

# LWRG NEWS

Issue 87 January 2020



# Editors Note:

I hope everyone had a fantastic Christmas and are looking forward to a fabulous New Year. We would like to congratulate Sophie and her husband Stephen on the birth of their daughter and look forward to her chairing the LWRG meetings like other notable LWRG offspring have done in the past. The front cover depicts our recent dig at Berwick Wharf taken by David Miller. You can read all about this dig later, and we hope there will be the possibility to revisit this site with the National Trust on whose property the wharf sits and are looking forward to their working in conjunction with the local canal society. We have a fine selection of digs to get stuck into starting on an old favourite along the Chelmer & Blackwater canal. The LWRG awards are also looming. These awards include bricklaying, leadership, driving, new recruit and catering so if you can think of any worthy winners for these, please let the editor know as soon as possible (contact details to be found on the last page).



And finally, more of an honourable mention than news of an actual LWRG dig, but as London WRG are well represented at the Christmas camp led by Moose Hearnden, here is Maria's cake, the first of fifty, celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of WRG.

# Wey & Arun with KESCRG 31<sup>st</sup> Aug/1<sup>st</sup> September

**Leader: Stephen Davis**



The groups met up at the Grantley Arms at Womersley on the Friday evening for a pre dig drink.



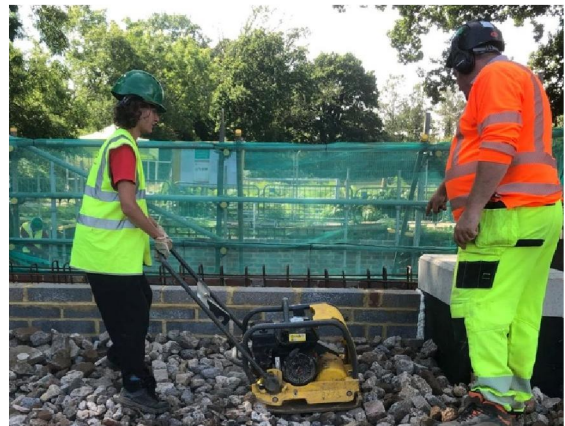
An important job that needed carrying out on the Saturday was to form a ramp up to the bridge beam to enable barrows to be used for the next day's concrete pour.



The hardcore was loaded at the compound.



... then unloaded for a team to move to form the ramp...



... then vibrated



As part of the preparation we used a formwork panel to brace the brickwork facing wall of the bridge beam to be concreted.



In the meantime a couple of other teams were carrying on the facing brickwork to the wing walls. Saturday night saw us sitting down to a sumptuous meal cooked by Sophie.



Sunday morning and we start the concrete mixing....



... for barrowing to the bridge beam pour.



Inka on the vibrator.



We eventually used 3 dumper loads, equal to 9 tons, of aggregate plus many many bags of cement



The mix was gauged using buckets.



The barrow team



Still bricklaying!



We finished the 4m3 pour in about three hours!



And then we had lunch.



Whilst the brickies wanted 'just one more load' of muck.

**Words and pictures: Tim Lewis**

## **The 'last ever' Inglesham dig with KESCRG**

**21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>**

## **September**

So the time had come that the Inglesham lock project would be completed and the final band of volunteers descended to the site over the long weekend of the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> September.

The early arrivals on Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> were tasked by the site leader, Digger

to start the final clearance of the lock as well as pointing up the brick work that had been submerged by both water and silt. Therefore the first task was to run the pump to empty the chamber to allow the sludge clearance team which included RAF Martin to fill the barrow hoist bucket which Sam was detailed to empty and dispose of in the spill weir. Nigel & Alan were tasked with the pointing job. Alan allowed Nigel to descend into the chamber while he mixed up the mortar. Digger & Pete F started on the job of installing the four gate posts which will control access to the site. They soon found that the rather solid soil slowed down this task along with some concrete remains just where they wanted to put the posts.

The Friday crew retired to the pub where they were joined by all the other volunteers for the weekend so that by the last bell 18 of us were in the pub and some of us did not leave until after midnight.

