

Editorial

It's that time of year again: time for the London WRG AGM. This is your chance to help plan our activities for the rest of 1994 and the first part of 1995, also to decide what we're going to spend our money on, how to get more money to replace it, what to do about recruitment, what to do about Cavalcade, what to do about Tim etc. Please try to attend, or else you will only have yourself to blame if you find you have been volunteered to organise the next five digs, become Dig Deep co-ordinator, try to export London WRG scarves to Saudi Arabia, or even write something for London WRG News... **See pages 11-12 for details.**

Speaking of writing things for London WRG news, thanks to Alison Struckett for writing the report on the January dig on the Thames & Severn, providing a break from the monotony of my scribbles and assisting me in my never-ending struggle to get London WRG News and Navvies ("**what's Navvies**", **I hear you ask**) out on time. I look forward to more contributions from other people.

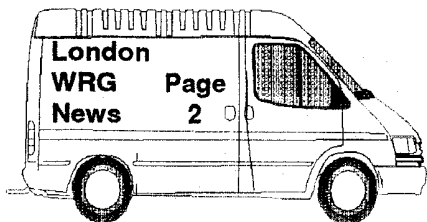
At least I won't have to persuade anyone to report on the 5-6 March dig on the Wey & Arun. Why? Because it was cancelled, due to lack of interest (3½ people). As

this was part of our commitment to Dig Deep, we will be adding a replacement Wey & Arun date on 18-19 June.

Many thanks to everyone who helped to make the London WRG Christmas party a success, especially those who helped with the catering. My apologies for attempting to ruin it by spending most of the evening driving round West London with most of the food in the back of my car. Well, I was trying to get "Navvies" to the printers before Christmas. ("**What's Navvies?**" **I hear you ask again**)

Well, since you keep asking, Navvies is a national canal restoration magazine that just happens to be edited by Yours Truly, and is available from **Sue Watts, 15, Eleanor Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy, Manchester M21 9FZ**, for the amazing price of £1.50 for six issues (payable to "Waterway Recovery Group Ltd."). This is the **minimum** subscription. Please add a donation, if only so that you can write letters to the editor threatening to stop sending donations if the quality of the magazine doesn't improve.

Finally, if you want to hear about our amazing plans to retain the Marcus Boudier trophy at Cavalcade this year, you'd better come to the AGM, because I couldn't possibly reveal any details here.



Working Party Reports



Thames & Severn Canal 22-23 January 1994

A select group of people (only 3 of them!) set off from Waterloo on the Friday evening. However, by the time we were in the Eliot Arms we numbered 5, with 3 more expected (none of whom knew where we were staying!) Just as we were eating tea and toast at midnight in South Cerney village hall, 2 of them turned up (having enquired at the pub as to our whereabouts), but the 8th person was still missing. We put the van at the top of the lane and left the outside light on with a London wrg catering box on the step. Still no sign of this person in the morning, but an 8th portion of breakfast was cooked, and an 8th set of sandwiches made. It wasn't until Saturday evening that we found out that he wasn't supposed to be coming at all!

This was London wrg's 4th visit Boxwell Springs Lock, one of the Dig Deep sites. The first was exactly a year ago, and much progress has been made in those 12 months.

The lock wall that we watched a JCB demolish that time has now been rebuilt (see Dig Reports from our 2nd and 3rd

digs there), apart from putting the coping stones into place.

Working out which ones go where is a bit of a jigsaw puzzle, which some of us spent some time trying to figure out, but none of us were coping very well!

The other two main jobs in hand were rebuilding the upper wing walls, and demolishing a 2 ft high, 20 ft long wall by the spill-weir, which took 5 of us all day to demolish on the Saturday, including first-new-recruit-of-the-year, Sarah, who joined in very enthusiastically. On the Sunday it took 3 of us all day to lay the first two courses of bricks in the rebuilding of it.

Saturday evening was notable for minor changes in personnel, including a brief overnight visit from our Editor, originally en route from Glasgow to Birmingham! (he normally has such a good sense of direction!) until his car (which was ill) had to be taken slowly and carefully back to London on Sunday.

