



Painting the Barnsley Canal Group's trip-boat at Elsecar (see P2). Photo: Martin Ludgate

Editorial

What's happened to Ed?

OK, all together now - one, two, three... "Nothing, he's always been like that!" Right, that's got that one out of the way... Anyway, your regular editor 'Ed-the-ed' Walker didn't manage to round up enough stuff for an issue of London WRG News before he disappeared for most of the summer on Canal Camps. (Bloody students! Far too long holidays, far too much money, mutter mutter...) So rather than waiting until he returns sometime towards the end of the century, I'm afraid you're lumbered with me back as editor for one issue. I've got round the problem of not enough stuff by writing most of it myself and nicking the rest from elsewhere, but don't you go thinking that's a permanent solution - **please do keep the dig reports and other contributions coming in** so Ed won't have any excuses next time.

Dig Deep Update

Many of our working parties are on projects that have been adopted as part of the Dig Deep Initiative - a joint scheme between ourselves and three other groups to co-ordinate our efforts on several selected projects in the south of England, so that the jobs get done to something approaching a schedule. Well, the next phase of Dig Deep will see us carrying on with the Basingstoke back-pumping scheme, plus over the next few months we'll be starting on two new sites, both lock restorations - one on the Cotswold Canals (Thames & Severn Canal) in the highly scenic Golden Valley, and one on the Wilts & Berks in the heart of Arkells and Wadworths beer-drinking territory. Watch this space.

And speaking of beer...

If enough people are interested in going there, this week's social may be at the **Great British Beer Festival at Olympia** instead of the usual pub. Ring Tim Lewis on 020 8367 6227 or mobile 07802 518094 to confirm.

PS don't miss the Droitwich Bonfire Bash on Nov 4-5!!! - see p6

Martin Ludgate

Dig Report: Dearne & Dove Canal

London WRG at Elsecar

A magnificent run up from London in the minibus meant that we had time to unpack and inspect the Hoyland Scout Hall. It was obviously "undergoing restoration" at the time. The half-built climbing wall might be an improvement, but we didn't think much of the half-demolished Ladies loos.

So we headed off with the London WRG Leek branch (Harriet and the Smedleys) to the Furnace pub: although some distance away, it has several certificates praising its toilets. The beer was good too, and the funny drinks with things on sticks in. Aileen said the orange thing-on-a-stick was called physalis.

We had two main worksites. Firstly, the party at the lock had to check the stone flags making up the top cill and realign and puddle any that were out of place. This involved lowering the pound above so that that the hapless volunteers in the lock had a reduced chance of being swept away by 5,000 tons of water if the planks broke. It also involved JP and a pump: but perhaps most things do these days.

There was also a nearby pyramid of large stones to be measured, numbered and laid out by size to make rebuilding of the lower end of the lock easier. All this was done in tropical heat surrounded by mosquitoes.

Meanwhile a party of boatwomen headed off to the Heritage Centre to paint "Elsa" the trip boat, formerly the "Norwood Packet" on the Chesterfield. She certainly looked in rather a "heritage" state in the bright sunshine. By Sunday, with the added assistance of Rupert, she was covered in shiny blue and white paint with gloss black on as much of the bottom as we could reach. We were also covered in shiny blue and white paint, etc.

We kept off the heat by buying ice-creams from the Heritage Centre and exhausted ourselves in our attempts to play a simple children's game where you run a large plastic ball up an Archimedes' screw, down a variable slope, up a ratcheted pulley, and down a corkscrew spiral. The secret is to do it slowly or your balls fall off!

Saturday evening was notable for playing with Martin's new mobile phone before eating Alison's excellent moussaka, followed by a rhubarb and orange crumble. A brief trip to the pub for more beer and physalis then helped tranquillise those who found it difficult to sleep due to the noise made by the snoring... or the spiders.

On Sunday by the lock we moved more stones, tidied some old lock gates out of the way and developed insect-bitten sun-tans.

A steam train made hourly trips down the Heritage Centre's railway. All was idyllic - no one even panicked when JP had to be called back from his early return to Stockport to bring back the lunch which had been put in his van - this being the first time that Martin's mobile (07779 478629) had been used in anger!

Lesley McFadyen

Dig Report: Hereford & Gloucester Canal

London WRG and friends at Over

Just to show that we're really scraping the barrel regarding contributions to this august journal (well OK July actually), this report on an extra dig on the H&G project at Over, supported by London WRG and NWPG among others, is actually written by somebody from KESCRG...

