

DON'T FORGET THE
LONDON WRG XMAS PARTY
ON DECEMBER 15TH! SEE
PAGE 11 FOR DETAILS

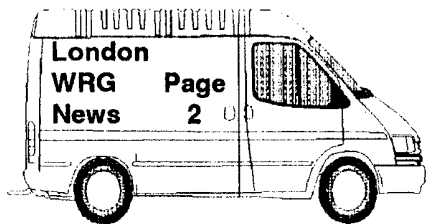


Editorial

Regular readers of London WRG News (there must be one or two masochists out there) will be aware of one or two changes in this issue. For a start the pages seem to have somehow shrunk a bit, and the staples seem to have migrated away from their traditional haunts in the top left corner to somewhere in the general area of a fold that has mysteriously appeared down the side of the pages. More observant readers may have spotted that the writing has gone into columns, and learnt to spread itself cleverly round the illustrations and is giving a slight impression of having had a passing acquaintance with a desk-top publishing package. Those of you who are subscribers to "Navvies", the national canal restoration magazine published by the Waterway Recovery Group will probably have noticed that it has recently had a change of editor, that the new

editor is none other than Yours Truly and will be wondering whether the changes in London WRG News have anything to do with this. Well you'd be quite right. With the editorship of Navvies has come a rather useful desk-top publishing package and as Navvies is only published once every two months, I have decided that in order to reduce the likelihood of its programs going rusty or some of its bytes seizing up between issues of Navvies, I will also use it to produce London WRG News.

You are probably wondering whether this is leading anywhere (apart from in the general direction of another plug for Navvies) Well, actually, it is. The really observant reader (I don't know who it is, but there can't be more than one of them, can there?) may have spotted that the report from the dig on the Ipswich & Stowmarket Navigation was not written by the editor; it was written by our roving reporter Rupert Smedley. Editing



Editorial (continued)

Navvies, as well as taking up a fair amount of my time, also involves me writing various bits and pieces concerning canal restoration, and as there seems to be some kind of physiological limit to the amount of this sort of stuff that I can produce in a given time without going completely mad, I would like to see more dig reports done by other people, in exchange for which I am prepared to carry on indefinitely as editor (a bit like I'm doing at the moment). I also don't mind writing the odd dig report (many of you will testify to the oddness of my dig reports), but for a lot of the working parties, I will be attempting to cajole, coerce, bribe or bully one of you into writing a report. And don't think you can get out of it by not going on any digs. I wrote my first camp report for navvies before I'd been anywhere near a Canal Camp.

Our Christmas Party is coming soon, and details and application form are elsewhere in this issue. We are once again going to do our own food, and anyone who experienced last year's efforts will doubtless be keen to offer their assistance with the catering. So if you haven't already had Lesley trying to persuade you to provide a contribution, you will probably hear from her soon. Or you could always make her day by phoning up and offering...

P.S. if any of you thought you were going to get away without a plug for "Navvies", you were wrong. Britain's liveliest, most informative, least boring, best edited canal restoration magazine is available for the ridiculously low price of £1.50 minimum subscription per year (six issues), from **Sue Watts, 15, Eleanor Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9FZ**. Please make cheques payable to **Waterway Recovery Group Ltd**. Please note that this is a minimum subscription, and is kept low so that people can't claim they are too poor to subscribe. The sort of yuppies that London WRG attracts should be able to add a couple of quid donation at least.

Thanks to...

Glyn Davies for finding a London WRG News from 1988 for the archive column.

Apologies for...

No dates for the AGM or slide show yet. See next issue for more details.

The lack of a cartoon strip. I'm afraid it got hijacked by "Navvies". If you want to see what it would have been like, all you need to do is send £1.50 to Sue Watts at the address printed above.

The misprint in the apologies column of the last newsletter. Those of us with long memories remember the days when the idea of males and females sharing sleeping accommodation caused some raised eyebrows on village hall committees, but I don't recall anyone ever being prudish enough to suggest having to do "his" & "hers" newsletters. Jeremy's newsletter was called "Dig This", not "Dig His".