After an early breakfast and lunchtime sandwiches made we departed to the site where Digger & Pete had started the pump. For arrival on site the van drivers were warned not to knock down the four new gate posts. We unloaded the vans and then Digger gave us the final morning jobs briefing on site.

Main Tasks – Lock Clearance, Sand consolidation and disposal, Fencing, drainage ditch, quoin (I believe quorn stone to be a typo, despite not actually being there, ed.) stone completion and general tidy up of site.



Digger pointing at a whiteboard. Photo: Tim Lewis

Steve D & Paul R were tasked with the quoin stone task and proceeded to construct the former. Meanwhile brave Rhiannon joined Barry and David B to start sorting out the sand and put it into bags.



Sorting sand. Clearly all the excitement was at Inglesham this weekend! Photo: Tim Lewis

But before this could be safely done they were joined by the two members of the lock clearance team Dave M & Paul I to move all the spare bricks or blocks into neat piles. When the lock was sufficiently empty Dave & Paul joined RAF Martin & David S down in

the lock chamber although Paul was very hesitant on the ladder descent. Gary & Sam were tasked to finish off the duct and with help from Ed in the mini digger a trench was dug to lay the remaining pipework.



Pipework trench. Photo: Tim Lewis

This left Roy and Tim with the task of operating the barrow hoist and the disposal of the contents. Digger & Pete were joined by Nigel and Alan to dig the holes for the fence and then construct it.

By tea break everyone had progressed in their tasks and despite Paul R/Steve managing to drop the quoin former into the bottom of the lock chamber, it was quickly retrieved by Paul I. Steve returned the favour by providing Paul I with his cup of tea & cake as he was unprepared to climb back up the ladder until absolutely necessary. The planned movement of the sand bags by Nick was abandoned due mechanical issues and the bags were now being grouped into one big collection. By lunchtime the quoin stone had been cast and was being annoyed (WHY are you annoying a quoin stone????! I mean, we can all be irritating, but really. Were you trying to make it look more stoney faced? Ed.).

Meanwhile the bottom of the lock was three quarters cleared but Paul I decided that fatigue and the need to climb the ladder meant that he allowed Rhiannon to replace him in the afternoon (He is such a gentleman ☺). The duct team had now finished laying out the pipe and started to infill the trench where Gary's expert carpet fitting prowess came to light as he used up all the nicely removed turfs to lay back on the dug trench. The Fencing team had now reached the stage where the old container was required to be moved to allow them to finish off the fence. This meant a delicate movement of the container by use of the mini Digger by Ed W. The sand bagging team of Dave B & Barry continued their seemingly never ending task as they continued to locate more sand to fill the bags. A visit from Jenny & Archie provided the troops with Ice lollies and after an overall site clearance a group photo was taken for the final record.



The "last ever" Inglesham dig team. Photo: Tim Lewis

A return to Brimscombe for a wonderful meal from Jude and Harri was followed by a speech from Rick and then drinking of the beer brought by Jenny with port and cheese to follow.

On Sunday, as the weather forecast had stated that it would be bad hence the finish on the Saturday meant that the teams could concentrate on the clearing up of all the equipment brought back from Inglesham as well what was in the other storage spaces at Brimscombe. Some members attended the WRG meeting so the rest of us set about the various tasks. The rubbish was put into the skip while the batch of bricks and fencing panels and blocks were stored around the various units on site. The barrow hoist was checked over and the frame was reconstructed within one unit and all the scaffolding neatly piled into another. Due to the need for a single movement of trailers at one time this allowed the inspection of the WRG van fleet which had not been in the same space since the last national over 5 years ago. This gave the chance to assess which vans were required to visit the body shop for repair or which could be repaired on site.

So by the lunchtime which was noisily announced by Archie using the empty mini beer barrels as drums, all the tasks had been completed and while the London WRG van group waited for Martin L to finish in the meeting everyone else departed.

