



London WRG News

Another shopping trolley! (Cleanup, Tim Lewis)

Issue 61 April 2005

London WRG Notices

Not really space for a real editorial section this time, its reached busy season again!

See everyone at Cavalcade.

Ed Walker

LWRG Awards 2004

The LWRG awards for 2004 were presented at the LWRG Xmas Party. This years (un)lucky recipients were:

Leadership – Tunji, for the laid back leadership of the Wilts & Berks dig.

Driving – Andy (Sal's), for novel excavator parking.

New Recruit – Chad.

Brick Laying – Bob, Derby wing wall – curving in two directions.

Lame Excuse – Sal & Andy, for moving house and appearing on the dig anyway.

Catering – Moose, the Cavalcade BBQ.

Blue Peter Skills – Richard Cool and Matt, cardboard Falkirk Wheel.

Destructive Behaviour – Moose, the “small and controlled fire” on the Basingstoke.

Ed Walker

New Insurance Paperwork

Due to changes in the WRG Outdoor Activities Insurance (which also covers us on London WRG digs) we now have to fill out a form detailing what work we carried out on each dig. This form is available from the main WRG website at:

*[http://www.wrg.org.uk/
Insurance_Return_Form_single.doc](http://www.wrg.org.uk/Insurance_Return_Form_single.doc)*

and should be completed by the dig organiser at the end of the weekend and returned to IWA head office.

Ed Walker

Cavalcade - Site Services Team

Anyone who has already volunteered to help at LV and / or needs accommodation can they please send me an e-mail. (Especially with dates of arrival etc.)

I am always on the look out for more volunteers; anyone who would like to volunteer and help Jenny Wilson with the cooking would be particularly welcome. At events like this the cook(s) are so important and we must always keep them happy, (in return we might have the odd cake made?)

Moose

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Cavalcade (Again)

As you probably know it is almost time for Cavalcade again and time to dust of those decorating skills and patter. For those that don't know Cavalcade is a canal festival held at Little Venice behind Paddington station the first weekend in May (30 April – 2 May). It is our main fundraising event for the year but is also lots of fun. We will be running the usual Waterways Tombola and the ever-classic Spat The Wrgie, plus entering the decorated boats parade on Saturday. This year's theme is Trafalgar so get your thinking caps on to top last years “Steaming A Head”, or at least put our inimitable stamp on it! (There will be an extra social to help plan this on Wednesday 27/4/05 in the Warwick Castle pub, Warwick Place, W9 from about 7.30pm – Ed.)

I am therefore asking for volunteers to help out with decorating the boat on the Saturday and running the two stalls on the Sunday and Monday, I realise Moose is also on the hunt but there will be time for people to be involved in both.

We are also planning to go for the usual curry over the weekend, probably the Saturday night but we will confirm this. You will need to book a place with Ed (see page 16 for contact details - Ed.) as they are limited.

If you can drop me an email to *sallynutt@hotmail.com* letting me know when you can offer your services I would be grateful as it gives me an idea of who will be around.

Thanks and see you there.

Sally Nutt

Wey & Arun Canal, Haybarn Bridge site, 15-16th January 2005

The first dig of 2005 was originally meant to be organised by Moose and Maria but a horse-trading session at the end of 2004 meant we did a swap and with a small amount of trepidation I took on the leadership of a Wey and Arun dig. So on the Friday night 16 navvies descended on the sleepy village of Plaistow, set up camp in the five star village hall (showers included!) and hit the local pub where the landlady seemed very surprised to have that much business appear!

The next morning arrived and while Jenny Wilson put the finishing touches on breakfast I wandered round with coffee and tea – always the best way to wake up the troops I find. Onto site and a detailed briefing by Bill Nicholson showed us what the main job for the weekend would be – bricklaying. So while Sal, Nigel and Martin discussed the best way of starting the curved brickwork around the swing bridge end, a few locals started work under the bridge itself and Sleepy Dave and Aileen started to finish off another wall near the pivot. Everyone else set to with the myriad of support tasks that were needed – mortar mixing, clay backfilling, level checks and bridge painting we even found some scrub bashing to keep Moose and Maria happy! By about lunchtime work was well under way and Martin returned to the hall to work on “Navvies”, Rick Ansell taking his place with the “curves and flourishes” brick laying team.

Sal and Nigel doing the fancy bits (Ed Walker)

Working Party Reports

The afternoon continued much as the morning had, Sal had made herself at home under the bridge doing a course of half soldiers and the smallest person on site – Dippy Claire – was dispatched under the land end of the bridge to clear the mud off the pintle. In the end, lose of daylight forced us off site at about 5pm but not after a large amount of bricks had been laid and 3 “small” fires had dealt with all the scrub bashing. Back at the hall and Jenny had cooked up a superb chicken stew with chocolate pudding to follow – I must have worked everyone hard as people could only just summon the energy to head down the pub!



