

LWRG NEWS



Issue 86 August 2019

Editors Note

I apologise for the delay to the July edition. If this upsets you, what you could do to stop this happening again is write some dig reports, send me your best pictures and any infill you think may be interesting for others to read. I would like to thank Martin and Paul who have contributed to this as to previous editions. I thought I would comment on some of the things keeping members busy over the summer break.



Martin beside a restored and navigable lock 10 on the Basingstoke Canal. Photo: Fran

Martin and Tim came with Darren on my boat Atropos to the Basingstoke Canal. They showed us the ghost work site of years past and we worked the locks that they had restored over twenty years previously. We also walked past the ghost of the Robin Hood pub (see later in this issue).



Lock 3 of the Basingstoke being restored in 1988 Photo: Tim Lewis

Sophie has been busy cramming her adult life into an eighteen month period and we congratulate her and Stephen on their wedding and look forward to a new member for the LWRG crèche. So, it is all go, and the rest of the year looks to be busy too. Plans are even afoot for a new canal for us to work on in 2020. Tim is in discussion with the Royal Gunpowder Mills in London!



Stephen and Sophie newlywed! Photo credit: unknown but Sophie placed it on LWRG Facebook so the editor thought it fair game!

Chelmer & Blackwater 12/13th Jan

Leader: Paul Ireson

This was a joint dig with WRG Forestry sharing the accommodation but working at separate sites. So while the Forestry team would tackle some trees near some flats in Heybridge, London WRG were tasked to work at Paper Mill. The first task for me was to be the purser and allocate the cabins to each person to ensure comfort. Being close to London, most of the people expected were soon located in the Jolly Sailor by early evening.



Path destruction. Photo credit: Ian Stewart

Saturday

With the assistance of Jo Alderman, the two brew boxes were filled and everyone made their sandwiches. But remind Dave M to put them in the correct box next time! So while the Forestry team went off to assess and prepare their work area and boat, London WRG went off to work at Paper Mill. The first task was to break

up the concrete path just downstream from the lock and re-lay the path with some type 1 covering. Those of us who had long memories will remember that the re-laying of the path was done by us in 2011 and was promptly flooded & washed out within the next week. The second was to re-edge the existing path line so we could lay and level the path. Allocation of duties and Tim made a rash statement that Fran was not big enough to work on the demolition team. So while Tim was setting up the Burco at the lock, Dave with the pick axe managed to lift the old concrete path and Fran wielding the sledge hammer set about smashing it up into little bits. Whether she was imaging Tim's head in each piece would be a matter of conjecture. So despite the chaos, by lunch the path had been cleared of concrete which had been wheel barrowed over the lock to be put on the island behind the work parties shed (By first tea break I think you'll find, ed.). Here Joe, Tim & Helen started on the crazy paving which would give them a more solid surface to store "stuff".



Forestry at the pub - they did get changed before dinner so didn't look like a Guantanamo Bay outing when we returned in the evening. Photo: Tim Lewis

The path was dug out to a depth to fill with the type one and several holes on the bank were filled by the soil. Upon return to the accommodation, tales of

Forestry breaking their boat and having to get a little boat to rescue it were retold after they had all had a dirty pint in the pub.



Evening meal on the boat. Photo credit: Tim Lewis

The evening meal produced a major nomination for the 2019 catering awards when my custard was not the best and was described as looking like mashed swede and other derogatory comments. Sufficient evidence was noticed when even the seagulls turned their noses up at it.

Sunday

A smaller band of Forestry went back to their trees to finish their task while London WRG returned to Paper Mill. We were joined today by Emma Greenall as well as Moose & Maria. The path was levelled by usage of a Waca plate and a group were tasked to level the car park where some pot holes existed. By tea break both the path and car park had a level and packed down surface. After tea, while Martin performed some master carpentry to repair & replace the damaged fence and posts beside the towpath, Moose, Maria and Fran started to clear out the area in front of the sheds on the island ready for the areas to be laid with concrete. So the mixing team of Tim and Helen started

making up the mix. However none were as thick as Paul's custard. The barrow team of Emma and Paul moved these mixes trying not to put them where the team did not want them.

