



Editorial

The Annual General Meeting

Thank you to those who turned up for the AGM; for those who didn't, a full report appears elsewhere in this issue, while the main product of the meeting appears on page 8 - a complete list of all our dates for 1995, with only one TBA (To Be Arranged). Turn to page 8 to find out which working party you've volunteered to run.

Canalway Cavalcade

London IWA's annual rally and pageant of boats takes place on the May Day holiday weekend May 6th-8th. We need people to help look after the WRG publicity stand, run the Canal Names tombola game to raise funds for London WRG and be part of London WRG's entry in the pageant on Saturday afternoon.

DIG'95

DIG'95 is WRG's 25th anniversary Big Dig on the Thames & Severn Canal, taking place on November 4th-5th over several miles of canal south of Cirencester, near the Dig Deep sites at Boxwell Springs Lock and Wildmoorway Lower Lock.

The purpose of the weekend is twofold: firstly as a celebration of 25 years of canal restoration work by WRG on canals all over the country, secondly as a protest at the blinkered, mean-minded, short-sighted stupidity of the Department of Transport in refusing to include provision for canal bridges in the new Latton Bypass (or just possibly to celebrate the enlightened, forward-thinking, environmentally aware Department of Transport's decision to include the bridges after all.)

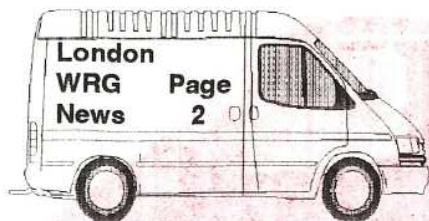
The work will mostly be scrub clearance, but there will probably also be some big machinery to play with. Accommodation will be at RAF Kemble (they've lent us a hangar). Entertainment on the Saturday night will include Mikron Theatre Company.

DIG'95 will be run as a WRG Centrally Booked Weekend, and a booking form will be included in the next London WRG News. **In the meantime, write DIG'95 in large letters next to November 4th-5th in your engagements diary...**

And speaking of engagements...

...congratulations to Rupert and Alison on theirs.

DATES OF LONDON WRG SOCIALS CHANGED: SEE BACK PAGE FOR DETAILS



Working Party Reports



Thames & Severn 11-12 Feb

We met up for our "Last Ever Boxwell Dig" in the Waggon & Horses in Cirencester before retiring to the Phoenix Centre for the night.

Saturday rained, then became rainier; work on re-pointing the lower wing walls of Boxwell Spring Lock being ruled out by the depth of water, with a constant flow arriving from further up the canal.

Coping stones were selected and barrowed over a plank-way to the offside lower wing-wall while the nearside wing wall was built up to height with bricks. A start was made on landscaping the lock-side. Eventually we were so wet that we couldn't get any wetter and we retired to wring out our clothes back at the accommodation, stopping briefly to look at Wildmoorway Lower Lock - the next one to be worked on by the Dig Deep groups - where the towpath was a foot under water.

We entertained ourselves with hot tea and coffee while reading a handy copy of "100 Household Hints". Darryl made a "feeliie-box" said to "entertain the children on wet afternoons". [what are they supposed to do on wet mornings? ...Ed]

The next day we continued to landscape and to set coping stones on the far side. A grand new lock sign was made (There seems to have been some doubt about whether the lock was "Boxwell Spring" or "Boxwell Springs". Well the new sign says "Spring" and it was made by Neil Ritchie, who's a professional sign-maker, so he must be right!) and planted in front of a blackthorn hedge which we extended by transplanting some randomly seeded bushes from elsewhere in the field.

It's likely that some further work will be needed on Boxwell once the lock bottom can be drained in the Summer, but at least all the blocks are now gone.

Lesley McFadyen

Working Party Reports

Wey & Arun Canal 4-5 March

This working party was planned for Bignor Bridge, which is being rebuilt as part of the Dig Deep scheme.

However, only days before the dig, John Ward informed us that the site was too wet to work on. This was rather reminiscent of the old days on the Wey & Arun, when we regularly had to cancel digs due to sites being flooded. On one occasion Dave Wedd arrived on site by canoe. Another time, we spent a considerable time trying (in vain) to start a dumper at Toat, only to be told afterwards that it had been under several feet of water a few weeks earlier.