Friday Night (skip this bit if you're not interested in the gossip) – my introduction to the 'Royal Exchange' was, apparently, fairly typical. I do like a pub where arriving at 10.30 does not necessarily mean just a swift pint before closing... unfortunately some people chose whiskey to have the pint of. Others didn't make it home at all!

Saturday – As someone who has been a bit too busy getting married etc. to be at Over every "Over" weekend, I'm VERY impressed with the progress that has been made. Someone has even managed to work out how to turn the rain off, and it was lovely and sunny all weekend. However, Adrian still had plenty for us to do!

- **158 Big blue coping bricks were laid on top of the first third of the long arm of the wharf wall. Ian, Martin, Jude, Rick, Stephen, me, Graham Hawkes, and various other locals and NWPG formed a crack team, all the available bricks were laid and pointed, and it looks dead sexy. Even Mr Penny was forced to concede that it was very nice! Only need to do another 500 or so...**
- **More brick work was required to build a support for a diesel tank, Phil Cardy and NWPG types were doing such a quick job of this that at one point it looked like Phil was going to get bricked into it!**
- **Lots of shredded bark was spread on the towpath, by Marcus, Lesley and Paula and others who I can't remember. The pile was a nice soft sweet smelling place to snooze on too!**
- **Jen used excavator 'Blue' to dig out the foundations of the "feature wall" on the long wharf side. Later on Stephen, Jenny and Rick were involved putting up the reinforcing mesh for the foundation and back fill.**

Saturday eve (optional extra section of report) Ralph had woken up by the time we left site – and had gone to the pub. Ali cooked a delicious chilli, with all the etc's. We had a huge cheese board for afters, and Birthday cake, thanks to Lou and her book of cakes. I don't think that the blue sponge inside the pig cake for Jude was standard, and whilst we all know her obsession with pigs, I didn't realise Martin collected hideous alien faces with optional detachable ears! Early night back from the pub – the dawn chorus hadn't started.

Sunday – I think other jobs went on, but the main one was laying the foundation of the feature wall, a pour of 7m³ of concrete (it should have been 6m³, but Jen had got carried away with Blue.) Unfortunately it was in the most awkward place to get at with machinery, so we all spent the day doing what Navvies do best – shovelling! Some navvies shovelled ballast into big square bags, others shovelled ballast and cement into the 2 mixers set up on the wharf wall, and others shovelled the concrete into the right places of the foundation. Occasionally the ballast bypassed the mixers when Mike and Ian got too enthusiastic. Martin on the Skid-Steer kept us provided with cement, bags of ballast and water, with the help of a team of dumpers. He also provided the cabaret, finding new and interesting ways to park and unload the skid steer. Obviously 2 days of summer weren't quite enough to change all the Over mud into solid ground.

Huge thanks to Adrian for spending more time at Over than at work (?Over time), Ali for the top food, and all the folks who stayed until 6.30 on Sunday to finish the concrete. It's fab to see the visible progress, and that this really is a feasible project. Keep up the good work, see you at the next weekend.

Dr. Liz (Williamson!!)

Dig Report: Here and there

What have we been doing Over the last few months?

The last few months have been very busy ones for London WRG - mostly working at Over on the Hereford & Gloucester Canal. Liz's report on the previous page covers just one of a series of weekends - either 'official' London WRG digs or extra weekends supported by us - that have seen us down there about twice a month for the first half of 2000. I think the minibus knows its way there without me needing to steer it any more! (OK - how's that for a novel excuse for my bad driving?)

Our most recent visit at the start of July saw another couple of hundred blue bullnose coping bricks laid on the top of the wharf wall, and the whole place really starting to look like we might actually finish it in time for the August deadline. Since then, two weeks of Canal Camps have seen further progress in the gradual transformation from muddy hole in the ground - via building site - to canal basin and restoration showpiece. Have a look at the photographs on the back cover, compare them to what you remember the site looking like at the start of this year, and marvel at the changes that have happened in such a short time. And remember that quite a lot of it's down to London WRG for getting heavily involved in putting the project back on schedule. Well done, everyone! (Not that we want to claim all the credit for the work done on Canal Camps plus NWPG, KESCRG and everyone else's efforts - who do you think we are? BW?)

But it isn't all Over...

We do work elsewhere too. We like to work on the Wey & Arun Canal (not least for the King and Barnes beer - although I heard a terrible rumour that K&B have been taken over and the brewery has been closed down!) but sadly the W&A - despite being one canal that suffered horrendously throughout its short and less-than-busy life from water shortages that meant it struggled to carry the meagre trade on offer - seems to always be inaccessible due to flooding whenever we plan to go there. So despite deliberately scheduling W&A digs in what are laughably referred to as the 'drier months' we ended up cancelling our last two visits. One was rescheduled to Over (surprise surprise!) and the other went to the Basingstoke...