The rest of the crew were tasked to ensure safety for the users of the car park by trimming the entire hedgerow that existed between the lock cottage and the car park entrances.



Bob and Paul fencing. Photo credit: Tim Lewis

By late afternoon, all the various tasks had been completed with one area fully concreted in front of the sheds. A big thank you to everyone who attended from both groups and a big thank you to Essex Waterways for arranging the accommodation and supporting us in the tasks.

PS The custard was last seen floating (sinking, surely? Ed.) on the Blackwater estuary and will probably be used as a sealant.

Paul Ireson

Shrewsbury & Newport 9/10th February

Leader: Tim Lewis

Last time we worked on the Shrewsbury & Newport Canals in May 2019, we were working at the north west portal of Berwick Tunnel, but during the weekend several of us snuck off for a walk down the road to take a look at the remains of the canal at the far, south east, end of the tunnel. Well, not actually at the south east end of the tunnel, because you couldn't see it. What we did find was a rather nice brick-built farm bridge across an impenetrable jungle which someone with a good imagination might have been able to convince themselves had once had a canal in it.



Berwick tunnel portal. Photo: Martin Ludgate

So imagine our surprise to arrive on site in February to find that thanks to the efforts of the S&N Canal Trust's volunteers in the meantime, the bridge now spanned a deepish canal cutting. There was even water in it! OK, so it

wasn't exactly looking like a navigable canal yet – but that was why we were there. Well, eventually we were there, after several people went on a magical mystery tour on the way to site.

There were still quite a lot of overhanging branches, small trees and undergrowth - most of which was rather annoyingly growing on the non-towpath side, meaning we would have to drag it across. But thanks to having rustled-up no fewer than three Tiffor winches (curiously not including our own new one!) we were soon shifting stuff across the canal and had the first bonfire going.



An odd angle for using a tirfor! Photo: Martin Ludgate

And that was more-or-less what we did all weekend. Various Tirfors were set up at various odd angles dictated by the position of the available anchor trees (I don't think I've ever seen someone work a Tirfor upside down above their head before!), plus there was some more old-fashioned tug-of-

war style heaving on ropes, and gradually the canal emerged from the remaining undergrowth and started looking not just like a canal but like one which might one day be navigable again. All of it was cut up and either burnt or logged by the trained chainsaw operators from WRG Forestry and SNCT who were working with us.



Nigel making wood chips fly. Photo: Martin Ludgate

In the meantime several of us snuck off again (lazy lot, aren't we?) to have a look at the south east portal of the tunnel. It's in a lot better condition than the north west one, just missing its parapet stones on the towpath side (quite possibly they're buried in earth at the bottom of the wall), and with some ivy roots that need dealing with. And if you point your torch through the gate in the bricked-up entrance you can see that the inside isn't in bad nick either – and that it clearly has a distinct bend to the right. A quick trip to the north west end later in the weekend revealed that it too has a distinct bend

to the right, giving credence to the story that there's a sharp S-bend in the middle. It's a very interesting tunnel: originally it had a wooden towpath which was removed after 20 years, without which it quite possibly wouldn't have been practicable to later widen the canal from its original tub-boat dimensions to normal narrowboat width. Anyway repairing the portals looks like it might well be a job for us on future digs.



Scrub bashing. Photo: James Weir

Our leader Tim didn't just skive off for half an hour to look at a tunnel, he sodded off to the airport half way through the weekend to suss out some canal restoration projects for us in Spain. (*) So rather than the full AGM that he would have been chairing on Saturday evening, we held a short meeting to choose our dig dates for the rest of the year – see elsewhere in this publication – before heading for the pub followed by an early night.



Looking South from Widow's Bridge. Photo: James Weir

Oh, and Inka discovered that you can buy crisps in buckets. And we were impressed by the clock in the bijou accommodation in Uffington Village Hall which shows the incorrect time (well, OK, right twice a day!) in four different cities around the world. And all incorrect by different amounts. Very useful in Uffington.



