

London WRG News



Richard and Sal modelling the latest in WRG fashion...Mud! (BCN Cleanup, Ed Walker)

Issue 54 April 2003

From The Editor

It's been a busy few months in London WRG, as the length of this edition of LWRG News will testify to. We have dig reports from the digs on the Basingstoke, Wey and Arun, BCN Cleanup and the extra dig at Froghall, it looks like the plan of taking a computer on the dig is really paying off! If you thought the last few months were busy though the next are even worse! Apart from the digs (where we are hitting the Basingstoke again, the Wilts and Berks and the Grand Western) we have the usual fun and games at Little Venice for Canalway Cavalcade and the WRG Training Weekend on 10-11th May. All in all a busy calendar, hope to see you on some of these events!

The London WRG AGM was held, as usual, in the pub on 28th January (Minutes on page 13, thanks to Andi for doing these.) and apart from sorting leaders for the forthcoming digs (volunteers for which seemed to come easier as the beer flowed) we managed to persuade Sal to organise the Cavalcade section of the new WRG fund raising effort, further details on the opposite page. Better watch out, as she seems after volunteers to run the various stands, including the usual London WRG Canal Name Game stand.

See you at Cavalcade,

Ed Walker

New Equipment

After some discussion at the London WRG AGM we have bought a large amount of new equipment for the group. Top of the list is a stone saw, as we seem to be getting the reputation as an ace brick-laying group it seemed prudent to equip ourselves suitably. This new saw will certainly help with carving up the bricks to build the fancy walls that Martin and Matt so enjoy building. We have decided to service our scrub-bashing kit as it has been looking a bit poorly of late, some new bow saw blades and loppers will certainly help there. Our catering kit has also received some TLC as it did not really appreciate its long winter lay over.

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Congratulations...

Go to Rhys and Anna who tied the knot recently, I am sure you will join with me in wishing them many happy years together. Remember that being married is not considered a good excuse for not coming out digging!

Openings

The last few weeks have seen a large number of canal openings of various types, BW have opened the Rochdale Canal (Again!), the Woodham locks pump house on the Basingstoke has been opened but probably most important to us volunteers, Aston Locks on the Mont have finally been opened! This event was marked with the usual ribbon cutting, this time with John Craven doing the honours and a wave of boats headed down the locks to explore this 5 mile section while the WRGies headed down to lock 3 for a barbecue and a spot of sun bathing. No Mont opening would be complete without a session in the Punch Bowl inn and this one didn't disappoint, we managed to clear them out of Pedi by last orders.



The opening of the "Redway Pumphouse" (Woodham Locks, Martin Ludgate)

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Cavalcade Needs You!

As you may or may not know Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice is swiftly approaching. With the 3-5 May not that far away it is time for me to appeal for volunteers for the weekend.

As usual we will be entering the Pageant of Decorated Boats on Saturday afternoon. This year's theme is **Carry on Canals** so get your thinking caps on.

In addition to the usual fabulous Canals Tombola that London WRG run we are also running a stall for the national appeal.

The Right Tool for the Right Job

For any of you who have somehow missed the appeal we are aiming to raise £75,000 to replace and buy kit such as two new vans, dumpers, training courses, brick saws and not to mention a new grid- dle and 3 burcos to ensure we all get up in the mornings and the tea supply is constant! More details are on the website:

<http://www.wrg.org.uk/appeal.htm>

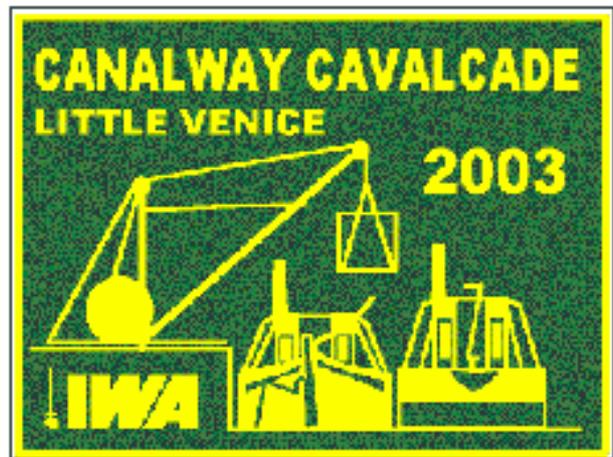
The stall for the appeal will consist of a silly game plus lots of information and leaflets so we can persuade the public into donating. We will be running both stalls on the Sunday and Monday of the weekend.

So I am therefore looking for volunteers for the following.

- Saturday from about 9am to help decorate our boat
- Sunday and Monday to help man (or woman) both of the stalls.

All volunteers for any or all of this time are extremely welcome. I would be very grateful if you can either drop me an email or give me a ring to let me know what time you can offer to these fabulous causes, so I can ensure a tea and biscuits supply!

