

London WRG News



Extra Droitwich dig, finishing the work on the spillweir (Tim Lewis)

Issue 48 February 2001

From The Editor

The start of a new millennium and the Over project is but a fading memory, brought back only when you have to excavate the clay out of the washing machine hoses. As London WRG no longer have to spend every weekend commuting up and down the M40, things have returned to a vague kind of normality with the usual Christmas parties and some new Dig Deep sites (more on this later).

The London WRG Christmas party was held at the London Canal Museum and involved the usual excellent buffet, a barrel of beer, the traditional alcoholic raffle (3rd prize, a bottle of alcoholic iron brew, 4th prize, two bottles, 5th prize, three bottles!) and the highlight of the evening, the London WRG awards! This years recipients (unfortunates?) were:

The driving award: Martin for driving up and down the M40 every weekend.

The lame excuse award: Alison Smedley for being elected to IWA council and so missing a dig.

The leadership award: Eddie Jones for leading the large number of KESCRG digs that London WRG have been on this year.

I think that's it for another couple of months, don't forget it is the London WRG AGM in a few weeks time and cn people pleasewrite me some dig reports!

See people on a dig,

Ed Walker

Millennium Volunteers

On the Kennet and Avon dig the other weekend we were working alongside some Millennium Volunteers, from talking to them and some research on the web it has been found that this project is along the lines of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in that it is meant to be getting young people more involved in the community. The scheme involves doing either 100 or 200 hours of volunteer work for which you get a certificate signed by Dan's boss, the Secretary of State for Education and Employment. What made many of us prick up our ears was that the volunteers get their transport paid for by the government! The thought of being able to charge the government for the Friday night transit van ride seemed to good to be true. Unfortunately it is, you have to be working on a Millennium Volunteers project and WRG is not due to a full time member of staff being needed to run the project. Anyone who is interested in the Millennium Volunteers can find (some) further information on the website:

www.millenniumvolunteers.gov.uk

Gone (Im)mobile?

Helen Gardner has had a landline fitted to her boat, the number is:

020 88457820

We can only assume that she has a long wire on the phone to enable her to use the boat still!

New Web Address

The London WRG web page has been moved to the following (slightly more memorable) address:

www.london.wrg.org.uk

The old address will still work for the foreseeable future.

Due to a dearth of dig reports this time, here is a brief pictorial synopsis of what we've been involved with recently.



Working Party Photos

Extra Dig on the Droitwich, rebuilding the spillweir and finishing off the work left after the fireworks weekend (Tim Lewis).

Unofficial new year camp on the Basingstoke, cutting back the trees on the offside bank (Martin Ludgate).



KESCRG/London WRG Christmas party, with a gypsy theme (Wilts & Berks Canal, Tim Lewis).

Stone recovery operations on the Kennet & Avon Canal (Carl Whitehead).



Working Party Reports

**Kennet & Avon Canal: 20/21st January
2001.**

Originally this dig was meant to be continuing the back pump support works on the Basingstoke Canal as part of our Dig Deep commitments, it was found that as the contractors were running behind their would be no work for us. An E-mail from the British Waterways volunteer co-ordinator for the K&A and some swift discussion, it was decided that we would work on the Bradford section of the K&A, removing some stone from the bed of the canal to allow a piling operation to start on the Monday.

We arrived in Devizes at 11.05pm on the Friday after having collected a camp kit trailer from deep cut on the Basingstoke and Rick from a station nearby. A new use was found for the mobile phone collection, phoning the people already in the pub to get a round in before closing time! We were staying in the Devizes Canal Centre, the only problem with it was that it was a half hour from site.

On reaching site the next morning we found that some of the local Millennium Volunteers would be giving us a hand and so we started work at removing the stones from the canal bed and onto the bank, as the canal bed was frozen solid, this was harder than it seemed as all the stones had frozen to it! A bit of work with a wrecking bar soon loosened them up though. A small hydraulic dumper was used to move the recovered stone to the storage area where it was to be used to repair a wall around the local tithe barn. A hard mornings work saw most of the canal cleared of stones and work

was started by Lesley and Dorian to patch the retaining wall that had become undercut by water. Lunch was in the canal centre, heated with electricity...luxury! The afternoon saw more dumper loading and a start was made on recovering more stone from a heap of clay.

