

London WRG News



London WRG formation Tirforing team (Rowenna Gaskil, Wilts & Berks)

Issue 63 April 2006

From The Editor

Well Easter's come and gone so it must almost be Cavalcade – better get a copy of London WRG News out to the troops quick!

See you at Little Venice!

Ed Walker

Canalway Cavalcade

Moose has (daftly?) again volunteered to lead the site services team for this years Canalway Cavalcade, I am sure any volunteers would be welcome but please contact him ahead of time by e-mail (moose@wrg.org.uk) as a lack of food sometimes offends.

On the fund raising side Sal will again be in charge of organising our efforts in this department – we will be taking part in the decorated boat competition as usual (the theme this year is diamonds, any ideas?) and the “splat the WRGie” and “Waterways Name Game” will also be run over the weekend.

The usual London WRG meal on the Saturday night will be a trip to a local Chinese restaurant – Aileen Butler has apparently been volunteered to organise this!

To help organise all this there will be an extra social on Wednesday 24th April from 19.30 in the Warwick Castle pub, Warwick Place, near Little Venice.

WRG Training Weekend

There will not be a training weekend this year but a date has been set for next year's event – 13-14th May 2007.

London WRG Awards 2005

The Annual London WRG Awards were given out at the London WRG Christmas Party in December, the recipients were:

Leadership – Elanor Napier for the Grantham dig.

Driving – Nigel Lee for getting an excavator stuck 5 minutes before people wanted to leave site (Mon & Brec).

Catering – Dr. Steve for the Grantham catering arrangements.

New Recruit – Chris Lee.

Lame Excuse – Richard Cool for going to the wrong St. Margaret's station on the tool painting weekend.

Brick Laying/Cleaning – Lesley McFadyen for joining in with the brick cleaner's chorus on the Lichfield Canal.

Showing A Bit Of Muscle – Helen Dobby for bionic Tirforing (Wilts & Berks).



Chris Lee with his award and beard! (Nigel Lee)

KESCRG/LWRG Christmas dig, Seven Locks, Wilts & Berks Canal, 3-4th December 2005.

The Christmas dig this year was held on the Wilts and Berks working on the Seven Locks site, also the site for the October Camp and with each of the locks at a different stage of restoration. Accommodation was at the Youth Centre in the middle of a roundabout and I circled it the wrong way on foot before finding the door!

By the time I arrived people had a glass in their hand and it seemed rude not to join in. This was fine until it was announced that we had already demolished one barrel and there was only one more for the Saturday night. However this was not a reason to stop and the proceedings migrated to the side room with a pool table and continued for some time.

The waft of breakfast implied it must be time to get up although the sound of heavy rain on the roof didn't make moving a tempting prospect. However the weather improved just as we set off for site but it remained wet all morning. The work was spread across several of the locks in the flight. Between the road and Lock One large trees were being take out by the chainsawers.

At Lock Two the stumps which were left from the October Camp had to be taken out and burnt. It took until tea break to get the fire started and although we didn't resort to any inflammatory means we did burn several celebrities!

Nothing could be done to the wing walls of Lock Three due to the weather but between Locks Three and Four hedge laying was continued.

On the off side at Lock Four scrub bashing was taking out a collection of small trees. There was also a stream in the way which proved to be deeper than boot height.

Right - Three Tirfor's and one Taz and the stump still won't move! (Rowenna Gaskell)

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Working Party Reports

Despite the teamwork of the trees holding each other up, Bob was used to demolish more than everyone else.

As the light went we regrouped and returned to the accommodation. As people became more civilised beer was begun and a minibus run for alternatives was arranged. Soon after it had to be a run for beer as the barrel looked in danger of running out before the festivities had begun.

The theme for the party was Mad Hatters and a wide range of styles emerged. A spectacular Christmas dinner was served with choices at every stage.



Working Party Reports

Before pudding there was a short interval for the Hat Parade. Prizes were awarded for a range of categories and the winner was Alan (Welsh) with a wonderful interpretation of 'The LWRG/KESCRG, Christmas, Party, at Seven Locks, on the Wilts and Berks, Canal, in Chippenham'.

