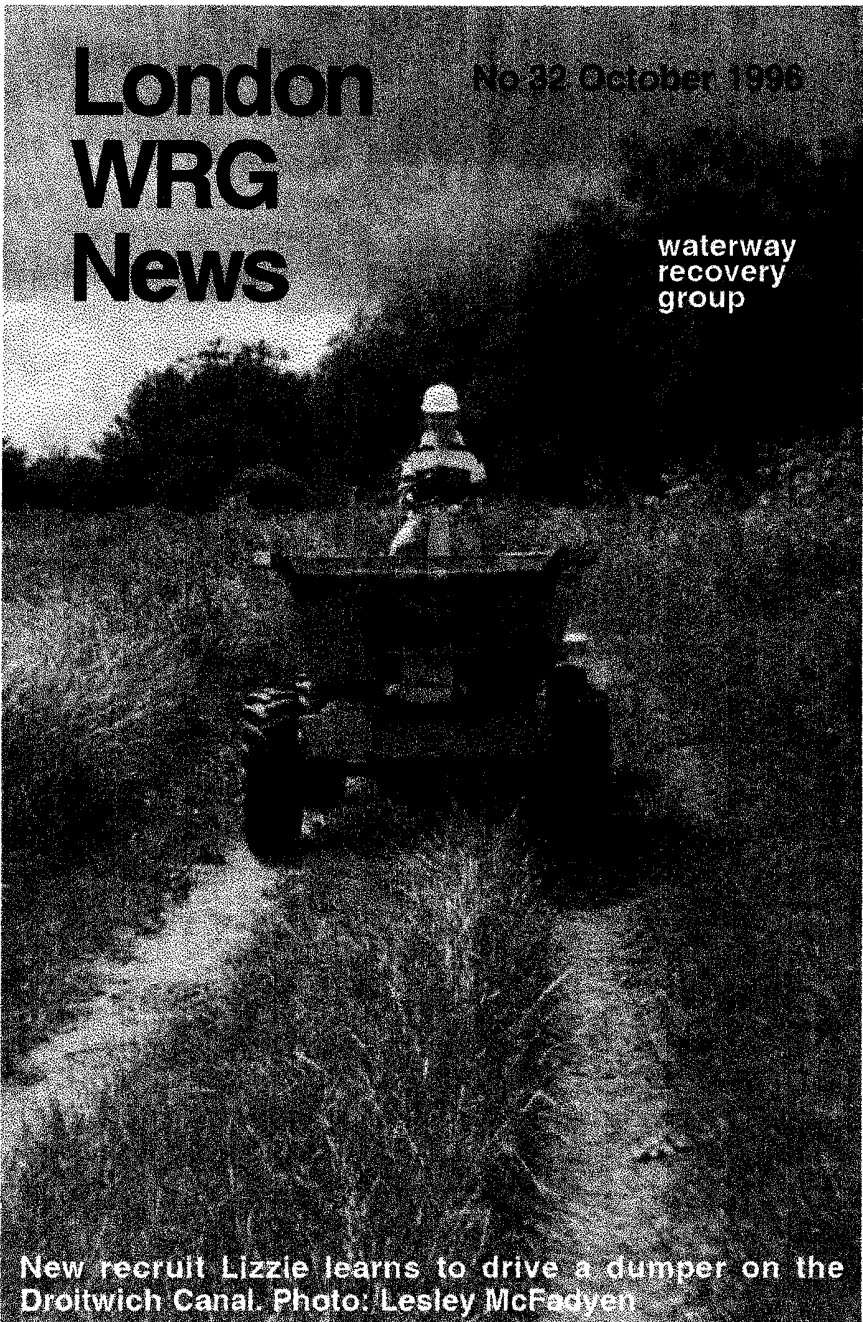


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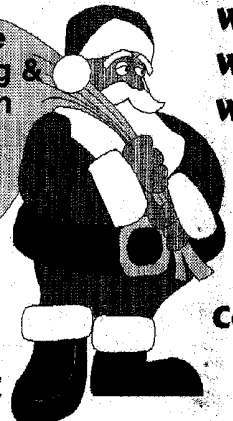
No 32 October 1996

waterway
recovery
group



New recruit Lizzie learns to drive a dumper on the Droitwich Canal. Photo: Lesley McFadyen

**The
Kescrg &
London
WRG
Xmas
Party
Dig**



We don't know what entertainments Ken's planning yet, but I overheard Lesley and Karen Cribb discussing the price and availability of fishnet material...