Working Party Reports



Ipswich and Stowmarket Navigation

October 23-24

Since this was LWRG's first dig on this little known navigation, organisation was entrusted to Cath & Darryl since they ran the earlier canal camp.

Upon arriving at Offton (do you come here much?), we elected to drive past the pub to the hall to unload, only to find the hall still full of local carpet bowlers. So we then walked the half mile back to "The Lime Burners", where we discovered most of Essex WRG with whom we were sharing the hall, the dig, and the pub. The pub name refers not to angry G & T drinkers dissatisfied with the fruit in their drinks, but to the local lime kilns.

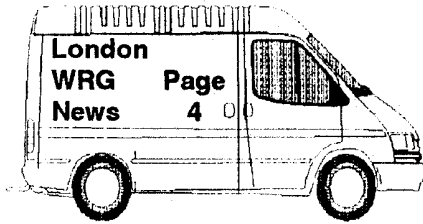
The village hall (apparently selected from the bottom of a list of four), lived up to the expected specification. The Gents had a switch marked "Water Heater" that was optimistically switched on, but the heater and pipework were missing! In spite of this one person (not female, or Martin) managed to shave in the morning. Two people slept on the stage which

had the advantage of seclusion, but meant they got forgotten when the tea came round in the morning.

The main worksite was Bosmere lock at Needham Market. From a car boot sale next to the worksite, Huw obtained yet another chrome toaster, and Alison returned bearing a scottish flag. The first task was to fix the leaking dam at the top of the lock, as the brickies were having trouble rebuilding the wingwalls with water flooding through, wetting them, the bricks etc. A repair was eventually effected using more sandbags and a tarpaulin, this was hastily reversed during installation when it was noticed that the previous owners (Eastern Electricity Board) had written their name on it.

The van was taken to Stowmarket to load more sandbags for dam building, and returned just in time for lunch, they had taken the sandwiches with them to ensure this would happen. Luckily nobody confused the sandwiches with sandbags, although some thought the bags were more tasty.

After lunch a group were dispatched to the next lock downstream with a hydraulic road breaker which Martin carefully topped up with diesel, soaking the van



Ipswich & Stowmarket (continued)

interior in the process. Here some general tidying up was undertaken, tree lopping, scrub clearance, and the breaking up of some concrete on the locksides. Tim had supplied the brush cutter in a "safe" condition, without any petrol, so traditional methods prevailed. Bob Kearney the local coordinator came back at tea time with primus etc, and proceeded to brew up very welcome tea & coffee.

Back at the hall, before the food was ready for consumption, some people took the van to have showers at a local sports ground. Others hitched a lift as far as the pub, fancying an aperitif rather than cleanliness.

Sunday was much the same except the time had slipped back an hour in the night, however this meant it got dark an hour earlier so we could knock off at 5pm. The lock tidying was completed by lunch-time in spite of several people sloping off to collect sloes (a vital ingredient of sloe gin, the other being gin) from bushes spotted the previous day when the next lock down was inspected. Everyone worked on Bosmere lock after lunch building a dam in the tail of the chamber. Judith and Alison volunteered to assemble the dam working in water just deeper than their wellies were tall, ably assisted by Muppet, as long as he didn't get wet. It was commented that the sandbags

seemed to fulfill the same function as bricks at Aston, keeping navvies occupied moving them from one place to another. Part of the storm damaged top dam was cleared out of the chamber before the site was tidied up with Rupert managing to plough a furrow across the site towing the pump on a long chain with a dumper.

Cath had persuaded one of her friends (ex-friend now?) to cook for us. Emma did a fine job of the breakfasts and lasagne with self assembly apple crumble (the topping and filling were cooked separately). Apparently she was well qualified for the job, having been a Girl Guide camp leader. She will be welcome again as chocolate crispy cakes greeted the workers back at the hall Sunday evening.