The entertainment continued after pudding with a hat based quiz, list as many hats as possible, a velcro hat game, junk modelling and the finally the doff off! Once again there was a migration to the side room where singing took place into the wee small hours.

Sunday breakfast arrived earlier than expected and included a reincarnation of the left overs into bubble and squeak which was rather heavy on the sprouts! Eventually we reached site and continued where we left off.

At Lock Two the fire took little persuasion and we tested its ability to devour tree stumps. These were being supplied by a team using up to three tiffors.

At Lock Four the remaining trees were felled and burnt. Then there was essential fire watching and marshmallow eating. Once the tin of Quality Street had been eaten we could return to the accommodation and then into the darkness.

Rowenna Gaskell

Mon & Brec Canal, 14-15th January 2006.

First dig of the year and the job of organising it fell to me. The weekend started well, at least after we finally managed to get some directions to the accommodation as strangely my directions of look for the large red arrow floating above it seemed to provide some entertainment!

Amazingly van and occupants made it to the pub by 10:30 to join those already present. Drinking continued late into the evening or should I say early morning aided by the new licensing hours.

Sat morning out on site work started in earnest, the fencing crew fencing, the slash and burn team slashing and burning, the excavator and dumper drivers excavating and dumping and the slipway team marking and cutting the finishing stones for the slipway.

As tea break in the Canal Centre arrived, un-typically for Wales the sun came out and we were bathed in some glorious sunshine that continued for the rest of the weekend! (See I even managed to order the weather!)

After tea break work continued much as before however I got the task of donning the rather attractive waders so we could start laying the finishing stones on the slip way.

Post lunch –also held in the canal centre, the fencing crew completed an amazing perfectly straight fence so moved onto fixing and installing a bench.

As it started getting dark and most of site was packing up the speed pointing championship started! The challenge being to get all of the finishing stones pointed in before we left or it was so dark we couldn't see any longer. It seems luck was on our side as we completed most of it, probably due to getting everyone to lend a hand.

Right - Sal points up the slipway (Nigel Lee)

Back at the accommodation and on to dinner. The evening's delights were Chilli and Garlic Bread. However Martin got slightly carried away with the amount of chilli powder (or he was making up for not getting to eat it normally!) so the resulting dinner was a little on the warm side. To put it into context our garlic bread can usually be tasted through everything, however this evening we might as well have not bothered with the garlic! However it did work well to cool your mouth a little!

Vast amounts of rice and water later we headed for the pub and the usual beverages.

Sunday on site involved the finishing off of the jobs we had started on Sat and moving another fence.

This completed we headed for home.

Thanks to all for their hard work over the weekend, it was also a pleasure to see Matt out with us again if only temporarily. As he put it "only you lot appreciate why someone would travel 12000km to build a fence, fix a bench and point stonework in the dark"!

See you all new time

Sal Nutt



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Working Party Reports

Lichfield Canal, 5-6th February 2006.

With the normal emails flying around, the weekend of the 4th and 5th of February found LWRG up in sunny Lichfield (okay I fibbed it was not sunny).

The Hall, The Martin Heath hall had been used by LWRG before but some of us had not been there before, so on the drive up on the Friday, we had a phone call asking were we on our way? At this moment we both decided to say we were lost, after driving through several industrial parks etc, I said to Maria is that the pub we need?, she said no. At this moment she was answering the phone I said is this the pub we need and it was quickly decided that it was, as I went past the entrance! This pub is in the middle of the roundabout with a deft movement by yours truly, i.e. I went in the out drive. Waited for the phone call to finish so we could then work out where the hall was in relation to the said pub. Within 5 minutes we were sat outside the hall and yes it was locked the keys was at the pub. A few minutes later people and keys turned up.

Found space to set up bed etc took the shopping out of the car etc toaster was then put into operation, a two slice toaster in Maria's hands could toast quicker than the Gas hob could with Young Chris operating (must find out if there is an operating license for a toaster?). Elanor had collected the odd bottle of beer from Burton on Trent on her way through so money changed hands and the sound of happy drinkers could be heard. Late night to bed, bad move.

Saturday Morning, Liz got up a cooked breakfast for the hoard, at 07:50hrs was the breakfast call, i.e. breakfast in ten minutes. After a good breakfast including several cups of tea or Coffee, off to site.