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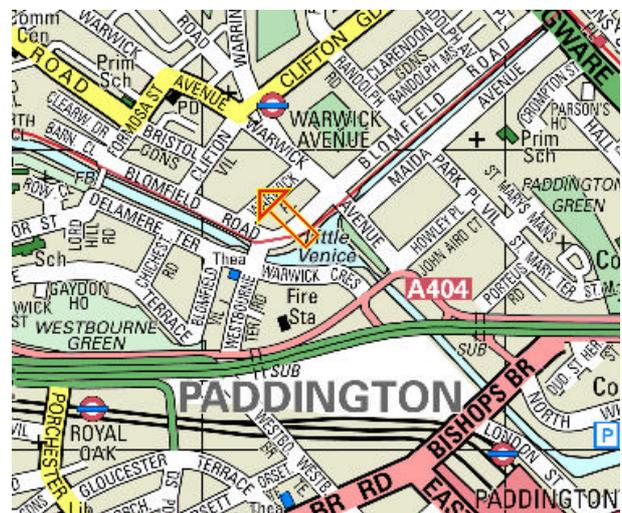


Additionally we have an **extra social** to plan our boat entry, this will be held on Wednesday 30th April, at 19:30 in the Warwick Castle Pub on Warwick Place (Map below...Ed). Finally there will also be a group meal of some nature on Sat night.

I look forward to the offers flooding in! Also any suggestions or questions let me know.

Thanks
Sal

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<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/streetmap.dll?G2M?X=526091&Y=181941&A=Y&Z=1>

Working Party Reports

Basingstoke Canal, 8-9th February 2003

For some of us, the weekend started very early indeed. London WRG's traditional (is it traditional, Ed?) visit to the Battersea Beer Festival prompted Liz W and Mk2 to claim floor space at Ed's, and Richard Cool to do likewise at Sally's, and hit the beerfest on the Thursday. Martin and Lesley also showed up, and we got into the swing of, well, swinging arms with glasses of beer at the end of them!

Friday night (we'll get to the bit involving canal restoration in a bit, I promise) saw four navvies and four sets of kit cram into Mk2's SEAT for the journey down to Woodham Village Hall, via an excellent sit-down fish-n-chips in Byfleet. There was an audible pop as Liz and Sal were surgically removed from beneath their backpacks, in the back of the car.

Off to the Bleak House, and true to reputation, the London Pride pumpclip was turned 'round as we approached the counter. Honestly, the place has been knocked through and extended out so many times that there's hardly anywhere to sit any more – it's all corridor. There was Adnams Bitter anyway, but we'd finished that by 10:00 as well, Martin (minus a 'suffering-at-home' Lesley) and the rest of the LWRG hard-core having arrived.

Pretty soon, we'll talk canal restoration. Honest.

Saturday morning and amidst dozing and darkness, Martin's telephone rings. It was SO tempting to shout out "I'm in the SLEEPING BAG!" It was Matt Taylor, the morning-loving rotter that he is, full of beans (though Jenny Wilson the New Wonder Cook had not by that point started cooking up the beans for our breakfast) and ready to dig. After a hearty (though no real hearts were used in order to provide it) breakfast, we piled into NJF and the Mariamobile and travelled (via a

Milton Keynesian number of roundabouts) to site. Three types of jobs awaited us, as did a yard full of local canal volunteers led by the indomitable Pete Redway (Milton Keynes again! Dunno? Look it up). Job type 1: dig out a trench (and thus divide the site in two for the duration) and expose the last pipe laid. Job Type 2: dig out a hole in the bankside for the outlet pipe, pile and backfill. Job Type 3: get the pipes ready for being laid, in the vain hope that we will get around to laying them.

See, I told you canal restoration would come into it soon. As an aside, you all know that the Basingstoke gets very little water – oh, you all know that, let's get onto the cock-ups and have a laugh at someone else's expense. Well, there was the pipe-prep team of Mk2, Liz and Rich. They needed to trim the nadgered end off one of the pipes and re-chamfer it with the angle grinder. Mk2 set to with a panel saw. Carefully sawing along the ribbing in the plastic pipe, he realised (but all too late) that the design was in fact a spiral, and once he had completed sawing through the pipe's complete circumference, found he was about 4 inches away from where he had started! Hasty reparations were made, and much of the afternoon was spent re-making the end of the pipe.

Matt T, meanwhile, was digging a huge hole in the tow-path next to the lock entrance with the Volvo excavator. Into this piling was sunk and once the end of the pipe was exposed – Matthew carefully dug out all around it – it was found to be well nadgered. Step in (to the hole) Mk2 with the angle grinder.

