

# London WRG News

Issue 76:  
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# Editors Note:

As usual I have failed to produce this edition of LWRG news within a reasonable period after the end of the six months to which it refers.

Despite this—my thanks to all those who put in time and effort to produce the contents of these pages. These include both the words and the images (especially those of Inka's pillow (p9). My especial thanks to those who contributes under duress having been bullied into compliance after several drinks in the pub.

My habitual lateness does however have the benefit of meaning I am able to report the winners of the LWRG awards on pages 19 and 20! These were picked out of the submitted nominations by the usual method of judging the volume of the heckles from the audience.

Below are the dig dates for 2014 as they stand (March 2014) - though as usual they are subject to minor change. For the up-to-date lists see: [https://www.waterways.org.uk/wrg/regional\\_groups/london\\_wrg/dig\\_dates\\_2014](https://www.waterways.org.uk/wrg/regional_groups/london_wrg/dig_dates_2014).

**Helena Rosiecka**  
(Cover photo: Alan Lines)

Date	Canal	Leader
11/12/ Jan	Shrewsbury and Newport	Martin L
1/2 Feb	Chelmer and Blackwater	Adrian C
22/23 Feb	Wey and Arun	Paul I
15/16 Mar	Cotswolds	Moose & Maria
5/6 Apr	BCN Clean-up	Chris M (centrally booked)
31 May/1 Jun	Chesterfield	George R
22/23 Jun	Mon and Brec	Martin D
12/13 Jul	Basingstoke	TBC
2/3 Aug	Wey and Arun	TBC
23/25 Aug	Cotswolds	TBC
13/14 Sep	Cromford	George R
11/12 Oct	Somersetshire Coal	Sophie S
22/23 Nov	London Clean-Up	Tim L (Centrally booked)
6/7 Dec	Xmas party with KESCRG	KESCRG

# 14/15TH JULY 2013 (COTSWOLDS)

Let's start with the negatives. First, there was no van from central London. It was off on its summer holidays visiting Camp sites around the UK. Secondly we were at a Port (Brimscombe) which had no ships – unless, of course you count the pub (called 'The Ship' for those who haven't yet been there). Thirdly we worked at Griffin Mill Lock where there were no Griffins (mythical or family) and no mill (long demolished, I suspect).

Now to the positives. There was a lock, or at least the semblance of the reconstruction of one. Over the weekend we contributed to making it more complete with rows of brickwork in the chamber, the start of the ladder recess, patching of one wing wall, pointing in the sluice chamber and

'messaging about' with a bund which seemed to consist of getting plant and machinery stuck, unstuck (repeat!) and moving earth and materials around, the purpose of which I never really understood.



Another positive was the lovely dinner provided by Sophie, breakfasts courtesy of Paul and Colin and lunchtime sandwiches prepared by the excellent team of makers. We were lucky with the weather and the beer didn't run out at the pub. Altogether a good weekend.

**Allan Scott**

(Images: Alan Lines and Martin Ludgate)



## 3RD/4TH AUGUST 2013 (WEY AND ARUN)

Volunteering to run a dig when the camp season is on is always fraught with logistical problems and volunteering numbers. I had the delights of running the Wey and Arun dig on the first weekend of August. I sent the invites before the previous dig which meant I would know if the kit logistics would work. I also got the details of the work so I knew that we needed at least one plant operator for the dig to take place.

The numbers were going to be low as several regulars were either attending camps on or before the dig. We were going to stay at the Plaistow Village hall even though we were going to work between Shelford and Bramley on the towpath besides the Cranleigh waters. With a week before we had eight confirmed attendances including two newbies. However, by the time of the dig only five attended the dig with one extra person on Sunday.

Due to the low numbers I managed to squeeze both the shopping and the kit into my fiesta. Arriving at the accommodation despite attempts by the regions traffic to delay by having both the Dartford and Blackwall tunnels being blocked, I met up with the key holder and unlocked the accommodation and offloaded the food and awaited arrival of the

others. Both Peter's arrived and along with Richard we had a pleasant night in the Sun pub before the traditional toast feast.