On the Sunday some of us discovered that the nearby road bridge going over a derelict single track railway, consisted of 26 brick arches (or 42 if you include the

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upside down ones)! To see what we mean, you'll have to come on the next dig here in March!

All in all it was a good weekend, and being back to just a handful of people from London wrg, it was noticeably different from recent escapades such as Big-ish Digs and Christmas Parties!

Alison Struckett

Wilts & Berks Canal 2-3 February 1994

Our recent slash-and-burn activities on the Wendover arm and the Wey and Arun Canal having not been 100% successful (the slashing went OK, but the trees showed a marked reluctance to do their bit for the greenhouse effect) we did our best to prepare ourselves for the Wilts & Berks, where Peter Smith had promised us a patch of virgin jungle to bash at Dauntsey.

The editor duly changed the engine, gearbox and back-axle oil on his car (there were those who suggested that he would have done better to have kept the oil and changed the car) and mixed the three together into a cocktail that was guaranteed to get the most reluctant timber burning.

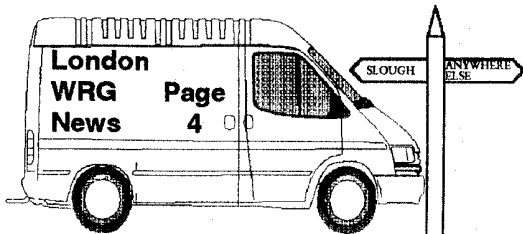
After a late departure from Waterloo, and a slow exit from London (Overdrive finally



engaged itself as we passed Slough) a small group (three in fact) managed to arrive at the Foxham Arms before closing time. By morning our ranks had been swelled by various arrivals in the night and by lunchtime we had reached double figures (including 2 WRG Board members!) We were also joined by a group from Bath who promised us a barbecue on Sunday lunchtime. The local timber proved remarkably keen to burn (we hardly used any of the oil) which was just as well as the temperature was several degrees below zero with occasional flurries of snow and we needed the bonfires to keep warm.

By Saturday night a fair amount of timber had been cut down (including a large and very dead elm which we felled by the simple expedient of several people pushing on it) and despite some huge bonfires, we were all feeling the cold, so we warmed ourselves up by pushing the van and several peoples' cars out of the muddy corner of a field in which we had been clever enough to park them, before returning to the hall where the editor cooked burnt lasagne followed by burnt apple pie following which we repaired to the pub.

On Sunday morning the bonfires were still hot and we were soon at work again slashing, chopping, sawing and burning, and by knocking-off time what had been a jungle was looking more and more like a derelict canal. We were joined by a



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number of the locals, some of whom, it appears, are sufficiently optimistic about our efforts that they have already bought the land next to the canal to build a marina on! (You think I'm joking, don't you?). The Bath lot kept their promise and duly dragged a **gas-powered** barbecue 200 yards past several enormous bonfires to cook our lunch for us.

The section of canal to be restored also includes a lock which appears to be situated in the **garden of the Peterborough Arms**. So far we haven't got any more dates booked for the Wilts & Berks. If, by any chance, you might possibly consider that this site merits

another visit, **turn up at our AGM on March 16th and suggest it.**

*P.S. Regular readers may notice that one similarity between this working party and the previous one on the Wilts & Berks is that on both occasions the overdrive on the van only decided to work once we got to **Slough**. Could this be more than a coincidence? Is Slough such a horrible place that even Transit vans do their best to get away from it? Is it the known KESCRG presence (and their tendency to get their vans stolen) which has put D739NUH off the place? I think we should be told.*

Martin Ludgate

For the last few issues of this newsletter I have been trying to make it look more like a real magazine, and my efforts have finally borne fruit. I have received the final accolade, proving that London WRG news can take its place with Waterways World, the Trow, Dragon-Fly, Navvies ("**what's Navvies?**" I hear you ask), Wey-South, Excalibur etc. as a Real Canal Magazine. That's right, I've just received my first communication from Michael Handford on the subject of the **IWA/WRG Charity Bank!**

For those who have never read a canal magazine in their life (and therefore know nothing of the Charity Bank), the indefatigable Mr. Handford spends much of his time writing to magazines appealing for trading stamps and recyclables that can be turned into either cash for waterway restoration or free gifts. He spends most of his remaining time selling the free gifts at boat rallies to raise more cash. In the last 5 years he has raised over £10,000 this way.

