [dan@danevans.demon.co.uk](mailto:dan@danevans.demon.co.uk). On a similar thread a general discussion list for canal restoration has been set up at [restoration@ukwaterways.net](mailto:restoration@ukwaterways.net), for more details on this and other canal related material check the UK Waterways

Network web page at  
[www.ukwaterways.net/home.shtml](http://www.ukwaterways.net/home.shtml).

### London WRG Pub Crawl?

In what looks like an attempt to drink our way round all the pubs in London by the end of the next millennium, London WRG has changed pubs (again!). The socials are now being held at the Mad Hatter on Stamford Street (map below, spot marks the spot) just south of the Doggett's. The primary reason for the change is that the Doggett's has closed for refurbishment, but we have already found that the new pub is cheaper and the beer is significantly better. So come along next time and find us somewhere at the back of the pub and we will find out how long we survive here!



### Dig Update

Check page 11 for the latest dig details, including where we are going in the next few months (all change!).

All the latest information:

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

## **Droitwich Junction Canal, 17-18<sup>th</sup> April 1999.**

By the time we left Waterloo on Friday we were already two people down and this set the tone for the whole dig. By the time we arrived at the accommodation and had managed to get in (SOS messages to Mike by headlight) a few beers later in the Railway we had met up with the last of the group and were now down three people.

The next day dawned way to early and we found that Mike had to go to work (for a change) and that John's car had broken down and he would have to go home, luckily that was the last of the loses for the weekend otherwise it would start to look like a story from a certain other canal restoration magazine. Once on site we found that bricklaying was the order of the day. So while a number of us started to rebuild the upper wing wall of lock three, while Martin started on the more creative and visible coping bricks on the pound between locks two and three. Also going on was the removal of a large quantity of broken bricks and rubble to the Droitwich Canal Trusts yard and the pointing of the coping stones on lock three. The weather for the whole day was extremely variable with rain in the morning but it improved later on. That evening Martin did himself proud with dinner, so much so that it was only with difficulty that we managed to get to the pub and force down a few beers.

The next day was much the same as Saturday, changeable weather and another three courses on the wing wall. By 4pm the weather had closed in and it was decided to quit site before the rain and wind undid all our hard work

We reached London by 8pm feeling tired but glad that we had done

## **Working Party Reports**

something constructive and moved the restoration forward. Also thanks to everyone for helping to assemble the last issue of London WRG News on the dig.

**Ed Walker**



Martin laying bullnoses. (Droitwich Junction Canal, Tim Lewis)

## Working Party Reports

### **Basingstoke Canal, 22-23<sup>rd</sup> May 1999.**

The construction of a bywash around lock 1 was the work for this dig. The Basingstoke canal is amazingly close to London, so many people actually drove to the dig - and got there early. Those of us who were in the van received a phonecall from Ed at about 8: "why's there no-one in the pub?" - we hadn't even left Waterloo at that point, but got to the pub in about 40 minutes!

When we arrived at the pub, Pete Redway explained our tasks for the weekend. Much of the work was to be brickwork at the inlets & outlets of the bywash. Other tasks included backfilling, breaking up unwanted concrete and installing tie-backs.

Woodham Church Hall provided us with accommodation for the weekend - it is a good hall, complete with showers. The only annoyance is that the cooker takes about half an hour to light! The hall boasts some rather odd signs: "Hi there, I am your toilet & I want to be your friend - so please keep my clean", "I am your rubbish bin - use me". Hmmm, well, yes. Lesley liked them anyway. And I won't forget to mention Matt killing some time in the hall.

On Saturday, after a good breakfast from Matt & Ed, we were soon on site. The weather was glorious, which made the dig even better. Surprisingly, the weather remained good despite Rhys being on site - it was the first London WRG dig that he has attended where it hasn't pissed it down!

Martin, Matt & I started the brickwork on the bywash outlet. Meanwhile others fished around with grappling hooks to retrieve the six wheelbarrows which had been thrown in the cut by the local kids. Some tie-back piling was carried out too, and the bywash inlet was prepared for brickwork. By cunning use of cut bricks, Martin did an excellent curved bit of wall, which looked really good when completed. I made a start on the outlet arch, which turned out moderately well considering I'd never built an arch before - I never told Pete that of course! A disc cutter came in very handy for cutting bricks to shape. OK, so I did cock-up the levels a bit, but I blame it on the mortar being too wet and too dry at the same time.