**Saturday:** Next morning, after the arrival of Anne, we proceeded to the work site (with a minor diversion due to a fallen tree). Parking our vehicles in the layby opposite the work site, we received a malevolent stare from the mobile café when we offloaded the Burco. We then met up with the locals and obtained the keys to the plant for Pete F and Anne to operate. While Richard, Pete K and I got the hand tools required for the footpath work,

Pete and Anne had to drive the plant across the road to collect the type one aggregate and dust to be laid on the footpath. The local JJ informed us that some of the path previously laid was too high for the amount of topping to be laid this meant that we had to chip away at already rolled path to reduce the level before laying the topping on it. This meant that we ended up with a dumper full of type one. We got the local to roller down the new path and then laid out the next length of lining and inserted the excess aggregate. Nigel joined us late in the afternoon and the extra help meant that we were able to lay soil on the next patch of path to be laid.

After the evening meal and the departure of Anne, the five of us ventured down to the Sun pub to find it closed. A quick move into



Excess soil from the location of the bridge being constructed was used for infill—however this was complicated by Pete F being given strict instructions not to dig too deep as there was a fibre optic cable running just under the soil spoil heap. The infill was used to raise the level of the towpath which was dug too deep. This was quickly rolled flat by the local and we then laid a teram lining before filling it up with more type one aggregate. The aggregate was now being supplied to us by two dumpers before this was rolled down.

Pete K's car and we enjoyed an evening in the Onslow Arms.

**Sunday:** Having made arrangements with the key holder the previous evening we had our breakfast and left the accommodation by 8:30. The work on Sunday morning was a repeat of the day before with Nigel and Pete using the plant. However, this was also the first morning of the Wey and Arun Canal Trust week long camp so we were joined by around twelve other personnel all doing tasks around the site.

By mid-afternoon we reached within a few metres of the towpath creation and surveying teams from the camp so we called a halt to our weekend.

I would like to thank Pete F, Pete K, Richard, Anne and Nigel in making the weekend go so well. I would also like to thank the locals for the support and guidance of the tasks.

**Paul Ireson**  
(Image: JJ Price)



**Next time:  
LWRG builds this...**

**7/8TH SEPT' 2013  
(CHESTERFIELD)**

## **T' Cowboys (and girl) laying T' blocks on T' Chesterfield Canal in T' Stavery**

So, I met the group at about midnight down the local pub which conveniently was right next door, to our cardboard accommodation I missed out on last orders but used my charm to get a drink whilst they were shutting up (result!!)

**DAY 1:** Paul cooked the most marvellous breakfast and even did the washing up which was fantastic. Pete made the sandwiches then left as he had a night shift at work that night (talk about commitment!) We then Headed down In the waterways vandango to assess the site and take some pictures from different angles.

As it had been raining the ground was a little wet (being up north where it rains 99% of the time) so we decided not to risk the vandango getting stuck in the mud, Martin backed up the van and we loaded up the back with concrete blocks,

which I have to say weighed the same as a small elephant. He then drove a cautious 100 metres and we unloaded the back of the van to three blocks per wheel barrow and cautiously shifted them down the very muddy hill to the wall and put the blocks up like dominoes on top of the 2nd course (if your not accustomed to brick laying slang, a course is a set of blocks/bricks not a part of a meal).

Dave decided to make himself a mixologist and started to mix the muck (the mortar) some of the guys got it loaded into wheel barrows and moved it back down the



hill to the wall, no mean feat if you ask me! A load of muck was slopped on a muck board for the purpose of muck laying and Martin asked if I've done this before. I said no so he gave the following instructions: *Well you just slap the muck on, give it a whack here and there and follow the string line to make*



*sure it's flush and true,* So I did just that! The hardest thing was to lift the block in place and make sure it did look flush and true which was pretty hard considering I am not really a builder type but after another one I was soon getting the hang of it,

Eventually someone shouted "BURKA'S BOILED" and I thought "brilliant about time for a brew". Unfortunately we forgot to pack the biscuits and cake so we had some crisps and tea, not dunked in as that would be just gross... We then continued as above until the lunch time, after which Emma arrived off the train and joined us cowboys in laying the blocks, as we started laying the 2nd course.