The tirfor team. Photo: Alan Lines

And Martin D cooked us an excellent dinner, while Paul not only did his usual sterling job on breakfast, but drove the minibus all the way back so I could work on Navvies magazine on the back seat! Thanks to both, and to Tim for leading the first half of the weekend, Nigel for taking over on Sunday, and to everyone for turning up and making it a successful weekend.

(*) I reckon both the Canal de Castilla and the Canal Imperial de Aragón should be good prospects for restoration...

Martin Ludgate



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Channel-of-Castile-Near-Fromista.jpg>

Wey & Arun

9th/10th March

Leader: Paul Ireson

This was my second dig of the year to lead but this time, I did not need to do any evening cooking or do the shopping as Sophie had volunteered for this task. However, best laid plans sometimes do not come off as Sophie managed to do the online shopping but injured herself on the evening before the dig and this meant that although I had agreed to pick up the shopping, I needed to get some vegetarian ingredients for their evening meal. Thankfully Maria agreed to do the cooking.



The site for the new bridge. Photo: Martin Ludgate

Saturday

After breakfast and with Dave Evans showing the 16 of us the way, we made our way to the new site. The canal society had just purchased the freehold of around a mile of canal and Dave took us on a tour from Birtley Court and down the track until we reached the line of the canal which still held water. We walked down the line of the towpath until we reached the

end of the land and Dave showed us where the proposed first lift bridge would be built during the summer camps.

Due to the recent weather certain planned tasks were dropped, so the four main tasks were:

- 1) Plant some tree saplings along the line of the canal
- 2) A bonfire to burn off some of the waste wood lying around on both sides of the canal
- 3) Replace a missing gate and remove old posts from a former gate
- 4) Lay tracking over the field behind the car park for the compound area and along the track down to where the towpath access was located. All of this required some terram to be laid beneath to prevent too much mud coming up through the tracking.

Tim volunteered for the fire duty so we sent a responsible adult (Inka) to keep him in line, while Angela, Ian, Joe & Laura went off tree planting. This left the rest of us to lay the tracking. Dave E and Adrian had the previous day moved some of the two sets of tracking from Dunsfold to the site but this meant that we had to unload the first set off the trailer so that we could despatch Dave E & Dave B to collect the remaining sets.

We started laying the track and bolting down the units, Fran & Martin had the spanners and wrench to tighten the bolts, but when Dave E returned he pointed out that the black set of tracking did not need the square washers so these were unscrewed and re-tightened. By tea break we had laid the first 20 units and the other two teams returned for tea. Dave E then

cracked the whip and we were despatched back to work. Chief tree planter Angela then demonstrated the harness for all the tree saplings and comments about the amount of whips were muted.



Angela loaded up with saplings to plant. Photo: Ian Stewart

The track layers were now boosted by Maria and we allowed Fran to use the power tool to speed up the tightening of the bolts. A well-oiled production line was employed with spacers being screwed onto a piece of track while still on the trailer, moved to the location required and then bolted down. This meant that by the afternoon tea break the whole of the compound area had tracking laid and we started on the lane using the second set of tracking which did need the square washers.

To save the movers backs this meant that the trailer was reversed by use of the dumper through the bottom gate. This ensured the entertainment of watching the drivers attempt the turn

through the gate and around to the track. By the end of the day the various teams had achieved a large part of their tasks and Dave E announced that he would be unable to attend the next day due to a half marathon going past his home. Honourable mention of a lame excuse for next year awards.



Tea break. Photo credit: Tim Lewis

During the break between the brilliant Shepherd's Pie Dinner and equally brilliant Pineapple Upside Down cake the 2018 London WRG Awards were decided and verbally awarded (see below for the winners!).

Sunday

The three teams continued their tasks with the track laying team having a challenge of how to use the wide strip of terram in the narrow lane without cutting the roll in half. So with a committee decision, Moose & Dave B then proceeded to use it side on which meant multiple cutting but good practices for new part time jobs as carpet fitters. And so by tea break in the morning, the track laying and tree team has completed their tasks, so following the break, the tree team joined Tim & Inka in clearing up the fire area and surrounding area while the rest of us started on erecting the gate.

