



Editors Note:

Apologies for lateness of this issue of LWRG news. Hopefully its worth the wait!

Below are the dig dated for 2012 as they stand. There are still some sites and leaders to find. So please have a think in time for the **AGM at the Mon and Brec on 4th Feb** of sites and potential leaders! As usual LWRG socials will be at the Star Tavern in Belgravia two Tuesdays before each dig.

With regard to the AGM please also have a think about anything else that would be worth discussing - is it time to splash out on that coffee maker Martin is often wistfully contemplating?? Do we have a plan for decorating Fulbourne at Cavalcade yet? Who is organising the tombola?? If you can't make the dig please contact Tim Lewis with any thoughts or ideas.

The rest of this issue is mainly the usual dig reports. However I have also included the nominations and winners of the LWRG awards and put in some screen shots of the new website at:

http://www.waterways.org.uk/wrg/regional_groups/london_wrg/about_us

Maria and Moose are doing an excellent job of keeping this up-to-date but would appreciate your input. A great way to help is to send Jenny Black photos after each dig so we can keep the gallery up-to-date.

As usual my thanks to Nigel for proof reading, Tim for printing and everyone else for sending in contributions and putting photos on public websites for me to hi-jack! In addition thanks to Martin for the production of the **year planner**—its already on my desk at work and allowing me to work out when meeting in London coincide with LWRG socials! Also available online at:

http://www.waterways.org.uk/wrg/regional_groups/WRG_Volunteer_Planner_2012

Helena Howarth

(Cover image: Alan Lines)

Date	Site	Leader
14/15 th January	Inglesham	Helena
4/5 th February	Monmouthshire and Brecon	Tim
25/26 th February	Somersetshire Coal Canal	Sophie
10/11 th March	Chelmer and Blackwater	Adrian
31 st March/1 st April	Chichester	
21/22 nd April	BCN CLEAN-UP	WRG Head Office
12 th May	Leader Training Day	WRG Head Office
19/20 th May	Chesterfield (TBC)	Paul
26/27 th may	Tool painting	Moose/Maria
9/10 th June		Martin
16/17 th June	Training Weekend	WRG Head Office
7/8 th July	Sussex Ouse	
28/29 th July	North Walsham and Dilham	Gary
18/19 th August		
8/9 th September	Lichfield	Tracy (with WRG NW/ KESCRG)
29/30 th September	Inglesham	Tim
20/21 st October	Somersetshire Coal Canal	Sophie
10/11 th November	WRG Reunion	WRG Head Office
1/2 nd December	Xmas party dig (TBC)	Bobby (with KESCRG)

16/17TH JULY 2011 (EISEY LOCK)

This dig was billed as London WRG's last ever chance to sample the delights of Stratton Village Hall. As a gentle reminder (in case you needed one) of just how popular this accommodation is with visiting groups: this is, remember, the only accommodation where we've actually been pleased to discover that we've been double booked with somebody else and had to move unexpectedly to a scout hut the other side of Swindon in a rough area with a dodgy pub that didn't do real ale.

Sadly, no such luck awaited us this time. So it was no great surprise that it was a smallish team that assembled in the Rat Trap pub (probably the only thing that made staying in Stratton bearable at all) for a couple of beers – and our co-leader Sophie announced that she didn't think any more people were expected for the weekend. What was, however, a slight surprise, was that at that precise moment another volunteer walked into the pub – and this sequence of events was repeated at least three times, until we had quite a respectable group of volunteers. (respectable in terms of numbers, you understand, rather than appearance – which was probably no more respectable than the Scout Hut to which we reluctantly returned for a toast-burning session).

An early start was planned for Saturday, as it was the weekend of the Fairford Air Display, which meant that the local roads would be chocker with traffic heading for the air base. Well, it was a good plan. But "the best laid plans o' mice and men..." suffice it to say that both the cook and the reserve cook overslept. Some speedy cooking (fortunately breakfast didn't involve Frank or pancakes) meant we got off reasonably early and were soon in a massive queue of plane-spotters.

Hint to Tim: if your phone rings just as you're leaning out of the driver's window to try to talk the policeman into letting you go a different way from all the other traffic,

DON'T ANSWER IT. Fortunately a speedy handover of said instrument to the front-seat passenger saved the situation.

And so to site, where we met up with the ever-helpful local John Pontefract. OK, not actually quite as ever-helpful this time, as he was slightly hampered by having a leg in plaster. Still, we got cracking on the important job of setting up the gazebo for our tea-break, and (as it was raining) stringing up some awnings over the bricklaying site on the offside lower wing and recess walls.

Getting the awnings into place against a strong wind was, of course, the cue for the rain to stop as the sun made its first appearance – as did our second co-leader Helena. She was accompanied by a rather pale-looking Nigel – my notes, rather surprisingly, appear to say 'poisoned by Ed' (perhaps we will have learned the truth of this at the London WRG awards ceremony) – who returned to the accommodation.

Helena soon made her presence felt with a curious remark that "Martin makes a good tart" at morning tea-break. (Mind you, Helena makes a good lobster if my memories of previous digs at Eisey can be relied on – said Martin, returning the complement).



Meanwhile, work continued on the brickwork and by the end of the day we'd completed the recess wall ready for adding the coping stones, and made good progress on the wing wall. There were also (joy!) lots of bricks to be fetched and cleaned, and mortar to be mixed, and the whole thing was made more interesting (if that can be imagined) by us being buzzed by assorted aircraft from the air display, and

by a discussion of how many items of underwear were needed for a week's canal camp.