The dumper truck was kept busy ferrying the spoil from Matt T's hole to – er, where WERE you taking it, Sleepy Dave? Sally had a go, too, and had an early stab at the London WRG Driving Award. Having climbed onto the dumper asking "what is the shift pattern?" to be told "it's on a sticker there", she got on with it. 2nd instead of reverse and nearly into Matt's big hole. Sal did the right thing and climbed straight back onto the dumper and continued the job, but she did not take it out of 1st gear until Dave took over again. Dave also nearly did the hole thing later.

Meanwhile, the piling continued. Another hole had been dug into the bankside beneath the lock entrance for the outlet of the Famous Pipe. People like Mk2 and Rich barrowed concrete whilst Sal and Ed worked 19 to the dozen (or rather, 10 shovelfuls of sand to half a bag of cement) making the stuff. People like Mk2 and Rich either showered Matthew and Liz with concrete or nearly followed the heavy barrows down the hole upon finding the ground a bit loose. The piling was perfect – absolutely to plan apart from one missing hole and a need to chop the brace bars in half and clamp them – but the angle grinder was needed to restore the dolly to its original shape after Richard had practiced manual piling upon it with a sledgehammer.

Matt T switched on his worklights and continued digging. The rest of us attempted to clear our toys up and spot the difference between JFH and NJF in the dark. If in doubt, chuck it in JFH and ask questions later. Questions like: “Where’s the whacker plate?”

Back at the accomm, the shower key was declared Not Here, but fortunately, the smell of Jenny-you’re-such-a-good-cook-oh-PLLEEEASE-can-you-make-the-next-dig’s Beef Bourginon comprehensively outdid the smell of not-very-clean navvies.

It being officially Nearly Helen Dobbie’s Birthday, a special cake was brought in with such unblowoutable (new word there) candles that a second cake was brought in with extinguishable pyrotechnic decorations. Happy Birthday was duly sung twice. And so to the Bleak House where the Adnams actually lasted, and the Sunday lunch count stood at zero (ask the landlord). Actually, the Bleak has changed management and the new people seem eager to develop the trade; actually opening on Sundays and laying-in enough Adnams for an LWRG contingent suggests that they are reading the signs!.

Sunday morning and Matt Taylor and Ed Walker have left for site before anyone other than Jenny-your-breakfasts-are-very-nice-so-is-there-any-chance-you-can-make-the-next-dig is up. They have left a note detailing who is on what work site and what jobs are to be expected. Simply put, the work on Sunday followed the same principle as

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Saturday, ie. one lot go off and scrub-bash whilst the rest stand and stare into a hole of their choice.

At this point, it is worth pointing out that Tim Lewis, who had arrived suspiciously close to dinner time on Saturday night, (a) might take nearly all day to start a fire but once it gets going it consumes everything you feed it and (b) might just have psychic powers. He was definitely heard to ask if there were any kebs on site a few minutes BEFORE his hat fell off and into the cut. Martin, meanwhile, had gone off to light his own fire, and quite possibly won the race to giant, leaping flames.

Helen attempted to rein-in the biscuit-powered human dynamo that is Bob and start the stack-it-up-neatly operation at the scrub-bashing site. Mk2’s comment was that the top end of the site “looks like a Bob’s hit it” and a bizarre round-the-fire discussion on the naming conventions of tropical storms (yeah, yeah, the rest of you can mock but I bet you were just staring into a hole...) very nearly assigned him the nickname “Hurricane Bob”. In the bus on the way back, Bob allowed a moth to escape to freedom (probably followed by a less certain death then being confined to NJF’s interior) and informed everyone that he respects all God’s creatures. Everyone else enquired as to where trees stand. The answer is, of course, that they don’t stand; they get chopped down.

Ed will now, I trust, tell you what was achieved in and around the holes on the Sunday. He might mention Sally’s second stab at the London WRG Driving Award involving the bucket of the mini digger and the bridge handrail, but he may not.

Mk2

[Over to you, Ed!]

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Thanks Mark.

The Sunday of the Basingstoke dig started way too early as Matt kicked me awake at sometime before 8am (it was around 0730; and I thought I'd have to the loo to myself at that time! – Mk2) and I wondered about the sanity of volunteering to get to site early; I blame the beer and red wine on Saturday night. Once on site Matt started to extend the trench we started the previous day while I stood in the rain and passed piles as needed. After putting in another four piles we briefly stopped to admire our nice deep trench and realised we didn't have any more acro props for the new piles. At this point two of the piles collapsed in. These were swiftly pulled and replaced and trenching continued. Just as we reached the right length a white Land Rover was spotted heading onto site...perfect timing. Sally was then mugged for breakfast sandwiches for Matt and I while the rest of the pipe laying team swung into action. The pipe section was quickly soaped and stropped up and lowered into position, but we then ran into the first problem. Pete had the first attempt at keeping an eye on the seal ring and preventing it from kinking as the pipes were fitted together, but after about 2" of winching, the seal irrevocably kinked and the pipe had to be removed. Tea was then delivered and drunk.