However, recent progress has meant that nowadays the Wey & Arun Canal Trust usually have several work sites in operation simultaneously, and at least one of them is likely to be above water. And on March 3rd-4th that site was Brewhurst Lock, currently being rebuilt using the Canal Trust's patent home-made concrete "stones".

For those not familiar with the Wey & Arun's construction methods, these "stones", used on the stone locks on the southern part of the canal, are cast in concrete such that the surface looks very much like stone, but the back incorporates a dovetail-shaped recess, for the concrete backfill to key into.



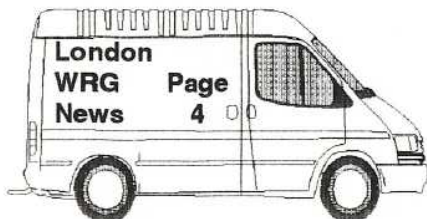
One realistic feature of the "stones" is their weight. If anything they are heavier than real stones. And they were all dumped by the site compound, rather inconveniently sited several hundred yards from the lock (and actually rather conveniently sited in the garden of the Onslow Arms, but that's another story). We spent most of the weekend carting them to the lock using variously a two-wheel trolley, a four-wheel trolley and a one-wheel trolley (one wheel of the two-wheel trolley was a bit loose).

We also filled sandbags, loaded them into a trailer and unloaded them into somebody's garden (without their permission), dragged stones (real ones) from the canal bed into the next field, removed stop-planks from above the next lock down (fun when you're standing in the canal bed and there's water the other side of the planks), moved a temporary bridge (originally built for the 1986 Brentford rally and on its fourth lock since then), and did some work on setting up scaffolding for the chamber rebuilding work.

But everyone seemed to enjoy themselves, including our *two* new recruits and next time we visit the Wey & Arun in July, John Ward has promised to give us a boat ride (Now that's something he *can't* cancel due to the site being under water!)

Martin Ludgate

The AGM Report



Up to a couple of years ago we always used to get considerably more people attending our AGM than our working parties, and AGM reports used to bemoan this fact; these days, however, we no longer seem to suffer from this problem - we get just as few people turning up for our AGMs.

However, this year there were mitigating circumstances: for example, we conveniently held our meeting in the London Canal Museum, in the middle of a week-long canal camp planned to be held there. The camp then moved at the last minute to the Wilts & Berks Canal, taking several potential meeting-attenders with it.

Those who did make it to the meeting managed to plan our dates for the next year or so, and volunteered various absentees as organisers for various digs.

We decided to stick to the three-weekly cycle, but with some longer gaps to avoid Christmas and Easter and to allow a gap either side of Canalway Cavalcade and the National Waterways Festival to satisfy those who, not satisfied with having to move one boat around the canal system to get to and from boat rallies, seem to be intent on building up entire fleets of boats.

Many of our dates for 1995 had already been decided by our Dig Deep commitments on the Wey & Arun, Wilts & Berks and Cotswolds Canals; the remaining weekends see us visiting the Basingstoke, Chesterfield, Stowmarket Navigation and, for the first time, the Barnsley Canal.

It rather worries me that Lesley's notes seem to mention "...possibility of *shaving* Christmas Party with KESCRG was raised..." Having once been to a KESCRG Christmas Party dig where various people had various parts of their anatomy shaved for charity (including Eddie's beard, Darryl's head and Rachel's legs) I sincerely hope that I have misread the notes and we are actually planning on *sharing* a Christmas Party Dig with KESCRG instead of having our own party this year.

On the social side, we decided once again that Rupert would organise a day trip to France. This time we'll make sure he really does organise one. We also hope to have another evening boat trip and we may have a barbecue outside the London Canal Museum sometime in the Summer. We will as usual be attempting to win the Best Decorated Boat award at Canalway Cavalcade. There is now the added attraction of a £100 cheque to the best boat entered by a voluntary group (By "voluntary Group" I mean a charity group or society like WRG, the Church Army, KESCRG etc. I don't mean all the other boats' crews are press-ganged). We also hope to run a Tombola game over the weekend.