Working Party Reports

At 10:00hrs a ready mix lorry was expected with about 6?? Something (cubic metres...Ed.) of concrete, for a pour to back fill a wall the locals had already shuttered etc.

The plan was to use the dumper to carry a load of cement to the wall along a raised bank of soil and then the dumper to tip the cement in and we could then spread it along behind the wall simple?? The first dumper load with James the postie driving, started to come over the raised earth when the earth started to give way. A quick positioning of dumper and unloading the cement saved a large mess. All the other raised earth banks were promptly reinforced and no further real hiccups.

After about 30 minutes the mixer went away empty and the back fill nearly half full of concrete. A team then started up a mixer and with Bob wheel barrowing, they for the rest of the day, made mix after mix to complete the infill. (some anorak will know how much aggregate they used).

A mixer was started by Liz to keep the brickies in mortar. The rest of LWRG, after the back fill had been eveled left that job and started to clear the brick work off the next lock. By now I got a call, from my beloved, stand on the road I can't find you? Duly obliged and Maria delivered lunch.

After lunch those clearing the lock edge then started to do a little bit of scrub bash with no fire. No LWRG had not gone mad but it just wasn't worth starting a fire for the afternoon, so we just made a large pile ready for the next day.

At knocking off time everyone cleaned the tools and jumped in the van back to the accommodation where Maria on special requested had made Paprika Scrumpy. But before we were allowed to eat, it was the dreaded time of year Yes the AGM.



Sal and Nigel working hard on the lock wing walls (Ed Walker)

After a couple of hours AGM was finished and scoff was served, after pud (syrup sponge). We adjourned to the pub, shame we had to sit at three different tables for a while until people starting to leave.

On return to hall a beer or two more then coffee followed by bed, I was the last one to bed and that was before 00:00hrs LWRG are getting soft.

Sunday morning Sal's Andy had volunteered to do breakfast and again after the call. Everyone had there fill plenty of tea or coffees and we then had to move all our stuff out of the kitchen into the hall we use for sleeping. From 09:00hrs we had left the hall and were back on site, brickies carried on with there walls etc and the remainder start to scrub bash again, a fire was started, all we had cut was gradually put on the fire and more was cut, Lunch arrived (without getting lost) then it was time to wonder back to the scrub bash two rugby balls were found and an impromptu kick about started, Helen tried to head the ball with a hard hat on.

To soon it was time to pack up site and go back to the hall, Maria had done a lot of clearing up and all that was left to pack cars and trundle of home in the various directions of the country.

I would like to thank all the people who come and had a play; we had 18 on site Saturday and 19 on site Sunday, (Taz who lives fairly close come and had a play just for the day).

Dave "Moose" Hearnden

No photos survive from the Battersea Beer Festival this year, the main protagonists can be seen here receiving a reading from the PRH by renowned beer drinker Matt Taylor (Nigel Lee, Mon & Brec)

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Working Party Reports

What's worse than a pub with no beer?

London WRG return to the Battersea Beer Festival, February 2006

It has become an annual tradition for ale-inclined London WRGies to visit the Battersea Beer Festival and as the visit is usually co-ordinated as an extra social by former nearby resident Ed, it took place on a Friday this year. He's moved to Didcot, you see, so Thursdays are no longer goers.

This was music to my ears, as Thursdays have been no good for me, either, since I changed jobs (this is also why I can never make the Star socials!) and more music lilted along to my lugholes when Liz and Clive offered floor space for the likes of Ed, Richard Cool and me to stay over.

On Friday evening, I met Liz, Jenny Mum Wilson and Alan Scott in Pizza Hut (you'll be pleased to know that I chose not to partake) and Clive then met all of us, and ate a pizza. Quite quickly, I noticed. Perhaps I could learn something from Clive here.



Working Party Reports

Off we went to Clapham (pronounced CLAP-‘um) Junction and walked up the hill to the historic and impressive Battersea Town Hall, only to find it partially obscured by a ruddy great queue. The fire limit had already been exceeded and it was one-out-one-in. And a quick check of the heads ahead suggested that specifically, it was one-out-Richard-Cool-in. Sally and Andy were already inside and Martin & Lesley were bound to be somewhere.