Working Party Reports

Sunday arrived with that ever-popular alarm clock – “Hurricane” Bob had arrived. Breakfast ensued and a slightly wearier crew headed back to site. The brickies returned to their tasks and instantly started to cry for mortar and everyone else started a backfill concrete pour which involved much cursing at a very obstinate mixer which required a stick to be stuck in the choke to stay running.

People started to drift home after lunch as we started to run out of ancillary jobs but the brickies slaved on – Sal was finally allowed out from under the bridge having finished laying the soldiers, Rick and Nigel had got two courses of the curve done, Aileen had laid almost all of her soldier course and Bob, Sleepy Dave and Graham the local had laid another couple of courses on the retaining walls.

With light failing we packed up and left site well pleased with the work we had completed over the weekend.

It just remains for me to thank the Wey and Arun Canal Trust for their support over the weekend – we didn’t have to go to Tickners once, everything we needed was on site! Thanks also to Jenny Wilson for agreeing to cook for us – you’re a star as ever. Thanks to everyone else who came down as well – according to the matched funding sheet I have just completed we put 250 hours work into the project over this weekend and the difference we made to the site is easily visible.

Ed Walker

Laying out the end of the swing bridge (Tim Lewis)



Uttoxeter Canal, 5-6th February 2005

Friday night and I was lost in Stoke-on-Trent. I was en-route to Kingsley village, and probably so desperate to see a familiar red Transit van that I missed my turn and ended being very geographically embarrassed. However, I did finally arrive at Kingsley Youth Centre, and after meeting up with a few other early arrivals, we set off down the local pub. Funnily enough, I found my way to this one without a hitch.

The weekend work was based entirely on a BW site, so Health and Safety was a serious issue, as was the wearing of correct protection kit. Therefore Saturday morning, after breakfast saw us all treated to the WRG safety video, plus a briefing from John and Julie of the local Canal Trust. Johns briefing, including a map, was very detailed and trying to retain most of the info we were given, we were all desperate to start... which is what we thought we would do on arrival at the site. What scuppered this was a guided tour of the site and even more paperwork to sign from BW contractor on the site. So once we had all signed our lives away and declared we were competent and safe, we could get to work.

Andi, Dig leader, did a fab job of delegating jobs out, and soon a wave of Hi-viz festooned the site and set about clearance work, wall repairs, re-setting moorings and any other tasks that we could lay our gloved hands on. The steady rain and the slight delay to our start did nothing to stop us catching up on lost time, and we soon had John and Julie racing around trying to keep up with the pace we were setting. End of play, we returned to camp to use the delightfully warm showers, and then we set about the LWRG AGM. Dates and ideas flew around the room, and when the whistle blew for half time we were treated to a superb evening meal, courtesy of Harry cuisine and Andy's killer Garlic Bread. So bellies full of scran, beer and no half time oranges, we stuck into the second half of the AGM with more topics, including purchasing of mixing bowls and Ed's custom Transit conversions. After the meeting was closed, we reluctantly frequented the pub again in our quest to find a quality ale. I cant remember if we passed or failed this task, but I can remember seeing about 20 Hi-viz vests all lit up in the dark on our return to the accommodation, which was quite bizarre, maybe the beer was finally working.

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Working Party Reports

Sunday saw familiar wet weather and a concentration of most people on the wall repairs. Once again the pace we set kept John and Julie on their toes, John doing runs to the cement shop to keep buying more for our consumption. Overall we did a sterling job of completing the tasks, and despite copious amounts of mud and not so copious amounts of wheelbarrows, a good time was had by all. Big thanks have to go to Andi for great leadership, Harry who did the lion(ess)'s share of the cooking, John and Julie for their liaison with BW and local contractors, and for their excellent guidance throughout the two days. This weekend really did have something for everyone including hot showers, friendly locals (or random over friendly ones in my case), the use of the contractor's facilities and even the chance to have your photo taken with a baby. Variety really is the spice of life.

Tay

Martin fitting mooring rings (Andy Roberts)



Working Party Reports

I-SPY...

...on the Birmingham Canals!

BCN Clean-Up 2005, 12-13th March

There are lots of fascinating things to see, smell and trawl for, on the Birmingham Canal Navigations. This booklet will show you some of the more amazing sights of the BCN. Score as many points as you can, and don't forget to send your completed book to Big Chief I-Spy (aka the Duke of Edinburgh) and you will receive either the coveted Gold Award, or a manky old tachograph disc, whichever comes to hand first.