Back at the accommodation we were treated to a cow pie, followed later in the Rat Trap pub (can it get any more exciting?) by a discussion of what issue number of London WRG News we were on (if you wish to know the answer, I suggest you refer to the front cover of this one – and subtract one) and an attempt to solve the 'underground stations' quiz in the last issue, which is a whole lot easier when you find out that all the answers are underground stations. My notes also mention a discussion of whether kidnapping the royal corgis would count as treason...

Our second attempt at an early start was much more successful, with most of the lunch sandwiches made before breakfast was served, and a departure for site before the traffic had got too bad.

The brickwork for the gate recess having been completed, it was now time to add the coping stones – including a chance to play 'splatter the WRGie on the scaffolding with mortar', a game for everybody (except Paul) to enjoy. We also cracked on with putting the final course of brickwork on the offside chamber wall, rebuilt the lower wing wall to within a couple of feet of coping stone height, did lots of pointing around the big stones on the upper towpath-side gate recess wall, Tirforded out some stumps from the canal bed, and Rob did something involving a culvert and hiding under a tarpaulin. All in all a successful weekend's work, leaving just enough for the following canal camp to finish.

On Sunday once again we were treated to our very own air display, including a fly-past by the Red Arrows, as well as a thing shaped like a giant bicycle saddle which I understand was the mighty Vulcan bomber – which once carried Britain's nuclear weapons. Might it, one couldn't help wondering, still have the odd bomb left in its bays which could account for Stratton



Scout Hut (along with most of Wiltshire)? Come to think of it, I'm sure I've heard of 'scout attack' helicopters, and didn't the US Navy air division used to have some 'scout bombers' at one time?



Perhaps fortunately these musings came to nothing, as when we returned to the accommodation we found it occupied by the Scouts – presumably they had dropped by to feed the cockroaches or something. Anyway it

wasn't long before they'd departed and we were left to pack up and leave for the last time, shaking the dust (and not just figuratively) from our shoes as we departed.

Martin Ludgate

(with thanks to Paul for providing the detailed notes on which this report was based many months after the fact!)

(Photos: Alan Lines and Martin Ludgate)

Ed lays his first bricks in approximately 10 years!



13/14TH AUGUST 2011 (WILTS AND BERKS - DAUNTSEY

London WRG & KESCRG – together again!

Soooo, Helena has entwreaked me ('entwreaked,' there; new word...) to write her a dig report re: the London WRG – KESCRG joint dig on the Funky Wilts n' Berks in the middle of August. And she's sent Nigel AND Mister Floodgates to chase me up. Best write the dig report up then.

We arrived at the Foxham Reading Rooms on the Friday night (I was early having cunningly booked some work in Oxfordshire and even managed dinner with my sister courtesy of my chef brother-in-law. Alan and I approached the Foxham Inn, wary of their unconventional approach to opening hours which last time had us sitting outside a locked pub until we gave up. This time they weren't on holiday and surprised us instead by no longer selling Bath Gem, which was always one of the reasons some of us went there.

After a pleasant evening chez Foxham Inn we inserted ourselves into the Reading Rooms. Leader Ed and KESCRG coordinator Bobby had warned of potential overcrowding and had advised any happy campers to bring their tents but I do not recall anyone other than Elanor actually putting one up and sleeping in it.

The task was to improve the floor of a spill weir about halfway down that very straight stretch of the Dauntsey Section which goes from the Peterborough Arms and eventually curves off towards the Seven Locks sites. There was also a leak to be fixed on the offside of the canal (yes, there's water in that there cut!) and miscellaneous tirtfiring to do in and around the line between these two work points. The Amenity & Welfare Area (i.e. LWRG Burco on its heavyweight, red wooden box) was set up at the spill weir, the bulk of the team set to scraping back the accumulated dirt

on its floor, a small group took the largex (Rachael Banyard's venerable JCB Power-slide) 'round to start digging for the leak and anyone left set to with Tina Tirtfor and her friends.

All that is, except Martin, Bobby and me. Martin drove the little dumper (compact and maneuverable but hand-start), I drove the rather unusual and rather bigger dumper (easy to start and drive but it only just fitted down the towpath) and Bobby watched this pending getting his dumper ticket. We delivered the Bentomat rolls and things to the spill weir and then went off doing training exercises.

Nigel, meanwhile commanded the digger with his customarily steady hand and Frank, Gary and Paul went leak hunting via pulling out an amazingly twisted steel I-beam which had previously been the gate-post. This was replaced with a wooden one and eventually dragged back to Dauntsey Farm behind Gary's Navara, much to the chagrin of the farmer who seemed to think he could have re-instated it!

Now here's where it got clever: the clay that came out with Nigel's digging was collected by my dumpering and used in the spill weir team's puddling. Once the base was leveled out a bit, some clay was inserted in choice areas and out came the Bentomat lining. This was then stuck down a bit like installing a floor covering indoors (meaning it felt strange to be effectively carpeting the outdoors) and sealed up with some special stuff which came in a big plastic pail like a paint pot. Said grey goop also stuck the 'carpet' to the walls of the structure but for good measure, Rachael gave Martin a nail gun. Now I don't think I've ever seen Martin Ludgate look in any way apprehensive about using a piece of mechanical equipment but heck, this was one scary piece of kit; rather he than !! Actually, there is a pic on Facebook of him smiling and holding it so I think we won in the end (*See back cover - He!*) At this point it was also discovered that a carpeted, outdoor tea room was a very nice place to enjoy a mug or two of the hot stuff.

Dinner was cooked mightily well by KESCatering supremo, Eli Mathieson and

due to my enquiry that morning which went "What's for dinner tonight, Eli; the correct answer is lasagna," we had lasagna. So apologies from your humble* correspondent if you were on the dig and were not in a lasagna mood. We then went to the Foxham Inn and had some post-lasagna beer and after that we did some post-beer sleeping.