A big thank you to everyone who have been connected with the Inglesham Lock project for the time they have spent on the task and the satisfaction we had of its completion.

**Paul Ireson**

# Shrewsbury & Newport

## 12/13<sup>th</sup>

### October

**Leader: Paul Ireson**

This dig was notable as Martin cooked something that was not lasagne or tiramisu. However, our digs are not only ruled by our stomachs. Although we did come back with more food in our brew box than we left with. Alistair's wife, Sue, having baked a remarkably large number of cupcakes that even after 3 each we had some left over.

Our planned leader was also notably absent for medical reasons. And rather than having a pause in our digging, a pregnant pause as it was, Paul stepped into the breach.



A makers brick uncovered from one side of the basin.  
Photo: Martin Ludgate

We were working at Berwick Wharf on the National Trust site, the Attingham estate. We had two of the Trust's archaeologists, Janine and Viviana joining us to help preserve and

investigate the remains. We uncovered the walls of the wharf and a brick showing that the bricks are from the Albion brickworks in West Bromwich.

Tractor spotting was a major highlight for some, as the site is next to a busy highway where potatoes (Martin Danks thinks they are majestic potatoes but I remain a little sceptical of how one can tell a muddy potato in a trailer holding a few tonnes of them look any different from any other but he has a garden) and chopped maize which was being taken to a biomass digester.

The task was to remove the scrub obscuring the wharf and canal site which is partially in water. There were two fires. Luckily for John, David S. had brought his tinfoil so they were gainfully occupied for most of the day. David B. spent most of his time in the canal miraculously not getting wet but David M appeared damp up to the knees. Walking on water is not a speciality of everybody. The strimmer was used to help clear the scrub on dry land but a lot of saplings had sprung up where the canal should be. Martin D felt Rachel and Paul had done a good job at not burning the tree on the offside. All I'm saying is that the tree had been fortuitously pruned in the afternoon. It was a good warm fire. Only one person fell in. She did it three times. Practice makes perfect, but Viviana's dog, Lulu had the time of her life. Tim turned up in the afternoon which was handy as the fires needed to be out by 4pm.



The WRG tart baked by Martin and scoffed by all.  
Photo: Tim Lewis

Martin L had cooked a chicken option or a bean and vegetable stew with roast potatoes, vegetables and garlic bread prepared by Sue. He followed this by a plum WRG Tart. When deciding on how many slices we needed, Sue thought it could be one letter each. There were 12 of us. We are thinking about numeracy and literacy classes on the next dig. We then had an AGM (please see the diary for the dates we hope digs will be for the next few months). We then went to the pub for a well earned drink before happily going to bed, little imagining what would wake us in the morning.



Berwick wharf on Saturday morning. Photo: David Miller



Same view by the end of Saturday. Photo: David Miller

Sunday started earlier for many of us than expected. Martin having managed to make toast without the fire alarm going off on Friday night had clearly lulled us into a false sense of security on the toast ticketing front. Penny set the alarm off with gusto. And not only that alarm but had managed to set her phone alarm for the same time and leave it in the hall so even after David S had switched it off, everyone was well and truly alerted to the horrible news they needed to get out of their sleeping bags to go out in the rain for site. Albeit Paul had cooked a lovely breakfast to make it a little less harsh.



Bonfire watching. Photo: Tim Lewis

The ash was still very hot so the fires were restarted easily and we carried on clearing as much as we could. We also attempted to save some logs and save some longer lengths of hazel for hedge laying. This may not be accurately achieved as explained in our own words; Me: "What does a hazel tree look like?" Martin: "I don't

know. I'm a townie. They are all wooden, I think."



Mooring ring for the wharf. Photo: Martin

We found some mooring rings set in two of the coping stones. I think this will be a wonderful project to rebuild the wharf and we hope we may continue to be part of this exciting project. Seeing the rusting rings and the wharfside wall really helps this area of boggy waste land become so much more recognisable as a canal. The SNCT (Shrewsbury and Newport Canal Trust) had a banner up at the side of the road and several local people stopped to look and admire our efforts, one very surprised that there had ever been a canal here.