All hands to the pumps

The water-supply backpumping scheme on the Basingstoke Canal is proceeding apace, with the work on enlarging the overflow weirs complete (although unfortunately the completion of this job has drawn our attention to the fact that the overflow culverts also need rebuilding - this summer's Canal Camps are due to tackle this job). Our most recent dig was on July 22-23, and a small but perfectly-formed working party (just for once I was more-or-less the average age of the party, rather than a couple of decades older than several of them!) did most of the work of clearing trees and stumps from the site for the pumping station and the access road to it from lock 1, plus a fair amount of moving dirt from one place to another, giving me a rare chance to practice my digger-driving skills without having to fight Ed and Marcus for it!

On yer bike!

As usual this year's BCN Cleanup demonstrated that the worthy citizens of England's Second City fully understand the link between environmentally friendly transport and inland waterways - namely that canals are useful places for dumping old bikes. We also pulled out a three-piece suite, a toilet seat and a couple of computers. But apparently - believe it or not - we're running out of suitably crappy bits of canal to clean up in Birmingham, and there's a chance we'll be re-locating to Manchester next year.

Martin Ludgate

A song for Marcus

Sung to the tune of "Waltzing Matilda" (traditional version)

1. Once a jolly student sat by a telephone,
Calling his contacts one, two, three.
And he sang as he sat and waited for the dialling tone,
"Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
And he sang as he sat and waited for the dialling tone,
"Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
2. Weekly he calls to rustle up some volunteers,
Weekly he calls, their weary ears to bend,
"There's mud and there's shuttering, bricks to lay and plant to mend,
Who'll come to over to Over with me?"
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
There's mud and there's shuttering, bricks to lay and plant to mend,
Who'll come to over to Over with me?"
3. Dialling up the number, listen for the ringing tone,
Wait for the answer, "Hello, its me!
Coming to Over?" He asks the calls recipient,
"Coming to Over, to Over with me?"
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
Coming to Over?" He asks the calls recipient,
"Who'll come to over to Over with me?"
4. "Watching the paint dry", "Worming out the family pet",
"Doing the laundry", "Hugging poorly tree",
"Cutting my toenails", "Cleaning out the guttering",
"Having my Grandma to visit for tea."
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
"Cutting my toenails", "Cleaning out the guttering",
"Who'll come to over to Over with me?"

(Slowly, with feeling)

5. Sadly, dejected, he calls the last name on the list,
Tear in his eye, as he gives his final plea,
"You'll have lots of fun there, beer and friends and revelry,
"Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
You'll have lots of fun there, beer and friends and revelry,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
6. Silence ensues as he holds the phone with baited breath,
Silence ensues as he holds on patiently.

(Back to rhythm)

- "Yes! I'll come to Over." They say with crass naivety,
"I'll come to Over, to Over with thee."
Ch "Who'll come to Over, who'll come to Over,
Who'll come to Over, to Over with me?"
"Yes! I'll come to Over." They say with crass naivety,
"I'll come to Over, to Over with thee."

Lyrics by Allan Scott

Next time out

They think it's all Over...

...it is now! Or it will be, very soon. Our next working party on August 12-13 is the very last one at Over, on the Hereford & Gloucester canal, before the deadline for completion of work. Thanks to lots of weekend working parties and several week-long Canal Camps, the work of recreating the entrance basin including the wharf wall, slipway and lock forebay is on schedule for completion - but there are bound to be lots of finishing off jobs to do. Unfortunately we probably won't have our minibus for transport from London for this dig, so we'll be relying on people with cars to give lifts to those who don't have them - thanks.

Basinstoke Backpumps

Next outing in September is a joint weekend with KESCRG on the Basingstoke Canal water supply back-pumping project at Woodham. What we'll be doing depends on how work progresses on the two weeks of Canal Camps just starting.

WRG Works!