The following day, reclaimed bricks were placed neatly onto the Bentomatted ('Bentomatted,' there; new word...) spill weir floor and more clay was used to seal them up to watertightness (*probably also a new word - Hel*). This was done by poking the clay into every possible nook (and also: cranny) and then puddling it down around the structure's internal periphery with, er, blocks of wood attached to broomsticks. This would effectively radius the floor-to-wall joins and prevent water washing into, rather than over, the structure itself. I think. I'm not an engineer.

After Frank, Gary, Nigel, Paul and I had sorted the stones out of it the remaining clay from their now-repaired leak site we dumped it back into the hole and Nigel made good the ground in a very, very tidy fashion in very, very short order.

Whilst this was going on, yet more tirloring was carried out (Pete, Elanor and others working very hard to rid the stretch of its remaining stumps) and Kate, Mick and co

did some scrub-bashing and lit a fire, for which it was probably too warm; did I mention how simply splendiferous the weather was? Helena intended to celebrated the warm sunshine by topping up her tan but instead squirted on so much sun cream that not even a UV curing light would have harmed her and instead of brown, her arms went artificially white!

The faithful KESCRG trailer (10 years old now and you wouldn't know it; lfor build 'em to last) was packed and still being attached to Ed's Discovery, was towed back to its secret hideaway in a hollowed-out cavern full of men in yellow jumpsuits and Mini Mokes.

And that was that. I managed to go home with a large assortment of unopened biscuits for cheese with no discernable use-by date and Alan Lines put some excellent photographs up on Facebook, so proceed to his FB site if you would like a simpler explanation of the work than the giberish above.

Mk2 8-)

* During one Typically WRGie Discussion (probably over tea or in the pub) a number of us agreed that whenever anyone says "in my humble opinion" or some such comment, they are usually being anything but; I admitted to amplifying this by adopting a suitably pompous tone in accompaniment and using long words.



10/11TH SEPTEMBER 2011 (CHESTERFIELD)

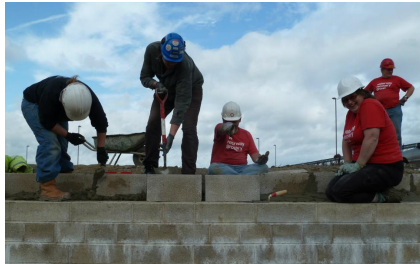
You should always learn from your peers (Ed Walker) and not take a couple of weeks leave immediately before the dig you are organising.

I was attending the third Inglesham camp lead by Nigel & Helena two weeks prior to the dig and sent out the early enquiry to the local contact during the previous week. However as I heard nothing before the camp and had received notices of intention to attend from various people I began to grow concerned as the following week I would be camping prior to leading the dig. So I enrolled the assistance of Martin Ludgate and Mike Chase to chase up on my behalf. As it transpired the local had been ill and only just received my e-mails.

So the Wednesday before the dig received confirmation of the work and accommodation and promptly sent out the details to all concerned. I was by now having to use a running colleague's house as my link to the internet word. Then on Thursday evening came the bombshell. The original accommodation had second thoughts about people from London staying and effectively banned us from using the premises. The local (Geraint) and I had a conversation about alternative locations and agreed to the Hollingwood Community centre besides the Hollingwood lock. This premises had only a small kitchen area which was enough for a microwave and some kettles. So with agreement of the cafe next door they agreed to cook our breakfasts for the weekend and we had a barbeque on Saturday. An urgent e-mail to all attendees about the change of accommodation was then sent.

Friday evening I picked up the keys from Geraint and got all the instructions on key and alarms before the attendees started to arrive. The attendees were from all over the country but it was unique

dig to have Andi Kewley, Dippy Claire and her geologist friend Rory from the north east direction, Alan Lines from the South West and Mike Chase and Gorgeous George from the North West as well as the normal London Contingent minus the southerners. We waited for the arrival of the Van from London before walking up the hill down a road called "Private Drive" to the pub. We temporarily lost one volun-



teer who thought we were only going for fish & chips but soon retrieved him. Saturday and after a breakfast in the Cafe we departed the short distance to the site which was via the local Morrison's car park. The first task of the day was to move a sufficient number of blocks for the wall built from the bridge back to where we parked the van. This worked out to be around 80 blocks. The barrow run up to the top of the wall was hard enough that only a wheelbarrow containing 2 blocks could complete it.

After this one of the jobs was to mortar the blocks in to act as a stop board for the edge of the canal. Two teams of three were dispatched with a barrow full of mortar. Meanwhile another team was set to



lay blocks to three courses matching what had previously been done by the locals up to where the two walls were due to meet. This resulted in the short barrow run for the stop board teams being chopped out and a longer barrow run being created. With a couple of locals also on site this meant that Pete Fleming was mixing mortar for most of the day.

Saturdays Barbeque was prepared along the towpath besides the lock between short sharp showers which eased off before the barbeque cooks George and Pete mastered the specially created kebabs for some of the volunteers. Half the group went up to the pub while the rest stayed in the accommodation.

Sunday Morning and we all had another breakfast in the Cafe and sandwich preparation alfresco. The tasks today were to finish off the stop board blocks and also finish off the block laying to bridge the gap in the walls. Another team departed to start on the top lock paddle culverts. By early morning both block laying teams had finished their tasks and as the locals were concentrating on doing their own thing, we all moved down to the lock to assist in moving and laying of the blocks up to the upper lock level as well as dismantling and clearing up of the site around the lock of previously used batens from the earlier years camps concrete pores. The result of our efforts means that both top paddle culverts were completed up to the upper lock level.



I wish to thank everyone on the weekend for making the dig so successful despite the late change of venue and the cramped accommodation. Now all I need to do is relax (plus do the accounts for the weekend and write this report...)