An Accommodation

You need one of these in order to get completely trolleyed (see: trolleys) on Friday and Saturday nights and not have to drive home. Here's a typical one: a 1950s/60s/70s school in Tipton, in which youngsters are expected to grow into upright citizens, having spent their youth in a brutalist concrete box being reminded of courtesy, respect, and always wearing a condom. This accommodation is warm and has strange showers which are surprisingly satisfying.

*How utterly incomprehensible were the directions to your accommodation? **Score 25pts***

Base Camp

This is where you meet up with all your chums and sign on to the work site. Here you will find a leader (see: leaders) and an assortment of British Waterways staff with cool Brummie and Black Country accents. There might also be boats belching odd smoke, some big hoppers full of scrap (see: trolleys) and possibly, a Wolf.

*How many unsuspecting locals signed on at your base camp, and how many brought their own kebs? **Score 25pts***

*How many actually came back on Sunday? **Score 750pts***

Leaders

You need these in order to know what you are doing, when you are doing it, and when you are allowed to go and have some tea. Here are some examples:

Aileen: This is the site leader who gets everybody to the right place at the right time and then gets them all to sign on to site and to sign for borrowed BW tools (see: tools). Aileen is the link between the BW folks and the volunteers, and warns you not to get shot when you go out to site.

***Score 50pts** for spotting Aileen's make-up on site*

DrEd (mouse slayer) and **Moose** (Mr Moose to you): These are the zone leaders, and their job is look after a specific part of the site and ensure that you don't actually get shot, or even injured in a normal kind of way, like having a grappling hook (see: tools) swing straight into your shins during your first half hour on site.

*Which zone leader were you working with? **Score 50pts** for DrEd and **250pts** for Moose (or else he'll rip your nuts off)*

Tools

The main tool used on the BCN (other than BW blokes and boats) is of course the ubiquitous grappling hook. The reason for this ubiquitousness is that whenever you turn around or try to hook something with your grappling hook, someone else's will somehow get in the way.

How many hooks and ropes did your group get hopelessly entangled, and was any of the original colour of the rope still visible by lunchtime on Saturday?

***Score 25pts** per hopelessly entangled rope and hook*

Crap

This is the whole point of the exercise. You get more points for the more outlandish/filthy/heavy thing or things that you drag out of the canal. Don't forget that if you are in Moose's zone, the quality of the crap always seems to be higher (the rotter). Here are some of the things you might just catch on your grappling hook:

Car Parts: Particular to the West Midlands is the BCN approach to building a kit-car. You fish various parts of several cars out of the oily water and attempt (a) to identify the car of origin and (b) build a whole one before the bits get chucked into the BW working boat.

What sort of car originally contained the parts you dredged up?

Score 75pts if Mk2 immediately identified the exact make, model and year of the car, and **250pts** if Mk2 wasn't on your zone, but you managed to at least work out that it was maybe a Japanese 4x4.

Trolleys: These devices fulfil two main purposes: (a) to convey shopping from a supermarket to a parked car (see: car parts) and (b) to be chucked into the canal in order to make navigation hazardous. Trolleys, of course, breed ferociously in canal, especially if the alpha male bread-crate trolley is also present. One lock can contain as many as five trolleys, but surprisingly, none ever seem to still contain the £1 coin.

Which supermarket (not mentioning ASDA by name) did your trolleys come from?

Score 25pts per ASDA trolley, **50pts** per any other trolley, an extra 20pts per pound coin remaining. **Deduct 20pts** per missing wheel.

Old Tools: A popular thing to fish out is a tool from a previous Clean-Up, or something which once cleaned up a bit, can be re-used. Grappling hooks will re-appear, and Martin will no doubt add another bicycle to Fulbourne's inventory.

Dippy Claire and Helen suitably grubby (Tim Lewis)

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How useful was your tool?

Score 25pts for fishing out a grappling hook or a keb. **Score 50pts** for still using the bicycle you fished out last year.

Miscellaneous bits of crap and nicked stuff: This category will include bicycles, motorbikes, tyres (of all sizes and types) and the usual selection of roadworks and sunken vegetation.

How much black, slimy sludgy stuff seeped out of your pieces of miscellaneous crap?

Score 20pts for just all over your site boots and **100pts** for so much it formed its own little support network and starting having a black, slimy, sludgy stuff coffee morning right there on the towpath.



Working Party Reports

Specialist and/or unique bits of dumped stuff:

This category will include anything that doesn't come out of the canal in large numbers.

What kinds of weird things did you drag out besides the usual items?

