

waterway
recovery
group

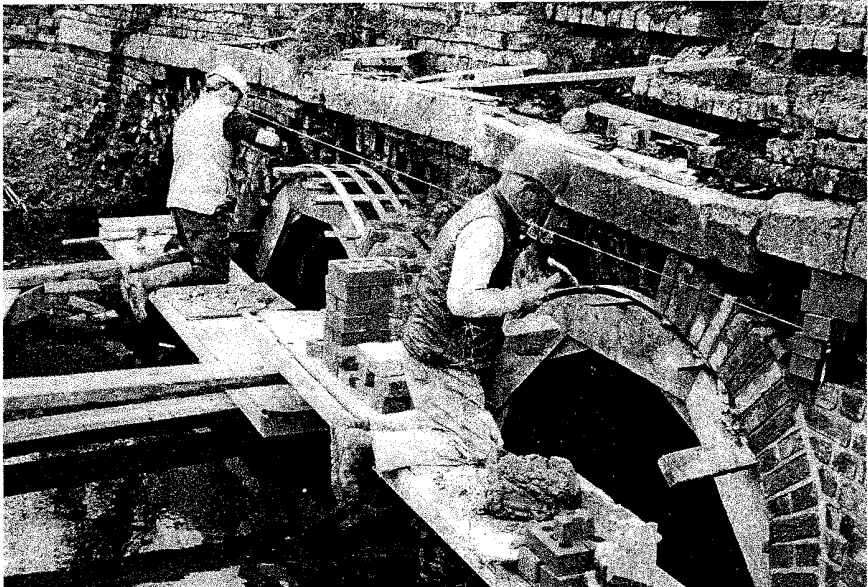
London WRG News

May 1996

No. 31



Above: Applying the final touches to our entry for Cavalcade (see page 7).
Photo by Lesley McFadyen. Below: Moredon Aqueduct, N. Wilts Canal: rebuilding the north side arch faces (see report on page 4) Photo by Tim Lewis.





The Dig Deep Initiative continues to involve London WRG in a joint venture with NWPG, KESCRG and WRG BITM to ensure a supply of quality projects for skilled groups.

The successful project on the Cotswold Canals (Thames & Severn Canal), now in its 4th year, continues. Boxwell Springs Lock is complete apart from gates, and excellent progress is being made on Wildmoorway Lower Lock.

Meanwhile lock repair on the Droitwich Canal is going well and there is also a swingbridge to be replaced in the near future. Long term funding is still not secure, but work currently under way has guaranteed financial support.

Two new projects have been put forward for Dig Deep to consider adopting: one on the Wey & Arun Canal, one on the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal.

The work on the Wey & Arun would be to provide a water supply for the restored 'Loxwood Link' section, piping water under causeways and rebuilding one of the locks above Loxwood as a reservoir. This would allow the Wey & Arun Canal Trust's trip-boat 'Zachariah Keppel' to pick up passengers right outside the Onslow Arms (and in full view of the main road) and thereby help to publicise the canal.

On the Hereford & Gloucester there is a lock with a cottage beside it in an advanced state of deterioration. It is hoped, however, that the building is still saleable, due to its location. It is grade 2 listed, so the local authority are obliged to prevent further deterioration and it is expected that either they or the Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal Trust will purchase the site. It is hoped that the proceeds of the sale of the cottage can be used to fund rebuilding of the lock chamber, using stone obtained from a nearby derelict railway bridge.

The 'Dig Deep year' starts in October; for the 1996-7 year we have committed London WRG to three working parties on the Cotswolds, two on the Droitwich and one and a half on the Wey & Arun and the Hereford & Gloucester (The 'half' means we haven't decided which one to hold it on yet!)

Lesley McFadyen

Our next working party is a joint one involving all the Dig Deep groups on the Bude Canal on June 14-16. See page 5 for details and send off the booking form straight away as accommodation space is limited.

Book now for...



WHEN?

ON WEDNESDAY JUNE 26TH, DEPARTING AT 7:00 PM, ARRIVING BACK AT 10:00 PM.

WHERE?