Alan was proving really useful in taking lots of 'Action' photos and then suddenly picked up a trowel and started chucking the muck in between the gaps to make the blocks stick together. (pointing apparently).

We continued on with the fourth course (our second) had another brew with no cake. I was starting to get a bit knackered as the sky' was getting a bit greyer. Chris said it won't rain but I said you've said the 'R' word it's gonna do it.. And sure enough the sky was starting to spit a bit. I thought we're gonna have to run for cover, but luckily we didn't have too and it soon passed.

We then downed tools and cleared up to go back to the cardboard box where a full on cricket match was being played (we were staying in a bit of the pavilion) so we watched the cricket for a bit and Martin was very disappointed about not being able to have a remote control to rewind or pause the game. It then really started to hammer it down, Emma and Chris cooked an amazing tea of burgers, chicken and sausage. George also made some pasta salad and some lush eaton mess which was very quickly eaten up (see what I did there??)

We then went to the pub which was just a short stagger and the entertainment was play your cards right, where we were trying to work out the odds for winning the game.. It took a fair few pints to work it out, but it seems no one could remember what it was come morning. We then stumbled back to the accommodation and had a kip..

**DAY 2:** I laid in my sleeping bag, too lazy and hungover to go to the loo and too bone idle to do anything else, but luckily Paul was up and awake and making a lush breakfast which was just what the doctor ordered after last nights adventures. We made lunch and this time remembered to pack the cake and the biscuits! Chris said over breakfast that Helena had requested someone do the site report and so George suddenly elected me! So I was ready as I went to site for this write up!

We got to site and assessed the damage from last nights down-pour - after Chris had cursed the weather. We couldn't get the van down the hill so barrowed the blocks again. Dave put his mixing skills to the test and made muck, we then got to work and started to lay more blocks on to the 4th course,

I looked around and as there was no more space on the wall I helped the locals chip away at the bank to fill up the sides so the concrete mix would fill into

place (which I'm secretly glad of as my joints were pretty stiff all over) so I had a great second day having a good laugh with the locals taking the piss out of each other with the north/south divide , different accents, and debating about whether or not people will use the HS2 to get from the north to the south in 20 or so years time...

We had a good lunch this time as we had brought ALL of the supplies down (including those originally meant for Saturday) so had a pretty good feast, we then packed up and had our photos taken in front of the wall. Looked pretty good if you ask me, but then anything would look good to me being a cowboy of T'north.

All in all we laid 400 blocks and it was a pretty good weekend, Gold stars go to Paul for making breakfast, Chris for his weather reports. Chris and Emma for making tea, Alan Lines for working (and taking pics), Martin for the cricket updates, Pete for making lunch then leaving, and of course George for organising the whole thing!! If I've missed out anyone else do forgive me.

Cheers!!

**Paul  
Clark**

**(Images:  
Alan Lines)**



## HALF AGM NOTES:

The Chair was absent from the meeting, and no one sent their apologies.

The main purpose of the meeting was to decide the dig dates for the following 12 months, and leaders for the next six months (*2013 dates omitted, 2014 dates listed on page two*). If any of these venues cannot have a dig then we will approach the Wilts and Berks..

**Actions:**      Suggestions for other dig locations to Martin  
Tool painting weekend to be decided at the AGM for May/June  
Ask MKP where the London WRG bricksaw and wrecking bars are, to have them back for the winter  
Tools to be bought: 3 quarter inch tuck trowels, 3 three eighth inch tuck trowels, 4 gauging trowels, 4 bucket trowels,

### 28/29th September 2013 (Cotswolds)

Having failed in y editorial duty to harass someone into writing a dig report for this one I am left months later wondering what we did. My own memories are minimal having contracted a tummy bug prior to arrival and spending the majority of the weekend asleep in the accommodation.



Pictures from site however indicate that there was some work done— but mostly by Inka's pillow....