Score 50pts for a TV set

Score 500pts for a Pentium 4 PC, which is more up to date than the machine this report is being written on

Score 100pts for a cooker of any kind and 200pts for a fridge

Score 100pts for a keyboard weighing so much it might be made of concrete

Score 100pts for a working pogo stick

Score 200pts for a ceramic toilet

Score 50pts for a bikini top or bra and score 500pts for finding the other half of the outfit (this being Topless Tipton, of course). Score

an additional 500pts for knowing the cup size

Score 750pts for dragging up the entire bottom of an old speedboat ("just look at what you could have won")

But be careful...

Deduct 50pts if you turned around to see a local kid chucking whatever you just dragged out back into the canal

Deduct 25pts if you went and thoroughly washed your hands and then decided to take your site jacket off

Deduct 25pts if you wanted the minibus driver to pick you up but waited under the bridge 'ole where he can't see you

Big Dinner

This is what happens when you return to the accommodation (see: accommodation), weary after a day's hard grappling. A nice surprise is the big dinner coinciding with someone's 50th birthday (congratulations, Lesley!) and there being not just sausages, mash, onion gravy, swede, carrots and peas all served up by Jude and Ellie, but also a choice of three partyesque puddings (rice pud, choccy something and trifle with real strawberries!) and candles, one of which is in Lesley's dollop of mash.

How long did you spend touring Wolverhampton in the minibus looking for an open office, to return only for the last line of 'Happy Birthday'?

Score 50pts for each time your beer stash clinked on the speed bumps

Score 200pts if you actually remembered to buy some beer/wine BEFORE the event and bring it with you

Evening Entertainment

This is what happens after the big dinner and is generally done on a DIY basis. Opportunities to score abound.

Score 25pts for having seconds of at least one of the puddings.

Score 75pts for having cheese and biscuits sometime after 1am.

Score 20pts for spotting Mike Palmer asleep with his head on the table just after dinner.

Score 20pts for WhichChris looking up an internet clubbing guide on his whizzy mobile telephone just to prove that there is indeed a club in Sheffield called Bed, only to find that it has closed.

Score 100pts for Frank, acquiring a page of the BW blokes' Stihl Products Girlie Calendar (featuring a lightly-oiled and scantily-clad female holding a Stihl chainsaw) and getting as many people as possible to sign the back of the poster to Tenko, who is recovering from serious illness. Score an extra 100pts if you looked at the picture and actually noticed the chainsaw...

Eventually, everyone finally tires out and goes to bed only to find that (a) they are going to slow-roast overnight because the heating system has been left on and (b) the lighting circuits are so convoluted that it is impossible to turn the lights on in the loo without fully illuminating at least one of the dorms.

How did you find your way to the toilet? Score 50pts for avoiding wet feet.

And finally...

To complete your booklet, you will need to spot those who made it happen.

Score 1000pts for Aileen putting it all together

Score a zillion points for Jude and Ellie cooking up a storm in a compact and bijou facility.

Score 750pts for BW blokes, Claire the BW PR (who makes good tea), several senior BW visitors and model BW vans which made nice (and collectable?) souvenirs.

Score 500pts for a Vaughan-quality risk assessment including the need to “recognise rodents” (score an additional 50pts per rat and 250 pts for being a mouse slayer).

Score 250pts for drivers doing ferry runs between sites in increasingly smelly minibuses, Just Jen bringing the cooker from Lichfield (and Alice from Shefffield) and James (newly-qualified minibus licence holder) and DrEd (newly-qualified mouse slayer) for other van and trailer shenanigans. Score an additional 25pts per time that DIG-SAD’s tachograph tried to eat your disc.

Score 100pts for Phoenix, Bittell, Wolf and crews and scrap-hauling lorries operated by someone called Brian.

“See you next year on the BCN”, says **Mk2**.

And from the leader...

Many thanks to all those hardy folk who braved the chilly weather to go fishing on the Walsall Canal of the Birmingham Canal Navigations. Great were the hauls and black were the WRGies, but it was a very productive weekend, and British Waterways and future boaters of the length of canal are grateful. BW will let us know the final total of tonnage retrieved from the depths after collecting the rest of the rubbish you pulled out the next morning, assuming the locals hadn’t tipped it back in by then. So great was the amount of rubbish that not a lot of distance was covered. Another time?

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Working Party Reports

BW officials joined us each day to help and see how it all worked (and it did). It was good to see so many locals of all ages join us, maybe some future WRGies there, including perhaps Peter Smedley who came to collect his parents Sunday lunchtime.

