

Antipodean update: or Australia today, the World tomorrow!

Over in Australia, through drought, heat, fire, flood and pandemic – dry stonework has been able to continue as normal, and any spare time arising from the global slowdown has been put to good use!

Throughout 2020, Australian OYD branch member Emma Knowles has been working hard to establish her business - Stone of Arc, a 'Crookland's down-under', a women's stone network, a work placement centre for young Aboriginal people, and catch up on all the jobs put on hold whilst she was in the UK.

Set on farmland in the foothills of Mount Arthur near Wellington NSW and incorporating our old gate sign from Surprise view car park and a covered training area, Stone of Arc's near complete purpose-built drystone training centre is currently the only one of its kind in the southern hemisphere. Training structures are all built to DSWA test standards comprising of different types of stone and incorporating all the styles and features required to advance from beginner through to expert.



Being a professional and corporate member of the DSWA, Emma is keen to assist the development of a similarly strong dry stone community in Australia, the maintenance of our ancient traditional skills, and increased opportunities for women to get involved. As such, she is a founding member and current convener of the Women's International Stone Alliance (WISA).



WISA believes women, and eventually the stone trades as a whole will benefit from their collective effort. WISA aims to provide opportunities, advocacy, promotion and support to women involved in or wishing to be involved in traditional stone trades. Our own David Griffiths has already teamed up with WISA to collaborate on designs and technical drawings for the ‘Wollstonecraft edifices’ – a suite of culturally specific designs that the alliance hope to build in various locations around the world, to celebrate women’s strength and capabilities.



In these early stages of development, WISA would like to gather as much input from as many women as possible, so that the future can be shaped together. They’ve created a short 3-5-minute survey which will be available until the 31st December 2020.

For further information or to complete the survey, please go to www.womenstonealliance.com to find out more about Stone of Arc go to www.stoneofarc.com



The above has been written by Emma. I feel exhausted just reading what her plans are, as well as what she has achieved so far. We will be following the development of WISA & look forward to unveiling of the ‘Wollstonecraft edifices’. – M

Tales from a more mature drystone waller

John Heslegrave, whilst not doing so much around Bellerby, has been remained very busy with his commercial work since April. He is finding that he is getting new enquiries regularly, quite a few through his web-site, with some returning customers & projects for which he has been recommended.

Restrictions haven't really been a problem as he tends to work alone, sometimes with assistance from volunteers looking for more experience (&/or *feeling sorry for the old guy?*). Another regular "assistant" is his wife, Barbara, who he describes as being "brilliant at stone sorting & middle filling". He also notes that "she continues to drive the slave" - surely not!

One of the jobs has been at Hawes, at the top end of Wensleydale. Here John was working with thin stone, almost none thicker than 100mm, taking about 20 courses to get to the top of a vertical-sided wall & with a lime-mortared end to key a dismantled building into the wall.

Multiple layers at Hawes



You'll now find him (possibly) working in Dallowgill ("a lovely valley between Laverton/Kirkby Malzeard & Pateley Bridge"), (*no! I didn't know where it is, either - M*). Here the stone is at the other end of the size scale - huge, unliftable, 'Nidderdale' grit stones - they have to be slid up in place using a plank (*there's another item for the equipment list*).



Big stuff at Dallowgill

In an update from Leyburn I hear that John has been working on a drystone fireplace & barn corner for the **Farmers Arms** at Muker. Sounds like a dream appointment to me but John was quick to tell me that the preparation & stone dressing is taking place outside, to reduce dust & noise. Perhaps more serious is the fact that, taking advantage of lock-down closure to re-furbish the hostelry, beer is not currently on the menu. Perhaps just as well.

Tuesday Group at Bingley

The Tuesday group started walling again in July after a 4 month break. We are working at Prince of Wales Park Bingley which is maintained by the Friends of Prince of Wales Park <https://www.friendsofpowp.org.uk> who meet twice a week to repair paths, prune shrubs, clear leaves and generally tidy up. They work with the support of Bradford Council but most of their funding comes from their own fundraising activities.

We have been asked via Julie Ramsden who is both a Friend and a DSWA member if we could repair their boundary wall. This is a field wall of several hundred metres bounding open fields containing horses which is in a variable state of dilapidation, on a slope, with corners and T-junctions and scope for a lunkey to allow for a stream, and incorporates three types of copes, so offers good training and practice opportunities. There is a good supply of stone with the Friends moving more if required, vehicular access and a pleasant and safe working environment. What more could you want!