Still on the fundraising front, I see from Lesley's notes that we are to write to London IWA to ask for a donation. I also see "...we intend to spend it on tea-making kit..." and "...Alison has a blowtorch..." in the notes nearby. So stump up for our new teapot, IWA Committee, or we'll send the girls round to burn your houses down...

From the Archives



Exactly ten years ago, in March 1985, *Navvies 97* carried a lengthy article on London WRG by Tim Lewis and Bob Keaveney, reviewing the previous year's activities:

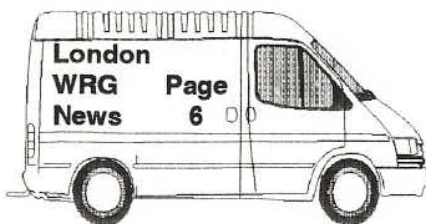
"... if only to dispel all the rumours suggesting that we do nothing but drink ... we ran 16 digs: 5 on the Basingstoke, 5 on the Wey & Arun, 2 at Droitwich, 3 on the Stratford and 1 at Ironbridge Gorge Museum ... On the Basingstoke Canal ... Mike Fellows had us laying vast quantities of 'hogging' to raise the towpath ... at various times we were assisted by a large fleet of dumpers and a vibrating roller, and at other times we were hindered by Jeremy ... On the Wey & Arun ... height of Summer ... trying to work in the ever-decreasing area of shade in the lock ... lunch-times tended to be long, King & Barnes is very refreshing ... Stratford ... joint with WRG NorthWest, a chance for the two groups to meet each other: we bashed trees, they cleared lock chambers; we went on a pub crawl, they went to the One Elm..."

...including a list of "memorable happenings in 1984":

1. Laying 2000 tons of hogging on the Basingstoke Towpath
2. The boat trip on 'Sabrina' on the Droitwich Canal, the first trip that Sabrina had made all the way to Ladywood Top Lock.
3. The boat trip on John Pinkerton on the Basingstoke. Canals do look different from boats.
4. Finding somewhere to store our tools ... 2 of our regulars renting a house with a shed.
5. Seeing an almost completed lock 17 on the Wey & Arun. On our first visit in 1982, this lock was little more than a shallow depression in the ground.
6. Walking from Ash Lock down to Lock 1 on the Basingstoke. Seeing all the sites we'd worked on, linked together as a proper canal, rather than just as isolated building sites.

...followed by a list of "things we'd rather forget about 1984":

1. Laying 2000 tons of hogging on the Basingstoke Canal towpath.
2. Jeremy's dumper driving on (or rather into) the Basingstoke.
3. Martin discovering he could lie on top of a vibrating roller and still steer it at top speed (1.5 mph).
4. Forgetting about Martin still bringing the vibrating roller back in the dark at the end of the weekend (at 1.5 mph) and driving off without him.
5. The Waterways World article about us (Jan '85) based on our Stratford visit in November.
6. The custard on the Ironbridge weekend; even squeezing it through the sieve didn't remove the lumps.
7. The joint weekend on the Stratford when both groups thought they were doing the catering, resulting in 76 dinners, 152 breakfasts etc. for only 38 navvies.
8. Our first ever "dig" on the Croydon Canal (on April 1st).
9. The John Pinkerton setting off without half the group (or Mike Fellows), they being still in the pub.



Basingstoke Canal 22-23/4/95

This will be a continuation of the towpath surfacing work that we would have completed at the KESCRG Christmas Party dig in December, had it not been for the fact that certain individuals spent more time finding new and interesting ways of examining dumpers from unusual angles than concentrating on the work in hand.

Canalway Cavalcade 06-07-08/5/95

Canalway Cavalcade is IWA London Region's annual rally and pageant of boats held on the May Day holiday weekend at Little Venice, junction of the Regents Canal and the Grand Union Paddington Arm. We will be taking part in the pageant on the afternoon of Saturday 6th May. Once again Rupert has offered us the use of his narrow boat Ben, which we will decorate in an appropriate manner in the hope of winning the Ray Dunford trophy and the associated £100 cheque. I cannot give details of our plans for the decorations (in case this document inadvertently falls into the hands of our deadly rivals KESCRG and the Church Army) but it may or may not have something to do with a certain anniversary that some of us might or might not be celebrating this year.