WHERE: DROITWICH CANALS

WHEN: 7TH-8TH DECEMBER

WORK: SCRUB-BASHING ON THE DROITWICH JUNCTION CANAL, DREDGING AND WORK ON LANDING STAGES AT LOCKS 3 & 4 ON THE DROITWICH BARGE CANAL.

COST: £12 FOR WHOLE WEEKEND IF BOOKED IN ADVANCE. £16 IF PURCHASED ON THE WEEKEND.

THE PARTY: ON THE SATURDAY EVENING AT 19:00, WITH BRIAN AND MAUREEN'S DELICIOUS CHRISTMAS DINNER, KEN'S SUPER FUN PARTY GAMES, THE KESCRG AWARDS CEREMONY, RAFFLE ETC. ETC.

DRINKS: REAL ALE AND WINE AVAILABLE. IF YOU'RE INTO "TWO DIGS" ALCOHOLIC SPARKLING DIESEL OIL OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN.

TO BOOK: FILL IN THE FORM BELOW (OR COPY IT) AND SEND WITH YOUR CHEQUE (PAY 'KESCRG') TO MAUREEN AND BRIAN AMOS, 13 TROSLEY AVENUE, GRAVESEND, KENT DA11 7QN.

TRANSPORT: AVAILABLE FROM LONDON. CONTACT TIM LEWIS

Please reserve _____ place(s) at the KESCRG/LWRG Party

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Any special dietary requirements: _____

I/We enclose a cheque for £12 per person payable to KESCRG

I/We will be present for the whole weekend / for the following meals: (sorry, it still costs the same) _____

Apologies...

...for the late arrival of this London WRG News. No excuses except the usual ones of being too busy boating, working on canals, editing other magazines, etc. but see the last item on this page for one way of helping to ensure that there isn't such a long wait for the next one. Unfortunately this leaves very little time to book for the...

Reunion Dig

This year's WRG Reunion Big(ish) Dig will be at Rushton Spencer (Staffs) on Nov. 2-3. We will be clearing a silted-up feeder that should be supplying water to the Trent and Mersey Canal via Rudyard Lake. It'll be muddy so remember your wellies (waders if you have any).

This is a WRG Centrally Booked Weekend, so you'll need to send off the enclosed form. Unfortunately Chris and Helen Davey, who take the bookings, will be away during the week prior to the event. (Helen is a teacher and her school has decided to take Half Term on a different week from every other educational establishment in the known universe) So please send off your form straight away and if it's likely to arrive after the 28th or so, please also contact **Mike Palmer** (phone **0121 472 2882** and leave a message on his answering machine if he isn't there or e-mail **Mike.Palmer@bbc.co.uk**) to tell him you're coming.

There will be a Guy Fawkes party on Saturday. Please contribute one decent sized firework each (or club together and buy a HUGE one between you).

Transport available from London: contact Tim Lewis for details.

London WRG News

From the Editor

Christmas Parties

In addition to the joint London WRG & KESCRG Christmas Party dig on December 7th-8th (see left) we have decided to have a London event as well, so we will be holding a Christmas Social at the Jugglers Arms, in Leather Market Street, London SE1.

To get there from London Bridge station: turn left out of station approach, left again into St. Thomas Street, 2nd right into Weston Street, 3rd left into Leather Market Street and the pub is on your right. It's also within walking distance of Borough tube station and lots of buses including routes 17, 21, 35, 40, 42, 43, 47, 48, 188, P3 and P11.