Paul Ireson

(Photos: Alan Lines)

1ST/2ND OCTOBER 2011 (LITCHFIELD)

Joint with WRG North West

I am so looking forward to this dig, it has been a long time since I last did a dig. I am also looking forward to seeing friends and family from the south. This dig had been arranged so that my sister and I could spend some time together on a dig, but she then decided to go to POLAND for a wedding (she is now nominated for a LWRG award for this).

Friday is here and it is time to go and meet the red van which will get me to Lichfield. When I got to the van I realised that something was different with Mike: all his hair was shaven off so I did not recognize him at first!

We got to the scout hut at about 9:30ish where I sorted my things and set up my bed ready for when I got back in after the pub which Nigel and Ed dragged me to. However I was not complaining as we all had a good catch up and took the mick out of my sister for being in Poland, when this dig had been partially set up for Helena and I to spend some time together (as well as so NW and London could meet up).

Next day, I woke up with a little sore head at about 4ish but managed to go back to sleep until I was woken up by Paul making breakfast. This was as usual a full English. The jobs for the day were filling gabions, filling some big



hole with concrete and sorting out the top of the wall. Nigel also had some lovely ladies to show round and explain what we did; they stayed and helped for a little time so he must have been fairly convincing.

At this point I went to help Ed with the filling of holes with concrete. However before we started we had to fill all the gaps so that the concrete did not come out and make it a funny shape. At this point Ed had to sort out his gun because it was not working. When we got it all sorted it took us about 4 dumper loads of concrete to fill it and this was very hard



work. However we manage to do it before the 11 o'clock tea break then went on to fill more holes. However this time it was in the lock and not the easiest thing to get to. At this point we got some late arrivals turning up just as we broke for lunch.



After lunch we went back to filling in holes with concrete - this time behind the big Duplo bricks (but everyone called them Lego bricks). When everything was done and cleared away it was time to go back to the hall to get cleaned up and nap before a scrumptious dinner which Morriana and Cath had been working on all-day. Afterwards some of us went to the pub again and tonight the pub had a singer on, who as not too bad. Lots of alcohol was drunk by us all.

Woke up on Sunday after not much sleep because I seemed to be sleeping in the snoring corner. Then to add insult to injury I had a hangover so was not a happy camper! Back on site Ed and I had to finish filling the big hole that we had started the day before with more concrete. But there was not enough concrete to fill it so we had to admit defeat. By this time it was time to clean up and head back to clean and tidy the scout hut before having some lunch before heading home. I got back home about 9pm that night I was knackered but I had a fantastic weekend. I would like to thank everyone who were there and a big **THANK YOU** to the cooks and to Mr Mac for his lovely cups of tea and cold juice: which was nice as Saturday was very hot.

Tracy Howarth

(Photos: Alan Lines
and Tracy Howarth)

8TH/9TH OCTOBER 2011 (BASINGSTOKE)

Please see:

- 1. Navvies issue number 250,**
 - 2. The KESCRG dig page**
(<http://www.kescrg.org.uk/picturespage1011.htm>), or
 - 3. the winter 2011 edition of the Basingstoke Canal News** (<http://www.basingstoke-canal.org.uk/>)
- for reports from the Pete Redway Memorial dig that took place on the Basingstoke Canal on 8/9th October 2011.**

Pete Redway Memorial dig

(Photos: Alan Lines)



22ND/23RD OCTOBER 2011 (SOMERSETSHIRE COAL CANAL)

It was our first weekend at the Somersetshire Coal Canal and the weather was gorgeous! We met on Friday night as usual but I can't remember much about that as I am writing this report three months later (having forgotten to nag anyone into writing the dig report). Luckily Facebook is my friend and with David Millers photos as an *aid memoir* I think I can make up something that vaguely corresponds to what occurred.

Saturday morning started with breakfast and the most thrilling drive to site ever. We were staying in Bradford-upon-Avon in an area named almost exclusively for St. Margaret (there was even St. Margaret's steps on the way to the pub) and the site was several miles away across the hills. The route was single lane roads that squiggled through the country at incredible angles and often with 12 foot stone walls at either side. I have never been so relieved to make it to site intact as at several points the whole convoy had to halt as the lead car came head to head with oncoming traffic and we all (except Martin and Tim who had stopped to take photos) had to pause.



On site we met the locals (inc. Abby who has been on LWRG digs before) and the landowner. These lovely people gave us a tour of site and the weekend's work before we began. The job was to clear around one of the locks and an inclined plane. Some of the locals were also chain-sawing slightly further up the canal so it was a hive of activity.

We started with the brush pile by the lock that had previously been felled by the chainsaw crew before moving into the lock. This took most of Saturday and by the end of the day the slash and burn (aided by Paul's almost constant use of the strimmer above the lock) meant the canal bed was much more open to viewing. Unfortunately

as the canal is on private land with no public footpaths no-one but the landowner is going to see it. A rotten stump near the fire that kept insisting on setting alight due to the heat complicated the burning process. This was eventually remedied as the

locals produced a huge saw and Paul, Pete, Richard, Phil and Colin all set about chopping it off at the base.

In the evening the food was (I presume) tasty and followed by a trip to the pub. As by this point we all stank of bonfires the pub cleared out a lot quicker and we were able to find seats. This meant we could get on with our half-AGM; a most informal affair with Sophie and I making some

notes. I have since discovered that notes should include names against all actions as otherwise I end up doing them myself. Having thought of places to go and noted suggested dates we tried to get down to some serious drinking but were too tired so headed back to the accommodation for toast.