"D'Artagnan and the Three Concreteers" (in the form of Marcus, Ed, Dave and Rick) went about backfilling the wall. Later on, it was landscaped with earth.

As Saturday drew to a close, most of us wanted dinner, but Martin & Matt needed to finish pointing their brickwork. The rest of us went back to the hall, and did some "cooking by committee", which turned out surprisingly well. At one point, there was a bit of confusion about the numbers of people eating. "Ten Little Navvies" was mentioned, but luckily no-one had disappeared, and we had cooked enough for everyone.

Sunday got off to a good start with Andi's garlic mushrooms. After getting a few extra groceries, we met Tim and Aileen on site. A start was made on the brickwork for the inlet bywash. Rick Ansell - not a character from Bankside but a volunteer on his first London WRG dig - built an excellent wall next to the bywash pipe. The construction of this was complicated because the

ground sloped upwards at quite an angle.

Andi broke up some wire meshing, and Ed cut up the rods into short lengths. These were then installed into the existing concrete base to provide a tie-back to concrete backfill, which is to be poured once the brickwork has been completed.

Over all, a very good dig. Lots of quality work done. The completion of the lock 1 bywash can't be far off - which is pretty good going considering we only started work there earlier this year. Thanks to everyone for making it such a successful dig.

**Dan Evans**

#### **Basingstoke Canal, 5-6<sup>th</sup> May 1999.**

A large number of London WRG members gatecrashed the KESCRG dig on the Basingstoke to celebrate Martin's 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. Apart from working on site (the top of the lock one bywash is very nearly finished) the main purpose of the weekend was the Saturday night party where Maureen and Maria did a wonderful roast dinner, Martin's birthday speech ran to four pages, much beer was drunk, old photos of Martin were laughed at and that is about all I can remember! A good time was had by all and congratulations to Martin and Dan on their birthdays.

**Ed Walker**

## **Working Party Reports**

#### **Wey & Arun Canal, 12-13<sup>th</sup> June 1999.**

The Forresters was as usual the meeting place for London WRG on the Friday evening and Kirdford Village Hall the accommodation. The pub had no intention of throwing us out so we left of our own accord after midnight to be struck by disaster! NO BREAD! and therefore no toast. This vital item had not been bought at all due to a misunderstanding between the organiser and the van driver over the phrase "We've got the basics for breakfast." The general upset led to Rhys generously producing a couple of bottles of wine and some beer to help the coffee down, but this resulted in much animated conversation until the move to bag at 2am.

Saturday got quite old before life returned to the contents of the bags. (In fact John Gerrard arrived before breakfast!) But meanwhile the organiser had not been idle on the bread front and had been busy failing at the village shop. Yesterday's sliced bread was not for sale having been reserved by some good burgers of Kirdford who obviously preferred to store it in the shop. (Small larders?) A request for a loaf of the newly delivered "real" bread revealed that most of it was also already reserved. Luckily sliced bread was due to be delivered so 3 loaves were ordered, and earnest supplication (i.e. begging) and a vivid picture of the consequences of returning empty handed resulted in a real loaf for breakfast. Due to subsequent poor communication, misunderstandings and individual enthusiasms a further 9 loaves appeared during the day. However this had the advantage of producing garlic bread at dinner and eggy bread at Sunday breakfast.

## Working Party Reports

The work on Saturday was around Malham Lock. One side of the lock needed landscaping and bricks and rocks removed, some of the lock stones needed repointing and posts concreted in and a gate hung above the lock steps. Work was carried out on all projects at the same time, but not necessarily by the same people.

During the working periods it was discovered that Rhys and Martin could be related (due to a forebear Ludgate having a bike? or a boat? between Congleton and High Wycombe), that blokes could talk on for AGES about "plant" which led to speculation as to whether that was the probable reason that they didn't mind hoovering. Dan's domesticity was touched upon (yes, he can iron) and Marcus mysteriously and suddenly fell into the canal, but only wetting his trousers. This, interestingly, resulted in his sneaking up and tipping a bucket of water completely over Rhys who declared war and subsequently tipped the by then ucky contents of a welly over Marcus' head (Luckily in a hard hat at the time but looking up from the lock chamber)

But, dear readers, it wasn't all fun, we sweated blood over sod and clod, concrete and mortar to finish the work, revived only by tea and lunch (Lots of sandwiches!) and observed by two horses waiting for apple cores. It was noted that one of these beasts snorted with derision everytime the initials 'JP' were mentioned. One of the occasions was speculation on whether Marcus was his love-child. Marcus worked out that he (JP, not Marcus, though probably he too) did not have a beard at the time and therefore M's mother might not have been completely put off.