The final cap to the dig occurred when the van arrived at Waterloo just as the station was being cleared due to a bomb scare.

Rupert Smedley

Wendover damp squib

November 6th-7th

WRG's annual Canal Camps reunion and big-ish dig was held on the Wendover arm, an old arm of the Grand Union Canal which was built as a feeder and subsequently proved its eligibility for the Book of Heroic Failures when it was found to be leaking so badly that it was actually draining the rest of the canal. The work to be done was scrub-bashing something approaching a mile of waterway that had become overgrown with large quantities of brambles, nettles and small trees. The joining instructions said that chainsaws would not be used

as there was no scrub that was thick enough to require them; this was because the canal was scrub-bashed only ten years ago. Some of London WRG's longer-serving navvies have long been of the opinion that on certain long-term restoration schemes in the South of England, we are not only doing the same tree-cutting work that we were doing ten or more years ago, but sometimes it's the same trees that we are cutting. However we've never ever seen anyone admit it in writing before.

Anyway, the usual late departure from Waterloo on Friday night was followed - due to the totally unexpected appearance of a long stretch of brand new A41 dual carriageway (unexpected by us, that is; I guess the Dept. of Transport probably knew about it) - by a surprisingly early arrival at Tring School, where, after the necessary signing-in and floor-reserving activities had been completed, we took a quick stroll to the nearby pub, where the staff were coping remarkably well with the influx of at least 50 thirsty navvies. One of the locals was celebrating his birthday and was doling out cake to all and sundry, Steve Paice was impressing people with his command of the English language and Darryl was on girlie-hugging duty by the front door.

Saturday morning saw us on site early and scrub-bashing was soon under way, and the pyromaniacs were attempting to get some bonfires going. By lunchtime sizeable amounts had been cut down and serious attempts at bonfire-lighting were in progress. By mid afternoon large quantities of vegetation had been hacked down, titor-winch gangs were hard at work puling up stumps and serious attempts at bonfire-lighting were still in progress. By knocking off time, one or two people reported seeing some signs

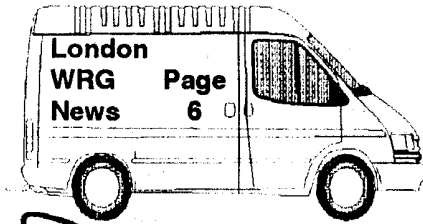


of smoke, but this was probably the London WRG News editor's pipe.

After work, there was time for a shower (the floor in the men's shower appeared to hold water rather better than the banks of the Wendover Arm) and a swift half in a different pub (where, surprisingly enough, the same chap appeared to be having another birthday party with another cake), then dinner, which was followed by a firework display, rumoured to be sponsored by the noise abatement society. Everyone had been asked to bring a firework and these included those well known types, the "whistle-phut", the Roman Night-light (like a Roman Candle only smaller), and everyone's favourite, the "fall-off-a-post-and-fizzle-out") Never mind, at least they burnt with more enthusiasm than the trees on site.

This was followed by the entertainment, which featured a disco, party games including "Jude Says", (Jude says "everyone do the Tim Lewis"), a real ale bar with Wadworths 6X, London WRG falling over sleeping bags trying to stagger to bed, etc. etc.

Despite the large quantities of 6X, we managed to get on site at a reasonable time on Sunday and were soon back at work, while the bonfire lighters continued their by now increasingly desperate attempts to persuade anything to combust. Rumours abounded that the trees were special environmentally-friendly ones developed by Friends of the



Wendover (continued)

Earth (If they won't burn, they can't contribute to the Greenhouse Effect), or that their planting had been sponsored by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, as a way of preventing forest fires. Various things were thrown

on the fires in an effort to get them to burn, including some large lumps of bitumen believed to be the remains of an attempt to waterproof the canal. Someone claimed to have spotted a metal bucket full of old sump-oil somewhere, but it turned out to have been the London WRG van that they had seen. Finally, to looks of utter disbelief, just as we were about to pack up, Rupert & Alison managed to turn a heap of smouldering branches into a raging conflagration. We still don't know how. Neither do they.