Please tell myself or Lesley if you are coming, so that Mine Hosts Roger and Karen know how much of Karen's delicious buffet food to provide (I'm afraid there will be a charge for this) and how many extra barrels of their excellent Fullers' Ales to order (this will be on sale at the usual reasonable rates, and will no doubt be consumed at the usual unreasonable rates)

And finally

This page is called 'From the Editor' but I could have applied that name to the whole newsletter. Please write me some articles and I promise I'll get the next issue out more promptly. Thanks.

Page 3

Working Party Reports

Bude Canal: 14th-16th June

This weekend was a 'First' in more than one aspect: it was the first time London WRG had ever visited the Bude Canal, it was the first ever joint weekend working party involving all the groups in the Dig Deep scheme, it was the first time most of us had ever worked on an Inclined Plane, and it was the first (and almost certainly last) time we'll ever spend a long weekend searching for the wheel-pit that used to house the water wheel that powered the inclined plane.

In many ways it was an extremely successful weekend. The weather was so good that we ate all our meals outdoors; we got to know lots of people from the other groups; we spent the early part of the evenings exploring the rest of the canal and the later part ensconced in a super pub that hadn't heard of closing time. We met some friendly locals from the Bude Canal Trust; we did some useful work on towpath clearance and surfacing; we even built a sand castle on the beach (complete with inclined plane and wheel-pit).

But (I'm sure you could all spot that there was a 'But' coming!) one teeny-weeny thing spoilt the dig just an it'sy-bitsy bit for us. That's right. After 3 days of digging and dowsing, tunnelling and triangulating, archaeology and argument, we **never found that blasted wheel-pit!**

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Droitwich Canal: 6th-7th July

Our most recent weekend on the Droitwich Canal coincided with the start of a week's WRG Canal Camp on locks 3 and 4 of the Droitwich Barge Canal.

We carried on with the repairs to the holes in the lock tail at lock 3, and the Editor took advantage of the opportunity to put his newly acquired brick-laying skills to good use. OK, so John had only taught me how to lay bricks in a straight line, and the job I had to do involved a building a lower wing wall / lock tail wall 'corner' whose profile had to go from round to square in 3½ courses or so, but in the end it didn't look too bad and anyway it'll be below water level eventually (and besides nobody saw me do it and anyway you can't prove nuffin, guv!)

It wasn't one of London WRG's bigger turnouts this year but we did get a **NEW RECRUIT** Lizzie, who not only learned to drive a dumper, but also demonstrated her ability to simultaneously cast and vibrate concrete bollards while having a conversation on her mobile phone. This must qualify her for something, but I'm not sure what.

Hereford & Gloucester Canal: 27th-28th July

This was our first visit to this canal for three years and was spent clearing the scrub from a length of canal to give access to a rather derelict lock with an almost equally derelict lock cottage next to it. We shall be seeing more of this site next year as the lock restoration is being taken on as one of the next projects to be carried out as part of the Dig Deep Scheme.

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Thames & Severn Canal: 7th-8th September

Much had happened since our previous visit. Wildmoorway Lower lock had been the venue for two weeks of WRG canal camps and was looking substantially closer to being finished.

Rebuilding work on the offside chamber wall having already been completed, we spent much of the weekend mixing, barrowing and tipping concrete backfill behind the coping stones, to guard against the day when the first boatload of drunken incompetents comes carrying into it in 20 tons of unyielding steel hull (you've been on a London WRG boat trip, haven't you?).

Meanwhile our bricklayers were rebuilding the towpath-side lower wing wall and repairing the towpath wall under the bridge. This was one of those jobs where you think you'll only need to take out a couple of coping stones and a few loose bricks and replace them. Then once you've taken them out you find that a few more bricks are now loose. So you remove them, and so on, and eventually you end up rebuilding the entire wall.

The weekend was notable for a flying - or rather 'limping' - visit by Roger and Sue Burchett on the Saturday evening (Get well soon Roger and by the way where on earth did you find a bollard on the Kennet and Avon Canal to trip over? We could never find a single one when we wanted to moor up) also *another new recruit* Susan plus much picking of blackberries, some of which made the pudding on Saturday evening more interesting; the rest are maturing away in the form of a gallon of 'Wildmoorwine' in the editor's bathroom cabinet (well, cellars are difficult in 1st / 2nd floor maisonnettes).