By the time we got in, and paid entrance fees, we were well ready for a beer or three. I was (as usual) ready for the loo so off I went. Now regular CAMRA event-goers will recognise this: two or three blokes in the washroom or queue or coat check or wherever, complaining loudly and bitterly (pun, there) about something or other. In this case it was something along the lines of no-beer-left-on-a-Friday-night-you-wouldn’t-believe-it, etc. “Bearded, woolly-pully whingers,” I thought (glad that neither Martin nor Keith Flett* couldn’t read my temporarily beardist thoughts), “I bet they’re tickers and they’re just put out that not all 100 beers were available!”

Nope, they weren’t exaggerating. There was virtually no beer left, and what there was ran out whilst we were queueing up for it. I managed one pint of real ale before necessity steered me towards the Bieres san Frontieres bar, or foreign beer to you, moosh. There were Weissbiers aplenty in bottle and a couple of nice draughts- one Belgian and one German. Ever eager to enjoy the combination of Belgian and German thinking (have you seen the contents of my driveway?) I sampled several brews happily whilst dissension rose in the ranks.

Meanwhile, I bumped into one of the few friends I made at university (those that know me will know that I don’t really talk about uni much) and despite

not having seen or heard of each other for just over 10 years, we recognised each other immediately and talked a fair bit about humourous writing (why we were friends in the first place and what he does instead of working now!) and the joys of, er, beer!

The food also met with my approval. I’d stayed off the corporate pizza with a view to a hot dog or chilli at the festival, but entering the servery, I was amazed to find a genuine Polish chef, serving up a selection of genuine Polish recipes. Now sausages were of course available (this being a beer festival and the chef being Polish) but I can’t resist a plate of Bigos. This is what my mum would call “enthusiasm stew, because I’ve put all I’ve got into it!” and it includes all kinds of slow-cooked meat and veggies in a lovely rich sauce. Yum!

So once I’d finished my dinner (see: must take notes from Clive, above) a group decision saw us heading back down Lavender Hill (smells like: any other main road in South London) a big corner pub called The Falcon. A wide selection of the usual national-brand real ales awaited and they were in fine nick, so we stayed for a couple of rounds.

After a dash back across The River, during which Liz did her ankle in (see: mathematical equation in my W&B dig report) and I tested the stylish glass luggage racks in the new trains by lying in one, we (Liz, Clive, Ed, Richard and me) ended up watching Back to the Future on DVD and (inexplicably!) drinking port AND Belgian beer. What was I thinking? All I know is that I was glad of the lovely sausages Liz cooked us in the morning!

I went back out to MK on the train (first experience of Virgin’s ‘Pendolino’ – wow!) and home for a quick bath, followed by zipping off to Dr. Liz & Ian’s to celebrate Rowena’s birthday with a nice big dinner!

All in all, a great weekend, and no mud involved!

Mk2

* Well, he crops up everywhere else, so I thought: why not here?!

“Nearly Rudderless” or Up Seven Locks Without a Paddle...

Wilts & Berks Canal, Seven Locks, 25-26th February 2006

Having christened 2006 with a freezing foray into Wales, LWRG ventured a little less far in February, with a visit to Seven Locks (not far from Dauntsey), one of the major work sites for the Wilts & Berks at the moment. This is part of Racheal Banyard’s patch and she was to be putting us to good use with lock wall brickwork, groundwork including backfill behind newly-built lock walls and an awful lot of lifting-and-shifting.

The leader for this weekend was to have been Andy (never trust anyone called) Richardson, and up until Saturday evening, it was. He then left us, having a much better offer for Sunday, namely a box at a rugby match.

I arrived a bit early on Friday evening having been working in Sussex (cracking drive up from Andover to Lyneham, via minor roads, between snow-covered downs!) so I popped in to see Racheal and Di at Dauntsey, where I had a cup of coffee, watched the news and was violently adored by Mina (sorry for spelling your name wrong in the last report I wrote, Mina).