Special thanks go to the great catering team of Jude and Ellie, with some assistance from Tess. Not only was the food good but they also made a gooey chocolate cake for Lesley’s birthday. Also to drivers Mark II, Sleepy Dave and Daddy Cool, Martin for paperwork, runarounds Ed and James Butler for collecting and returning van, kit and cooker, Ed (again) and Moose for being able Zone leaders and, of course, to your good selves for all your hard work.

Aileen Butler

PS have just heard from BW that it was 7 skips = 27 tonnes of rubbish.



One bridge hole’s worth (Time Lewis)

Working Party Reports

Lichfield Canal, 2nd – 3rd April 2005

On arriving at the pub-in-the-middle-of-the-roundabout (only Lichfield could have a pub there!) it was obvious that the weekend was going to be “compact”. Originally meant to be a purely London WRG weekend working on Tamworth Road locks, Essex WRG had decided to join forces with us as they were short of people for that weekend. As it turned out, Essex WRG appears to consist of just Frank Walder these days; certainly he was the only Essex person who turned up! Nigel had volunteered to be the emergency stand in dig leader as Andy “Kate” Roberts had escaped to Scotland (something about Munro bagging, snow and new toys to play with) and it was only seven people who joined in the toast and beer session back in the hall.

Frank had volunteered to act as cook for the weekend, so early the next morning a very fine breakfast was being enjoyed by all. Onto site and meeting Phil Sharpe the local organiser the work gets parcelled out. The first job was to pour a concrete base to the Tow path wall landing stage at the tail of lock 24, Marcus and I took on this role – well what else can you use a chemist for on site but making concrete? About half way through this pour the correct set of keys to start Blue arrived, only 2 tries needed. Sal, Nigel & Rick continued with the concrete, whilst after half an hour of bucket changing and preventative maintenance saw Martin, Marcus and I starting to excavate the towpath wall between locks 25 and 26, Blue did not seem as pleased by the prospect of work – arthritis and what sounded like the after affects of a 40-a-day habit were the least of the problems!

Sal painting the new Burco box (Ed Walker)

After an excellent lunch courtesy of Frank (you can come along again!) we pressed on with the work, brick laying started at lock 24, more soil was shifted - a job at which I had to retire from mid-afternoon as my ancient dumper could only tip over edges and I was running out. The other major task of the day was to start painting the new Burco box, cunningly designed and built by Marcus. Sal & Nigel disappeared off shopping for paint and then Sal proceeded to spend the rest of the day undercoating and top coating the box and any other tools that didn't escape fast enough. The last volunteers for the weekend joined us just after lunch, Bob and Sleepy Dave rolled up.

Back at the accommodation and painting continued over beer while Frank cooked up a wonderful chicken casserole – the food was so good that we only just made it down the pub and Martin was seen almost falling asleep in his beer.

Back to site again the next day and work seemed to pick up, more bricklaying, more towpath wall clearance, another concrete pour on the wing walls and the final coat of paint on the Burco box kept everyone out of mischief until it was time to head home.

Many thanks to Nigel for stepping in to lead the weekend at the last minute and to Phil and the rest of the Lichfield trust for having us – despite the slow start we seemed to get a lot done over the weekend, everyone seemed tired enough on Sunday evening!

Ed Walker



Wilts & Berks Canal, 23-24th April 2005

Accommodation is Foxham Reading Rooms

The site is seven Locks on the Wilts and Berks, somewhere I don't remember working before¹ so forgive me if the details are a little hazy. Work is machines, brickwork, concreting and a side issue of playing with grit and Terram and cleaning bricks².

Job 1 is to dig out the tail of Lock 3 with a view to replacing the foundations of same and dispose of some of the clay as backfill to a chamber wall. This will need a machine operator, a dumper driver and a banksman.

Job 2 is brickwork at the head of Lock 4, working on the wing walls and paddle culverts. The plan is to add bulk concrete behind this on Sunday. This will need brickies and people in support - including cleaning bricks so we can keep the brickies supplied.

There may also be, and I don't know exactly how this fits in, work putting in a drain behind the bulk concrete (or its future location) involving Terram and grit.

More detail when I get it.

Rick Ansell

rick@nb-invincible.org.uk

1. I may have been there, but I probably wasn't paying attention, never expecting to do any of this organising stuff.

2. Sorry.

Wilts & Berks Canal, West Vale Branch, 19-20th November 2005

Accommodation has been confirmed as Watchfield Village Hall.

Work will probably be on either Steppingstone Bridge or the towpath to Station Road or the steps required to get from towpath to footpath at Station road. Or anything else that they come up with in between times.

Nigel Lee



WRG Training Weekend, 7-8th May 2005

As many of this year's projects require skills of a non-plant variety, we have decided to offer a slightly different programme of training at this year's Training Weekend.

