

From The Editor

As you can see from the cover, London WRG has been a bit preoccupied with a certain muddy hole in the ground near Gloucester over the last few months; if I did not have this illustrious magazine to write I probably would have been there myself this weekend. After a slow start last year the project now seems to be moving ahead at an incredible rate; it is amazing what we can do when everyone pulls together. But despite four digs in a row on the site in the last month with a strong London WRG presence there is still a huge amount of work to do, so if you are looking for an excuse to do a dig in the near future make it on the H&G and you will be guaranteed a good one.

This issue of London WRG news has gone a bit “Over the top” (poor pun I know), with two dig reports from Over and also the write up from the recent London WRG AGM detailing when else we are going there. But apart from more Overwork in the next few months London WRG is going back to some of its more traditional haunts and we are planning to have a strong presence at Canalway Cavalcade as usual.

As always, if anyone feels compelled to write something for London WRG News it will be accepted with gratitude, you may have noticed the same author’s crop up again and again!

See people at Cavalcade/Over/some other canal?

Ed Walker

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

www.danevans.co.uk/lwrg

Run Away! Run Away!

Yes, the great London WRG diaspora is on. Matt and Andi have set off on their travels around the world and apparently they are in South Africa at the moment and thoroughly enjoying themselves. I know that we have been working a lot at Over recently but disappearing off to the other side of the globe is a bit excessive for getting out of going on the digs! Rupert and Alison have also moved out of London to the Caldon Canal: the house comes with its own flight of disused locks, should keep them busy for a few years restoring that lot!

Fancy a Dirty Weekend?

A large batch of red postcards appeared recently in my student union, bearing the “fancy a dirty weekend” logo. On closer inspection they turned out to be part of the new recruitment drive from WRG central. The cards appeared to be extremely popular and we can only hope that we get some new recruits out of them and not just have the cards used for practical jokes! Seriously Dan’s new website that goes with the cards is well worth a look:

www.dirtyweekend.org.uk

Stop Press – The latest from Over

The WRG Over camp finished (late!) last night, and achieved a huge amount of work. Much of the wharf wall is now backfilled with compacted crusher, so it is now possible to walk rather than wade round site. All the crusher that had to be moved was moved, the canal was extended round the corner, the compound filled with neatly stacked materials (it’ll never catch on!), the really high noise bund was doubled in height, and we occasionally managed to consume alcohol but were usually too knackered. Many thanks to all who managed to make any part of it... but don’t think it gets you out of more begging phonecalls!

Marcus Jones

Hereford & Gloucester Canal: 29-30 January 2000

Right from the start this promised to be a very different weekend: LRY managed to leave Waterloo on time! It wasn't long before Ed was happily asleep, dreaming about plant, being woken only briefly as we picked up Ian Wingfield and the "Ian that isn't Wingfield" from a lay-by near Rickmansworth. What is it about digs on the H&G and picking people up in lay-bys?

The rain started on Birdlip – almost as regular an occurrence on London WRG digs as at Lichfield – but was short lived, giving us a much needed dry weekend. The other regular feature of our journeys to the H&G, the discussion of the true meaning of weight restriction signs in relation to Transit vans full of lardy blokes also materialised, giving Andi a chance to practice her mental arithmetic.

We found the Royal Exchange already very full: despite five cancellations, we had an excellent turnout of 23. Another welcome discovery was the landlord's interpretation of closing time – obviously it's when you close the curtains! That and an excellent hall pose a serious challenge to West Felton.

Tesco once again obliged at 1am, but on returning to the hall with all the food, we found the fridge and all the pans locked in the storeroom. Somehow an excellent breakfast was cooked using a single grill tray on Saturday.

On site, a huge number of bricks were laid on the wharf wall. The slipway walls were finished by Matt, shuttered, and then partially backfilled with concrete, mixed by hand. Elsewhere, the gabion wall was finally started, and a large amount of "landscaping" brought the east bank of the basin down to the correct height.

Maria and Clive cooked an excellent meal, augmented by cakes supplied by Trust members. Once again the landlord was very obliging; too obliging for some!

Working Party Reports

On Sunday, shuttering and bricklaying continued, while everyone else got to play with terram and tonnes of crusher. The area around the slipway was prepared for topsoil, and the slipway for its granite finish. Clive filled more gabions, ably assisted in the cab of the 3CX by Bess.