If you have any of the following please send them to the address below:

Green Shield (old or new), Co-op, Blue chip, Pink, Look, Cash, Premier Gold, Supersave, Nationwide or any other trading stamps;

Texaco, Gulf, Mobil, Shell, BP, Esso, Fina, Elf, Total, Burmah or any other petrol vouchers;

Air miles, cigarette coupons, Tetley, Brooke Bond or any other tea vouchers, Silver foil, ring pulls, used stamps, foreign coins/notes or old 10p pieces

IWA / WRG Charity Bank, 6, Spa Lane, Hinckley, Leicestershire LE10 1JB



From the Archives

Twenty years ago...

London Working Party Group's entry in *Navvies* issue 47 (February 1974) gave details of planned digs on the Stratford Canal...

"The final working party in the Stratford Blitz programme for 1974..."

...and the Basingstoke canal...

"...clearance of the towpath through the whole Hampshire section ... bridgeholes have to be cleared and access prepared for the dredger, due to start in September. A mammoth project needing your utmost support..."

It was a long time ago, I admit, but surely mammoths were extinct by then. Weren't they, Winnie?

The same edition of *"Navvies"* also reports that Essex area navvies can now be transported to London WPG working parties in a van provided by the aptly-named Mr. Colin Vanner of Wickford.



Ten years ago...

My copy of *"Navvies"* 92 has six covers on it, 5 of them printed on one side only and one of them upside-down, which indicates that:

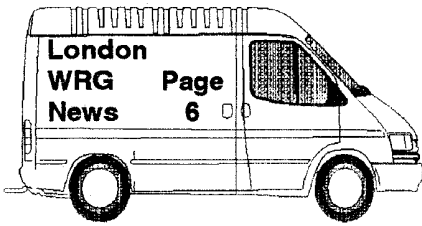
- (a) I wasn't at *Navvies* assembly, and
- (b) Some London WRG jokers were.

The London WRG dates list includes two weekends on the Basingstoke Canal, May Day weekend on the Wey & Arun and Spring Bank Holiday at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum...

"A rare chance to work on the Shropshire Tub Boat Canal System. Accommodation is limited to 15, so book early."

Five years ago...

The Feb '89 London WRG News describes the Christmas party: "...Winnie ... fine effort ... whinging award...", plans for Cavalcade, the final Basingstoke dig and following Chris Spurrier to a non-existent curry shop, apologises for errors in the previous issue; and is liberally sprinkled with requests to come to the AGM (and dire warnings of what you may get volunteered for if you don't come.) In fact I don't know why I didn't just reprint the entire issue, instead of writing this one.



Letters to the editor

Dear Martin

Just a few lines to explain why I may never attend another LWRG social after my first visit to the Founders Arms on 23rd Feb.

I enjoyed a very pleasant evening, meeting some new people as well as others previously met on camps. Leaving the pub at 23:30 hrs., a brisk walk to Waterloo and in time to catch the train. Spot on 23:45, with an impressive burst of acceleration, we headed south west, while I enjoyed the luxury of a carriage to myself. Lots of leg-room and pleasantly warm. Pausing briefly at such quaint wayside halts as Clapham Junction and Woking we next stopped at Basingstoke. Not a pause; we **stopped.**

The P.A. announced we had to change for points further west. A confused group disgorged onto the platform, from where we were shown to a bus. (crowded, knees-under-chin and cold.) We finally arrived at Winchester and waited on the platform. And waited.

Our train was clearly visible in a siding, lights on, engine running, driver in cab, and we waited. We waited on the cold windy platform and

waited some more. The points had frozen and the train couldn't get out of the siding.

Upon hearing this, the great British reserve broke down and a general discussion ensued about what to do with British Rail. Privatisation was suggested and a group of German tourists were amazed to be offered the entire network for a nominal sum of 1p. All to no avail and eventually a man with a blunt instrument walked up the line and solved the problem.