The proposed courses are as follows: First Aid, bricklaying, heritage pointing, levels & surveying, banksman (signalling), electrickery, shuttering & reinforcement, and loading & securing plant. As they will be there anyway, it is also possible to offer training on vans and trailers, as well as the beavertail for those who would find this useful. Hopefully a dumper and our excavator 'Blue' will be available for training on one of the days when they are not being commandeered by Bungle for lashing down to the beavertail!

The list is all well and good, but if there are skills that have been missed that your group or society would find invaluable this year, please let us know so we can try to arrange courses for you. The other point is that all of the training invariably costs money, so if no-one books on or shows any interest in the courses, there is little point in us booking an instructor. So don't leave it until the last minute to find that your course has been cancelled due to insufficient numbers – phone/email now!

Although the accommodation is booked for Hatton Scout Hut, the site has not yet been confirmed but obviously it will be nearby, possibly on our doorstep! You are welcome to drop in for one of the days or to stay for the whole weekend. Accommodation will be available from Friday night.

Bookings and enquiries to me on Tel: 07719643870 or 0191 422 5469 and email: *training@wrg.org.uk*.

Ali Bottomley

James on...

Minibus Tests

As many of you know I have just passed my PCV (minibus) driving test and being the first in WRG to do this I have been asked to do a report.

When I first started out on this mission I didn't realise quiet how much needed to be done.

1. You need to go to the doctors to have a medical done.

Approx £40

2. You need to apply to DVLA for your provisional license to be added. A tip here is get both D1 and C1 or if your over 21 get C not C1 added to your license as it is the same amount of money and enables you to provisionally drive minibuses and LGV (up to 7.5 ton) vehicles.

Approx £30

3. You need to study the theory driving test book for busses.

Approx £15

4. Now you have looked long and hard at the book you need to take the theory test. Although most minibuses don't have air brakes, spray guards etc it is the same theory test for minibuses and double decker busses. The hazard perception test is harder as you need to react faster on the computer to hazards than you would for a car theory test. This part I found very stressful.

Approx £30

5. Now you have passed all of the above you can now go for a driving assessment to see how many days training you will need. For an average person 4 days training is the norm for a minibus.

Approx £10

6. This is where you finally get your hands on the wheel and start training. How you drive a WRG van compared to how to drive a minibus for a DVLA test is totally different. Firstly the good old BSM shuffle steer comes back. No driving one handed now! The main thing to remember is to keep looking in your

mirrors.
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The trick I was taught is to count to five in your head then do a mirror check and make sure you move your head not just your eyes. When it comes to the test the examiner needs to see your head turn. Also when you stop **always** put the handbrake on and put it in 1st gear and whilst waiting to move off keep looking in your mirrors and both blind spots. You should always check blind spots and mirrors when you are about to take off the hand brake. You are expected to use bus lanes where possible. The only bus lanes you **CANNOT** use are sign posted with the word "local" on them. It feels very wrong driving in bus lanes. After having the lessons you should hopefully be ready for the test.

1 Days driving costs approx £150 inc vat

7. The day of the test comes. So what do you need to prove to the examiner you can do? The first thing to be done is the examiner will ask five questions. For example, "what safety equipment do you have on board?" Obviously you will show him the first aid kit and fire extinguisher. Another maybe where is the emergency fuel shut off? In my case it was turn the key back as far as it will go. You could get how will you make sure the doors are shut and show me. I said, "I will go round and open then close them all and pull the handle and see if the door moves".

Next is the reversing exercise. You will be asked to drive forward in a dead straight line and stop with the front of the bus level with 2 cones. If you turn the wheel here you will fail. You now need to reverse around a cone which you have previously passed on your nearside it now needs to pass you on your off side. You need to apply full lock to the left the second you start to move. The cone behind you is one and a half times the length of the bus from the cones you stopped at and again one and a half times the width of the bus from a yellow line on your right hand side. Do not cross the yellow line with your wheels at any point. You can stick your head out the window to check if you like. After passing the cone without touching it you then reverse round in an S shape and reverse into a box marked with cones which will be the same length of the bus and 1 and half times the width. The back of the bus must stop within a defined yellow box marked on the floor.

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A good trick here is when practising look for something on the bus that looks like it is over the line. In my case when I looked at the bumper in my mirrors it looked like it was just passed the box. It is cheating but legal. You are allowed two “shunts” (going forwards in other words) but you will get 1 minor for each attempt and on the third shunt that is a fail. For this exercise you don’t need a seat belt on and you can cross your hands. If you can keep control of the bus you can drive on your head if you like whilst hand cuffed. There are no restrictions except to get between the cones and not hit them and be in control of the bus. After this the examiner will hop into the bus and ask you to drive up to 20mph and as the front of the bus passes two cones to stop as fast as possible and within 1 vehicle length and do not lock the wheels up. It didn’t help that there was a load of salt thrown down where I did it.