A tea-time discussion on various types of milk and their bugs led this reporter to observe that she had 'had some hot goats'-collapse of navvies assembled and one hot flush! (I was told I had to include this incident, I'm not usually into self-flagellation)

After Saturday night's blow out meal caused not only by garlic bread, but also the inability of certain shoppers to resist a bargain in the guise of a huge bag of mince, (Cook it all - so I did), consumption in the Forresters was slow and little toast subsequently consumed.

Sunday's first disaster was when we arrived on site and the van window fell in when the door was slammed. A temporary repair was effected by Rhys and Tim using an assortment of cutlery and a Swiss army knife. I write "temporary" because of the interesting loop in the rubber surround that you can see through. (No-one could call it a seal).

Sunday also brought out the shorts and a split group, some working at Malham and some at Rowner concreting piles by hand (sounds revolting) after unfortunately disabling the genny which ran the mixer. Even Rhys (Mr Fixit Extraordinaire) couldn't get it going again.

The afternoon was spent getting and spreading dumper-loads of rubble on the other side of the lock, until tired but happy and stuffed full of sarnies we went back to the hall in the dodgy van leaving behind the busted generator. Still, what's that between friends?

PS When are we due to go back? **Bags** I don't organise that dig too!

**Aileen Butler**

## Summer Barbecue

This years London WRG barbecue will be held on Sunday 11th July at Dave Charlton's flat at Cyclops Wharf E14 next to the River Thames on the Isle of Dogs. To assist with finding Dave's flat a map is attached below (the spot marks the spot): Please arrive from 12.00 noon and if you can't find the way to the river front feel free to ask the Porters to show you the way to the BBQ terrace.

This is usually an extremely fun event (as long as the weather is good!). We hear the view of the river from Dave's patio is great and we may even see some canal boats if



we are lucky as they pass along the Thames from Limehouse Basin to the River Lea.

Please inform either Martin or Lesley (contact details on the back page) if you are intending to turn up so that the correct amount of food required can be catered for. The cost of the afternoon/evening will be £5 (cheques made payable to Lesley McFadyen) to cover the food. This does not include drink so please bring your own (or contact Martin if you are interested in a share of a polypin). Anyone interested in helping with the catering please contact Lesley.

## London WRG Social Activities

There will be plenty of overnight crash space is available as although Dave has not sold his flat yet it will be completely empty due to his move to his new house at Gants Hill on 5 July. Please inform Dave in advance if you need overnight accommodation.

The nearest station is Crossharbour on the Docklands Light Railway (Mudchute is closed due to building works. Alternatively take the Tube to Mile End and catch the D7 bus and ask to be dropped off opposite the Kingsbridge Arms Pub and the Space Arts Centre, which are both by Claude Street, a very short road that leads to Homer Drive and Cyclops Wharf.

Dave's address is:

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

E-mail: [dcharlton@compuserve.com](mailto:dcharlton@compuserve.com)

Home Tel: 0171-538 0245

Home Fax 0171 538 4990

Work Tel 0181 478 3020 Ext. 3205

## Great British Beer Festival

The London WRG social on 4<sup>th</sup> August will be at the Great British Beer Festival which is being held in the Grand and National halls in the Olympia exhibition centre, Kensington. The entry price will be £5, with a reduction to £4 for CAMRA members, we will meet up somewhere inside at 7.30pm (look for the people in WRG T-shirts). Check [www.user.globalnet.co.uk/~beerfest](http://www.user.globalnet.co.uk/~beerfest) for the latest beer festival info.