Back at the accommodation after one of Martin's excellent spag bol's we headed down the local hostelry for a few jugs of pigswill before an impromptu slide show at the accommodation.

The next day prove to be warmer but as the rain had thawed the canal out it was much squidgier underfoot. Martin and Marcus headed off to a WRG board meeting leavin the rest of us to complete the work. The last of the stone was removed from the canal bank and the clay heap team held a small rebellion. Not wanting to work on the clay heap all afternoon we cut back a number of trees that had fallen into the canal before heading down the pub to wait for Martin's return.

A very good dig, despite the less than technical nature of the work but it was nice to work on a canal where all the local people seemed to be interested in the work. We certainly seemed to impress Carl, the local BW representative with the speed that we cleared the stone out of the canal and it looks like we may be able to do more work down there at some point as a lot of lock quadrants need replacement.

Ed Walker



Wall patchers at work (Carl Whitehead).

Our next dig, on **February 10-11**, is at a new site on the **Wilts and Berks**. This is one of two new Dig Deep sites this year, and we will be only the second working party there. The site, Summit Lock, is on the Southeast side of Wootton Bassett, and it looks like we will be staying in the town's scout hut. The bottom four feet of the brick chamber walls remains in situ; above that level, contractors have removed the very poor remains of the lock, and graded the bank back. We aren't too sure of the work yet, but it is likely to include salvaging materials, cleaning out of the invert, and, doubtless, some head scratching and condemning of the rest of the lock from our surfeit of engineers! From NWPG's account of their weekend, however, the main job may actually prove to be cleaning the tools of the Over-like clay on Sunday afternoon! Please let Martin know if you are coming: (020) 86933266 or e-mail: editor@navvies.demon.co.uk.

Three weeks later, on **March 3-4**, we'll be visiting the other new Dig Deep site, at Valley Lock on the **Thames and Severn**. This is a joint dig with Essex WRG, so we are aiming to make substantial progress both on the lock chamber itself, and clearing several fallen trees above the lock. The site is at Chalford, in the Golden Valley near Stroud, and will be where both WRG and NWPG are holding camps this summer. We may well be scaffolding out the chamber on this weekend, prior to extensive rebuilding of the offside chamber wall. Accommodation is at Selsley Scout Hut, near Stroud: highly convenient for the Bell Inn, serving its legendary Ol' Bastard, a unique peanut flavoured lager. Please let me know as early as possible, as this is a joint dig: (07968) 334358 or e-mail: marcus.jones@btinternet.com.

Our next dig was supposed to be supporting the national clean-up weekend on the Ashton Canal. This was to be the first time the clean-up had ventured out of the BCN for a number of years, but unfortunately the weekend won't be running on schedule due to the wrong type of rubbish in the canal. Instead **March 24-25** will see London WRG, along with several other regional groups, on the

Next Time Out

Montgomery, as part of "Pant 2" – continuing the work started during "WRG Works!" to clear a substantial length of dense scrub near the village of Pant. Further details and booking forms will be in the next copy of Navvies and on the WRG website soon. Please let Martin know if you have booked on the weekend and would like to travel up in the minibus.

Not actually a London WRG dig, but the first camp of the year, and the first of many this year on the **Droitwich Junction**, will take place over Easter, **April 7-16**. There may also be several extra weekends there over the next few months, and bricklayers in particular would be very welcome on any of these! Don't worry if you aren't a bricklayer though: an unusual aspect of the work at Droitwich this year will be the emphasis on training in heritage and manual skills, much of which will be given by staff from BW's new heritage skills centre. IWA announced recently that the Droitwich Canals Trust had been awarded £100,000 from the legacy left by Neil Pitts, a prominent member of the association from the West Midlands, and it is intended to fully restore the Junction Locks with this by the end of this year.