We then returned to Lyneham (after, bizarrely, a landline telephone conversation with Welsh Phil) to await the Bearer of the Hall Keys with Nigel and Chris, who had materialised meantime. Later, Nigel, Chris and I adjourned to the White Hart and to our delight found a choice of real ale (there was real cider too, for those, that, er, drink the stuff and don’t have to spend the next two days talking to God on the Great White Pay-As-You-Go) and an amazingly seventies interior with a real fire burning in an inset-stove affair in the stone chimney. The rest of the London WRGies arrived in RFB and piled in too. Into the pub, not the stove. Richard piled into the real cider and found that next time, he’d have a Strongbow, please.

Right - The locals inspect the new bywash pipe before we bury the evidence (Nigel Lee)

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On Saturday morning, I forgot to get up because I had some new earplugs in and had no idea the rest of ‘em were up-and-at-it. I watched everyone else scoff brekky (I’m not a breakfast person, so it isn’t a big deal with me) whilst clambering into my clothes and preparing for battle with lip balm and handcream (“ah, modern men!” I hear you sigh, “in my day,” etc etc).

As ever, the “anything involving the W&B involves problematical site access” rule applied, and the complete lockful of (brand new!) scaffolding which awaited us upon arrival at site had to be moved, by hand, from the road end of the site (Lock 2) to where it would be stored, a small, fenced-in area of the field to the offside of Lock 4, an earlier KESCRG-and-locals creation. All this was via an uneven tow-path, a bund over the canal’s course and into a hoof-rutted field half-swamped with water and, er, animal bi-products.



Working Party Reports

Frank fell over in his riggers so many times he was ordered off the area by Andy for his own safety (his cleanliness already having been compromised). I tell you what, I've never been so completely and utterly knackered at the end of a week-long Canal Camp. Unfortunately, it was 11:00am and the SAT-URDAY of a weekend DIG. And there was more to come.

Mixing vast quantities of concrete with an enormous mixer (ours was Schweppes, Jumbo being employed on similar duties the other side) was next. Much lifting and the mix called for entire bags of cement at once and 25 blokeish or 50 girlie shovelfuls of agg. Cue WRGNW regulars' cries of "Southern Jessie!" but my shovelfuls were not much more blokey than Rowena's girly ones, so we did 50s! This was naturally followed by failing to get the wheelbarrows of concrete up the precarious access ramps, succeeding somehow, shifting the vibe generating machine onto other precarious places in order to walk up and down the wall-tops (1 block wide) and vibrate the backfill and much general stretching of poor, abused backbones back into posture-correct positions.

I learned how to angle the vibrator head for maximum effectiveness ('Teacher' Tim Lewis at maximum effectiveness, there) and how you were really supposed to stop Schweppes (like, not the decompression levers, Mk2!) I also learned that how worn out I felt at 11 was nothing to how I felt mid-afternoon, and there was still more scaff to shift.

I must say how utterly welcome the aroma of cooking was to my chapped nostrils upon our return to the hall. And how welcome it was to find boot scrapers on either side of the main door; these are great for taking the boots off without getting even dirtier!

Liz Wilson, nursing a bad ankle* that would have put her out of contention on site, chose instead to take after Jenny Mum Wilson and cook up a storm for us. Dinner was slow-cooked chicken in creamy sauce, with sticky rice, and moy hoy did it fill a gap! For some reason, I've forgotten what was for pudding, so perhaps Editor Ed will fill that in for me!

Off to the White Hart without much further ado. Richard decided that Strongbow would continue to be his cidre-de-choix and the rest of us made merry with the Pride and 6X. Well, not Chris, obviously.

The following day again featured dry but cold and breezy weather and again featured scaff-shifting, backfill and brickwork. The leader for Sunday was yer actual Tim Lewis, but by early afternoon, enough was enough for his back, and he headed for an early bath. From then on, I'm not sure who was in charge but Ed kept a watching brief on everything.

The brickwork of Martin, Nigel and David, supported by Chris soldiering away on yet another ancient mixer, was continued by locals just as we were leaving site, so Lock 3 certainly saw some headway and by the time you read this the Easter Canal Camp will probably have seen it finished. Lock 4 is another story, but thanks to this dig, all the (new!) scaffolding is in the right place for when the demolition is done and the rebuild starts.

