

From The Editor

Sorry for the long delay between London WRG News's folks, but due to the usual amount of canal camps, boating and the national, plus the fact I have finished my job and moved back to London I really have not had the time. Luckily its been quiet for the group over the last couple of months and so we only have three dig reports for you this time. But with information about the various Christmas parties and the second part of Martin's history of Canalway Cavalcade it should still be a packed issue.

Apologies if this issue seems a bit rushed but due to various computer problems I have not had as much time as usual to work it over.

Please note my new address and e-mail:

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Battersea,
London.
SW11 4ND

ed@edwalker.freeserve.co.uk

See you on a dig somewhere,

Ed Walker

Note, new web page location:

www.danevans.co.uk/lwrg

Pant's Off; It's All Over!

Yes, the WRG reunion this year has been moved from the Pant on the Montgomery Canal to Over on the Hereford and Gloucester Canal. The cause of this change is believed to be a difference of opinion between the WRG "scorched earth" brigade and the local environmentalists about what to do with all those lovely trees growing in the canal. So it's back to Over for the reunion as there is still more work to do on the canal basin the local society are building, everything from plant ops, brick laying

Outbreak of the TLA's?

A careful reading of page 11 of this illustrious journal will show that the dreaded TBA's come out of hiding again. In this case at least one of those TBA's will probably stand for "The Basingstoke Again", as there is still more work to be done on the back pumping and bywash scheme. And if anyone would like to do something about the TBA's in the "Organiser" column then please stand forth and be recognised!

Reunion and Christmas Digs

Enclosed there should be a booking form for the reunion. Sorry that there is no information on the KESCRG / LWRG Christmas party but details had not been finalised by the time London WRG News went to press (or photocopier?). Details should be in the next issue of Navvies.

Hereford & Gloucester Canal 3-4th July 1999

SHOCK, HORROR - LONDON WRG
MINIBUS TURNS UP EARLY!!

Martin excelled himself by getting the van to Waterloo by five to seven! He'll never hear the end of this. Unfortunately we then had to wait for half an hour for 2 or 3 people to turn up, so he's not likely to do it again! Seriously, though, parking the van isn't easy (or legal) at Waterloo and the idea ought to be that we, the passengers, arrive before the van, so that the van doesn't have to stop for very long.

Anyway, enough whinging. There were 12 of us in the van, so Martin had brought the trailer on a rare outing. It was very useful having it along, and we all agreed that we should take it on digs more often (it must get lonely being left in Aileen's garage).

3 more people met us at Dymock hall (well, in the pub next door) so there were 15 of us to cook breakfast for on the Saturday morning. Lesley and Dan did a great job, despite the missing bits of cooker. Quote of the weekend was waking up to hear Lesley saying "I can't find the knob..."

Martin and others were up before breakfast and had the sandwiches made before breakfast was served! This was because muggins had foolishly agreed that we should meet the local organiser on site at 9am! (It sounded perfectly reasonable at the time!).

As we were now 16 in number (John having joined us for the day) and there wasn't enough work for that number at House Lock, Oxenhall, a number of us were sent away to work at the Over Hospital site, after splitting up the sandwiches, crisps, fruit & cakes into

Working Party Reports

what we hoped were the right proportions, and ditto with the tea & squash (but managing to take all the milk to Over).

Work on the Oxenhall site was mostly stonework: clearing out old stone work from the lock sides, cutting new stones to fit with a brick saw, and fitting some new stones in place.

Meanwhile over at Over (which is pronounced Oover)... Some of us were putting up shuttering ready for a concrete pour to form part of the wharf wall, some of us were cleaning bricks (extremely dirty dusty bricks - Lesley was covered all over in fine black dust by the end of Saturday!) whilst those without wellies (it being rather muddy down in the hole which is the canal basin) were assigned to removing stone window sills from the demolished mortuary building. One pillar of bricks about 15 ft tall had been left standing, and below it was a nice stone window sill such as we were looking for, so Dan & Rupert felt the need to demolish the brick pillar by throwing things at it! It worked eventually.

Back at the accommodation most people felt the need for a shower, of which there are two, only one of which seemed to work, and both are in the gents toilets. So we swapped the identity of the toilets over for half an hour while the four girls all had showers (we got first go because I was cooking!). Once everyone was clean I was left in peace to get on with cooking while everyone went next door to the pub. Strawberries & cream

Working Party Reports

for pudding, carefully picked at the PYO (identifiable from miles around by the large inflatable red thing with white spots) by the window sill team once they'd found and moved all their window sills (who claimed they hadn't eaten any during the picking, but nobody believed them).