After a swift brew break we set up for attempt two on the pipe, this time with yours truly in charge of the seal. All seemed to be going well until a twang was heard from deep in the pipe and the tension went. The rope between the tirfor and the end of the pipe had snapped and shot at high speed towards Steve and Liz who were winch operators. Needless to say they leapt out of the manhole like scared rabbits just before a long length of rope hit the end of the pipe. We rapidly reconfigured to use the excavator instead (which has the drawback of

nudging the end of Mk2's pipe) and the pipe was pushed back into place with minimal extra trouble. The pipe was emplaced in pea gravel and we decided to break for lunch.

After lunch Matt started to fill in the trench and a concrete collar was poured around the pipe joint. Around this time, Sal made another attempt for the LWRG drivers award as she got the small excavator stuck while trying to drive off the gravel pile. The machine, having less power than GCW, was pulled out using the dumper, possibly the first time I have had to use a dumper to remove a mired excavator!

With darkness falling, most people left site, but Matt, other Matt and I worked on to clear site; the piles were driven around the bywash outfall to prevent any bank erosion and gear was packed. Two dumper loads of road stone were swiftly converted into a towpath by Matt while I cleared up around the spoil heap using the other excavator, which being a bit short in the lights department meant I had to use a head torch!

A very productive dig in quite difficult conditions; thanks to everyone who took part, particularly Jenny Wilson for cooking.

Ed Walker



Matt placing piles (Basingstoke Canal, Ed Walker)

Wey and Arun Canal, 1–2nd March 2003

As is becoming current style we decided to start the dig early on Thursday with an extra (just because) social, breaking convention and trying a different pub. The Star Tavern proved a good home for the evening proving Ed, MkII, Andi and myself with some rather fab, steak, steak, bangers and mash and pasta appropriately. Martin, Lesley and Tunji also joined us to sample the alcoholic wares.

Back to usual on Friday with the minibus collection at Waterloo for Richard (Cool) and me. We arrived as expected at 9:30 and set off to find the keys for the accommodation. Typically this proved to be slightly less simple than hoped. The dressing-gown-wearing bloke at the address we were given knew nothing of our elusive keys. What followed was an eclectic selection of phone calls to everyone we could think of. Problem was solved by a phone call to MkII in the pub, hence we set off to find the Snail and wence the keys! Finally made it to the pub and there was more than enough time to sample the IPA at the bargain price of £1.50!!, before returning to toast.

Sat morning, and you will be pleased to hear that you will finally get to hear about the work. We were reasonably early out of bed and following breakfast and some enthusiastic sandwich making we set off for site. Luckily or unluckily it was decided that we were doing the wet weather plan. To start the day Bob, Lesley, Nigel, Richard T cleared an area to provide a new home for the “teleported” container when it arrives. Apparently they new it would take longer than they thought but was over quicker than expected. Nigel also managed to split his trousers but that is an entirely different story. Dave went to collect some more equipment, MkII persuaded Martin to give a Dumper lesson. This left Rick, Richard and myself to tackle digging out the old culvert, which runs over the new access track and needed to be replaced with gas pipes. Within minutes of starting all three of us had managed to cover not only ourselves but each other with copious amounts of the clay. The more we dug the

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deeper the water became and the slipperier the sides. The arrival of the gas pipes and sand bags prompted the start of my day in the excavator providing MkII with plenty of loads worth of practise. Tea breaks featured as usual but work followed filling sand bags to create the new track area over the gas pipes.

Lunch was taken in the minibus as the fantastic sunshine was just a bit too much (we wish, the heavens had opened and was living up to its wet weather plan!). Post lunch work continued in a similar vein. Minor entertainment provided by me managing to get locked inside the excavator cab and having to pass the keys out the window to MkII to let me out. The afternoon finished with the completion of the track over the gas pipes plus the beginning of the terram laying. At which point the heavens opened and we decided that since it was 5:30 leaving site was more than acceptable. It was then back to accom for Coq au Vin with Plum Pie au Vin for afters! As expected we decamped to the pub for several more pints of the IPA. On returning to the accommodation we discovered a tad too much condensation on the ceiling in the entrance hall and for some strange reason decided to mop it off (trust me when I say it seemed like a good idea at the time!).

Sun morning came round all to quickly for those of us that were slightly later to bed, especially since we were woken up in Traditional Bob style ie lots of noise and bright light however the tea and coffee in bed were much appreciated.