The first task was to remove the old wire fencing that was joined to the old posts while a couple of us measured up the location on the new posts for the gate pins. This completed and the gate being re-hung, everyone congregated into the lane to watch Adrian uproot the old posts complete with their concrete bases and re-profile the holes created with the excavator. With all jobs completed, we all returned to the hall to have lunch and an early departure.

A thank you to Dave E and the Wey & Arun Canal society for their support and also to all that attended the weekend.

Paul Ireson

LWRG Awards

Doughnut/**Donut** (for doing something silly which is apparently the same as making a donut of oneself) : Helen Dobbie as an experienced boater was allowed to helm the boat on the Cotswolds. Then promptly fell in



Our chairman awarding the Donut award to Helen. Photo: Martin Ludgate

Bricklaying: Martin Ludgate for laying his first brick of the year on the

Buckingham Arm Bridge 1 project. And then promptly relaying in a minute later having laid the second one and finding them not level. With an honourable mention to everyone else on the dig for a sterling effort laying over 1200 bricks.

Driving: Pete Fleming for getting the off road forklift stuck in the mud on another Buckingham dig. We felt he should know better. Though honourable mention to Dave Evans of the Wey and Arun Canal Trust for launching the trip boat from the new slipway at Dunsfold. Straight into Martin standing on a pontoon photographing the launch. In case you were wondering, Martin only nearly fell in.

New Recruit: Malcolm Hewlett for attending two LWRG socials. Despite not having come on a LWRG dig yet,

Leadership: Paul Ireson - Small dig. Small leader. For the Famous Five effort of the smallest LWRG dig of the year on the Wey & Arun but getting much done so the slipway was ready for it's opening ceremony.

Lame Excuse: Tim Lewis for missing out on a day on site at the Inglesham joint dig with KESCRG as he left on Saturday to stay in a hotel for a (true quote) "pleasant evening" with Sarah. Alan Useful Lines got an honourable mention for just not being bothered to go to the Reunion.

Catering: No-one could remember any catering disasters for 2018 (though I believe the 2019 contest has some really stiff competition that may not be overcome. Even by seagulls - ask anyone on the Chelmer and Blackwater dig) but there were many nominations for catering triumphs.

Emma Greenall won though for her amazing gateau trifle.

So that was that. Award nominations can be made throughout the year for 2019 - though it's best to write them down and email them to me because come December we've all completely forgotten and hotly deny we could have ever done such a thing.

BCN Clean-up

30th/31st March

Leader: Chris Morgan/ Dave "Moose" Hearnden

It's a long way to Birmingham so we set out early. Unfortunately we were going via Tom's farm as we needed a cooker. The van entered into the hilarity of the cooker moving in the dark by adjusting it's suspension just as we were heaving the damn thing over the creaking boards into the back "We know it's heavy" we growled while trying to keep all 4 wheels going in the right direction.



Boats at the BCN. Photo: Fran Burrell

Luckily arriving late did not seem a problem as numbers in the sleeping quarters were curtailed by a number of

attendees arriving by boat so we easily found space to sleep. Having never got so far into the room before I was pleasantly surprised to learn I could sleep beneath the archery target. Downstairs all was good too with beer on tap and a number of happy Wergies determining which of the two their favourite was by sampling the wares. Then double checking each in turn!



Paul retrieving a bicycle. Photo: Tim Lewis

After a delicious breakfast cooked by George we were driven to site. Armed with grappling hooks we then start throwing the hooks into the cut, remembering to hold onto the other end of the rope, so we can pull whatever we might snag from the murky waters.



A sofa! Photo: Martin Ludgate

Particularly prized are bicycles, trolleys and tyres, but more unusual objects are sometimes recovered. Wet sofas make for a fearsome workout.

For anyone who has not been to the BCN clean-up, it is a mixed event with volunteers from several organisations working with the canal and river trust (CRT) to remove rubbish from a part of the network. This year we concentrated on the Dudley number 2 canal from Gosty Hill to Blowers Green.