Finally arriving at New Milton it was raining, windy, the station staff had locked up and gone home. and I had to climb the railings to get out.

Is the pleasure worth the pain?

Yours sincerely,

Richard Hignett

This letter suggests that British Rail Network Southeast might be a candidate of the 1994 London WRG Best Organiser award presented at our Christmas party. On the subject of awards, the editor would like to point out that there is not necessarily any connection between this letter and the following anonymous one, which was received some time ago, but which he has not previously found an opportunity to print...

Letters to the editor



Dear Sir

From its beginnings the Waterway Recovery Group has always set itself, quite rightly, the very highest standards. It is a tribute to the professionalism of the Group that these standards have been maintained and contribute to the esteem in which the organisation is held by all bodies who come into contact with it. However there is one aspect of its activities which is giving me cause for concern and I think this is reflected in the annual prizes given at London WRG's Christmas celebration. Please do not think that I am in any way disparaging of the nominations for the award; on the contrary, they are as fine as exponents of the art as could be found anywhere. It is just that I fear that they are so far advanced as to have no peers and that without the spur of competition even their high standards may slip.

I refer, Mr. Editor, to the noble art of whinging; in our nominees we have people who have turned this truly into an art form. In order that their skills, experience and craft is not lost it is imperative that their knowledge is passed on to others. Could not some of the otherwise wasted time on digs, say between 8:30 and 11:00 on a

Saturday evening, be used for training new whingers? Perhaps our experts could be persuaded to hold a whinging masterclass. In order to encourage newcomers perhaps we should consider some new awards: Best whinge from a newcomer, Most original new whinge or Best first whinge.

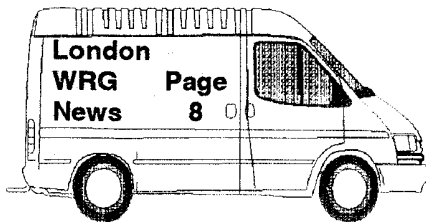
I hope, Mr. Editor, that these scribblings will be taken in the spirit in which they are intended, namely to enhance the standing of the Group in this facet of its operations and to generally improve its overall performance in this most important aspect of WRG activities.

I remain, Sir,

Your most humble and obedient servant

and would-be whinger.

Don't forget the London WRG AGM on March 16th. See page 11 for details.



Bits and Pieces

Coming soon...

At the London Canal Museum on Wednesday April 20th. Food provided.



Y o u r chance to show that Tim isn't the only photographer in L o n d o n WRG.

See next London WRG News for more details.

London WRG Merchandise...

T-shirts (£5.50), Holdalls (£10.50), small back-packs (£6.50) and tea towels (£3.00 each, £5.50 for 2) available from Aileen Butler (phone 071-215 5339 daytime, 081-467 1292 evenings), or if you could always turn up at the AGM to order them...

Please note...

Tim Lewis's new address and Phone number. See Page 10.

Apologies...

...for the odd misprint on page 6 of issue 21. For "wiothg" read "with". I think my computer's been learning Welsh.

Next time out



Digging Deep at Boxwell

Our next working party is at the Dig Deep site on the Thames & Severn Canal, where Boxwell Springs Lock is now nearing completion, with only the gate recesses and top sill still to be tackled. Work has now started on the next lock, Wildmoreway Lower, which will become the main focus of work by the Dig Deep groups on the Thames & Severn Canal. We will be returning to the Thames and Severn on 9th-10th July.

The Basingstoke Again

On 16th-17th April we return to the scene of our earlier triumphs, the Basingstoke Canal. We don't know what we'll be doing yet, but last time we spoke to Pete Redway, he mentioned something about a tendency of the new top paddle culverts (installed when the canal was restored) to silt up. Apparently they're just big enough for someone to crawl up...