21-22 April will see us back on the **Basingstoke**, once again working to install the backpumping scheme at Woodham. Work by that stage should be getting back on (pipe)line, following delays to the contractor's schedule with all the rain before Christmas. Remember the problems we used to have with the whinging residential boaters above Lock 2? It's unlikely to happen again, as Rick, Steve, and Helen have been doing their best to buy them out. Anyone want to form a LWRG Non-Boaters Club?

Marcus Jones

Social Venue & AGM

New Social Venue

The London WRG pub crawl continues! As the “Spread Eagle” has changed landlords and now no longer serves real ale, it seems to be now less than ideal a site for our socials. So we have moved it to the “Jugged Hare” a Fullers held pub (much like the “Mad Hatter”) on Vauxhall Bridge Road. The pub is a converted bank and seems significantly more hospitable than the “Mad Hatter” and the 4 for the price of 3 offer on beer last time was well received. So over to Marcus for the directions from Victoria Station.

Leave the station at the front (i.e. by the bus station). Cross over the one way street to your right - Wilton Road - at the traffic lights. You should be by Pizza Hut. Keep it on your right, and follow the pavement 180° round to the right. This will take you down Vauxhall Bridge Road in the same direction as the traffic. Vauxhall Bridge Road becomes two-way traffic after Neathouse Place. Carry on for 400 yards, passing the Queen Mum’s sports centre on your right. The “Jugged Hare” is on the left, a very narrow pub that looks strangely like a bank ‘cos it was, opposite a much more obvious (and seedy) pub on the right hand side, near the junction with Warwick Way and Rochester Row. (See the map...*Ed.*)

Marcus Jones

It will be interesting to see how long this pub will last, maybe we’ll be changing pubs in the middle of the evening next!

London WRG AGM

The London WRG AGM and social will be held in the “Jugged Hare” pub on Wednesday 21st February 2001 at around 19.30. Come along and get involved in the running of the group and help answer the perennial questions about where shall we go digging, what social events shall we run, what tools and equipment should we buy and who will volunteer (or be volunteered) to organise all this! More seriously we have a large number of things that need to be sorted out as we have already had to move the dig dates around a lot this year.



For up to date information check the London WRG web pages:
www.london.wrg.org.uk

London WRG Dates List

Working Parties: Transport available Friday evening in the London WRG minibus; meet by the post box outside Costa Coffee 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
10-11/2/01	Dig Deep on the Wilts & Berks Canal	Martin Ludgate
3-4/3/01	Dig Deep on the Thames & Severn Canal	Marcus Jones
24-25/3/01	Pant 2, Montgomery Canal	-
21-22/4/01	Dig Deep on the Basingstoke Canal	TBA
19-20/5/01	Dig Deep on the Thames & Severn Canal	TBA
9-10/6/01	TBA	TBA

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, 21st February, 14th March, 11th April etc. at the **Jugged Hare** pub (note new venue) 400 yards South of Victoria Station along Vauxhall Bridge Road, from about 19.30 till 23.00.

Other Events:

21/2/01 London WRG AGM, Jugged Hare pub, Victoria.
5-7/5/01 Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice.

Who to contact:

London WRG Co-ordinator: Tim Lewis, 6, Downs Road, Enfield EN1 1PA.
Phone: 020-83676227 E-mail: wrgtim@netscapeonline.co.uk
Enquiries: Martin Ludgate or Lesley McFadyen, 35 Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB
Phone: 020-86933266 / 07779-478629 E-mail: editor@navvies.demon.co.uk
London WRG News Editor: Ed Walker, 226A Battersea Park Road, London. SW11 4ND
Phone: 020-79781130 / 07887-568029 E-mail: e.walker@ic.ac.uk



Tree felling on the Wilts & Berks Canal (KESCRG/LWRG Xmas Party, Tim Lewis).



Stone Reclamation (Kennet & Avon Canal, Carl Whitehead)