ON THE LONDON WATERBUS COMPANY'S TRIP BOAT "WATER BUFFALO" ON THE REGENTS CANAL, STARTING AT LITTLE VENCE. MEET BEFOREHAND IN THE WARWICK CASTLE, WARWICK PLACE (OFF BLOMFIELD ROAD) NEAREST TUBE: WARWICK AVENUE.

HOW MUCH?

£6.00, INCLUDING BUFFET. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH LESLEY IF YOU CAN HELP WITH THE CATERING.

PLEASE BRING? SOMETHING TO DRINK.

PLEASE FILL IN THE FORM BELOW AND SEND IT OFF WITH YOUR MONEY TO LESLEY MCFADYEN (ADDRESS ON PAGE 7)

.....

■ Please reserve me _____ place(s) on the London WRG boat trip ■

■ at £6.00 per person. (Cheques payable to Lesley McFadyen) ■

■ Name(s) _____ ■

.....

Working Party Reports

**Thames & Severn Canal:
23-24 March and 18-19 May**

Our last two Cotswolds digs have seen further progress on Wildmoorway Lower Lock. The lock tail bridge now has both its parapets complete, and the offside chamber wall is well on the way.

On our March dig we completed the top wing wall copings, rebuilt one of the top ground paddle shafts and uncovered (and tried unsuccessfully to clear) both of the ground paddle blow-holes.

The Editor, despite 14 years experience of canal restoration work, had until recently not laid a single brick. (OK so he'd dropped a few bricks over the years) On the 18th-19th May ace brickie John Park did his best to teach him the rudiments, and also trained Emma Parker and new recruit Alex Swan. (well, she's new to London WRG, even if she has been digging for the last nine years or so) Meanwhile Edd spent the entire weekend Kangoing, John Gerrard did some dry-stone walling in the sidepond and Lesley dug a suspiciously coffin-shaped hole behind one of the lower wing walls.

Martin Ludgate

PS did I really hear Alex *talking to her own brick wall?* Has she thought of offering her services negotiating with the Department of Transport on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Trust?

London WRG News

North Wilts canal 13-14 April.

A new experience for London WRG: Moredon Aqueduct.

A very productive weekend started with the meeting in "The Bell" which was helped by the local brew of Arkells 3B. Whilst the snow and sleet blew outside, we discussed the site plan A: Rain but low river water, B: Dry but high river and C: wet and high river ie another site.

The green tin shed opposite the pub (Accommodation) led to some interesting cooking with 1¼ ovens and a temperamental fuse box.

The Saturday was a bright sunny day but all the rain had raised the water level and so prevented us from working underneath. The two professional bricklayers got to work on the arch face and one of the side walls. the rest of us (10) got to work on clearing and cleaning the other three side walls along with the top of the back side of the aqueduct.

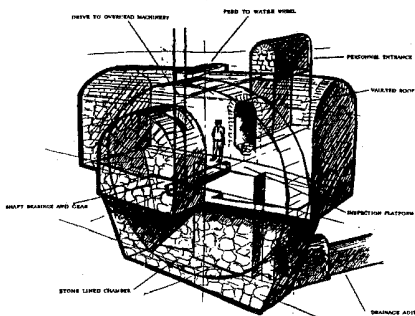
Sunday was not as sunny but the water level had fallen enough to try pumping out the dam that blocked off two of the three arches. This proved to be short lived as an hour later the water level increased and came over the dam. By the end of the day two arch fronts were rebuilt and most of the side walls were dug out.

On the way back to our shed, we visited Swindon and Cricklade railway museum. This is on a short piece of track that runs parallel to the canal. Who is going to get the Swindon to Cricklade route opened first?

Ian Little

Page 4

Have you seen one of these lately?



...because the Bude Canal Trust have lost one. WRG BITM have already been looking for it but failed to find it. It's the wheel pit that housed the water wheel which operated the Vealand Inclined Plane on the Bude Canal in Cornwall and the reason they're having trouble finding it is because it's buried underground. On June 14th-16th we, BITM, KESCRG & NWPG will spend a joint Dig Deep weekend looking for it, and when (if?) we find it, excavating it.