London WRG News

Working Party Reports

The Dig that Never Was: 28th-29th September

This was originally supposed to be a working party on the Wey and Arun, then it was changed to Moredon Aqueduct on the Wilts & Berks. Unfortunately nobody told the local organiser so he went away on holiday, and anyway we turned out not to have any volunteers and the London WRG organiser for the weekend couldn't lead the dig as she was out of the country. So without leader, site or volunteers, we decided perhaps it would be best to cancel the weekend. The editor went to the very successful BITM Bring-a-boat weekend at Cosgrove on the Grand Union Buckingham Arm. Maybe we should support this next year, or at least try to avoid clashing with it.

Wey & Arun Canal: 19th-20th October

50 volunteers from all four of the Dig Deep groups converged on the canal for a joint working party and succeeded in clearing the canal bed of vegetation all the way from the B2133 opposite the Onslow Arms at the end of the restored 'Loxwood Link' section to the next lock (Devil's Hole) over half a mile away. Although the lowered main road crossing means it may be many years before this section sees any boats, it will act as a useful reservoir to the navigable section, enabling the trip-boat 'Zachariah Keppel' to operate.

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From the Archives...

Fifteen Years Ago...

The second issue of Jeremy Frankel's 'London Waterways Activity Group (Incorporating London Waterway Recovery Group and London Social Activities Group) Newsletter' - snappy title eh? - showed that some of our recent problems are nothing new:

"...we had committed London WRG to the Rochdale Big Dig in July and come the weekend just three people turned out. This is not good enough..."

but elsewhere things were looking better. The Basingstoke for example:

"...we were eager to see our new work-site, Lock 10 at St. Johns in Woking..."

after an epic journey from London:

"we thought we had left London when we realised it was only Richmond Park. I forget how many circuits we made visiting every entrance (and all the deer as well) eventually leaving by the same gate we had entered by..."

The first job was to build a bywash:

"The pipes had been dumped 200 yards away and had to be rolled... as each section weighed a quarter of a ton, the initial enthusiasm waned somewhat... there were five surveyors on the site of whom two could have brought equipment to help obtain the correct slope. But instead all we had to work out a 1 in 30 with was bricks and string."

Mike Fellows demonstrated his legendary ability to find an end-of-weekend job to completely knacker you just when you're looking forward to going home:

"...we were asked to move the newly aquired mobile canteen. It was not really mobile (it didn't have any wheels) but we had to move it three feet one way and six feet the other."

London WRG News

The following working party was also on the Basingstoke (In Those days 'TBA' in the dates list stood for 'The Basingstoke Again'):

"Bywash Builders (Try and get it straight lads) Ltd. completed the bywash to everyone's surprise and relief... the rest of London WRG were moving mud and bricks and more mud in the belief that somewhere beneath it was a lock sill. This is a favourite trick of organisers to play on unsuspecting WRG members. It entails pointing at vast mounds of mud etc., telling them that there is a bottom sill under it all... in this case Mike was actually right and by the end of the dig it had been cleared to the surprise and delight of Mike who rarely shows any sense of delight (except in drinking Guinness)..."

Ten years ago...

Not a lot going on in late 1986. The only reference to London WRG in 'Navvies' (apart from a scurrilous reference to inability to stand up after a heavy pub lunch, which I will treat with the contempt that it so richly deserves) was a picture of London WRG working on the Pocklington Canal which shows Lesley shovelling and the editor leaning on a fence watching.

Five years ago...

We were back on the Basingstoke again, working west of the tunnel, and we were back in our old accommodation at Ash again:

"...having told people to look for a hall with a clock-tower, we realised we had very nearly misled them badly, as the clock tower has only recently been reinstated after being absent for two years... Ash was the hall where we had to bring our own crockery. None of us had brought any so we ate our cornflakes out of teacups and our bacon and eggs out of saucers..."

"...we had mistakenly parked the van in the canal. Well it looked like a car park... Malcolm Bates got to work... people commented on how peaceful it had been before... we think they were referring to his chainsaw..."