In the evening we were persuaded by Mick Lilliman to visit a different pub than usual. It was the haunt of the Tipton Slasher. He was murderous understandably, in my opinion. Several people had a ride back on Lewis' boat which has a round bottomed hull which rather alarmed several passengers when they found out quite how much it rocked with their weight. The fun continued after a delicious dinner cooked by Maria and George as Karen brought out a birthday cake for Nigel. It was only later that Nigel realised he had got his age wrong. But his Mum had not noticed either so maybe that's OK.



Nigel's birthday cake. Photo: Martin Ludgate

We then had a cheese and port party before turning in in the early hours. Pride of place among the boats was Swallow which has been sold and had its last appearance at the BCN clean-up in style, lit up and the centre of the party.



nb Swallow . Photo: Fran Burrell

CRT reported that 30 tonnes of rubbish was removed and the money from the scrap metal collected pays for the diesel for the Birmingham Canal Network Society's workboats.

Fran Burrell

Cavalcade 1st - 7th May

Leader: Pete Fleming

As in previous years, LWRG made a significant contribution to the sites

services team as well as participating in visiting boats



WRG won the best decorated community boat award. This year's theme was volunteers! Photo: Tim Lewis

Canalway Cavalcade is a festival run by the Inland Waterways Association in Brownings Pool in Little Venice since the 1980s when the now bustling Paddington basin was in threat of being filled in for redevelopment. The festival itself now extends down to the basin with live music in the new amphitheatre and the food court held on Stone Wharf.



Putting up another marquee. Photo: Tim Lewis

Martin, Tim, Lesley and other shareholders arrived with their restored 1937 GUCC Town class narrowboat Fulbourne. Fulbourne appeared in the boat handling competition with Martin and Tim steered through the historic boat parade. There is also a fiendishly

difficult quiz set by Martin on the Friday night in the bar which is delivered to an unruly number of teams assisted by Helen in the hope of winning a bottle of wine.



Fencing. It's a repetitive job! Photo: Tim Lewis

The weather was rather stormy this year with several of the trader's stalls needing to be weighted down with wheelie bins filled with water.



Leadership team of Pete and Emma. Photo: Tim Lewis

Unsurprisingly footfall was a little less than in previous years. However, several traders remarked that they had done very well despite the rain and wind. I certainly took shelter in a stall and found myself with something new decorated with Roses and Castles.

Such things as wind, rain and a hailstorm certainly enliven the boat handling.



A range of drinks were supplied by Bungle once we have closed the bar which is the last job of the day. Photo: Tim Lewis

I believe the event is a success in no small part due to the volunteers like Pete and Emma G who lead the site services team as well as the IWA volunteers who co-ordinate publicity and manage the event. Next year the government has decided to take away the bank holiday but plans are to go ahead with a shorter weekend event, so why not come down to either volunteer or visit the show and enjoy the stalls, watch the boats and sample the foods from around the world that can be found in one of the most iconic waterway locations in London.



Adrian dismantling the electrics. Photo: Tim Lewis



Sue and Ron Jones pushing NUH. Photo: Martin Ludgate

Obituary to Ron and Sue Jones

Longstanding London WRG volunteers will remember Ron and Sue Jones, who were regulars with the group in the 1990s. We are sorry to have to bring you the shocking news that both of them, and their precious pets, died in a house fire at their home in Lancashire in early April.

Ron was an industrial chemist, who in between the day job and working with WRG managed to take a series of Open University chemistry courses. This culminated in him receiving a doctorate, and becoming the first person that we presented with a mock stethoscope made from a shower hose and other junk for his achievement – “Well, you’re Doctor Ron now, so you’ll need one of these!” Meanwhile Sue gained a name for herself amongst us thanks to some ever-so-slightly off-the-wall on-site comments including “Look at that horse over there, it’s just like a zebra, with spots all over!” But although our memories might be irreverent ones concerning

lighthearted moments and general silliness, Ron and Sue were in integral part of the small nucleus of regular volunteers who helped sustain London WRG through some very lean years when we struggled for numbers, and it’s thanks to people like them that the group survived to enjoy its successful recent years.