On the Sunday, those at the Over site were subjected to a torrential downpour around lunchtime, whilst those working at Oxenhall stayed completely dry! By the end of the weekend volunteers on both sites felt that a useful amount of work had been achieved, and we set off on the journey home to London.

Alison Smedley

Droitwich - LWRG and NWPG 11th/12th September 1999

As the "usual suspects" marched across the taxi rank at Waterloo to join us in the minibus, I blinked. We had expected 3, but there were 4 of them. Rick hadn't managed to get through on the phone to tell us he was coming. Oh well - the more the merrier!

MKP met us at the Railway in Droitwich and ran through all the reasons why "it's not a problem". Graham Hawkes of the Newbury Working Party Group was also there and expected the rest of his party to arrive the next day. A mega brick-lay was planned.

There was a slight surprise on our return to the hall. The Droitwich Sports Centre now has NO fridge. However the recent downturn in the weather meant that our bacon and sausages were going to be OK. Site was one where every bit of plant and materials have to be taken there in the van and lugged along the towpath so slightly slow to get started each day. The Brindley-built spill-weir on which we were working is longer than a standard lock, and so could handle quite a few bricklayers. All three available brick lines were deployed and work started. As the day went on, NWPG turned up and set to work laying coping stones, John Gerard arrived for the day and a totally unexpected Adrian appeared. He had emailed us but for some reason the message had not been absorbed. Maria and Clive had planned a further shopping trip anyway.

By the afternoon it was clear that an overspill site away from the overspill was going to be needed on Sunday, and NWPG elected to go there en masse, brick-cleaning and demolishing part of a side pond on the Junction Canal. On the spill weir, our apparent excess of people was being taken up in fetching bricks, fetching cement, fetching sand and even in fetching water from a nearby stream as the canal water is too salty to use for mortar. Almost everybody had a try at bricklaying, which wasn't an easy job when you can identify at least two different sizes of hand-made brick and try to define all the other odd bricks as belonging to one or the other.

Our number was increased yet again by a local chap, who was delivered by the morning trip boat and was so willing that we overworked him on the barrow run until we had to bus him back to Droitwich because the

afternoon trip boat didn't run due to lack of customers.

So, to sum up, the long wall is almost ready for the topping off course to be laid, and most of the coping stones are in place. The catering worked surprisingly well considering that LWRG and NWPG have totally different systems, not only of paying, but also of meals eaten, as they turn up on Saturday, bringing sandwiches, eat a joint evening meal prepared at home and reheated, then Sunday breakfast and sandwiches. Somehow, a compromise was reached, everyone was fed and each paid the normal NWPG or LWRG amount for food without the world collapsing. Thanks to Maria and Clive for organising this and the whole thing on their second wedding anniversary.

Lesley McFadyen



Bricklaying on the Droitwich (Martin Ludgate)

Next Time Out

Our next outing is to the Lichfield Canal (or - for the pedants - the abandoned Catshill to Huddlesford length of the BCN Wyrley & Essington Canal) on October 23-24. John Horton has promised us some more of what seems to be our favourite activity at the moment - bricklaying. The lock that we were working on last time (when we weren't snowed-off) at Tamworth Road is progressing, and the lock tail has reached the rebuilding stage. Plus there is a possibility of some of us working on a couple of Lichfield specialities - piling at Darnford Road, and moving dirt from one place to another with diggers and dumpers. Accommodation is at Martin Heath village Hall, Christchurch Lane, Lichfield - convenient for the Bowling Green pub. We may not have a minibus available for this weekend, as ours is scheduled to be used on the Hereford & Gloucester Canal Camp that starts that weekend; we hope to be able to borrow another one, or we may have to rely on people bringing their cars. Ed Walker is the organiser for this dig.