Sunday was much the same except we moved onto the inclined plane. We soon discovered ourselves to be too earnest as the fire started to burn a felled tree that had been logged. Luckily Pete was there to save the day by hacking off the smouldering pieces with his axe before rolling the logs further from the fire. Here again there was a huge pile of felled trees to clear up from previous chainsaw work and most of the team abandoned Abby and me too it whilst Richard (the local chainsaw man) took them on a historical tour of the area. They were gone a good two hours (from tea break to lunch) so I presume there was a lot of history to cover. In the mean time Abby and I struggled to get the brush pile to surrender its individual components to the fire with the aid of the locals.

After lunch (which included warm sausage rolls courtesy of Sophie's mum) the clearance of the inclined plane continued with Colin and Tim joining us on the brush pile whilst everyone else chopped and burnt. This I decided was not a good thing as first



Colin whipped me across the face with a branch and then Tim laughed at me as I sat down on a log only to discover that it had a very sharp branch stump sticking out which holed both my jeans and myself. Following on from this I decided that discretion was the better part of valour and abandoned the stubborn brush pile in favour of a bit of light de-ivy'ing of the hedge line.

All in all I think it was a successful weekend with the inclined plane and lock almost entirely cleared out. My thanks go to the locals and the landowner for welcoming us (and helpfully tying bits of ribbon to the trees we weren't to cut down so we didn't have to memorise them all). My thanks also to the cooks, especially Paul for being on breakfast duty as normal, and to everyone that came along to do the work. We must have all enjoyed it as we have agreed to go back twice in 2012!

Helena Howarth

(Photos: David Miller)



GUESS THE LEG!!



(Answer available via Alan's Facebook photos!)

5TH/6TH NOVEMBER 2011 (INGLESHAM)

I was absolutely delighted by the numbers who signed up for the joint London WRG and KESCRG dig in the Cotswolds on the first weekend in November. Local organisers Jon and Martin were overjoyed with the amount we got done in a lively and good natured weekend of hard scrub bashing and tirqing. I was disappointed to have to turn people away – good, useful people too, not just the “bonfire-watching” types you wouldn’t be sorry to see the back of. Our final count was 27 on site but fortunately only 23 needing accommodation. This rather increased the organisation in advance of the weekend but once the volunteers turned up they were all fantastic and sorted themselves out without needing much leadership. Which was just as well as I was shoulder-deep in a vast pan of mince for most of Saturday.

Although billed as an Inglesham dig we worked at Eisey on the Sunday but the work was the same across both sites. At Inglesham we introduced a small number of newbies to the joys of the tirq and got a good bonfire raging almost immediately. The ground was surprisingly dry underfoot, the weather was mild and Roundhouse owner Nic came and joined us for the day. The first of a series of equipment failures began with breaking the shear pins on one of the tirqs – and then the spares. Luckily we had two other tirqs with us but we could have easily used another two. The Christmas camp at Inglesham is going to be busy with this equipment! By the end of the day we’d also been let down by three dodgy generators which a small party was using for finishing off a patch of concreting at Eisey. Gary did a heroic job mixing the concrete manually before himself retiring broken.

Sunday was a brilliantly sunny and mild autumn day, so mild and sunny that the milk had to be put in the shade. If anyone hasn’t been to Eisey recently it’s abso-



lutely remarkable how much progress the Cotswold Canal Trust’s own working parties have achieved over the summer. It’s now a long walk from the lock itself to where scrub remains to be cut and the road has nearly been reached which will mark the end of this stretch for the time being. It now requires very little imagination to imagine cruising along this avenue of trees in a boat.

We were lucky to have some good “bonfire strategists” with us who knew exactly how to start and maintain a good blaze and we tore through the scrub like an Australian bushfire. Because of the shorter daylight hours I suggested we take later breaks and not bother with the afternoon one as we were packing up at 4pm. Luckily people were amenable to this and there was no grumbling. Fuelled by sugar-loaded flapjack and some crumbly birthday cake people worked harder to make up for the shorter working day.



Kempsford may be a decent hall but the oven is definitely working for the anti-Cotswold Canal trust. It's far too small and the floor and shelves tend to collapse under moderate weight. We shovelled it full of potatoes (in the theory that these can survive a collapsing oven shelf) and used the gas hob to brew up two massive vats of chilli (one spicy, one mild). Twenty cloves of garlic, if anyone's interested! There wasn't room for a hot pudding alongside thirty spuds but sherry trifle is no hardship.

As it was my birthday, Paul Ireson's and Gary Summers in the same ten days we enjoyed birthday cake and party bags. What's in a WRG party bag? Why, sweets, tea bags and elastoplasts, since you ask. We also played with some sparklers but didn't waste too much time on these frivolities before heading to the pub.

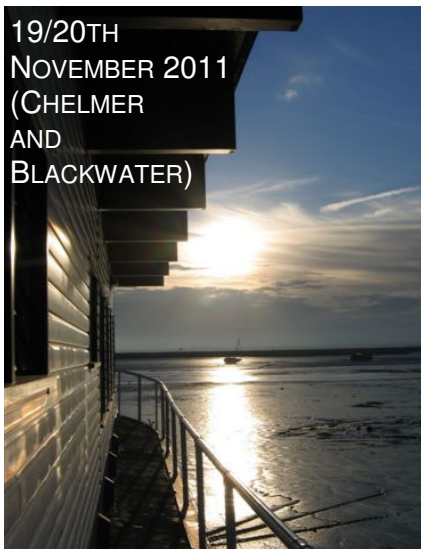
Although I was sorry we couldn't accommodate everyone there is a limit to how much mince I am physically able to stir in a saucepan and the pre-weekend organisation did get a bit heavy. Although the accommodation was a little cramped and there were queues for bathrooms, the main problem was the catering. I ate my breakfast with a spoon one morning for lack of forks. I think if there was this kind of enthusiasm again for a dig at Kempsford I'd suggest getting a fish supper in on the Saturday and breakfasting in shifts. It breaks my heart to have to limit the kind of enthusiasm which is going to get this canal restored.