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Back on to site and work continued in the glorious spring sunshine (unbelievable I know but it was actually warm enough for me to work in a T-shirt – a bit of a novelty as am usually dressed more like Michelin woman!). Richard Cool was living up to his name in the excavator, shades and all. Whilst the rest of us were clearing the path of mud before laying terram and sand/stone mix on top to improve the new access track. Unfortunately yesterday's downpour had created some seriously gooey mud. The most impressive hole was almost welly depth and several people had to have themselves dug out! In order to remove enough of the mud and leaves sludge it was decided we had to dig until we achieved a firm bottom – am still not entirely sure if that applied to the track or us! We improved several sections of the track with Nigel on dumper duty. The final job of the day was to cover the area for the container with terram and tow path chips next to the canal on the site which was cleared yesterday. Today's site was brought to you by the letters T and Cake.

Extremely muddy we returned to the hall for the tidy up and then visited the snail again to return the keys. A good weekend was had by all but I suspect there are several unhappy washing machines round the country as I don't know about anyone else but two washes still hasn't quite got that mud out of my trousers!!! Many thanks to all, especially Martin and Lesley for their leading of the weekend. See you all on the BCN Cleanup.

Sal Nutt

Froghall, 15-16th March 2003

An interesting weekend this one, an appeal from Rupert and Alison for volunteers to go for a weekend scrub bashing in Froghall. Never one to turn down a challenge I added my name to the rather short list and awaited further instructions.

Friday afternoon I journeyed into London and met Sal at Acton Town where that nice Matt Taylor had offered us a lift to the dig. After a brief food stop at his house and managing to tear ourselves away from the Comic Relief coverage we were off.

After about three hours of driving, several miles of very windy road country lane and a short stroll across the fields we arrived at the local pub where Rupert, Alison, various Fulbourne crew and Tenco were waiting. We were later joined by Clive and Marcus, to add to our select group. After general socialising and catching up we went back to the weekend's accommodation, Rupert and Alison's house. A note to the next person who has to book us a place to stay, I know it's a bit out of the way for most of the places we work but it has hot water, showers, and even beds – though these got taken by Sal and Matt because he was doing breakfast.

Saturday morning I was woken quite abruptly by the large blinds in the room I was in automatically opening at 7. Usually I'm a big fan of this sort of thing but this time it caused much cursing of mornings, blinds, most of the population of the planet and up from there before I hid deeper in my sleeping bag and waiting for breakfast. Baconny smells preceded our usual English breakfast and for the tea drinkers fresh Earl Grey, this should put us level with the coffee drinkers and their camp kit "cafeteria".

We loaded into the van and set off to site to see what there was to do. We were met by members of the local canal society Julie, Mike and Ivor as well as Graham, the man from BW. We started with some light clearance around the edge and collecting anything that was already there while a bonfire was started and Tenco set up for some larger scale destruction with his chainsaw. We were all very impressed with the abundance of new kit available to us, the sharp bow saws were a shock and work

wonderfully after you manage to remove the cardboard. Also in the kit were two new sets of telescoping loppers, again these were great as they were sharp but ask anyone who was there about the trouble we had altering the lengths of the handles. The local canal society had also provided an abundance of cakes for the weekend so everybody was happy during tea breaks and lunch. We received another volunteer at lunchtime, Rick B who called Marcus from the other side of the car park to find out where we were.

The afternoon mainly consisted of trees being cut down by Tenco at one end of the site, dragged to the bonfire, cut up, and burnt. Other activities generally involved trying to get fallen branches and trunks out of the water by hooking them with a rake or pulling them out with a rope.

Once we were all knackered and had made a suitably large hole in the scenery we decided to pack up and go. We loaded up the van and set off back to Rupert and Alison's, the journey was only interrupted when the hard hat that had been left on one of the van's wing mirrors decided to fly off, I'm sure it gave Rick a bit of a shock as he was following. Back at the house there was time for a shower and change of clothes before heading off to the pub, the Holly Bush, for dinner courtesy of the canal society. The Beer and Beef Casserole were excellent and everyone else seemed happy with their choices. As is traditional in these situations we managed to run the place out of at least two of its available beers during the evening. We were introduced to the game of "Staffordshire Skittles" which is more difficult than it looks, especially when you have to finish on a low number and continually clear the board. It's a stupid game anyway and I am in no way bitter.

Sunday morning was lovely and sunny, to the point that even without the huge pile of ash we may have managed spontaneous combustion of the wood. For the entertainment of those watching Matt ventured along a tree that had fallen in the water to cut pieces off the end while I tied rope to them to pull them in, I think that there may have been bets from the shore of who would go in first. Ivor brought a tractor and trailer to be loaded with the larger logs to be taken away in, as is traditional we ended up moving them

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and then carrying them back to where they started. BW Graham managed to make a lot of friends by providing ice creams from the van parked in the car park and it would have been impolite not to stop work and have them. As we got to the end of the afternoon we loaded up the fire until it reached inferno level as the local volunteers could stay and watch it and started to pack up.