Helena Rosiecka  
(Images: Chris Byrne)



## 19/20TH OCTOBER 2013 (SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL) - A LETTER TO RACHAEL...

I have to say Rachel that people were very surprised and disappointed that you weren't with us in Somersetshire this weekend. Rob found it especially hard to understand why you would want to go to Vienna when there was such an interesting culvert to be tackled here. Martin shook his head sadly and said he thought it very self-indulgent to be gadding off to Europe when we've barely even begun this restoration. Helena added that really you and James have known each other for years now, so she doesn't understand why you needed to be spending time with him when there are all these bricks to be cleaned over here. Anyway, they all hope you're having a nice honeymoon.

Our dig on the Somersetshire Coal Canal this year was really the closest London WRG is ever going to get to going to a festival. I'd promised accommodation on an organic farm, strings of fairy lights on old stone barns, vegetables picked fresh that morning. There were living willow sculptures and antique juice presses in the apple orchard, fresh herbs to be picked and rambling Bath stone farm buildings in states of picturesque decay.

*"But you didn't say anything about outside toilets!"* Helena cried

*"Far more hygienic than having them in the house,"* I reassured her.

*"Well these ones must be extra-bloody-hygienic, as they're a field away from the accommodation. In the sodding dark."*

None of the menfolk seemed concerned by the rather basic sanitary facilities – after all there were plenty of bushes around – but they were greatly distressed by the sticky parking. Luckily we managed to extract Alan from the muddy track he got stuck in Friday night quite quickly on Saturday. We also managed to pop the van's wheel arch back into shape after a different calamity in the driving rain.

Adrian came out of the kitchen looking alarmed. *"There are an awful lot of green things in the kitchen,"* he said worriedly. *"You aren't going to make us eat them are you?"* I promised him that all the vegetables would be deep fried, which mollified him slightly.

Helena had a fit about the daddy long legs in the kitchen and the spiders in the sleeping area. I was beginning to suspect London WRG did not share my appreciation of bucolic romance. Only Martin Danks seemed to get into the



spirit – he said it reminded him of going to festivals back in his hippy teens. Still, everyone else agreed it wasn't as bad as Stratton Scout Hut and we counted our blessings while Helena sulked and counted the spiders.

In the morning we awoke to find ourselves in rural bliss. The sleeping area looked out onto a lush meadow, a stream and a beautiful flower and herb garden, even if all these things were more than a little damp. Everyone was cheerful at breakfast and enjoyed Martin Danks's homemade jam. Half the group walked to the worksite at Radford and Paulton basins and I went with the rest in the van. I was in quite a lot of pain with a leg injury, but I didn't like to mention it - you know I don't like to make a fuss.



Site was damp and exciting: Rob's eyes lit up at the site of a juicy culvert in need of repair and everyone enjoyed standing around the hole frowning thoughtfully and offering advice. At the other end of site there were concrete blocks to be cast to repair a crumbling stone arch long enough to put stop planks in. I explained to everyone that I wouldn't be able to lift anything heavy as my leg was so painful, but they weren't to make a fuss of me and I didn't want any special treatment.

We were joined on site by our host Richard Fox. With green wellies and a straw hat, his appearance satisfied me that he was indeed a farmer. He was a very nice man even though he went everywhere carrying a massive machete. That afternoon the scrub bashing team discovered Chris has a strange magnetism for cows, who crossed their field and tried to climb inside his pockets as he scrub bashed. The volunteers got on quite well cutting down the blackthorn, despite having to continuously shoo the cows out of the fire (it seems a farmer in Somerset has managed to breed a cow that cooks itself). The concrete blocks got cast and hardly anyone grumbled about the brick cleaning.

Leaving most of the crew working on these projects I limped off to the towpath with a



small team and pointed out where they'd need to scrub bash. I explained I'd love to help out but I couldn't as I was in such terrible pain with my leg. Then I went back to the accommodation to get on with the cooking. On my way back to the farm I ran into our host again and was able to update him on the terrible problems I was having with my leg. In a fit of hospitality I invited him along for dinner. But when I got back to the accommodation I realized you can't feed organic farmers on Tesco 'basics' mince and shitty white bread like you can WRGies. In a fit of panic I decided I'd better make two soups and two puddings to dazzle our guest, and went off to climb a tree in search of damsons. This did not improve the situation with my gammy leg.