Keen boaters who kept a cruiser on the Lee and Stort, Ron and Sue later swapped it for a small narrowboat and moved away from their native Essex to be closer to their relatives in the north west, continuing their boating on the Lancaster Canal. However despite their absence from London WRG digs they still exchanged Christmas cards every year with several of us old-timers, and it’s shocking to think that this has suddenly been ended in this way.

But let’s keep the memories cheery, with this photo of Sue and the ever-present small black dog Tara (with Ron among the indistinguishable bunch in the background), helping to push-start the legendary LWRG crewbus D739NUH on the way back from a weekend dig on the Montgomery Canal around 1993.

Martin Ludgate

Buckingham

Arm 11th/12th

May

Leader: Fran Burrell

Paul was the LWRG van driver for this dig having done some complicated van choreography with Martin and we set off in good time for Stoke Bruerne where some people had already sampled both pubs. On arrival we unpacked the van and I was told there was no food box. The horror of no tea in the morning girded no-one to action but luckily Sophie was still shopping at that late hour and agreed to buy essentials. Paul reassured me that we had made a saving on previous digs so could afford to go over budget on this one. I tried to make some weak jokes about Martin having forgotten the saucepans and as we coped so admirably with such a challenge was now trying to starve us to new heights. It seemed strange when Paul found the food box under the hardhats after going to double check. Later, Pete pointed out that in fact Paul had packed the van after cavalcade so really ought to have remembered if he had left the food box under the Battlebridge Building at Little Venice! Unfortunately I had already sent a rude message to Martin Ludgate at this point of clarity for which I apologise. We joined the others at the Navigation Inn for a restorative drink. Getting back to the village hall after closing time, Sophie still had not arrived. Was she still driving around the village

desperately looking for a parking space?



The Buckingham Arm. Photo: Fran Burrell

Sophie did arrive safe and well and with enough food to feed an army. Including teabags for which we now had a delightful surplus and it was all gratefully unpacked before we all went to bed.



The Buckingham always appeals to those who like driving things. Big things in this case. Photo: Fran

The next morning after a fine breakfast cooked by Paul with John and Penny providing supplementary support, we then travelled to Cosgrove by road avoiding a pig of a flight of locks which needs to be worked if going by boat. We met Terry who then talked us through the site safety briefing. Our main task for the weekend was preparing the reinforcement and formwork for a concrete pour. The site had certainly changed from when we were last here building the brick supports. In fact, it looked like a bridge!



Pete and Penny tying rebar. Photo: Ian Stewart

Due to Martin having skived off to go to a wedding I had been worried about the bricklaying but John and Steve rapidly got stuck into building up the walls beneath the bridge. Adrian put his bum on the digger seat and stayed there all day as expected. The Davids (Smith and Miller) and Pete helped out with plant at various points in the day but for a Buckingham dig, less material movement than usual seemed to be needed, although David M spent a significant amount of time riddling a very large soil heap. The main task for the day was the reinforcement though so to this we were mostly employed. Emma G took the lead for one side for a team made up of David B, Angela,

Ian, me and Inka while Pete, David S, Penny, Paul and Alan carried on from the template started by the BCS (Buckingham Canal Society) volunteers on the East side.

Speaking of the BCS volunteers, they not only keep the projects going and make substantial progress between our visits, but also always come out to swell the numbers on our digs and we were joined by several volunteers on this day, as like all others. My retention of individual's names takes several years to perfect so I am not mentioning them individually, but their dedication, hard work and team work allowing us to share a site productively is much appreciated.



Building reinforcement! Photo: Fran Burrell

So rebar. There was a lot of it. Apparently there is a handy tool that allows ties to be done with minimal effort but as the hire company had not provided it we needed to do these all by hand. So wire cutters at the ready we set to work. Over 700 ties were needed for the reinforcements for the

edges of the bridge. After a while, we had a system going.