Martin Ludgate

Can't think what to give them for Christmas?



Why not surprise them with a London WRG Tea towel?

For sale at the amazingly low price of £3.00 each, or, for an introductory period only, £5.50 for two. These luxury towels are printed with the famous London WRG "tube map" design (as featured on the T-shirts) in either WRG red or Navy blue on a white background,

Also available...

London WRG T-shirts in dark blue; other colours available by special request. Only £5.50.

Sports bags in blue with "waterway recovery group" logo for only £10.50 and small back-packs in red with the same logo for only £6.50.



WRG umbrellas: By special request only; price on application.

All items available from Aileen Butler (phone 071-215 5339 day-time, 081-467 1292 evenings) or just turn up at any London dig or social event.

Next time out



KESCRG Xmas (scrub) bash

Our next dig is on the Wey & Arun Canal, when we join Kent & East Sussex Canal Restoration Group (KESCRG) for their Christmas party dig. The food costs £10 per person, including Christmas dinner and entertainment on Saturday night. London WRG's advice has been sought on the subject of purchasing and serving real ale, so it seems unlikely that there will be a repeat of last year's performance, when they forgot to organise a bar. Please contact Eddie Jones of KESCRG(081-684 7741 eves, 071-706 4100 days) if you want to come. Tim Lewis will be arranging transport in the London WRG van. If you want to make your own way there, the accommodation is at the Weald School, Billingshurst (the same place as last year's big-ish dig) and Eddie can send you details of how to get there. The work will probably be scrub-bashing.

Digging deep at Boxwell

Our first outing in 1994 is a return to the Thames and Severn Canal. I recently visited Boxwell Springs Lock, on which great progress has been made by the other groups involved in the Dig Deep scheme since London WRG's last visit. The nearside lock wall is virtually complete and it seems possible that Neil Ritchie will have something for us to do



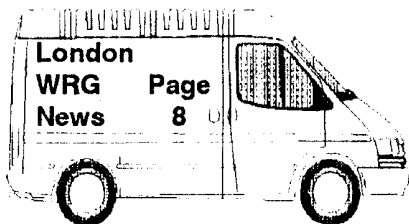
that doesn't involve carrying large blocks of concrete from one end of the lock to the other. By the time we return on 26th-27th March the lock should be nearly finished.

A first time for everything...

On 12th-13th February we return to the Wilts & Berks, where Peter Smith has promised us a "virgin site" (?) at Dauntsey Lock (the one that's virtually in the garden of the Peterborough Arms). I don't know what the work is, but as it's the scrub-bashing season, we might well be doing some de-foresting (or maybe deflowering?)

Digging deep at Bignor

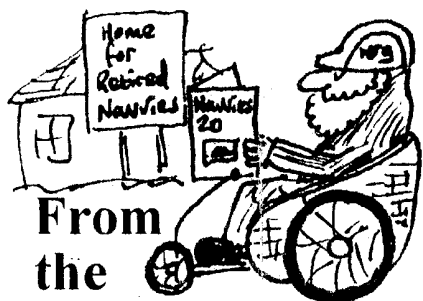
On 5th-6th March we will be on the Wey & Arun again, this time as part of the Dig Deep Initiative. The original project that was to be undertaken by ourselves, KESCRG and Newbury Working Party Group was the completion of rebuilding work at Lee Farm Lock and the construction of a new bridge nearby. Unfortunately owing to problems with obtaining permission to work, it is not possible to start work on the bridge, and as the lock is now complete, an alternative project has been found for the Dig Deep groups to concentrate their efforts on. This is Bignor Bridge, about 5 miles further North along the canal, near Malham Lock. This is your last chance



Next time out (continued)

to work on restoring an original bridge on the entire canal, as all the other bridges have either been demolished or

are already restored. It needs the parapets replacing, the towpath reinstating and repairs to the brickwork. As our dates for the Dig Deep sites were chosen to fit in with the necessity to construct Lee Farm bridge within a six-month period over the coming winter & Spring, and there is no such problem with Bignor Bridge, we have changed our venue for 16th-17th April to the Basingstoke Canal, where Pete Redway may well have us crawling up bywashes to look for silt.