No dig at Over would be complete without a few breakdowns: the hired pump failed to work all weekend, while the one it was brought in to replace functioned admirably. JP, Alan, and Chris even managed to perform negative breakdowns on both of the 805s: David will now have to find a new reference point to survey off! Similarly shocking was the novel experience of leaving site before sunset.

Those of us going back to London spent the journey asleep, no doubt dreaming of the opening ceremony: if the rest of the weekends are as productive as this one, then we won't need to dream about it.

Marcus Jones

Working Party Reports

**Hereford & Gloucester Canal: 26-27th
February 2000**

Another weekend, another dig at Over for London WRG. Meeting up with the rest of the group in the Royal Exchange pub we found that the work list (i.e. wish list) read like something prepared for the builders of the Egyptian pyramids. A few jars later we returned to the five star village hall for forty winks before site.

On site the next day the first job was to prop up the shuttering a bit more to prevent a repetition of the bulging/leaking that had blighted the previous pour. After a brief tea break a concrete lorry appeared and with the help of the JCB 3CX the last of the concrete on the short limb was poured. While some of us were working Marcus decided that Blue the excavator was way to clean and managed to get it completely stuck while trying to excavate behind the long limb of the wall. A couple of hours later, a few of the locals lovingly restored pallets, many photos and the threat of the 805, Harry managed to extricate the well mired machine.

The afternoon was spent laying crusher and terram for the H&G Trust's compound, painting the site hut and more behind wall excavation, this time with Marcus deciding to go "over the top" as opposed to "round the end". Strangely we managed to leave site while it was still light; not sure what went wrong there - DP must be slipping in his old age. A brilliant team effort on dinner and a few pints in the pub wound up a very productive day; everyone was too knackered to drink very much!

Back to site the next day, shuttering was struck from the short limb and a start made on reerecting it on the long limb, crusher was laid behind the walls, Adrian deigned to turn up on site and do some work (apparently the girlfriend was over from Norway or somewhere, as if that's a valid excuse!) and promptly got Blue stuck again while puddling clay behind the gabions: again it was Harry to the rescue. Come 3.30pm and the weather had got significantly worse and so it was decided to pull off site before someone injured themselves.

About the only thing I can say about the dig is that everyone worked bloody hard and we put a real dent in the work list, a few (lot?) more digs like this and we may get this job finished.

Ed Walker



Marcus digging Blue out (H&G, Ed Walker)

We held our London WRG AGM in the Mad Hatter on the 16th February 2000.

Dates, venues and organisers were arranged until Easter 2001 or so. (see the dates page of this issue) You will not be surprised to see that the Hereford & Gloucester site at Over features fairly heavily in the first part of the year. But it ain't all Over - we've also got our Dig Deep commitments on the Basingstoke and Wey & Arun, a trip to Yorkshire and another chance to sample Jan's cakes on the Lichfield! And although there won't be a Reunion dig in November this year (as there's a WRG 20th Birthday event in September instead), we hope to get together with KESCRG - and maybe the other Dig Deep groups - for a Bonfire Bash somewhere on the 4-5 November weekend.

It was agreed to bear in mind Droitwich, Chichester and - inevitably - Over for any free slots we might find we have at a later date.

It was agreed that we were happy with our three-week cycle of working parties with a few longer gaps around Christmas and other holiday times.

Incidentally, we went on 15 digs in 1999, which is the most we've managed since 1993, and probably more than any other group did last year. We might not run camps, and we might not have as large a turnout as some groups, but we still manage to do a very useful amount of work. This year we should manage at least the same amount again, and in addition to our own digs all London WRG volunteers are very welcome on the extra digs being organised at Over - with transport usually available from London. These digs therefore also appear in the dates list and Marcus will no doubt be pestering you to turn up.

Skills and training were discussed and it was agreed that it would be useful to add skills to the ring-round phone list, (and possibly also add dietary requirements). We could do with someone trained in the use of a JCB 3CX and also the Telehandler forks at Over. We are losing several van drivers with Rupert and Alison moving north and Matt and Andi travelling, so van authorisa-

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tion will be sought for Ed and any other qualifying drivers. (in the case of drivers whose licences are more recent than 1st Jan 1997 and who therefore don't qualify for 9 to 15 seat vehicles, we're waiting for confirmation that WRG central believe that we qualify for the "non commercial body for social purposes" exemption to this restriction). WRG hope to have another Training Weekend in June - in which case a minibus will be available to take people from London - plus there may be opportunities for training during digs.