You will then leave the DVLA yard and go for a drive lasting about 40 minutes. You will be asked to stop at 2-3 bus stops and pretending that passengers will get on or off i.e. the door should be near the bus stop sign. Also you will need to pull away from the kerb twice, an up hill start, down hill start. For a down hill start you need to put it into 2nd gear foot on brake hand brake off and then move away when safe and not forgetting those mirrors and blind spots. There is also a gear changing exercise. To do that you will be asked to go through the gears to 3rd or 4th gear and then on the examiners say so start going down through the gears 1 at a time and driving a little distance in each gear. When you get to 1st gear you need to crawl along and not stop.

The examiner will then say “now please drive on using your gears as normal” Obviously a mirror check will need to be done and a blind spot check, change into 1st gear and then pull away from the kerb and drive on. It is all mainly common sense to get you through - make sure your foot is right off the clutch with foot flat on the floor so he can’t do you for ridding the clutch. Make sure all the doors are unlocked when performing the test as it is illegal for a door to be locked while the minibus is in use.

Cost of the test £70

James on... Minibus Tests

8. Then if you pass, it is time to send all the documents to DVLA.

Free

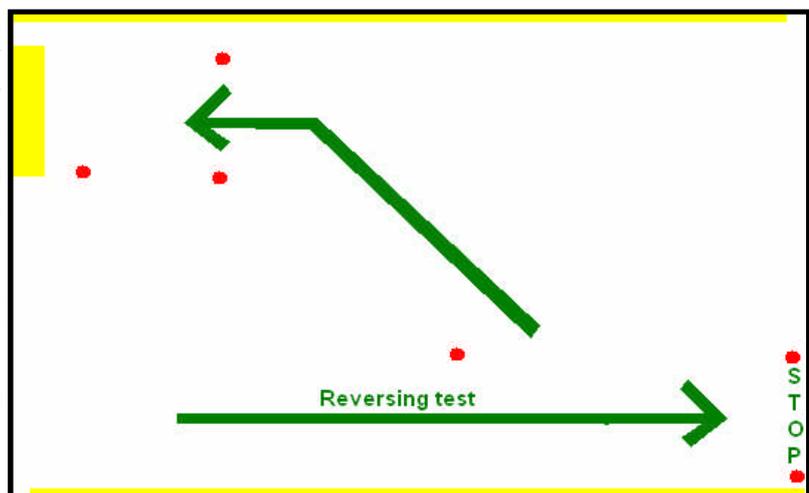
9. If you are over 21 you can go and do the biggest bus going without doing the minibus test first, but that involves more days worth of lessons and the examiner will be looking even closer for any slip ups. Also another point to remember is if you have passed the towing test in a van you CAN NOT tow trailers heavier than 750kg behind a minibus and vice versa if you took the towing test in a minibus.

10. So to sum up. It does take a long time to do. It took me three years. It is expensive. It cost me approx £550 as I only needed three days training and I got away with paying for two days. I got one day free as I used to deliver to the owner of the training school. A perk of being a postie!

11. If you are taking the trailer test then it is the same test except you won’t stop at bus stops or use bus lanes and also you don’t need to take a theory test.

All is left to say is good luck and if you would like any more advise I will be happy to help.

James Butler



London WRG AGM Minutes

Minutes for the London WRG AGM on 2005

Present:

Alice, Andi, Andy Roberts, Bob, Dave M, Ed, Ed W, Harriet, Helen, Heather, Marcus, Martin, Nigel, Richard W, Rick A, Sal, Tay, Tim, Tunji.

Apologies: Aileen, Allan, Andy Richardson, Gilly, Lesley, Moose, Maria.

Chair: Tim, minutes: Andi

Welcome and Introductions by Tim

Note the idea to trial using a Dig as the opportunity to host the AGM rather than the traditional LWRG drink, in order to enable more people that go digging regularly but are unable to travel to London mid-week to attend. Also to trail having a ½AGM mid year – next to take place on dig at Wey and Arun 10th and 11th Sept.

Agenda

Review of Projects and Future Work

Kescrg and LWRG not at the last Dig Deep meeting, which co-ordinates work commitments on a number of canals by a few restoration groups; KESCRG, NWPG, BITM, Essex and LWRG, but aware that at present there are 4 Dig Deep projects.