Digging Deep at Bignor

Now that Lee Farm Lock at Toat is complete, rebuilding Bignor Bridge is the Dig Deep project for the Wey & Arun Canal. We would have payed our first visit on March 5th-6th but this



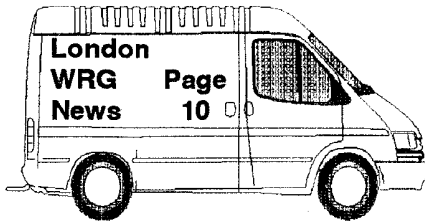
dig had to be cancelled. We are committed to three weekends on this site between now and the end of the Dig Deep year in October, so we will be visiting on 7th-8th May, 18th-19th June and 30th-31st July. In between these dates, NWPG and KESCRG will be spending weekends working at Bignor, and there will also be a week's Canal Camp, so we should see some rapid progress.

Digging Deep at Glyn Neath

On the Spring Bank Holiday weekend we return to the third Dig Deep project, rebuilding Granary Lock at Glyn Neath on the the Neath Canal, for our annual three-day dig. Remember to pack your waterproofs.

The Basingstoke Again?

Most of the rest of our dates in the next 12 months are currently marked in the dates list as "TBA". In the old days it used to be a standing joke in London WRG that this stood for "The Basingstoke Again". Those days are long gone, but we still have to decide on sites for those of our weekends which are still **To Be Arranged**. If you want to help us decide where to go on these dates, **just turn up at our AGM on March 16th** (See pages 11-12 for details).



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 Tim Lewis, Martin Ludgate or Lesley McFadyen for details.

Date	Location	Organiser
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
28-30/05/94	Neath Canal	To be arranged
18-19/06/94	Wey & Arun Canal	To be arranged
09-10/07/94	Thames & Severn Canal	To be arranged
30-31/07/94	Wey & Arun Canal	To be arranged
20-21/07/94	To be arranged	To be arranged

Social Gatherings: Wednesday Night, 10 days before each dig i.e. 06/04/94 etc. at the Founders Arms, Bankside, London SE1 (on the South Bank, 100 yards East of Blackfriars bridge.) about 19:30 till 23:00.

Note that 16th March is not a social, it is our Annual General Meeting. See pages 11-12 for details.

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

- 16/03/94 Annual General Meeting
- 20/04/94 London WRG members' slide show
- 30/4-2/5/94 Canalway Cavalcade rally at Little Venice.

Who to contact:

Tim Lewis,
6, Downs Road,
Enfield, EN1 1PA

Overall London WRG Co-ordinator
Phone 071-377 2677 ext 210 (daytimes)
Phone 081 367 6227 (evenings)

Martin Ludgate,
35, Silvester Road,
London SE22 9PB

London WRG News

Phone 081-693 3266

Lesley McFadyen,
35, Silvester Road,
London SE22 9PB

Enquiries and membership list
Phone 071-405 8400 ext 402 (daytimes)
Phone 081-693 3266 (evenings)

London WRG A.G.M.



The 1994 London WRG annual general meeting will be held at 19:30 hrs on Wednesday March 16th in the upstairs room at the Calthorpe Arms public house, 252, Grays Inn Road, London WC1. (see next page for directions)

The meeting is open to anyone and we will discuss any subject that anyone who attends wishes to raise, including:

Dates, sites and organisers for the next year's working parties.

London WRG's involvement in Dig Deep.

Recruitment and retention of new volunteers.

Tools and equipment.

Money.

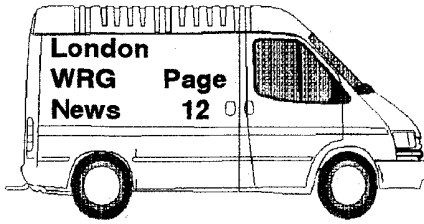
Involvement in rallies and other activities.

Social activities.

Publicity.

We would appreciate it if as many people as possible attend and give their views on these and other subjects.

Sandwiches will be provided for a small charge



London WRG AGM - How to get there

The Calthorpe Arms is on the corner of
Grays Inn Road and Wren Street.



To get there...

By train:

King's Cross
station 10 min-
utes walk.

St. Pancras
station 10 min-
utes walk.

Farringdon
(Thameslink)
10 Minutes
walk.

By tube:

Russell Square
station 5 min-
utes walk.

King's Cross station 10 minutes walk.

Farringdon station 10 minutes walk.

Chancery Lane station 10 minutes walk.

By bus:

Routes 17, 45 & 46 go along Grays Inn Road.