## From The Archives - Cavalcade

### **Seventeen years of Canalway Cavalcade**

London Region IWA's ever-popular Canalway Cavalcade rally every May Day Bank Holiday at Little Venice has been going since 1993, and London WRG have been there every time - usually taking part in the Pageant of Boats. Here is the first instalment of Martin's memories of 17 years of bad puns, ridiculous costumes, bizarre displays, beer, fun and fund-raising...

#### **1983: Late as usual...**

Let's face it - it's not unusual for London WRG to be late for the pageant at Canalway Cavalcade. And the very first year was no exception. In fact we were a whole year late - our first entry for the Pageant of Boats was in 1984. But some of us were there in '83, and I've got the photos (of a rather empty-looking Browning's Pool) to prove it.

#### **1984: 'Nike 5'**

In the dim and distant past, the word 'Nike' had nothing to do with footwear ('trainers' were people who trained race-horses, the canvas and rubber sporty-type things you might put on your feet were called 'plimsolls' or 'pumps' depending on what part of the country you came from) and 'Nike 4' was the name of a well-known boat owned by a well-known writer of canal books called John Gagg. For reasons that remain obscure, a certain anonymous group of people (ask Bob Keaveney who they were) took to painting 'Nike 4' on every half-sunken rotting hulk

they found abandoned around the waterways system - and there were plenty of them... the canals ain't what they were, you know, you don't get any half-decent rotting hulks these days, what with the Boat Safety Scheme and all that... Anyway, our first entry in the pageant was a work-boat lent by BW, which we decorated with a washing line of WRG clothing, a lot of WRGies with hard-hats and shovels, and an enormous metal oil-drum that we fished out of the cut, and labelled 'BEER' in letters a foot high. And just to go one better than whoever it was that was labelling the rotting hulks, we put nameboards on the boat saying 'NIKE 5'. And I think that was the year that we were supposed to be towed by another BW boat, but the BW crew supplied were too drunk to steer it (one of them fell in the cut!) and so David Wood towed us with his boat 'Anker', with a bunch of singers on board from Docklands somewhere, who sang sea shanties the entire time. Eric ('Winnie') and I slept in the workboat cabins, and concluded that we would probably have been more comfortable sleeping on the towpath.

#### **1985: 'Arfa Brain'**

I wasn't there - it's the only Canalway Cavalcade I've ever missed, and I don't remember why I missed it. But I'm sure I saw some photos of a similarly-decorated boat, but with an even more obscure joke in the boat's name, 'Arfa Brain', which was - if I remember rightly - a reference to the local Work Party Organiser on one of our regular work-sites, a chap called Arthur, who we believed to be missing 50% of the mental capabilities that he had begun life with.

### **1986: 'Wayne Arun'**

Once again, BW lent us their work-boat (I can't think why!) and we did the usual washing line, hard-hats and shovels (the latter I think were handy for paddling the boat when whoever was towing us - I can't remember - cast us adrift). Lesley's first Cavalcade was notable for her providing a large quantity of nail-varnish, which we used in combination with a large number of small pieces of hardboard to make our own collection of 'rally plaques' to equal any of the displays on other boats. Not only were a lot of genuine events commemorated (who would have guessed that a BW work boat called 'Wayne Arun' had attended the original 'National' at Market Harborough in 1950?) but several slightly more dubious ones - the Croydon Canal Small-ish Dig, the Loch Ness 'Monster Rally' the 'Sod it all Festival' at Old Sod House Lock on the Driffield Navigation and the Basingstoke Reopening Rally, which was still five years in the future.... I remember meeting a chap who was wearing a badge saying "David Alison Beer Pageant Master" - I thought "Either that chap has an unusual surname or we're having a Beer Pageant." - sadly it was the former. Our overnight accommodation was rather more comfortable than in previous years; we slept on community boat 'Tarpoley'... apart from the first night, when we slept in the basement of Beauchamp Lodge, which would have been OK but for the light-switches, which were operated by a peculiar key-thing, which we didn't have, so the only way we could turn the lights out so that we could sleep at night involved my Swiss Army penknife and three or four 240-volt shocks... some say I've never been quite the same since...