Many many thanks to everyone really for mucking in and not making the weekend any harder to organise than it had to be. Especially thanks to Owen for heroic washing up, Pete's chickens for laying all the eggs, Alan for the super meat, those who cooked breakfast and our great locals Jon and Martin. Both these guys are keen to get people back again so if you weren't able to book on in November I suggest the New Year camp at Inglesham may make up for it. London are also back there mid January so keep an eye on Navvies for dates.

Sophie Smith

(Photos: Tm Lewis)

19/20TH
NOVEMBER 2011
(CHELMER
AND
BLACKWATER)



I arrived around 8pm to find Paul, Pete and John outside the Jolly Sailor drinking. I took my kit to the boat and joined them, but persuaded them to move inside. By around 10 everyone was there except sleepy Dave. When the van arrived some people went back to sort the kit and start the toast. I hadn't eaten much, so the toast was especially needed.

Paul cooked breakfast and some of us went to work by boat and some by van. Wave Bridge has always had problems with the towpath flooding so our job was to finish the work Essex Wrg had started - to raise the level of the towpath under the bridge with concrete. The "dredger" was used as a work platform for mixing, but this meant the wheel barrows of concrete had to be lifted over on to the ramp to the towpath. This took three people to lift, then two people to steady the barrow to the required position. Moose, Paul and Dave were on land and Maria, Gordon and James were mixing on the boat. Gordon, James, David and Paul also sorted out the access steps up to the road from the towpath on the Maldon side of the road.

Wendy cleaned some graffiti from the brickwork on the bridge. The rest of the team were scrub bashing to widen the towpath towards Heybridge Basin. We couldn't have bonfires as we were close to

homes and businesses so piled the cuttings neatly for collection on Sunday. The bigger logs were left for the locals to take home.



Our cook Katie visited us by canoe on the way to the Hay-bay. She timed it well as it was tea break when she got there. Paul, Pete and John were

strimming the weeds between the towpath and the water's edge, as well as any other bits that needed it.

Dinner was a very tasty and healthy paella. I think it had prawns and chicken in. Dessert was pineapple and banana crumble with custard. Not a combination most had tried before, but it was must have been good as it all went! The fog came in and made the place look moody.

We went to The Jolly Sailor where the yacht club had a very noisy singer. Some of us ventured over to The Old Ship, which was not much quieter, but more in tune! This was someone's Birthday party and they insisted we all have a glow in the dark stick. I went back and straight to bed, but I think the others stayed up too late, as they didn't rise as easily!

Paul cooked breakfast then disappeared on Sunday as he had to prepare for a trip abroad. Sunday was still foggy. It didn't really lift. The work was the same in the morning. The slashing team were Helen, Tim, Richard, Martin, Nigel, Chris, Pete, Allan Scott, John, Wendy and I. There may even have been two Johns!

After tea break the towpath raising team had worked out they were missing Paul and James had to leave shortly to sort his caravan out and go home, so I swapped on to the mixing boat. Nigel and Pete used hedge trimmers on some of the thorny scrub. After tea-break the towpath team had to form a "coping stone" out of concrete. They made a nice job of it. Once the towpath team were finished it was time to collect in the tools and start clearing piles of scrub on to the dredger.

At the end of the day I sat on the bow of the dredger, whilst Gordon and Nigel took photos and Colin attempted to steer (it isn't the easiest of things to make it go where you want it to!). Helen and Pete waited at Hall Bridge to dump the last 1 ton bag of scrub on to the boat, then they walked back. All the tools were sorted by the time I was back after tying up the dredger in the dark.

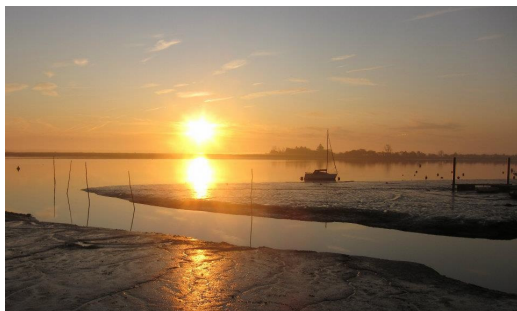
I didn't have anywhere to go that evening, so packed away the tables and swept the floor. Helen washed the floor and went home, whilst I had a shower as mine at home was playing up. I dropped the key back to the lock keepers house and went home to rest. As usual a very enjoyable dig on the Chelmer and Blackwater lead by Helen with locals Roy and Colin making sure we got the work done how they wanted it.

Adrian Crow

(Photos: Tim Lewis and Helen Dobbie)



This photo by Tim Lewis, I think, would be this issues winner of a LWRG photo competition!



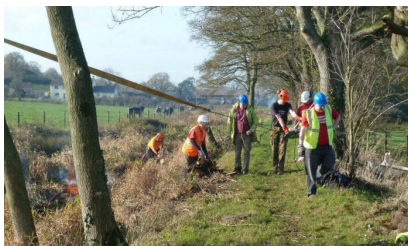
3RD/4TH DECEMBER 2011 (WILTS & BERKS)

The London WRG and KESCRG 2011 Christmas Party.

The first weekend of December saw the annual London WRG / KESCRG Christmas Party make a welcome comeback after having been cancelled at the last minute in 2010 due to our intended destination on the Chelmer and Blackwater being engulfed, along with much of the country, by a thick blanket of snow.