Back at Rupert and Alison's we packed our stuff and even had another hot shower, two showers on a dig is shocking enough but you expect at least one to be icy cold. We said our goodbyes and thank you's and set off back down the windy lanes toward London.

So glorious weather, 5 star accommodation and pub food, definitely a great weekend for all involved. Many thanks to Rupert and Alison for letting us invade, to the locals for their work, and to Tenco for the continuous supply of fallen trees

Richard Cool



Matt and Richard at work (Froghall, Julie Arnold)

BCN Cleanup

BCN Cleanup, 22–23rd March 2003

Last weekend saw the annual BCN Cleanup come round again this year ably organised by Aileen Butler. The weekend saw us tackling the canals below Spaghetti Junction with the usual determination and laughter.

Many of us arrived in NJF and GCW as we had travelled together (ish) from Waterloo. Post the scramble to claim some floor space there was the usual opportunity to catch up with many people I haven't seen in months, or at least 3 weeks!

Saturday morning and the call for breakfast came far too soon. But we were soon all up and on the buses (or in my case rushing round getting people onto buses). Cuckoo Wharf provided the signing on point for the weekend, allowing us all to claim the fabulous waterproof gloves (shame they don't make all in one suits in the same stuff as my hands ended up being the only clean part of me!), and select your tool of choice (Keb or Grappling Hook). Many thanks to BW for providing many of these. The site had been divided into two areas left in the capable hands of Ed Walker and Matt Taylor. A short minibus hop and walk along the tow path later it was time to get started. The hauls were as plentiful as the sunshine with copious amounts of scaffolding being pulled out not to mention the usual selection of traffic cones, signs, and bikes. There was even a suggestion to start the fencing for the National Waterways Festival early as we pulled out several fence panels and fencing blocks!! There was hope of an extremely big haul as about 25 of us with several grappling hooks were all heaving hard to drag out the same item. Eventually it gave way for us to discover that it was only a large loop of metal tubing!

Lunch time, washed hands and sitting in the glorious sunshine came and went all too fast for most of us and it was back to work. Rather unsurprisingly there was a slight lack of enthusiasm to work under a huge flyover purely due to fact it was dark and cold.

As the afternoon progressed the two teams worked towards each other meeting at the junction and then clearing the arm down towards lunch. More scaffolding etc etc was pulled out not to mention a new typewriter for our illustrious editor! Moose, Maria, Brian, Richard Cool and I made the mistake of volunteering to pull the barge round the corner so it could be filled up with the rubbish. This one corner turned in to going up and down the arm twice. As expected many jokes about horses and these new fangled things called engines never catching on were proffered. However the pain was soon replaced by laughter whilst watching Moose float the barge across to the far side and attempt to attach it to the railings. Unlike in all the Bond style movies apparently grappling hooks don't attach themselves to railings as easily as portrayed!!

Back at the accommodation and several gallons of shower gel later the relatively clean and shiny navies tucked into the barrels of beer and the curry a thon for the appeal. Entertainment for the evening was provided by a quiz, with questions ranging from the serious to the silly. Thanks to the question providers not to mention all the chefs for the fab food.

Sunday morning unfortunately had to be an early start as we had to clear the hall by about 9am. Several people were threatened by a raw egg in the sleeping bag for failing to move. But in usual practised style despite some sore heads everything was cleared in time. After ensuring everyone else had left for site, the remaining 5 of us set of in RFB and had to resort to the consensus method of navigation due to the lack of map, following a minor miracle we arrived without incident and were soon back on the towpath. A group of us tackled an area which we decided has the best type of scaffolding (it had extra loops welded on the outside, perfect for catching the grappling hook in, no longer does it roll off!!!) Some impressive hauls were had with several of us pulling out multiple individual scaffolding poles in one pull, and also a plank which we think came from the bottom of a narrow boat as it seemed to be more than long enough.

Lunch was well received yet again, however a well timed photographer's arrival meant it was slightly shorter for a few of us. The last few hours on site saw one last big haul under a bridge with bikes, signs, a car door and a mini trolley being extracted. Sadly it was then time to finish up. As the weary WRGies were taken back to the accommodation several of us helped to pack up site and return all of the borrowed kit to BW. Many thanks go to them for the constant supply of boats to take away the ever growing piles of rubbish we were accumulating on the towpaths.

That brings us to the end of the weekend, many of us were extremely grateful to be allowed showers before travelling home especially those on public transport! (or should that be the people next to them on public transport!). Thank you to all for a brilliant weekend, to all those I have mentioned above, anyone I have forgotten and to all for the laughter which all ways makes the weekends. Until next time.....