## **From The Archives - Cavalcade**

### **1987: 'Basingstoke' and the Bakerloo Trousers...**

For the first time, we had our own boat, and didn't have to rely on the kindness of BW. 'Fulbourne' was afloat, and its owners were young and foolish (I know, I was one of them!) enough to let it be used in the pageant. We decided that the SR3 engine really wasn't really up to the job, and set about designing some more reliable motive power. The result was 'Basingstoke' the pantomime horse, and the rest is history. The weekend began for us with a visit by Thames TV's Chris Tarrant on Friday evening, and they were keen to feature a few seconds of 'Basingstoke' being led by a boatwoman in 'traditional' clothing and towing 'Fulbourne'. Unfortunately as the time for the live broadcast approached, there was no sign of 'Fulbourne', which was starting a great Cavalcade tradition of not arriving until people had given up all hope. Eventually, another boat was pressed into service, a boatwoman was pressed into the trad clothing, (she was slightly larger than the intended boatwomen) and the broadcast went out. Unfortunately the boatwoman's attempt to elbow Tarrant into the cut on live TV was unsuccessful. The horse retired to the Bridge House (As the proverb goes, "You can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink". That's because he drinks beer!), several pints were consumed, and a bit of busking with boatwoman, boatman, accordion and dancing horse raised a few bob for funds. Next morning, as we were turning the boat at Kensal Green and starting to get our horse-



## **From The Archives - Cavalcade**

crew into their costume ready for the start of the pageant, we discovered that we seemed to have somehow lost part of the costume: one pair of special brown fit-all-sizes horse-trousers, to be precise. I therefore departed in a hurry, with less than an hour till the pageant started, saying "I'll get some more" to a disbelieving crew. As luck would have it, a 200 yard sprint (they didn't have metres in those days) got me to the bus stop just in time to leap on a bus as it departed for Notting Hill, whence I caught the Central Line tube to Oxford Circus, home of John Lewis - purveyors of finest quality horse-trousering material. I have a vague memory that JLP used to close on Saturday afternoons in those days - can this be true? Anyway, it was open when I got there, and for under a fiver I bought several yards of cloth, a pair of scissors and a box of about 50 safety-pins. Time was getting extremely tight by now - the boats would have finished turning round and pageant would be heading for Little Venice - and I couldn't afford to wait until I arrived back at the boat before starting work. It is five stops from Oxford Circus to Warwick Avenue - by Regents Park the cloth was rolled out, the hacking with the scissors was under way by Baker Street and complete by Edgware Road, the safety pins were starting to go in around Paddington and finally I legged it up the escalator, down the street and along the towpath waving a near-complete pair of trousers to a still-disbelieving crew... maybe they were right about the electric shocks.....

**To be continued...**

**Martin Ludgate**

## **Next Time Out**

The next dig is on the Hereford & Gloucester on July 3-4 and it looks like we will now be working at the Dig Deep project at Oxenhall, as they've located as source of some more stone for lock-rebuilding work. Alison Smedley will be taking names for this one.

The next three were suffering from a bit of an attack of the TBAs last time, but are more-or-less sorted now:

July 24-25 is on the Droitwich, and I'm sure Mike Palmer will have sorted out something suitable for us. (last time he had us digging cow shit) Not quite sure who our organiser is - any volunteers? (I had Lesley down for this...Ed.)

Then on August 14-15 it's back to the H&G but at their other main site at Over, with Adrian leading.

And September 11-12 sees Maria and Clive celebrate their second wedding anniversary by organising another dig, this time on a new site on the Wilts & Berks near Wootton Bassett.

After that, it's back to the Wey & Arun on October 2-3, the Lichfield on October 23-24 and the WRG Reunion on November 6-7 is almost certainly on the Montgomery Canal, in a place with the unlikely name of Pant. (booking form next time)

**Martin Ludgate**

For up to date information check the 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.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Organiser</b>
3-4/7/99	Dig Deep on Hereford & Gloucester (Oxenhall)	Alison Smedley
24-25/7/99	Droitwich	Lesley McFadyen?
14-15/8/99	Hereford & Gloucester (Over)	Adrian Fry
11-12/9/99	Wilts & Berks, (Wootton Bassett)	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, Pant)	-
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. July 14<sup>th</sup>, September 1<sup>st</sup>, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, etc. at the **Mad Hatter** pub, 200yds south of Blackfriars bridge on the right, from about 19.30 till 23.00. We are usually somewhere round the back of the bar. Social on August 4<sup>th</sup> at Great British Beer Festival, Olympia.

### **Other Events:**

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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