1. Lichfield - Tamworth Road Locks
2. Wey and Arun - nearly finished at the swing bridge – 3 weeks of camps plus weekends at Brewhurst lock, which already is restored and has a trip boat – but the loch needs to be rebuilt to allow it to drop below the road bridge. Change of plan – as it's easier to drop the canal level than raise the road.

3. 14 Locks on the Mon and Brec (KESCRG know lots about the plans for this)

4. Basingstoke – possible slipway

With the above projects taking up at least 1 weekend per year each, and with the Cleanup and Bonfire Bash included this means that – (looking at digs at a rate of every 3rd weekend – ish) we therefore have approximately 6 TBA's.

Future Dig Dates

(See Page 12 for 2005 dates list - Ed.)

2006

14/15 th Jan	TBA
4/5 th Feb	TBA
25/26 th Feb	TBA
18/19 th March	Cleanup
8/9 th April	TBA
29/30/1 st May	Cavalcade

Non-Dig Deep weekend suggestions:

H & G
Droitwich
Cromford
Derby
Grand Western
Dauntsey 7 locks
Wilts and Berks, West Vale branch

Discussion re the above and suggestions for all LWRG to keep their eyes and ears open re possible project that may be suitable for the group and report back.

Member Review

N/A at the moment

Sandwich board – for publicity at Digs- to be chased up.

Kit Review

Money approx £450 to be spent on new brick saw – after theft
toaster elements - £45 – Sal
Wooden spoon and spatulas – Sal
Extra brick kit, Pointing trowels - Martin
Harriet T requests a mixing bowl
Sally requesting box to put paints in

Kit cleaning / painting at Moose and Maria's Essex/ Herts Border (N of London)

Minibus

Issue - of use for transporting people and equipment. All agree that this is not ideal. Some discussion that this may put off members traveling in the minibus. MOT mid May. Trailer the ideal solution? Not an option with GCW. NJF not fitted with tachograph all vehicles need tachograph to tow.

Discussion of taking seats out for use of storage and use of straps to strap down kit to make it more secure and safer. Ed to look into this.

Issue – of less people in London able to drive the minibus- especially due to the changes in the drivers license and older LWRG members moving out of London. Means more pressure on minibus drivers that we do have! Will also be an issue if we opt for use of trailer as drivers will need training.

Issue – of more people traveling to digs via car (again due to less members living in London) minibus brings kit but is becoming expensive – may need to consider subsidizing the cost of the van by £7 or £8 per dig.

Fundraising

Moose organising Cavalcade site services, Sal organising LWRG side – splat the wrgie, tombola. Matched funding may be available via Vodafone – Contact Bungle to enquire. Fulbourne to go ... the theme is Trafalgar hope to win the decorated boat contest- to sort out at the extra social the Wed beforehand on 27th April.
Sat 30th April – Curry house social

London WRG AGM Minutes

AOB

Training

Discussion regarding future LWRG work, some interest in gaining different skills i.e. Hedgelaying, shuttering / concrete pours and site layout, scaffolding. Suggestions to ask for this to be included in future WRG training weekends

Andi Kewley

Well it's not just me who has trouble getting articles! (Brian Dominic, Cromford Canal)



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.

Dates	Location	Organiser
23-24/4/05	Wilts & Berks Canal	Rick Ansell
14-15/5/05	Dig Deep, Basingstoke Canal	Ed Walker
4-5/6/05	Grand Western (TBC)	Sally Nutt
25-26/6/05	Dig Deep, Mon & Brec	Tim Lewis
19-17/7/05	Derby Canal (TBC)	Andi Kewley
6-7/8/05	Sleaford Canal (TBC)	Martin Ludgate
10-11/9/05	Dig Deep, Wey & Arun	Dave Miller
1-2/10/05	Grantham Canal (TBC)	TBA
22-23/10/05	Dig Deep, Lichfield	TBA
5-6/11/05	WRG Bonfire Bash	Centrally Booked
19-20/11/05	Wilts & Berks, West Vale	Nigel Lee
3-4/12/05	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., 12th April, 3rd May, 24th May, 14th June etc. at the **Star Tavern** (upstairs room) Belgrave Mews West, behind German Embassy on Chesham Place, from about 19.30 till 23.00.

Other Events:

27/4/05	Extra Social, Warwick Castle pub, Little Venice, 7.30pm	
30/4-2/5/05	Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice (Curry trip Saturday night)	Ed Walker
6-7/5/05	WRG Training Weekend	Centrally Booked
18-19/6/05	Tool painting weekend (TBC)	Moose
2/8/05	Extra Social, Great British Beer Festival, Olympia, 7.30pm	Ed Walker
27-29/8/05	National Waterways Festival	

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