So this year the venue for the 50 or so party attendees was a return to scrub bashing on the Wilts and Berks, at the bottom of the 7 locks just north of Lyneham. Accommodation was in Chippenham – not, as on many memorable occasions in the past, at The Bridge Centre in the middle of its roundabout - but at the Sheldon School. This had the advantage of a very well equipped kitchen and lots of space, the only slight disadvantage being that one 'lot of space' was not necessarily next to the other 'lot of space'. Beer (and cider) was of course present, both *physically* in the form of a couple of barrels of Moles and a barrel of Tunnel (many thanks to Ian and Abi for sourcing these) and *ethereally* as the theme of the Saturday evening fancy dress and quiz.

Work for the weekend was scrub bashing several hundred yards of canal and towpath between the bottom of lock 1 and Sodom Lane, clearing the canal banks and preparing the towpath hedge for laying. Saturday saw the forestry team wielding 6 chainsaws and taking out some of the bigger specimens from the canal bank and towpath hedge. Everyone else set about thinning out the hedge in preparation for laying, tirdoring stumps and manning the several fires which were carefully constructed and controlled. Saturday evening saw a most marvellous feast prepared by the fantastic reformed kitchen team of 2009 lead again by Eddie and Bungle with much help from Mel, Digger, Mk2 and Eli. The main course of Roast Turkey (courtesy of the Jeffries), Pork (courtesy of the Williamsons) and Beef, served along with all the usual trappings, including both vegetarian and non-



vegetarian roasties and parsnips (something to do with whether they were engorged with incredibly delicious piggy fat, or were actually vaguely good for you. The finer details of this passed me by) was sandwiched by a very tasty soup and a fine selection of puddings.

The evening progressed to the fancy dress parade and quiz (via some exciting mechanical washing up. A dishwasher that bears a sign 'This Machine is Dangerous' is always going to be fun - especially if you put in just a little too much washing up liquid...). The beer themed fancy dress had, as always, many intriguing entries, and strangely a very large number of Bishops' Fingers. A most excellent Quiz was prepared by Martin and Liz, and this was duly won by Mk2, his team just sitting back and looking on in awe at the master at work (though Richard and Rowena did provide the splendid 'Diggers Arms' for the creative round).

A leisurely start to Sunday saw the forestry team head to Pewsham locks for some serious tree felling while everyone else returned to Sodom Lane to strip and log Saturday's efforts, relight the fires and burn everything that didn't move quickly enough... or hadn't been put to one side by Di for the hedge laying.

So, many thanks to Bobby for organising the weekend, for Rachael & the Wilts and Berks for providing a decent scrub bash site and most of all to Eddie, George, Mel and the rest of the catering team for looking after us so well. Keep an eye on the Wilts and Berks Foxham and Lyneham branch web page for latest news on the restoration of this section of the canal. (<http://www.wbct.org.uk/branches/foxham-lyneham>)

Stephen Davis

(Photos: Alan Lines)

Maria and Moose have kindly agreed to take forward work on the LWRG website with help from me. So far however the work is all theirs! Below are some screen shots aimed at giving you an idea of the websites contents. It is hoped that you will all bring comments on what has been done and what else could be added to the AGM at the 4/5th February dig (alternatively e-mail comments to me at hbmhowarth@hotmail.com).

This mentions the weekend dig price and the van but not the contribution towards van fuel.

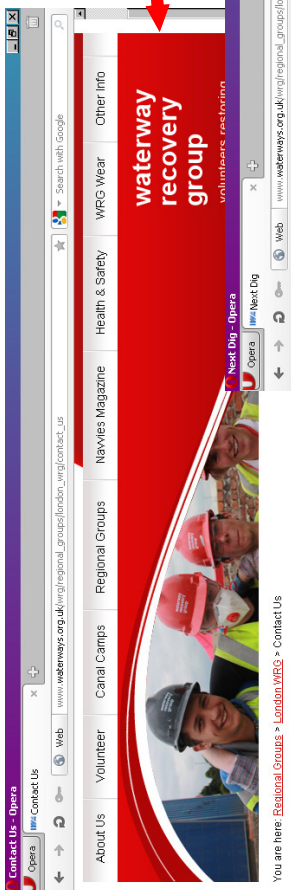
This takes you to a gallery of pictures. These need to be kept up-to-date.

This link takes you to Tim L's website. **Question:** Should LWRG news be put directly onto this website?

Click [here](#) to join our e-mailing list

This link takes you to Tim L's website where he uploads his own photos. Not the 'LWRG gallery page'.

Question: Do we want to encourage people to straighten onto the mailing list since we use it quite heavily. This might put off people before they even come on a dig?



Both these pages fit onto a single screen. All the other pages take more space - mostly due to the WRG banner being huge.

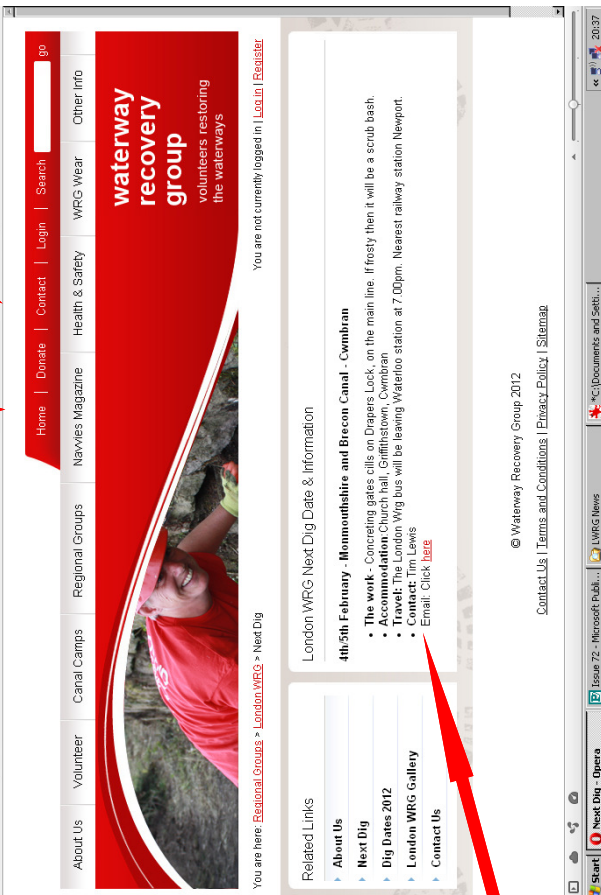
Question: Would it make sense to combine 'Next Dig' with 'Dig dates'? It would no-longer fit on one screen but the current dig would be immediately visible and someone new coming to the website and would be able to immediately see the next dates.