After that, it's "over to Over" for the WRG Reunion weekend dig on November 6-7 on the Hereford & Gloucester Canal at Over, near Gloucester. The work for the weekend includes 'scrub-bashing', root-pulling, bricklaying, gabion wall building, excavation by hand and by machine, towpath laying, granite paving and carpentry. If that sounds a bit of a tall order, remember it's not just a London WRG weekend - there will be about 150-200 volunteers from all over the

Next Time Out

country. It is likely that several of London WRG's regulars will be working on the bricklaying job, building a large L-shaped wharf wall and two side walls on a slipway, but if you'd rather bash scrub, fill gabions or dig holes (or even clean bricks!) then feel free to. Accommodation is in Oxstalls Community School, Gloucester, and transport will be available in the minibus, leaving Waterloo at 7pm Friday. As it's close to Guy Fawkes' night, you will probably be requested to bring a contribution to the fireworks display - one big firework per person, or go shares on one GIANT one between several of you. Adrian Fry is the overall co-ordinator for the weekend and will hopefully answer any queries you may have. Please fill in the enclosed booking form, send it to Helen Davey with your cheque, and contact Martin if you want transport.

The following weekend 13-14 November we have added an extra working party to our schedule. We will be working on putting in some visitor moorings on the Thames at Richmond. It's been arranged at rather short notice - the date has been partly decided for us by such things as the times of high tides and the maintenance schedule at Richmond half-tide lock - so things aren't definite, but it looks likely that we will have a converted barge to use as accommodation and a minibus available for anyone who doesn't find it easier to get there on their own. Contact Matt Taylor for the latest information.

On 4-5 December we have another joint effort, this time on the Basingstoke Canal with KESCRG as our annual Christmas Dig. Ken Parish will as usual be arranging some suitably daft entertainments, London WRG will be running the bar, Brian and Maureen Amos will be running the catering - including the usual sumptuous repast on the Saturday evening - and a good time will be had by all. Hopefully a booking form will appear in this issue of 'London WRG News'; if not, see the next 'Navvies'. Our minibus will be available for transport from London, leaving at 7:30pm Friday; contact Martin if you want a lift.

Martin Ludgate

London WRG Christmas Party

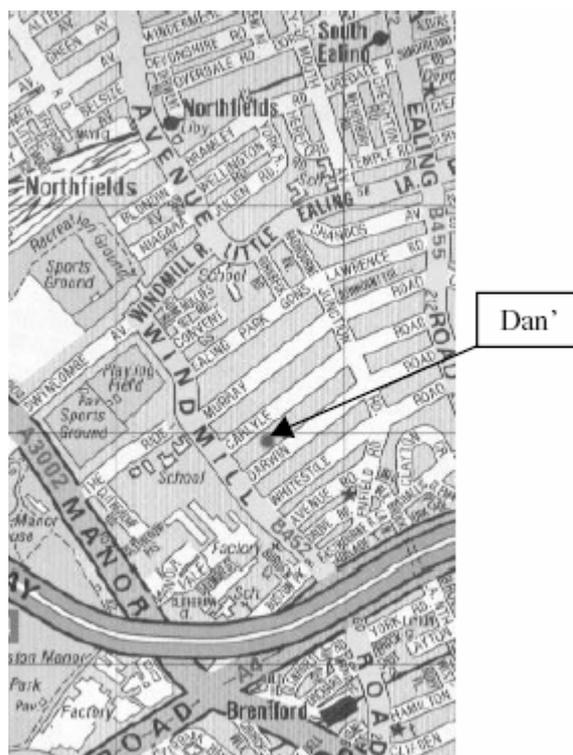
Unfortunately as this is quite likely to be the last London WRG News of the year I have to mention the dreaded "C"

word. Yep, the London WRG Christmas party is almost on us again. This year Dan Evans has volunteered to hold the party and it will be on the evening of Wednesday 15th December, starting at about 7.30pm. All the usual events will happen like the London WRG awards ceremony (does anyone want this whip off me?), a slide show, good food, lots of beer and a raffle. All this and much, much more! It should be a brilliant night so add the date to your diaries now!

Please inform either Martin or Lesley (contact details on the back page) if you are intending to turn up so that the amount of food required can be catered for. The cost of the evening will be a measly £5.50 (cheques made payable to Lesley McFadyen) to cover the delicious buffet, this does not include drink so please bring your own (or contact Dan if you are interested in a share of a polypin). Anyone interested in helping with the catering please contact Lesley. Some overnight crash space is available but please inform Dan well in advance if you need this.