We also carried on the important task of trying to eat all the cake, but a small amount was sneaked into cars for a snack on the way home too. We packed up after lunch to come home where the weather had brightened up considerably.

**Written mainly at the pub by the dig!**

# **WRG Reunion**

## **Uttoxeter**

### **Canal 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>**

### **November**

**Leaders: Becky Parr & Ali**  
**Womble Bottomley**

The van seemed surprisingly light for a bonfire bash weekend as it left with Martin, Aileen, Tim and Fran. We made good time and arrived at Upper Tean village hall to find there was actually a choice of space in which we could sleep. So we chose the bar as one might expect. It was a late night with catching up with Wergies known for many years but not seen for weeks or months and a happy team of campers.



The leadership team. Photo: Tim Lewis

In the morning Jude and the kitchen team had prepared breakfast for 7:45.

This certainly gave us a bit longer to faff and arrange ourselves into teams or be strongly encouraged into the milepost team. A small band of constructive people were needed to place the new mileposts along the towpath and another team to make a fence around a spill weir that had been found by local volunteers in the undergrowth near to the lock we discovered during the last Reunion weekend held here in 2017.



The fencing team. Photo: Tim Lewis

There was a separate Forestry team working alongside a tirfor team near the entrance to this stretch from the road, and then several small teams working on scrub clearance along the stretch of towpath either side of the lock and around the remains of an old cottage that we called the witch's cottage and had become swamped in rhododendron bushes

The van journey to site was a lovely tour of the countryside and as it was raining quite hard we did wonder if we

could make it last throughout the rugby game that several were very keen on following on the radio. The distance on the road signs to Alton certainly did not seem to be consistently moving in one direction. Yet we arrived with the other teams and then drove up the track to set up the gazebo and light the Burcos.



Lunch! Photo: Tim Lewis

It was a wet day and so we were keen to get fires started as soon as possible. So Tim availed himself of the LWRG flame thrower and we found some scrub piled up from the previous dig that we could extract some dead wood from to start a fire. Soon it was giving off a hopeful pall of smoke, though in traditional fashion it only started blazing when we left it alone and stopped watching it and went for a tea break. I think fires are just a little shy. Soon we were chucking larger logs on and a lot of new saplings as well as smaller trees removed from the canal bed.

Elsewhere a start was made on scrub bashing at the other end of site with one team tasked to tirfor out some roots as well as some forestry tree cutting. There was also a team putting mileposts in along a five mile stretch of the canal, and another team erecting a

fence around the spill weir.



Canal workers cottages. Photo: Tim Lewis

The rhododendron bash around what Becks called the witches cottage went well. No-one was entirely sure why it was a witch's cottage as it did not appear so spooky although it was a bit of a puzzle trying to work out what the remains of the walls once were with old pieces of stone, old and newer bricks and a strange piece of metal, all forming part of the rubble. Luckily on Sunday a man walking past stopped to chat to Steve Wood and told us that his grandfather had told him that they were canal workers cottages. Reputedly there was a pub somewhere in the area but we are not sure where.



Below the lock. Photo: Tim Lewis

In the evening we tried to go to the pub but found they had sold out of real ale

so were more than happy to eagerly return to the accommodation for an amazing stew and jacket potatoes cooked by Jude's team.



Bonfires were still alight on Sunday morning! Photo (and probably fire!) : Tim Lewis

Sunday was pretty much a continuation of Saturday in terms of finishing work. When it got started that is, I was being driven by Alex who took a while exiting Upper Tean, though he is very proficient at three point turns and he demonstrated this twice. The team at the far end of site did not arrive on time for lunch and no-one answered their phone. Luckily some horse riders were passing so we tried to convey the message that they should come up for lunch by horse. It appears they had started on a tree at an inopportune moment and had not forgotten they needed to come and eat. After the final final tidying up and re-assembling of the vans, we then departed.