When everyone got back from site I gave them a vegetable soup, with the vegetables heavily disguised in cream so as not to scare Adrian, and French onion soup, with stern warnings not to abuse the allocation of croutons (which everyone ignored). The plan was to stuff the latest edition of Navvies magazine into envelopes before the main course. Unfortunately I don't think we mentioned this to our dinner guest Richard, who must have wondered that no other food seemed to follow on from the soup. The poor man disappeared during the Navvies stuffing, presumably pitying these volunteers who labour all day on site with only a bowl of vegetable soup to sustain them.

Everyone agreed the food was very good if you just picked all the horrible green bits off your plate. I explained that I'd done my best despite the terrible pain I was in and not even having any help, though they weren't to feel bad about that. I brought out the puddings and everyone agreed treacle tart was just the thing to take the unpleasant taste of vegetables out of your mouth. Everyone enjoyed themselves so much they barely noticed how badly I was limping and how much pain I was in so I had to keep reminding them.



George Rogers was explaining his method for making breadcrumbs on a camp without a Magimix. He explained that he put some bread in a bowl, inserted the stick blender and covered the bowl with clingfilm. He said it worked quite well apart from some breadcrumbs got spilt. At the other end of the table, John Hawkins just caught the end of the conversation:

*“What’s that you say about there being a hole in the clingfilm?”* He cried.

*“George is explaining how he got his girlfriend pregnant.”* I replied.

Everyone agreed this was the best joke of the evening.



The next day I managed to go to site despite the terrible pain I was still in. The concrete blocks cast the previous day turned out like a dream when the moulds were removed and Rob had done sterling work on the culvert. I left Helena splashing about cheerfully in the muddy culvert hole and went over to keep an eye on the bonfire.

At tea break the owner of Paulton Foundry and the associated cottages came over. and we were treated to a digest of 12 months of archaeological discoveries on the site, with some notes about industrial architecture and the sadly biased application process for getting on ‘Grand Designs’.

Personally I couldn’t really see much change to the house restoration apart from they had managed to shoo all of the bats out of the bedrooms and got rid of the sofa they found with all the dead greyhounds hidden behind the armrests. The owner showed us a pile of interesting bits of old ironwork he’d found and the LWRGies began to root through it excitedly:

*“Look, you can really see the change from wrought to casting!”*

*“Do you think this could be a bearing pin?”*

*“Gosh Adrian do you know I really think it might be.”*

I had to briskly slap Emma and Abigail awake, but LWRG were in raptures.

We decided it really was time to go back to site, but first to enjoy a twenty minute chat about the different kinds of stone arches you get. We worked for a bit longer then had four kinds of cake, which was my way of making up for the unpleasantness with the vegetables the previous night (with supplementary cake provided by the locals). To everyone’s surprise, we managed to finish the culvert before it started to pour with rain. Then we packed up early and came home.

Everyone agreed we’d never ever come back to this accommodation. Then I told them that the farmer had promised us venison if we come next year. Oh let’s come back next year then, everyone agreed (except Helena—who retains a weird obsession with the loo’s being inside the building).

Yours faithfully,

**Sophie Smith**

(Images: Alan Lines)



## 9/10TH NOVEMBER 2013 (COTSWOLDS)

For the ostriches amongst us, this year's Bonfire Bash (or is it the Reunion - I've never worked it out?) was hosted by the Cotswold Canals Trust, taking place over the weekend of 9th & 10th November in the Stroud Valley, a fascinating area packed with all manner of industrial and transport history, with a goodly helping of wildlife and architectural yummys for those that way inclined.