Dan's address is:
131A Darwin Road,
Ealing,
London.
W5 4BB.
Telephone: 0208 560 1798.
e-mail:

The map shows where the nearest stations are (Northfields on the Piccadilly line or Brentford by surface rail):



London IWA

As some of you may have heard the London IWA's monthly social meetings have recently moved from Imperial College to the Grouse and Claret pub, Little Chester Street, SW1 (between Victoria and Hyde Park Corner). Start times are the same as before, 7.30pm for 8pm and apparently they continue socialising until throwing out time. The topics of the next few meetings are below:

Thursday 21/10/99:

Roger Wilkinson - Waterways of Poland

Thursday 18/11/99:

Graham King, Senior Planning Officer,
City of Westminster

Thursday 9/12/99:

Christmas Social - Auction and Quiz

Thursday 20/1/00:

Ray Claister: Russian Inland Waterways
Dan'

From The Archives - Cavalcade

Seventeen years of Canalway Cavalcade - part 2

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 second instalment of Martin's memories of 17 years of bad puns, ridiculous costumes, bizarre displays, beer, fun and fund-raising...

1988: 'Flagging' enthusiasm?

On his previous appearance in 1987 our pantomime horse 'Basingstoke' had been a youthful colt aged only a few days, but by 1988 he was a one-year-old stallion with a bright future ahead of him. Little did we know just how bright - his starring rôle in the WRG Pantos was many years ahead - but his boat-hauling days were drawing to a close and his dancing career was just beginning. He spent most of the pageant dancing on the roof of 'Fulbourne' - the rear deck where he had spent most of the 1987 pageant having been replaced by a brand-new back-cabin. Accompanying him throughout were a 'boater' and 'boatwomen' in traditional gear; the boatwoman accompanied him on the roof to stop him falling off; the boatman accompanied him on a concertina with some genuine interminable folk melodies to dance to.

As well as the horse, the boat carried a full complement of human passengers, plus a large number of extra ones who rather lacked the 'depth' of the usual

London WRGie - they were in fact only the thickness of the paper that they were painted on, and pasted into the windows of the boat. Some of them looked fairly convincing as navvies, but not all - I have yet to see a Diana Ross lookalike on a London WRG dig, although I'm sure we don't lack her ability to get arrested at airports...

The whole display was completed by the usual bunting... except that like the crew - and unlike most bunting - it too was painted-on. Fulbourne's front-locker was full of all sorts of different colours of paint inherited from the boat's previous owner... painted-on bunting isn't likely to blow away in high winds... the cabin was painted a hideous shade called 'grotto blue' (or was it 'grotty blue') that could be improved instantly by painting over any of it in any other colour... best of all, the owners were planning the demolition of the entire cabin and a return to 'unconverted' working boat condition very soon. In fact, there were some slightly more exciting plans for Cavalcade that were briefly considered in the Bridge House in the evenings and sadly not proceeded-with: one idea was to bring back the old 'piano-smashing' contests of 1960s village fêtes - "Put Fulbourne's cabin through a 9-inch square hole - 50p for 5 minutes with a sledgehammer". Another one involved a lot of petrol and some matches and would surely have won the Illuminated Boats parade...

Anyway, to our amazement we won the Marcus Boudier Prize - we hadn't even realised that there was a prize for the best decorated boat. We were only doing it for fun, and a 'nice little earner' for funds - pay us money or the horse will carry on dancing and the boatman will carry on playing his

concertina... I think we raised a couple of hundred quid that way.

1989: Injun trouble!

In these days of political correctness not many would suggest a display based on taking the piss out of an ethnic minority group. But ten years ago London WRG was a very different organisation, and there was only one slight suggestion of incorrectness about our plans - and that came from Bob who worked for Lambeth Council, so that explains it. So if you have noticed the slight lack of native Americans (or 'Red Indians' as we used to call them) on London WRG weekends, and were wondering why this could be, here is one possible explanation...

Anyway, as our numbers had increased to the point where we couldn't keep on hiding half the crew inside animal costumes so people wouldn't spot that we had over the regulation 12 on board, and Fulbourne in its de-converted state wasn't terribly suitable for the display, we towed most of it behind us on a work-flat.