This working party runs for three days (Friday-Sunday) and the van will be going on Thursday night, but if you can't get Friday off, there will probably be people travelling down on Friday night. Contact Tim Lewis (see page 7) for details of transport arrangements.

Accommodation is a bit limited, and we are expecting a good turnout from the four groups, so you will have to book in advance. Dave Wedd of BITM is handling the bookings; please send the enclosed form to him.

By the way, the picture (by Tim Martindale of Bude Canal Trust) actually shows the Merrifield wheel pit. We assume the Vealand one looks the same, but we don't know, because we haven't found it yet...

London WRG News

Next Time Out

And then?

On 6th-7th July we return to Droitwich to see what progress KESCRG have made on repairing locks 3 & 4 since our last visit.

Our 27th-28th July dig will be our first for three years on the Hereford & Gloucester Canal, where we may well be working on the proposed Dig Deep project (details on page 2).

After that we break for a few weeks while various people play about with various boats and things, before returning to Wildmoorway on the Thames & Severn, which will in the meantime have had three weeks of canal camps and should be well on the way to completion.

28th-29th September is our only visit to the Wey & Arun this year, and may also be a prelude to a forthcoming Dig Deep project (see page 2).

As I write this, WRG still haven't come up with a venue for the 1996 camps reunion big-ish dig, usually held on the first weekend in November. If they fail to find a site for it, we will probably hold a London WRG dig the following weekend instead.

And we've already booked the Droitwich for a repeat of last year's London WRG / KESCRG Xmas Xtravaganza.

Page 5

From the Archives...

Ten Years Ago...

In 'Navvies' issue 103 the following appeared anonymously:

BOB "TWO SHEDS" KEAVENEY

Can it at last be told - the real reason for Bob Keaveney's sudden departure as London WRG organiser and his reluctance to hold a housewarming party at his new South London "nearly in Kent" residence. A recent scouting party sent to search out the Beckenham jam butty arm of the Croydon Canal made the startling discovery that Mr Keaveney's new abode possesses not only one but **two** sheds capable of storing the London WRG tools - could it be that after 3½ years appealing for somewhere to store them (Navvies 86, 87, 88.....) the fact that such suitable facilities exist not six feet from where he sleeps has unhinged him to such a degree that he now spends his evenings cowering behind his curtains dreading the moment that a red Transit will enter the road to disgorge sweatshirt clad bearded navvies clutching to their chests assorted picks, shovels, mat-tocks, ear defenders and declaring to the world "At last, a store!" Please, please, can we put this poor pathetic creature out of his misery. All we need is someone in the South London or Croydon area who can make room in his garden for a pair of sheds...

London WRG News

Five years ago...

London WRG News reported on the 1991 Annual General Meeting:

"...we volunteered Tim to produce some exhibition boards as we believe he may have one or two photos of us at work... we agreed to spend the rest of our money on some nice sharp saws and a first-aid kit... one Robert Keaveney volunteered to try to organise a booze-up in a brewery..."

Our February dig on the Basingstoke had been cancelled due to snow:

"...so several hours of argument at Tim's party the previous Saturday about the rights and wrongs of working beyond Greywell Tunnel proved even more pointless than it appeared at the time..."

We were too busy running the Canal Names tombola and a badge-making machine to take part in the pageant at Canalway Cavalcade:

"...the proceeds should enable us to buy our new brush-cutter soon, so we can look forward to a reduction in the number of beards in evidence on future digs..."

The 'Next time out' section gave details of working parties on the Wilts & Berks, the Chesterfield, the Basingstoke West End and our first (and so far only) dig on the Grand Western Canal:

"...I don't know what the work will be, but Mike Palmer, who talked us into going there after one too many pints of IPA in the Bridge House ('We need your van, your catering gear and your tools on the Grand Western. OK, we don't mind if you come as well.'). said something about weeding a boat-lift..."

Canalway Cavalcade at Little Venice: London WRG wins again!