We also hope to be running the Canal Names tombola game for the whole weekend, and keeping an eye on the WRG publicity stand, so we need some volunteers to help with this.

Next time out

Barnsley Canal 27-28-29/5/95

For our annual three-day long-distance dig over the late Spring Bank Holiday weekend we will be holding London WRG's first ever working party on the Barnsley Canal. This will be a joint dig with WRG Navvies Anonymous (who?) and the work will involve more towpath surfacing, actually on the Barnsley Canal, unlike most Barnsley working parties, which - rather confusingly - take place on the neighbouring Dearne & Dove Canal at Elsecar.

Wilts & Berks Canal 17-18/6/95

Following the near-washout last time we visited the Wilts & Berks, this should be our first full weekend on the latest project to be taken on as part of the Dig Deep scheme, lock four of the Seven Locks flight near Dauntsey. Several other groups will have visited by then, so we should complete the demolition work and hopefully start reconstruction. (we always start things hopefully)

Wey & Arun Canal 8-9/7/95

John Ward has promised us a boat trip, if there's enough water in the canal at Baldwin's Knob for the boat to float. Meanwhile, we hope there will be rather less water in the canal at the Dig Deep site at Bignor Bridge than there was on March 4th-5th when we had to move elsewhere as it was too wet to work.

Chesterfield Canal 29-30 August

Rupert's debut as organiser; the work site will probably be at Dixons Lock, putting the finishing touches on a brand new lock.

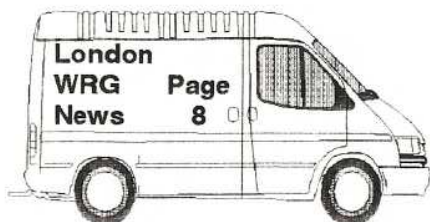
The London WRG Organisers Guide



Some Do's and Dont's of organising a dig

A guide from a new organiser

DO	DON'T
Find out where SITE actually is.	Use your home phone for the ring-round.
Note people's dietary preferences.	Assume all veggies eat all veggies.
Wait another 5 min for late WRGer.	Lose one before you start.
Check with chief London WRG organiser on contents of kit.	Be surprised to find 4 pots of syrup already.
Use a Libran WRGer as scales.	Be surprised at the resulting sponge.
Make extra sandwiches.	Be disconcerted at the 10 extra volunteers on site.
Guard lunch-time fruit pies.	Forget to initiate new WRGers on their share.
Send small WRGers through bywash.	Lose too many.
Make a stretchable dinner.	Be surprised at the extra mouths to feed.
Keep friendly cats out of hall.	Take notice of complaints about deflating new air-beds.
Search hall for stray WRGer before leaving for site.	Lock hall with people still inside.
Be in same time zone as group.	Forget to alter own watch to GMT.
ENJOY IT!	Volunteer again!
Be thankful you've spent your weekend with such a nice crowd.	



Dates List

Working Parties: Friday night start; meet outside Burger King 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
22-23/04/95	Basingstoke Canal	Lesley McFadyen
27-29/05/95	Barnsley Canal	Tim Lewis
17-18/06/95	Wilts & Berks Canal	Martin Ludgate
08-09/07/95	Wey & Arun Canal	To be arranged
29-30/07/95	Chesterfield Canal	Rupert Smedley
09-10/09/95	Thames & Severn Canal	Alison Struckett
30/9-1/10/95	Stowmarket Navigation (to be confirmed)	Darryl Foster
21-22/10/95	To be arranged	Aileen Butler
04-05/11/95	DIG'95 Thames & Severn big dig	Tim Lewis
02-03/1/95	Joint Xmas party dig with KESCRG	Martin Ludgate

Social Gatherings: Wednesday Night, normally 10 days before each dig i.e. 17/05/95, 7/6/95 etc. at the Founders Arms, Bankside, London SE1 (on the South Bank, 100 yards East of Blackfriars bridge.) about 19:30 till 23:00. **Please note there will be a social on April 5th, not April 12th. There will also be an extra social on April 26th, to give us a chance to put the finishing touches to our plans for Cavalcade.**

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

6-8/5/95 London IWA Canalway Cavalcade Rally at Little Venice
28/6/95 Evening boat trip on the Regents Canal (to be confirmed).

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London WRG News

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