Our base for the weekend were the industrial units at Brimscombe Port, these buildings have become a popular destination for many of the regulars and ideally suited to the weekend's event, having an almost absurd amount of undercover space for vans, trailers and kit to be sorted, plus a maze of different rooms to suit every taste for the small hours period of unconsciousness... Doggy rooms, a quiet room, a cool room, a warm room, an even warmer room, a late to bed room, a girly room, I believe it is correct to say that WRG Forestry Team also had their own room, though as is usual, the snorers spread themselves amongst all of these....

The accommodation was well set up by the time I arrived at 9pm on the Friday, several WRGies having been busy on this task in the days running up to the Bash.

This year's was a little different to previous events; this time instead of mostly scrub bashing over one length, there was a great variety of work spread over a number of different sites. Happily, everything was well organised in advance: A description of work was listed for each site, together with suggested group sizes and equipment required... write your name on the sheet describing the site you'd like to work on, then glue yourself to the appropriate site leader the following morning. Simple.

Saturday dawned and weather wise was not looking promising, leaden grey skies threatening their worst. Following a brief by MKP we made our way outside, just as the first drops of rain began to fall.

At Brimscombe Port, volunteers were tasked with "discovering" the Brimscombe Arch, clearing Bourne Lock and it's surrounding area of vegetation, with the special instruction "Do not set fire to the Port". Naturally, this note attracted the pyromaniac element. Squidge and Ulrich started a fire at one end of the port, whilst the rest of the team went to retrieve a trailer in order to transport the brush (or is it brash - this seems to depend on what part of the country you are from!) to the fire. Various remarks about the "plant trailer"... oh dear. A lot of the material had been cut by locals earlier in the year and so burned readily: having consumed all of

this, the fire was then fed with brush from other sites where fires were not an option. The team excelled themselves by not setting fire to the port, just as instructed.

Meanwhile at Gough's Orchard Lock (looking a LOT more with it following many previous digs and camps) some follow-up vegetation clearance work was required, together with the removal of some large trees in the pound below the lock which were starting to look poorly or otherwise unsafe. A passer by helpfully informed us that it was far too wet to have a bonfire, an easy challenge for such a crack team of battle hardened jungle bashers. There was some delay in setting up the Burco: EHP having failed to make it back up the steep and very autumnal looking lane which led down to the lock. Moose dispatched a Land Rover to rescue the disgraced Transit, which in sympathy promptly developed a fault with it's parking brake. Can we attribute the delay to 'Leaves on the Lane'?

By late morning the clouds had cleared and it was starting to look like a nice day, the low sun illuminating the columns of bonfire smoke which rose lazily up from the valley floor. Our work was particularly important as the canal is very much in the public eye, already in use as a popular walking route and also overlooked by the Swindon to Gloucester railway line, passen-

gers watching our progress as their trains slipped and laboured up the steep and winding tracks towards the summit at Sapper-ton. Clear instructions were issued to not smoke out the railway line, the route's principal operator having some reputation for the timeliness and safety of it's service....

Buddleia branches started to appear on the brash piles, this was the work of the specialist 'bunny poisoning' team who had been sent out with cordless drills and pellets to prevent regrowth of this troublesome species: Having cut the buddleia, the stems were drilled and poison applied... amazing at how effective this plant is at destroying masonry!

With the light fading, most teams were back at the accommodation by 5pm, milling around to savour the delicious smells of cooking. Food was quickly devoured, the few 'seconds' disappearing within seconds of Mike's debrief. Apple crumble with deliciously creamy thick custard followed, and as has become customary for this event, a selection of real ales courtesy of Nic. Late evening became very early morning and unless anyone can correct me, this year's Bash was notable for it's absence of alcohol induced bodily mishaps of the type commonly requiring a mop.

Saturday came with a frost, in fact a fantastic crisp Autumn morning with mist sitting in the

bottom of the valley, quickly burning off as the sun became higher, absolutely gorgeous. Bonfires were quickly re-lit from the previous day's monstrous piles of ash and soon the various sites hissed and popped with the sound of freshly cut timber catching fire. The temperature in the industrial unit had dropped somewhat overnight, I have reports that the cooks who, as usual had risen early in order to prepare our hearty breakfast had resorted to hugging the ovens in order to stay warm.