Thanks to Rachel and Luke for all their help, to Lyneham village hall's committee for refurbishing the place to a high level of cosiness, Liz for scrummy dindins and sarnies galore and also to Lesley, as without the loan of her padded jacket to put on my shoulders, I could not have continued carrying that flippin' scaffolding!

Mk2

* This can be expressed mathematically as = beer festival + imminent last train home + shiny-floored railway station.

Minutes from LWRG AGM. 4th February 2006

1. **Apologies** from Harri T. and Lesley.

2. **Dates, venues and leaders for weekend digs.**

2006 - See page 15.

2007

13-14 Jan

3-4 Feb

24-25 Feb AGM

17-18 Mar BCN Clean up

5-8 Apr Possible long Easter weekend dig

28-29 Apr

19-20 May

We will decide the 2007 leaders and venues at the half AGM in September.

3. **Finance.** The balance in the bank at the time was £477.53. This was said to be very healthy as our main fundraising events for the year, the barn dance and cavalcade, were still to come. Martin had also just sent a cheque to Paula that was some money left from various weekend digs (£60.00?).

4. **Tools.** With money surplus to spend we draw up a list of tools and equipment to buy, and potential purchasers.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| • Gas flame thrower | R. Banyard |
| • Tirfor bag | Ed |
| • Tirfor snatch block | Bungle |
| • 1xExtra long spirit level | Ed/Sally |
| • 20 x Bow saw blade | Moose |
| • 2 x Loppers (Wilkinson) | Ed |
| • 1 x Post spade | Ed |
| • 10 x Plastic mugs | Sally |
| • 1 x Sack trolley | Ed/Bob |
| • Plate/bowl bags | Moose |

5. **Fund Raising.** Ed's parents have volunteered to run our stall at Cavalcade on the Saturday. The theme for Cavalcade this year is Diamonds. We will enter the pageant as normal. We will be jointly running the barn dance again for a share in the profit.

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6. **Van.** We agreed to subsidise the van where necessary to bring the fuel costs for people travelling in it down to no more than 10 pounds per person per weekend. (In the worst case that might result in it costing as much as 30-40 pounds subsidy.)

7. **Publicity.** A request was made for new photos on the display board.

- Tim to produce some, with any also received from other people, will be also used.
- Martin will produce a large map of the canal system, showing those open and under restoration.
- Wording for sandwich boards will be priced up by Moose.
- A new batch of stickers will be ordered by Liz W

8. AOB

- Try and arrange a boat trip on a dig.
- Aileen to arrange a Chinese meal during Cavalcade.
- Tool maintenance to take place on a summer dig instead of a special weekend.

Moose & Maria

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
13-14/5/05	Chelmer & Blackwater	Helen & Tim
3-4/6/06	Dig Deep on the Lichfield	Martin Ludgate
24-25/6/06	Wilts & Berks, Abingdon Junction	Ed Walker
15-16/7/06	Dig Deep on the Wilts & Berks	Richard Cool
5-6/8/06	Derby Canal	Elanor Napier
9-10/9/06	Dig Deep on the Wey & Arun	Sal Nutt
30/9-1/10/06	Sleaford or Cromford Canals	Andi Kewley?
21-22/10/06	Dig Deep on the Wey & Arun	Nigel Lee
4-5/11/06	Bonfire Bash, Grantham Canal	Centrally Booked
18-19/11/06	Cromford or Sleaford Canals	TBA
2-3/12/06	KESCRG/LWRG Xmas Party, TBA	Tim Lewis

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. 2nd May, 23rd May, 13th June, 4th July, 25th July, 29th August etc. at the **Star Tavern** (upstairs room) Belgrave Mews West, behind German Embassy on Chesham Place, from about 19.30 till 23.00. Extra Social 26th April at Warwick Castle pub, Warwick Place near Little Venice.

Other Events:

29/4-1/5/06	Canalway Cavalcade, Little Venice	-
27-29/5/06	Campaign Rally, Basingstoke Canal	-
1/8/06	Extra Social, Great British Beer Festival, Earls Court	Ed Walker
26-28/8/06	National Waterways Festival, Beale Park	-
3/3/07	KESCRG/LWRG Barn Dance, Benson	Ed Walker

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