Recruitment, retention and publicity: we have the web page but need some articles about LWRG for 'Navvies', if anyone feels like writing one. We could do with a flier to give to people, including the locals at Over to explain more fully what WRG, in particular London WRG do. Ed will try to resurrect and polish a flier we wrote some time ago. It should be printed in smallish quantities with an up-to-date dates list on the back and contact details. For our display / fund-raising effort at Canalway Cavalcade, Dan will go ahead and encapsulate the Tombola Game's new map, and a weekend work party will engineer a set of display 'steps' for the prizes in the near future, using materials easily found in Martin's loft! Paula came up with a jolly good idea for a fund raising game... but we are not printing it here in case someone pinches it before we get it fully worked out! Ed was thanked for his work on LWRG news.

Money: We are financially OK at the moment with no plans to buy anything expensive, but will hope to raise some cash at Cavalcade and at the 'National' at Waltham Abbey in August. One possible expense will be if we need to hire a minibus for any of the summer weekends when all

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WRG vehicles are in use on Canal Camp duties.

It was agreed to pay £250 towards the cost of various work that has had to be done on the minibus.

Equipment and tools: We'll get some new safety gear - goggles, dust-masks and hard-hats including one with visor to go with the brush cutter. Also some more brick-kit including a line-level. And we've already acquired some more small levels and lines. More importantly, the **toaster** needs some new elements!

Socials: It was decided to continue meeting at the Mad Hatter on the Wednesday 10 days before each dig, except that we will try to organise something a bit different for a few of the summer ones - an evening at the Great British Beer Festival, a barbecue or an evening boat cruise. For our Christmas Party on 13th December we hope to go back to the London Canal Museum again. And an extra social at the Warwick castle just before Canalway Cavalcade will help us finalise our plans for the Pageant of Boats.

Speaking of which... that's one thing we forgot to talk about! We'd better think about it soon, and discuss it at the next few socials.

Lesley McFadyen

London Region IWA: Central London Socials

The dates and venues for London Region IWA Central London meetings are as follows. Note that some of these venues may have changed from previously, so please note the venues.

- 16 March 2000: Jim McDonald: Best Job on the Cut [Grouse & Claret]
- 13 April 2000: AGM [Lamb]
- 18 May 2000: Mike Palmer, [Canal Museum]
- 15 June 2000: Treasure hunt
- 21 September 2000: [Lamb]
- 19 October 2000: [Lamb]
- 16 November 2000: Pete Roberts: Thames Sailing Barges [Lamb]
- 14 December 2000: Xmas auction [Lamb].

The Grouse & Claret is at Little Chester Street, SW1. (Nearest tube/rail: Victoria).

The Lamb is at Lamb's Conduit Street, WC1. (Nearest tube: Russell Square/Holborn). This can be a bit tricky to find, as the street does not seem to be on most A-Zs. The street is off Guildford Street opposite Coram's Fields. Lamb's Conduit Street is a northern extension of Red Lion Street.

The Canal Museum is at New Wharf Road, Kings Cross.

Dan Evans

Who to contact:

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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
25-26/3/00	BCN Cleanup (Dudley No 2 Canal)	-
8-9/4/00	Extra dig on H&G (Over)*	Marcus Jones
15-16/4/00	Dig Deep on the Wey & Arun	Tim Lewis
29/4-1/5/00	Extra dig on H&G (Over)*	Marcus Jones
13-14/5/00	Barnsley	Rupert Smedley
27-29/5/00	Extra dig on H&G (Over)*	Marcus Jones
3-4/6/00	Wey & Arun, (Martin and Dan's Birthday)	Dan Evans
10-11/6/00	Extra dig on H&G (Over)*	Marcus Jones
1-2/7/00	LWRG dig on H&G (Over)	Marcus Jones
22-23/7/00	Dig Deep on the Basingstoke Canal	Lesley McFadyen
12-13/8/00	LWRG dig on H&G (Over)	Marcus Jones
9-10/9/00	Dig Deep on the Basingstoke Canal	Ed Walker
7-8/10/00	Dig Deep on the Wey & Arun	Martin Ludgate

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, 15th March, 5th April, 3rd May 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. **Note:** extra social 26/4/00 at the Warwick Castle pub, Little Venice.

* There will not be socials before the extra Hereford and Gloucester digs.

Other Events:

29/4-1/5/00	IWA Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice.
17-18/6/00	WRG Training Weekend
24-25/6/00	BCN Marathon Challenge.
26-28/8/00	IWA National Waterways Festival, Waltham Abbey.
16-30/9/00	WRG "Flying Circus", 30 th birthday celebrations (TBC).