In response to a request for a London WRG report of the BCN I have come up with the below, which need to be slotted into the main report either where appropriate or where it is most entertaining!

- Me getting lost trying to leave Reading after collecting GCW on Thursday evening. Can I point out that when you are on the correct road they have failed to put up any signs to confirm this.
- The quickest we have ever managed to fill the buses (note two!) at Waterloo, possibly due to fact that Rick A wasn't with us!
- Having to have NJF **and** GCW, as even with some very creative packing we would never have got 12 of us plus kit in GCW!
- Listening to the same GCW tape for the entire journey to and from Birmingham only for me to discover on the drive to return the van, there were 2 more in the dash board! Well it was either that or SAGA FM.
- Managing to sleep with 7 of us in a gap more sensibly designed for 5. Not to mention the site jacket wall.
- Mass consumption of Jelly Babies, (for those interested the next meeting of Jelly Babies Anonymous is)

BCN Cleanup

- Moose hanging on to the railings on the opposite bank whilst trying to attach the barge. Sorry Moose but it was extremely entertaining!
- The photographer who turned up just as we started lunch, Matt, Bob and myself did the honours, but couldn't decide if my muscles or the smile would give way first as I was asked to hold the same pose for far too long, my bet was def the leg muscles! Likewise with Matt having to hold an action shot with a huge wooden crate which had taken two people to pull out.
- Bob's fantastic supply of chocolates.
- Many people almost throwing themselves in after their grappling hooks.
- Brick, Bricks and more Bricks. (Well it wouldn't be a London WRG dig without at least a few!)
- The black gunge which really doesn't wash off unless you remove half the skin off your arms as well.
- Some people managing to stay relatively clean whilst some of us, well lets just say the muck seems to be more attracted to certain members of WRG.
- Congratulations to the person who got their grappling hook caught round a lamp on the opposite bank and had to get the caretaker to detach them!
- Not to mention the many more incidents which I can't remember or frankly don't want to!

Sal Nutt

BCN Cleanup



Waterway Manager, Roger Herrington
Birmingham and Black Country Canals

Dear Aileen

Re: Birmingham Fazeley Canal Clean Up

May we take the opportunity to extend a huge thanks to you and your team of volunteers for all your time and effort over the weekend during the clean-up activities.

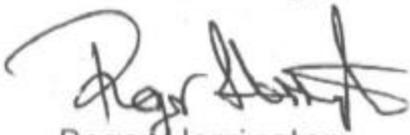
We've just had official figures back that confirm that you collected over 70 tonnes of rubbish, which is the most yet!

It's really encouraging to see such a large group of people dedicated to the canals of Birmingham and the Black Country and you can be assured that the results of your work will be enjoyed by all those using the canals in the future.

We attach a copy of some of the press coverage we've picked up already – we'll forward any further cuttings to you.

We look forward to working with you on future projects.

Yours sincerely,



Roger Herrington
Waterway Manager



Tony Duffield
Environmental Services

London WRG AGM 2003

Attending: Aileen, Alan, Andi, Bob, Ed, Helen, Martin, Matt, Richard W, Sal, Steve, Tim, Tunji

Agenda:

Digs for the rest of the year, See back cover.

Items to buy

Loppers –Ed.

Rake (metal) – Ed.

Brick Saw cost of £530. Offer to buy this on behalf of the WRG appeal with LWRG to look after it and loan it out when needed. If not decision to buy this anyway as we do so much brickwork these days.

Query of maintenance – Ed to maintain. - Ed

Diamond blades as above.

Hard hats X10 – Ed.

Tacho agreed to keep a reserve of £250 for the installation of a new tacho in any new minibus LWRG has. Tim and Andi to write a formal letter to the WRG board requesting a tacho to be put in with a donation from LWRG as to the cost.

Keb – Rick to donate.

Burco nut – Martin

Cutlery containers – Aileen to liase with Keserg.

Saw blade covers – Ed to find out whether these can be bought independently.

Ed to liase with Paula (treasurer) re monies to buy the above items.

Money raising

Tombola at Cavalcade is the main LWRG fund raiser particularly when manned by Matt, Sal, Tunji and Bob the builder!

£150 donation from London and Stoke on Trent IWA branches-Many Thanks.

Helen suggested another ‘adventurous’ fundraiser for WRG central eg Abseiling from Pontcysyllte Aqueduct (if that’s possible). To liase with Mike Palmer and keep any interested Lwrgies up to speed.

London WRG AGM Minutes

Publicity / Recruitment

Publicity via Navvies

Tunji working on a new LWRG T-shirt with map and website design. Requests for purple and black t-Shirts.

Bob and Rick A to liase with Moose to obtain the Advertising sandwich board.

Ed to recruit students.