Mentions the socials and gives a telephone and e-mail contact for Martin. **Question:** Should it also give an postal contact?

The email contact given here currently changes every dig. **Question:** Should it always be Tim L as the contact given in Navvies and other locations.

WHAT ARE YOUR VIEWS? PLEASE LET US KNOW!!!



London WRG Awards: 2012

My thanks to all those who wrote in with nominations or special mentions and those who spent one Friday evening in the pub wielding tip-ex and red marker pens in the production of the awards themselves. Hopefully we will be able to keep track of these for a few years; this should be easier since the whip of leadership has been replaced with an item less potentially sexual in nature! So now for the awards (winners in blue!):

Bricklaying

Special Mention:

- Martin Thompson for starting the Inglesham lock rebuild
- Nigle Lee for promptly removing most of the bricks Martin had laid at Inglesham

Nominations:

- Paul Ireson for risking the flying mortar when laying copingstones at Eisey
- Martin Ludgate for wielding a nail gun on site

Catering

Special Mention:

- Frank Wallder for the 'Pancake Marathon' well over a year ago – so epic Martin thought it happened this year because he remembers it so well
- Tim Lewis for cooking apples whilst they were still attached to the tree on a Summer Camp
- Sophie Smith and Nadine Whitcombe for going to Eisey for bricks and returning with scrumped damsons



Nominations:

- Katy brown for cooking an amazing paella at the Chelmer and Blackwater – a first for LWRG
- Paul Ireson for always cooking breakfast
- Pete Fleming's chickens for laying enough eggs to feed a 25 person dig

Driving

Special mention:

- James Butler for disco lights on his caravan
- Tim Lewis for reversing the van into a tree in the middle of site on a Summer Camp

Nominations:

- Paul Ireson for 1) losing Kempford on the way to a dig and 2) getting lost trying to return the volunteers to Waterloo after the dig
- Nigel Lee for being Helena's taxi
- Katy Brown for arriving at the Chelmer and Blackwater dig by kayak

Lame Excuse

Special Mention:

- Jenny Black for hockey training followed by hockey game, then hockey meal, hockey drinks, and more hockey!

Nominations:

- Helena Howarth for 1) wedding preparation course and 2) being in Poland.
- Gary Summers for variously 1) cleaning gutters, 2) drinking too much the night before, 3) being bitten by his own dog, 4) banging his head at the national, and 5) gashing his own arm open in a tirror/mattock related incident.
- Tim Lewis for missing four digs in the summer due to a combination of 1) being in France, 2) climbing mountains with girls, and 3) catching nasty diseases.

Leadership

Nominations:

- Helen Dobbie for allowing Martin Ludagte to lose the keys to the Haybay then allowing Pete to break in
- Sophie Smith for getting a decent turn-out at Eisey even though everyone knew the accommodation was Stratton Scout Hut (partially through recruiting her mum)

New Recruit:

Nominations:

- Hamon Stewart for turning up in full yellow Hi-Vis on his second dig (then getting an orange version to do volunteering relating to trains just a few weeks later)
- Nadine and Colin Whitcombe for returning after attending on of the Summer Camps
- Aaron for giving Elanor as good as she gives out.

What to do when its sunny and there is no gazebo handy...? A leadership decision of LWRG standards!



Disclaimer: This is not a LWRG dig

Obituary: Doug Beard

We are sorry to have to bring you the sad news that Doug Beard, former volunteer with London WRG, has died.

Doug lived in Essex and was heavily involved in leading Chelmsford IWA Branch's project to restore Springfield Basin and Lock, which between them form the uppermost section of the Chelmer & Blackwater Navigation in Chelmsford, in the early 1990s. He was always a one for following traditional methods, but despite a few debates along the way (I well recall arguments over lime mortar and soft red bricks versus engineering blues and concrete) his drive and enthusiasm led the project to completion. Together with his wife Molly he also attended a number of London WRG working parties on other sites including the Wilts & Berks at Foxham as well as Chelmsford. This experience helped him to set up the IWA Chelmsford working party, which in turn led to the establishment of Essex WRG which is still active to-day. Although Doug was no longer involved, this establishment of a local volunteer resource helped when in recent years IWA took over the running of the Chelmer to save it from bankruptcy and closure.

Our sympathies to Molly, to our friends in Essex WRG and Chelmsford IWA, and to everyone else who knew him.



Images: Alan Lines, and Tim Lewis

Who to contact:



London WRG Chairman:

Tim Lewis
5 Herongate Road, Wansted, London, E12 5EJ
london@wrg.org.uk
078 0251 8094

Enquiries:

Martin Ludgate or Lesley McFayden
35 Sylvester Road, London, SE22 9PB
martin.ludgate@wrg.org.uk



London WRG News Editor

Helena Howarth
43 Celandine Ave, Locks Heath, Hampshire, SO31 6WY
hmhowarth@hotmail.com
079 8180 6336