"Winnie's Spag Bol had to be served separately - a plate of spag and a plate of bol..."

"Chelmsford IWA presented us with some crowbars, rakes and very sturdy forks - useful when the hall doesn't have any cutlery..."

Rudyard feeder: 2nd-3rd Nov.

Our next outing is to the annual WRG Reunion dig. See page 3 for details and get those forms sent in as soon as possible.

Droitwich Canal: 7th-8th Dec.

After that it's back to Droitwich for the London WRG and KESCRG joint Christmas (working) Party. Details and a booking form are on page 2.

We don't know where we'll be staying as the accommodation we used last year (and which we thought we'd booked) has been let to a bunch of young offenders for every weekend for the next six months. (What do you mean, that sounds like KESCRG?) Eddie Jones is doing his best to arrange some alternative accommodation (the sports hall we usually stay in is too small and the thought of holding a party in the Gas House doesn't bear thinking about!)

Anyone who sends a booking form will get joining instructions sent to them by Brian and Maureen once they know where we're staying. For late bookings and up-to-the-minute information phone Eddie Jones on **0181 684 7741** (home) or **0850 889249** (mobile).

If you want transport from London, please contact Tim Lewis a couple of weeks beforehand.

1997 and all that

Our first four digs of the New Year will see us working on all four of the current Dig Deep projects.

The Dig Deep Initiative is a scheme operated jointly by ourselves and three other mobile groups (KESCRG, NWPG and BITM) to co-ordinate work on certain projects, with each group committing themselves to a certain number of working parties per year on each project, so that projects can be completed within a reasonable timescale. This in turn makes it easier for the local canal society to commit funding to the project, as well as (we hope) giving the visiting groups more interesting work to do.

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 9PE
Phone: 0181-693 3266 E-mail: editor@navvies.demon.co.uk

Enquiries Lesley McFadyen (same address as Martin Ludgate)

Next Time Out

Thames & Severn Canal: 18th-19th January

For our first outing in 1997 we return to Wild-moorway Lower Lock, which by then will have received attention from another week's WRG Canal Camp, so there should be some more progress to see. Editor Martin Ludgate will be organising this one; organisers for future digs will be decided at our AGM (details in next issue)

Wey & Arun Canal: 8th-9th Feb.

The October joint working party cleared the length of canal leading to Devils Hole Lock; this will be the first London WRG weekend on the lock itself, which (initially) is to have the top end rebuilt so that stop-planks can be installed and the length of canal above the lock can be filled with water to act as a reservoir for the restored 'Loxwood Link' section of the canal. The lock is a stone one, and it's a bit of a mess (the Canadian Army used it for target practice in the war), but it seems that most of the stone is still lying around somewhere.

Droitwich Canal: 1st-2nd February

We will be carrying on the rebuilding work on locks 3 and 4, which we hope will be complete and re-watered before the end of the year.

Hereford & Gloucester Canal: 22nd-23rd March

The project here is to rebuild the stone lock chamber that was cleared out by JCB during our visit in July this year. We should have more details by the next issue of London WRG News.

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
02-03/11/96	WRG Re-union dig on the Rudyard feeder in Staffordshire
07-08/12/96	Joint Xmas party dig with KESCRG on the Droitwich Canal
18-19/01/97	Thames & Severn Canal
08-09/2/97	Wey & Arun Canal
01-02/03/97	Droitwich Canal
22-23/03/97	Herefordshire & Gloucestershire Canal
19-20/04/97	To Be Arranged

Social Gatherings: Wednesday Night, normally 10 days before each dig 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 there will be an extra social on November 13th** as we'd get a bit thirsty going for 5 weeks without a drink, plus a Christmas social on December 18th (see below).

Other Events:

18/12/96	Christmas Social at the Jugglers Arms , Leather Market St. SE1
Feb/Mar 1997	AGM: date/venue to be decided; details in next newsletter
3-5/5/97	IWA London Region Canalway Cavalcade rally at Little Venice



Alison and Rupert get the traditional 'Arch of Shovels' from their friends in London WRG at their wedding on August 10th. Photo by Roger Lewiston