Waterway Recovery Group - the national organisation of which London WRG is a regional group - celebrates 30 years of volunteer work on restoring canals this year. The actual anniversary is on 1st August - so raise your glasses to WRG as you read this - but the main celebrations are in the second half of September. They consist of:

- A weekend dig at Pant, on the Montgomery Canal on 16-17 September. This replaces the usual early November WRG Reunion dig. We need lots of volunteers, as we've got 2 miles of impenetrable jungle to clear - and two days to do it in!
- A week's work at Lichfield, 18-22 September. We're re-lining a section of the canal with a Bentonite membrane, to waterproof it ready for re-watering. A variety of work for skilled and unskilled, machine-trained and untrained volunteers. Volunteers needed - contact Dan Evans (Tel: 020 8560 1798, mobile: 07968 196896, e-mail) if you can help.
- A weekend at Lichfield on 23-24 September, to finish off this work, hopefully re-water the canal, and have a party to celebrate it.
- A week of getting the H&G site at Over into the best possible state ready for...
- The celebration of the completion of the huge Over Basin project - a celebrity opening on Friday 29th and a huge WRG party on Saturday 30th.

There should be transport available from London to all the weekend events. You will have to book in advance for these events: for more details - and a booking form - see the last or the next issue of 'Navvies', visit the WRG web site <http://www.wrg.org.uk> or contact Martin.

Wey & Arun - third time lucky?

Our last two W&A digs have had to be moved elsewhere due to the site and access being waterlogged. Let's hope it doesn't happen again on October 7-8. We should be putting the finishing touches on Rowner Lock, completing the 'Dig Deep 2000' project to bring the length of canal through Rowner and Malham locks up to good navigable standard, ready to link to the restored 'Loxwood Link' length and create a 6-mile continuous navigable length - once someone's stumped up quarter of a million for an aqueduct to link the two together!

London WRG - Staffordshire branch?

On October 21-22 we head north to Staffs for a weekend on the Lichfield Canal, and a chance to meet up with our expatriate London WRGies Rupert and Alison, who moved to Leek in the spring - Alison will be organising this dig.

Droitwich Bonfire Extravaganza

Only just decided as this issue goes to press, so the details are still a bit hazy, but as WRG's national reunion is two months earlier than usual in September this year, the traditional early November date for a big work-party and Guy Fawkes bash is free. So we're getting together with our friends in KESCRG plus as many people as we can entice back from the summer Canal Camps that London WRG and KESCRG people helped to run, for a major working party plus bonfire and fireworks on the Droitwich Canal on November 4-5. More info and booking form next time.

Christmas on the TBA...

Actually 'TBA' stands for 'To Be Arranged' - we will definitely be having a Christmas dig on 2-3 December, it's just that we don't know where yet. See the next issue!

Martin Ludgate

Dates list

Working parties: transport usually available in the London WRG minibus; meet outside Burger King at Waterloo station, normally at 7pm but may be earlier or later depending on how far we're travelling. Contact Tim, Martin or Lesley for details.

Date	Location	Organiser
12-13/08/00	Hereford & Gloucester Canal	Martin Ludgate
9-10/9/00	Basingstoke Canal - joint dig with KESCRG	Ed Walker
16-17/9/00	WRG Reunion weekend on the Montgomery Canal	Martin Ludgate
7-8/10/00	Wey & Arun Canal	Martin Ludgate
21-22/10/00	Lichfield Canal	Alison Smedley
4-5/11/00	Droitwich Canal - Bonfire Night 'do' with KESCRG	
2-3/12/00	Christmas party dig - venue to be announced	
20-21/1/01	To be decided	

Social gatherings: take place on the Wednesday night 10 days before each working party, from 7:30pm onwards. They are usually held in the Mad Hatter pub on Stamford Street - from Blackfriars tube station, cross Blackfriars Bridge, turn right at the traffic lights into Stamford Street and the pub is immediately on your left. But check with one of the organisers to make sure.

Other events:

IWA National Waterways Festival at Waltham Abbey over the Bank Holiday weekend on 25-28 August. Not a London WRG event, but several of our people will be there as boaters, or involved in helping to run the event.

WRG Works! - a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Waterway Recovery Group (see opposite) - takes place on all three weekends and two intervening weeks from 16th to 30th September. We hope to have transport from London to each of the weekend events - contact Martin for details.

Christmas social: we'll be having an extra Wednesday night 'do' on 13th December, venue to be decided - see next issue.

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Progress at Over: the wharf wall is now complete with blue bullnose coping bricks and mooring rings (above), and work has finally started on the lock forebay (below). Since these photos were taken, two weeks of Canal Camps have seen the lock entrance base laid in reinforced concrete and the wing walls constructed in brick, the 'feature wall' above the wharf built, the final profiling of canal bed and banks completed and more of the landscaping and grass-seeding of the surroundings that is making it look more like a real canal. But there's plenty left to do - we need to have it complete and re-watered by the end of our August 12-13 weekend, ready for an official opening on September 29th. Photos by Martin Ludgate.