This second boat gave us an increased capacity for crew-members; more to the point, it gave much more space for entertaining(?) the audience with our dubious jokes. The bad puns had been going downhill for a couple of years and in 1989 they hit rock bottom... Bob was dressed in full chief's gear and sat outside a wigwam holding a pint glass and a sign saying 'Big Chief Sipping Beer'. We were the 'Muddy-foot Tribe'. Our canal-digging activities were advertised with slogans like "HOW - to have fun" and "Be BRAVE - join London WRG". The boat's 'Injun Room' was clearly labelled. We didn't have a 'pipe of peace'; we had a 'piece of pipe' instead - a length of old drainpipe we had dragged out of the cut and labelled. Worst of all, we had a 'pantomime buffalo' called... wait for it... 'Paddington Bison'.

From The Archives - Cavalcade

But the pièce de résistance of the whole display was surely Huw's Totem Pole, constructed entirely from polystyrene blocks nicked from his work, and with the usual carved figures replaced by hard-hats, wellies, beer-barrel, wheelbarrow and so on. Many years later, this remarkable piece of construction was still lurking in the loft at Tim's flat in Wanstead - in fact it was rumoured to be holding the roof up - and who knows, it may still be there today.

But sadly, no prizes for us. I can't remember if we came first, second, third or 'very highly commended' i.e. last, but the winners were a bunch of London IWA committee members... to show that there were no hard feelings, London WRG News reported that the judges must have been (a) biased (b) blind (c) drunk or (d) all three.

1990: To boldly go...

The Canals of Mars may be a figment of an over-fertile imagination (or - my pet theory - they may have fallen derelict and need restoring) but that wasn't enough to put London WRG off. (Some would say the same about much of London WRG's organisation.) So in 1990, the Red Planet provided the theme for our entry in the Pageant. Once again, a work-flat was towed behind Fulbourne, and we did our best to convince any sceptics that the Red Planet really was coloured in WRG-red.

From The Archives - Cavalcade

A hardboard rocket labelled 'WRG' where it usually says 'NASA' was equipped with some coloured smoke capsules thanks to stage pyrotechnist Luke (Sky?) Walker and set off in front of the judges. A sound system played the theme to '2001, a Space Odyssey'. Alan wore a fairly convincing space-suit made from bits of domestic appliance, and the rest of us were kitted-out in Martian suits - bright green, with an extra arm.

And yes, once again we failed to win the award - we came second to a bunch of IWA committee members again and started to think we were detecting a pattern, but didn't much care as the winners got a totally empty silver cup while the runners-up got a bottle of booze - but at least we seem to have succeeded in convincing the judges, the audience and everybody else involved that we really weren't on the same planet as them.

Martin Ludgate

Richmond Moorings

The history of it is that the IWA London Region Planning and Navigation committee spent many years trying to persuade the London Borough of Richmond that they need some visitor moorings, because at the moment there isn't anywhere for visiting boats to stop on the semi tidal stretch. They finally gave permission for a particular site to be used if IWA did the work, which involves putting in wooden piles (which have been donated and are ready and waiting at the site) and some associated metalwork, to prevent boats going over the bank (it being semi tidal).

What they would like London WRG to do is to provide some manpower on a particular weekend for putting the wooden piles in place (a crane of some description will be needed). The metal work will be fabricated and welded into place, probably before we got to the site. The cost of the works will be funded by donations from the 3 London IWA branches.

The "drawdown" (where they open the Richmond barrier so the stretch becomes fully tidal instead of semi tidal) is for 3 weeks from 6 - 27 November. The weekend of 13/14 November would be particularly conducive to this work as low tide is around midday, so we would get (however long) with no water in the river, or at least at the edges.

There is a possibility that accommodation will be on board community barge Richmond Venturer, but if this doesn't work out Dan has offered floor space at his flat, which is not far away

Alison Smedley

For up to date information check
the London WRG web pages:

www.danevans.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
23-24/10/99	Lichfield	Ed Walker
6-7/11/99	WRG Reunion (H&G, Over)	-
13-14/11/99	Richmond Visitors Moorings	Matt Taylor
4-5/12/99	LWRG/KESCRG Xmas dig (Basingstoke)	-
15-16/1/00	TBA	TBA
5-6/2/00	TBA	TBA
26-27/2/00	TBA	TBA
25-26/3/00	BCN Cleanup, Hawne Basin, Dudley No. 2	TBA

As most of the digs are TBA's at the moment, volunteers would be very welcome to help arrange them.

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. October 13th, October 27th, November 24th 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.

Other Events:

16/10/99 Legoland trip
15/12/99 LWRG Xmas party, Dan's flat.
?/3/00 London WRG AGM (further details next time)

Who to contact:

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