Our entry for Canalway Cavalcade on May 4th featured a hardboard model Transit van and JCB digger aboard narrow boat Ben, to publicise the IWA Golden Jubilee appeal to raise money to buy WRG (you guessed it) some new vans and a JCB digger.

Well done everyone who helped with the display; our efforts earned us the Ray Dunford trophy for the third time running. This award, for the best decorated boat entered by a charity or volunteer group, comes with a £100 cheque, which this year we put towards the Appeal. We also raised around £250 from running the Canal Names tombola, half of which will go to London WRG, and half to the Appeal. Quote from WRG chairman Mike Palmer: "The first new van goes to London WRG."

Many thanks to Rupert for letting us do outrageous things to his boat. Next year Ben won't be at Cavalcade as Rupert and Alison will be abroad. Alternatives include Fulbourne and the BW work flat (no unfair comparisons, please!)

Apologies...

...for the poor quality of the photos in issue 30. Hopefully the ones in this issue are better. Don't hesitate to send the odd photo to the editor (the odder the better).

The editor is appealing...

...to any old-timers who might still be harbouring a copy of issue 1 of Jeremy Frankel's London WRG newsletter 'Dig This' from 1981. Could I have a copy of it, please?

London WRG T-shirts

Aileen Butler (0181 467 1292) is ordering a *final* batch of the 'tube map' T-shirt at £5.50 each before we try to design a new one. (any ideas gratefully received)

Who to contact:

London WRG Co-ordinator Tim Lewis, 6, Downs Road, Enfield EN1 1PA
Phone: 0181 367 6227

London WRG News Martin Ludgate, 35 Silvester Road, London SE22 9PB
Phone: 0181-693 3266 E-mail: Navvies@clus1.ulcc.ac.uk

Enquiries Lesley McFadyen (same address as Martin Ludgate)

Bits and Pieces

Annual General Meeting

Thank you to everyone who turned up for the AGM. We managed to plan our dates, venues and organisers for the next year or so, (see dates list on page 8) we decided to buy a Tirfor winch to help get some of the lazier volunteers out of bed on Sunday mornings, and we agreed to buy some on-site tea-brewing equipment to make it worth their while getting up. We also decided to see about acquiring some different blades for our brush-cutter, some loppers, a frying-pan, some long-arm slashers and a toaster. The intelligent reader (readers?) will be able to work out which of these are for use on site and which are for use in the kitchen.

I see I offered to produce a publicity leaflet, so I'd better do something about it, and various people offered to write something for their company / college magazine.

On the social side, various events were suggested, including a boat trip on the Regents Canal (see page 3), a brewery tour, a day trip to France, a barbecue, a slide show and a Christmas party, in addition to the KESCRG/LWRG Xmas dig on the Droitwich Canal on December 7-8.

Congratulations...

...to Chris Spurrier and Kay Ingleton, whose wedding on May 25th was attended by a collection of London WRG stalwarts boasting a total of over 100 years canal digging experience between them.

London WRG 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
14-16/06/96	Bude Canal: Dig Deep joint long weekend	Tim Lewis
06-07/07/96	Droitwich Canal	Martin Ludgate
27-28/07/96	Hereford & Gloucester Canal	Dave Moore
07-08/09/96	Thames & Severn Canal	Ian Little
28-29/09/96	Wey & Arun Canal	Aileen Butler
19-20/10/96	To be arranged	Alison & Rupert
02-03/11/96	WRG Cmps re-union big dig (if they manage to run one)	
07/08/12/96	Joint Xmas dig with KESCRG at Droitwich	

Social Gatherings: Wednesday Night, normally 10 days before each dig i.e. 5/6/96 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 that instead of our usual social on June 26th we have a boat trip.** (see page 3 for details); also that there will be an **extra social on August 7th** as we'd get a bit thirsty going 6 weeks without a drink.

Other Events: in addition to the boat trip on June 26th (see p 3) we hope to organise some of the things suggested at the AGM, which included a barbecue, slide show, day trip to France and brewery tour. Details next time.



The Editor & the WRG Chairman combine their efforts to raise money for the IWA Golden Jubilee Appeal at Little Venice. Photo by Lesley McFadyen