We were grateful to find on our return to the village hall that Sophie had made 3 pies and there was a selection of vegetables as well as garlic bread to go with them. After pudding was eaten we somehow managed to find just enough room left to squeeze in a pint from the Boat Inn before bed.

When we arrived on site on Sunday, Marion was helping a boat through the lock. After climbing over the lock gates behind the boat we made our way to site. With the rebar done, to complete the job ready for the concrete pour, several volunteers completed the formwork, Others started building ends of the bridge with blocks. Other jobs included placing coping stones, and more brick laying.

It was an enjoyable weekend and wonderful to see the bridge getting closer to its completion.

Fran Burrell

Derby Canal

1st/2nd June

Leader: George Rogers

"I do believe we nominated somebody to write the Derby report. Unfortunately, I can't remember who it was. Obviously it wasn't me," remarked George, in a discussion some time later.

Even more unfortunately, this wasn't his first bout of amnesia regarding this particular working party, which had originally been scheduled for the Cromford Canal, but which he'd somehow forgotten to organise.

But never mind, he hastily found us another site on the Derby, and all such problems were... err... forgotten, as we arrived at a community hall in Ironville which not only boasted a bar still serving drinks in one room when we arrived, but a dancing session still going on in the other room – and which one or two of our volunteers joined in (I do hope you took your steelies off, ed.). It also gave us the novel experience of parking our van in the actual canal – the former Pinxton Arm went right past the back of the hall, and part had been turned into a car park.



Derby canal cottages. Photo: Martin

Next morning on arriving at the worksite we could have been forgiven for wondering if George had also failed to remember that he was organising a canal dig at all – as we discovered that our work for the weekend appeared to revolve around a rather dilapidated brick building, rather than a waterway. But all was made clear when Chris from the local canal group explained

the work and how it fitted in with the canal restoration...

Basically a long time ago there was a canalside mill building, which was later converted into a row of small workers' cottages (the cottages were small, not necessarily the workers), which was later rebuilt as a small number of slightly larger workers' cottages (ditto), which then fell derelict. And now, the Derby & Sandiacre Canal Trust has acquired them and set about a restoration involving yet another conversion: there will be a canal centre, community centre, café and a couple of remaining cottages to rent out, thereby bringing in some income as well as connecting the community to the canal and its restoration.



The floor of the cottages. Photo: Tim Lewis

It's a great idea, but they really were quite derelict when DSCT started – not to mention that with all the changes over the last century or two there are doors which have been turned into windows, windows into doors, some bits whose complicated history would take an archaeologist to unravel, and some bits which looked like they were quite likely to unravel of their own accord, as the various walls, ceilings, floors and roofs didn't look to have been terribly well joined together in the first place, and the whole lot was held

up by a bunch of Acrow props, whose removal was to be one of our jobs...

But in fairness, much of the more safety-critical structural work had already been done by professionals, and our removal of the Acrow props was dependent on us first repairing the walls holding up the beams that they were supporting, so that the props could be taken out.



Alan and Nigel at work. Photo: Martin Ludgate

We also rebuilt some decaying doorways, window openings, patched some holes in walls, made some more holes in walls and then patched them, and generally did a great deal of smallish brickwork jobs that between them made a big difference to the Trust's restoration of the building. (I almost said "gave the building a big push" then, but...)

Meanwhile another team dealt with a problem with a damaged land drain that ran along the front of the property

next to the road and which had been exposed by digging around it. I seem to recall them doing some cunning stuff with joining pipes together.



The pub at the top of a steep hill. Photo: Tim Lewis

Saturday night saw several of us make a trek up the hill behind the hall to find a pub –the Moulder’s Arms, apparently the only thatched pub in Derbyshire, serves a decent pint.

Sunday was more of the same, and at the end of it DSCT were sufficiently well pleased with our work that I’m sure we’ll be welcome back on their canal any time.

Anyway I’m sure there was a lot more to it than that, but to be honest... errr... I can’t remember...



Early birthday cake presented by Emma. Is this why Martin can’t remember the work on the dig??? Photo: Tim Lewis

Martin Ludgate

Shrewsbury & Newport

29th/30th June

Leader: Sophie Smith

Another successful dig on the Shrewsbury and Newport in pictures taken by Tim Lewis.