Andi to get LWRG included in volunteer bureau’s throughout London. Liase with Tunji for new leaflet and Head office for canal camp brochures.

Alan proposed the idea of getting a Lwrg business card for Lwrgies to be able to hand out to friends and acquaintances. Steve, Andi and Tungi to liase. Magnetic paper to produce boat labels.

Lwrg news- via Ed many thanks for his hard work throughout the year! Keep the dig reports coming. Suggestions of a crossword from Matt, wordsearch from Richard –all welcome. Ed is to give out email deadlines to encourage articles.

Web site- via Tim again many thanks!

Any Other Business

Pirate club- Alan established willingness by Lwrgies to have an extra day working in London at the pirate club. TBA.

Tool maintenance- Idea of painting tools at site hasn’t been successful. Usually too busy and the tools need time to dry. Everyone keen to re-establish the tradition of a painting bbq or similar. Martin to investigate how to work this into our schedule, re dig dates, painting location etc. Andi to chase.

Tim/Tunji to arrange summer boat trip.

Date for next AGM 29th January 2004.

Andi Kewley

WRG Training Weekend

WRG Training weekend 2003: 10-11th May

This year's training weekend will be held at the British Waterways heritage skills training centre at Hatton Locks again over the weekend of May 10th-11th. This is a very civilised place to hold such a weekend as we are kindly allowed the use of BW's meeting rooms and facilities.

Training will be available on the usual plant and transport such as vans, trailers, dumpers, excavators and also tractors, which we will be using again at the National Waterways Festival. There will also be short courses in bricklaying, heritage pointing, first aid and Safety regulations amongst others.

The weekend is dedicated primarily to training, so there is no official 'work' on site other than mending the plant that we have broken! However we do try to keep you as busy as you want to be and help is always welcomed back at the accommodation. It is also a chance to meet other volunteers and often some of the leaders from camps you plan to do or have done! Go on! You know it makes sense!

If you are interested in joining us for the whole weekend or just one day, simply request a booking form and return it as soon as possible.

Cost of the weekend covers food only and is likely to be £10 for the weekend or £5 per day.

For a form or more information, please contact me Ali Bottomley, 53 Redgrave Close, St James Village, Gateshead, NE8 3JD or ring me on 0191 422 5469. Alternatively, risk sending an email but remember that I am a teacher and I'm always on holiday (so they reckon!) Email address:

a.bottomley1@gateshead.org

Hope to see you there.

Ali 'Womble' Bottomley



You could be part of this photo..... (Training Weekend 2002, Alan Lines)

London WRG Dates List

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

www.london.wrg.org.uk

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
17-18/5/03	Dig Deep on the Basingstoke Canal	Ed Walker
7-8/6/03	Grand Western, Taunton	Nat Belderson
5-6/7/03	TBA	Allan Scott
2-3/8/03	Dig Deep on the Wilts & Berks Canal	Matt Taylor
6-7/9/03	TBA	Tunji Faley
27-28/9/03	TBA	Sal Nutt
18-19/10/03	TBA - Probably Dig Deep	Aileen Butler
8-9/11/03	Bonfire Bash, Cotswolds Canals	Centrally Booked
6-7/12/03	KESCRG/LWRG Xmas Party	-

Note: Digs marked "Dig Deep" are on projects where work is being co-ordinated under the Dig Deep Initiative, a scheme involving ourselves and four other mobile groups (Essex WRG, NWPG, KESCRG and WRG BITM).

Social Gatherings: Tuesday night, normally 11 days before each dig i.e. 6th May, 27th May, 24th June etc. at the **Jugged Hare** pub 400 yards South of Victoria Station along Vauxhall Bridge Road, from about 19.30 till 23.00.

Other Events:

30/4/03	Extra Social, Warwick Castle Pub, Little Venice	-
3-5/5/03	Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice	-
10-11/5/03	WRG Training Weekend, Hatton	Centrally Booked
21/5/03	BCN Treasure Hunt	-
5/8/03	Extra social, Great British Beer Fest, Olympia	Ed Walker
22-25/8/03	National Waterways Festival, Beale Park, Reading	-
16/12/03	London WRG Xmas Party, Canal Museum?	Lesley McFadyen

Who to contact:

London WRG Co-ordinator: Tim Lewis, 6, Downs Road, Enfield EN1 1PA.

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E-mail: tim@timlewis.org.uk

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E-mail: martin.ludgate@wrg.org.uk

London WRG News Editor: Ed Walker, 226A Battersea Park Road, London. SW11 4ND

Phone: 020-79679771 / 07887-568029

E-mail: e.walker@imperial.ac.uk



Narrowboat Millie leaving Aston Lock 1 after the opening (John Cheesbrough)



Nigel and Sal laying drain pipes (Wey and Arun, Martin Ludgate)