From the Archives

Twenty years ago...

"Navvies" issue 45 (October 1973) reported on a group variously referred to as "London WRG" & "London WPG" planning to start work on...

"...a canal, which for political reasons had better remain nameless for the time being. As the initial stage of restoration - ie whilst it is gathering momentum, will be the most critical, it has been decided to throw all our resources in this direction. As the canal is not exactly a million miles from London, there will be scope for both weekend and one day workers

so could we please have a big turnout on all four days. Full details from Nigel Stevens."

"Navvies" issue 46 revealed this mysterious waterway to be none other than the Basingstoke Canal, and also gives details of London WRG activities on the Stratford Canal.

Ten years ago...

London WRG's dates in "Navvies" 90 & 91 show us still hard at work on the Basingstoke canal and also holding joint working parties with Northwest on the Stratford Canal, and Navvies 91 also contains two contributions from Bob Keaveney; one concerning our organisation...

"When, at short notice, I took over as London WRG organiser, I did not intend it to be a permanent appointment. Now after 18 months and 26 digging weekends I've decided it's time for a change. Unfortunately we don't have any budding Nigel Stevens, Malcolm Lawrences or Andy

Archives (continued)

Chapmen (sorry to anybody I've missed) lurking in the van wings waiting to grab the organiser's clipboard. This presents London WRG with a problem...

Following the example of WRG NW we're forming a committee (not ad-hoc though) to replace me. So for 1984 the task will be shared between Jeremy Frankel, Eric Garland and myself, on an informal rota basis. I guess I will still have to write pieces for "Navvles", including my regular appeal for somewhere to store our damned tools, so you've not quite got rid of me yet"

...and the other in the form of a letter concerning the Croydon Canal...

"Dear Alan,

Since my current residence is less than a mile from what is probably the only remaining bit of the Croydon Canal I have come to take this canal very seriously. I've never lived so close to a canal before! As a result I find myself getting slightly annoyed by the continued reference to this canal in "Navvles".

Why is the Croydon Canal such a joke? Nobody writes such articles about the Thames, Berks & Arundel. Perhaps it's because it's named after the town of Croydon, which surely must be a town that nobody can take seriously. Which isn't too surprising seeing as none of its residents are prepared to offer space to store a few tools for London WRG. (Sorry Alan, but I'm running out of new ways to make this appeal - how about the front page next time?"



Five years ago...

The last issue of London WRG News in 1988 looked back on the past year:

"Unbelievable though it may seem, it appears the Basingstoke Canal really is in the final stages of restoration and our last working party of 1988 may be our last EVER dig on the waterway that has been our main source of employment for the last ten years..."

"...the Wey & Arun ... under water for at least six months of the year ... little-known Sussex monsoon..."

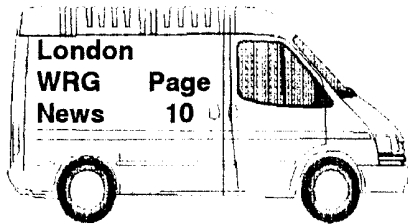
"...our first dig on the Wilts & Berks, as well as our first in living memory (as far as Winnie can recall) on the Kennet & Avon and the Stroudwater. To suggest that it is any more than a strange coincidence that all of these are in Wadworths country would be a terrible slight on our good character..."

and concluded with a list of the highlights of the year, including...

"London WRG Winning the trophy for the best-decorated boat at Canalway Cavalcade."

"Getting our dates into "Navvles" in time for publication TWICE. (some of them were even correct.)"