Demolishing the unstable hut by the portal of Berwick Tunnel. Photo: Tim Lewis



Newbie Liz using the SNCT mechanical tracked wheelbarrow. Photo: Tim Lewis



The tree stump removed that had caused such damage to the hut. Photo: Tim Lewis

The Robin Hood

Longstanding volunteers from London WRG and the other southern groups will be sorry to hear of the demise of a building which featured prominently in our activities in the 1980s: the Robin Hood pub in Knaphill, near Woking.

In those far-off days London WRG didn't even own a crate of mugs, let alone a Burco, and refreshments on site rarely ran to more than passing around a big bottle of squash to swig from. But we more than made up for it at lunchtime, when it was *de rigeur* to repair to a nearby boozier for a pie and chips or similar, washed down with a couple of pints of beer, before returning to work with no apparent

concern for such matters as the safety aspects of driving dumpers down narrow ramps into lock chambers while under the influence. In fact some swore that they'd never have driven them while sober. But I digress...



One such hostelry was the Robin Hood, which sustained many London WRG, Kescrg and NWPG volunteers during the long years while we rebuilt the five-lock St John's flight on the Basingstoke Canal. It wasn't the greatest pub ever, but it was within a short van ride of the work site, it sold a decent pint of Courage Best (finding a pub that served real ale at all wasn't a given in Surrey in those days) and did several basic pub lunch choices that didn't require you to take out a mortgage to pay for them (ditto regarding Surrey).



The Landlord was something of a eccentric who varied between genial host and blunt-verging-on-rude as the

mood took him, but decorated the walls with photos of the canal (derelict and under restoration), and when some of us returned there in 1991 by boat to mark the canal's reopening, he kindly dug them out of his cellar and put them back up on the walls for us.

As I said, it wasn't the greatest boozery, but it provided us with food and drink for several years, we have happy memories of sitting outside on a warm day (and our chairs occasionally sinking into the soft ground and depositing us on the grass), and it's sad to hear that having remained empty and up for sale since last year, it was destroyed in a fire recently.



All that is left was some empty barrels and the remains of the sign. Photo: Martin Ludgate

So raise your glasses for a nostalgic 'Cheers!' to the memory of the Robin Hood and all canal volunteers who drank there.

Martin Ludgate

Round-up of LWRG Activities

You can read about what we have been up to in the summer edition of Waterways, the magazine of the Inland Waterways Association, our parent organisation.



The article in Waterways. Photo: Tim Lewis

Tim Lewis also gives a talk annually to the London Regional branch meeting of the IWA which is held in a venue close to Paddington Station. It will be on the 19th November 2019 with refreshments from 7pm with the talk starting at 7.30. The venue is the atrium, ground floor, 2 Kingdom Street, Paddington Central W2 6BD.

Information about the IWA London region socials can be found via Libby Bradshaw on 0208 874 2787 or 07956 655 037 or email

libby.bradshaw@waterways.org.uk

Diary

Date	Site	Leader
31st Aug/1st Sept	LWRG/KESCRG Wey&Arun	Stephen Davis
21st/22nd September	LWRG/KESCRG Inglesham - ? the “last ever”	Tim Lewis
12/13th October	Shrewsbury and Newport	TBC
2nd/3rd November	The Bonfire Bash/Reunion on the Uttoxeter	Centrally organised via WRG head office
16/17th November	TBC	TBC
7/8th December	LWRG/KESCRG Xmas party at Brimscombe Port	Tim Lewis

Xmas Party

The theme for the dressing up and quiz is school nativity plays. So, bring a costume, bring some beer and bring many decorations to get the accommodation festive. More details closer to the time, but if you have never been to the Xmas party, as the cooks put a great deal of effort (yes, even more so than the normal sumptuous feasts we gorge ourselves upon!!) into the meal for the party, the cost is more than a standard weekend and payment is in advance. More details will be sent out on facebook and on email closer to the time.

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