At Bowbridge, another team worked on clearing the offside bank of overhanging branches, with the special instruction of taking particular care around a concerned resident's boundary fence. Upsetting the neighbours is not the done thing!

At Ham Mill there was some more technical work: Lock chamber clearance, installation of coping stones, dismantling of scaffolding and, according to the site guide notes, "assist the excavator team as they continue to make a real mess". With several excavators on site and some large diameter twin-wall plastic pipes to be uncovered and removed (these had been placed as a temporary water channel) yes, ground conditions were a little sticky. Omelettes, eggs.... Despite the area having a distinctly rural feel, the canal is never far from homes or businesses and any mishaps will at best be spotted quickly and at worst, impact upon others, therefore WRG's ability to

get the job done professionally and safely was important as ever. It was most heartening to hear Stroud District Council's Volunteer Co-ordinator - aka Jon Pontefract-chatting with a passer by about our work - it is clear we have a great reputation for the quality of our work, the way in which we achieve it and the trust that is held in the WRG parties to do the unseen bits properly even when working without external supervision.

As you'd expect, the Forestry team were kept fully occupied safely dealing with various large and tricky trees. CCT recover the timber themselves and sell the firewood locally as a means of fund raising - in fact several local residents were enquiring about this increasingly popular energy source as we were working. More brownie points for CCT.

With the accommodation offering covered, more importantly at this time of year, \*lit\* space for the final pack up of vans and trailers, work on site continued right up until the light faded, a little extra squeezed out of the weekend.

Having been the victim of a last minute stitch-up for the camp report (Bushbaby gets the blame, though I'm sure there are others too) I am sure that many notable points may have been overlooked, hopefully this is excusable given the number of different work sites and great variety of work on each. It was only a last-minute move of

goal posts that meant I could make it to Brimscombe at all, but am heartily glad I did so. A most enjoyable and productive weekend with a great sense of worthwhile work accomplished. A big well done and thank you to CCT, our fantastic cooks, the leaders, those who worked for months in advance to make it happen, and not forgetting a great team of WRGies for turning up to get dirty.

### Welsh Phil

(Right: Mike P presents Martin L with the original artwork used in the “hijacking” of the Navvies middle pages to celebrate 20 years with Martin L as editor!)



## 7/8TH DECEMBER 2013 (COTSWOLDS): CHRISTMAS DIG WITH KESCRG

### *Waterways and Peace: a Tale of WRG (abridged)*

Unit 1, Brimscombe Port is very handy for Griffin Mill Lock, and The Ship Inn is handy for Unit 1, so that's where we ended up on Friday night along with volunteers representing London WRG and KESCRG. It was a chance to catch up with friends and plot the jobs on site. The main job for the weekend was pouring a concrete base for the lower gates of the lock along

with work on the coping stones, clearing a paddle culvert and putting up a wooden fence.

As on any site there are always volunteers itching to jump in a muddy hole so they were sent in to clear the mud, prep the shuttering and lay out the reinforcing mesh for the concrete pour. Also on the lock, the last of the loose coping stones along the lock edge had to be pulled back and reset. With a new towpath having already been laid and the lock looking finished there were landscaping jobs to take care of. A traditional winter dig bonfire for scrub (and huddling round) was lit to get rid of previously cut scrub.

While the lock was being restored a line of Heras fence panelling had been put up but it was time to re-

place it with something more permanent, and more pleasing to the eye. Bonking jokes at the ready, two teams planted fence posts followed by a masterclass from Bobby in the arcane mysteries of the 'monkey strainer' for tensioning mesh and barbed wire.



Back at Unit 1, and after showers and a change of clothes, we were greeted by the wonderful smell of Christmas dinner. Soup and pâté, turkey and pork, all followed by Christmas pudding, cheese and the most amazing chocolate pudding complete with sparklers. Once we were finished it was onto a tradition nearly as old as Christmas itself – judging the fancy dress and party games courtesy of Martin – with a theme of 'books'. Round 1's book related questions may have favoured those with a good knowledge of *A Muppets Christmas Carol* and Round 2 gave us Purple Fairy as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar's* butterfly, RAF Martin as *Moby Dick's* whale and *Jack and the Beanstalk* with an appropriately tall cast. The games finished with a deciding round of Book Title Charades. The Ken Parish trophy was also

awarded to Jon Pontefract, the local on site, for all his work and help given to various groups, plus his ability to find work for a week-end (or week!) at short notice.