"Getting rid of Jeremy for almost the entire year (the problem is who to give the dumper-driving award to now)."



Dates List

Working Parties: Friday night start; meet outside Casey Jones at Waterloo station; normally at 19:00 but may be earlier or later depending on distance. Contact dig organiser or overall co-ordinator Tim Lewis for details.

Date	Location	Organiser
04-05/12/93	Wey & Arun Canal (KESCRG Xmas party)	Tim Lewis
22-23/01/94	Thames & Severn Canal	Lesley McFadyen
12-13/02/94	Wiltshire & Berkshire Canal	Martin Ludgate
05-06/03/94	Wey & Arun Canal	To be arranged
26-27/03/94	Thames & Severn Canal	To be arranged
16-17/04/94	Basingstoke Canal	To be arranged
07-08/05/94	Wey & Arun Canal	To be arranged

Social Gatherings: Wednesday Night, 10 days before each dig i.e. 12/01/94 etc. at the Founders Arms, Bankside, London SE1 (on the South Bank, 100 yards East of Blackfriars bridge.) about 19:30 till 23:00.

Other Events: further details from Tim Lewis, Martin Ludgate or Lesley McFadyen.

15/12/93	Christmas party at the London Canal Museum (see next page)
Jan / Feb?	London WRG members slide show.
Feb/Mar?	Annual General Meeting
30/4-2/5/94	Canalway Cavalcade rally at Little Venice.

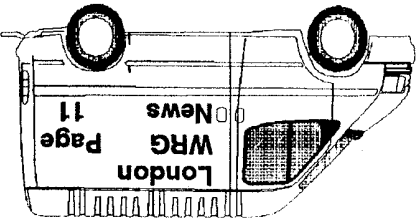
Who to contact:

<p>Tim Lewis, 5, Herongate Road, Wanstead, London E12.</p>	<p>Overall London WRG Co-ordinator</p> <p>Phone 081-530 7926</p>
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<p>Martin Ludgate, 35, Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB</p>	<p>London WRG News</p> <p>Phone 081-693 3266</p>
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<p>Lesley McFadyen, 35, Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB</p>	<p>Enquiries and membership list</p> <p>Phone 071-405 8400 ext 402 (daytimes)</p> <p>Phone 081-693 3266 (evenings)</p>
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London WRG Christmas Party



When Wednesday 15th December, 7:30 pm.

Where The London Canal Museum, New Wharf Road, London N1 (see next page for directions).

Featuring The famous London WRG awards ceremony (as copied by KESCRG), Maria's father's home brew, enough garlic to keep the vampires at bay for the whole of 1994 (if it's anything like last year's effort).

How much £5.50 including food, Christmas cracker and free ticket for the alcoholic raffle (we're raffling bottles of booze, not alcoholics).

To book Fill in the form below and send (with £5.50) to Lesley McFadyen, 35 Silvester Road, East Dulwich, London SE22 9PB

Please bring a bottle

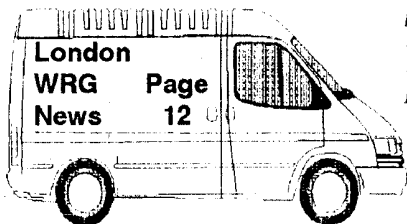


Yes, I'm coming to the London WRG Xmas Party, I enclose a cheque for £5.50 per person payable to Lesley McFadyen.

No, I'm not coming to the London WRG Xmas party, I don't enclose a cheque for £5.50 per person payable to Lesley McFadyen.

My name is

And I live at



The Xmas party - How to get there

Here it is!

By train:

**King's Cross station 5 minutes walk.
St. Pancras station 10 minutes walk.**

By tube:

King's Cross Station 5 minutes walk.

By bus:

**Routes 14A, 17 and 259 go past the end of New Wharf road.
Lots more routes go to Kings Cross Station.**

By boat:

Regents canal to Battlebridge basin (stoppages permitting).