# LWRG/KESCRG

## Xmas Party 7/8

### December

And it came to pass that London WRG and KESCRG came together at Brimscombe to celebrate the Yuletide. And lo, there came forth shepherds from the east – the midlands, Londinium and the oriental lands.

And they did travel west by minibus to Whitminster.

In the beginning there was scrub. And Jon said, Bash that scrub. And ploughshares fashioned from swords were employed with great energy on the waterside sward.



One of Tim's more successful fires. Photo: Tim Lewis

And it came to pass that a fire was decreed. But the flames would not come forth.

And lo, the flames arrived at last, and small, controlled, towering fiery infernos did consume the wood of the land.

And water was plentiful in the form of tea and coffee, much heat erupting from the wonders of the Burco.

And then there was great wailing and gnashing of teeth that the lunch was late.



Alan peeling sprouts. Photo: Martin Ludgate

And at that time the kitchen team in the east, including Mr Alan Useful Lines, did toil at peeling sprouts and preparing a bountiful Feast of Stephen (the leader).

And verily, the number of the garlic cloves was three. And Judith of Stanford-le-Hope searched diligently and without cease by both day and later on in the day but the garlic she did not find.

Elizabeth came to pass, and she searched beneath the fundament of the fridge, and the firmament of the shelves, and the depths of the green boxes of the KESCRG. But garlic came there none.

But Anne did bethink of the great boxes of Kit A. And lo, she there beheld garlic, and the land rejoiced for the people who eat not the flesh of the sheep nor the milk of cattle could have food which tasted good.



Dressing up. Photo: Tim Lewis

And at the same time it came to pass that the tin opener of KESCRG was found to be corrupted by black and sticky unguent of unknown evilness. But Nick laboured mightily with both water and scrubbing brush. And he fought with steel scourer and knives. And behold, the tin-opener became clean and pure once more.



Nativity tale with a twist. Photo: Tim Lewis

And lo, when the flames did die down, they that did toil still in the field saw that the mud was parted and the red chariot took the disciples to the sanctuary of Unit 1 in the promised land of Brimscombe. And they saw that it was good.



The making game efforts of creating a nativity scene. Photo: Stephen Davis



Creating a nativity scene. Photo: Tim Lewis

And forsooth, much merrymaking, ribaldry, feasting and jocularly ensued at eventide. And they did thank Anne and her wonderful catering team. And verily they were stuffed even as Martin's merriment beganeth.



The starter – baked camembert – the soup is waiting to be ladled out! Photo: Tim Lewis

And fanciful dress did follow, and what talent followed, with Christmas mummers and crib building all fulfilled with plentiful food and wine. And Sunday was a day of rest.



Not quite a day of rest – this is the new site near the Western depot where a group went to work on Sunday. Photo: Stephen Davis

**Organised by Martin Ludgate from the teams writing round of the Christmas quiz**

# Who to contact:

London WRG Chairman: Tim Lewis [London@wrg.org](mailto:London@wrg.org) 07802 518 094

Enquiries: Martin Ludgate & Lesley McFayden [Martin.ludgate@wrg.org.uk](mailto:Martin.ludgate@wrg.org.uk)

London WRG News Editor: Fran Burrell [katburrell@doctors.org.uk](mailto:katburrell@doctors.org.uk) 07765 793 474

## Diary

| Date             | Site                                            | Leader              |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 18-19/01/2020    | Chelmer & Blackwater                            | Paul Ireson         |
| 8-9/02/2020      | Lichfield                                       | Fran Burrell        |
| 29/02-01/03/2020 | Shropshire Canal                                | Martin Ludgate      |
| 14-15/03/2020    | BCN                                             | Centrally organised |
| 4-5/04/2020      | Wey & Arun                                      | Tim Lewis           |
| 25-26/04/2020    | Cotswolds                                       | David Miller        |
| 2-3/05/2020      | Not a dig but<br>Canalway Cavalcade<br>festival | Pete Fleming        |
| 16-17/05/2020    | Buckingham Arm                                  | Fran Burrell        |

## Caption Competition:



Can you see what's odd? Photo: David Miller