For the fencing team Sunday was an end to straight lines and on to corners with wooden fencing to go up around the spill weir. Others worked on scrub bashing and clearance of the far end of site and finishing up the landscaping. With the lock bed prepped on Saturday vast quantities of concrete were mixed and a large pipe was lowered into place to provide a chute for the concrete as it was mixed and shovelled in.

Scrub burnt, fence laid, concrete poured and volunteers knackered, we packed, tidied and left. As with any dig you need peoplepower, and anyone who came should be proud of what was achieved, but you need someone in charge and someone to feed us so many thanks to Helena (who says she wasn't in charge) and Sophie and Anne for cooking at least two Christmases' worth of food!

*The End*

**Richard Worthington**

(Images: David Miller)



**London WRG Awards 2013:** (Winners ascertained by level of cheering on the second dig of 2014 and listed last and in blue)

**New Recruit:**

- ⇒ George R for becoming a WRG tart
- ⇒ Paul C for the least expected answer to why he came along ever
- ⇒ Inka 2 for being a pillow on many digs without its owner
- ⇒ [Fran B for coming back even though her first weekend was the BCN](#)

**Catering:**

- ⇒ Alan L for sorting out flypaper whilst breakfast was being cooked to minimise extra protein being consumed
- ⇒ Colin W for being the assistant breakfast chef
- ⇒ Sophie S for inviting the SCC local to dinner and forgetting to say we were stuffing Navvies between courses so he went home thinking soup was all we were having
- ⇒ Martin L for dedication to duty in cleaning out the catering kit after the great mouse invasion
- ⇒ [Nadine W for giving Paul I food poisoning before he arrived at the dig](#)

**Brick Laying:**

- ⇒ Paul I for brick-laying up-side-down at Griffin Mill Lock
- ⇒ Rob B for continuing on his culvert at SCC even after the drainage ditch was complete and his feet started getting wet
- ⇒ Alan L and Martin L for laying stones weighting more than they did at Cromford
- ⇒ [Pete F for keeping his cool in the face of the comments strongly indicating a lack of knowledge of his \(and others\) engineering qualifications](#)



## Leadership:

- ⇒ Alan L for being the apprentice master
- ⇒ Sophie S for convincing LWRG to turn up to a dig where the accommodation was a pig sty with outdoor loo's that you needed wellies to reach
- ⇒ Helena R for organising the LWRG/KESCRG Christmas dig at Stroud after Chichester had to cancel

## Lame Excuse:

- ⇒ Tim L for a raft of excuses leading to him always doing one day on site
- ⇒ James B for moving house
- ⇒ Suzie and Ed W for being pregnant (Suzie only) and having a baby
- ⇒ [Helena R for having a housewarming party on a dig weekend](#)

## Driving:

- ⇒ Bungle E for organising complicated van movements without first checking that all vehicles involved were booked on the dig
- ⇒ Adrian C for getting the van stuck on a tarmac road at reunion
- ⇒ Essex Police for giving Helena R a lift after a computer error declared the car she was being given a lift in uninsured
- ⇒ [Alan L for driving down the road \(bridleway\) we were specifically told not to go down and getting so stuck that Adrian S had to rescue him in the morning](#)

## And new this year - **Doughnut:**

- ⇒ Attendees of the LWRG/KESCRG Christmas camp for being variously a whale, a cow, working girls, a very hungry caterpillar and a thesaurus
- ⇒ David M for finishing the trench at the SCC ahead of schedule and getting Rob B's feet wet
- ⇒ Inka R for letting her pillow go on more digs than she managed
- ⇒ [Martin L for forgetting the hard hats two digs in a row](#)

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