In progress



Completed



Next section to be done

So why not come and join us on a Tuesday – all levels of expertise (and none) welcome

Contact Colin Alexander to reserve a place (we have a limit because of Covid regulations and protocols)

colinalexander266@btinternet.com

07536 045747

POST SCRIPT – as elsewhere, the Tuesday trips to Bingley are currently on hold. Hopefully, we'll be up & running again in the not too distant future. You will be told!

Professionals' work in RHS, Harlow Carr

A report, taken from the local Harrogate paper - "The Stray Ferrett" - 13th October, 2020

A new bridge will be unveiled at RHS Garden Harlow Carr on Monday.



The bridge, which was built by Harrogate dry stone waller Neil Beasley, along with John Hulbert & John Downie, in four months over lockdown, has been named the **Friendship Bridge**.

The name is in recognition of donations from the Friends of Harlow Carr, for which we are most grateful. The Royal Horticultural Society, which is the gardening charity that owns RHS Garden, Harlow Carr, also contributed significantly.

The centrepiece of the design represents the head of a flower, with stone petals surrounding a central stonework arch. This was created by our own master craftsman, David Griffiths,

The bridge replaced one that was already there, one of four that cross the beck along the stream-side garden. The Geoffrey Smith memorial stone is a lasting testament to the former garden curator & well-loved broadcaster, who died in 2009. It was originally upstream from this new bridge and has been re-positioned downstream & incorporated within the parapet wall.

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Paul Cook, curator at RHS Garden Harlow Carr, said:

"We now have a beautiful new piece of artwork, which has been handcrafted in Yorkshire stone using traditional drystone walling techniques. "As well as being a thing of beauty in itself, the work will help to alleviate surface flooding problems."



The new bridge was built with freshly quarried Yorkshire stone, along with stone from the structure that it replaced. The parapet walls were constructed of sawn bedded sand stone and

the stand-out feature - the flower head - was created using riven, bedded sandstone & reclaimed roof and barn stone slates.

Neil & colleagues previously created Harlow Carr's garden entrance feature and monoliths on the corner of Crag Lane and Otley Road, which were also designed by David Griffiths.

Notes from Leyburn Group – October 2020 – Roy Sallabank

National Trust

Volunteering for the National Trust has been suspended during the COVID lockdown period. NT have also been going through an extensive review of their capabilities (their “Restart” programme) which has led to a number of redundancies. Whilst they have been in consultation volunteering has continued to be suspended.

All this means that we have not been to Braithwaite Hall since March. There is hope that our volunteering role may be considered later in the year and we can resume repairing walls and perhaps start the larger projects.

Manor Farm

Lack of work at Braithwaite Hall has benefited the Manor Farm walls. Since August groups of 4-6 wallers (varying combinations between: John, Bill C, Bill T, Robin, Steve, Dave B, Dave H, Greg, John Hodson, Tush, and Roy) have met each Wednesday and one Saturday.

We have now finished the walls around “Jonathan’s” bungalow, to which one of last year’s training courses contributed. This has included a new T and extension to meet up with the existing gate & fence.



We have also completed the high re-located wall at “John & Catt’s” bungalow, again a significant contribution to this was made by last October’s ‘mammoth’ course.

The group has now started on a new ~100m wall to the West of the farm; this is mostly in a poor/dilapidated state and we are taking down and rebuilding. Generally, this comprises good walling

stone and we are making good progress. However now somewhat hampered by the lack of foundation stone – it seems the wall was built on relatively small, flat stone which may explain why it has spread at the base and collapsed in many areas.



We are now able to **make use of the container** which Len bought for our use; this is intended for the training courses but is now positioned alongside our work area and provides a great place to eat our mid-morning bacon butties (also from Len) and lunches. Since we have had plenty of rain and wind the container has been welcome.

Great work going on up there. Some very interesting walls built over the years. Looks like you’ll have to concentrate on Bellerby for some time yet. All the best. M

Covid speed walling? An “Away-Day” for a Thursday Escapee.

The Thursday group are often asked to repair stretches of the wall in and around the Chevin Country Park; it seems that all adjacent landowners think the walls bordering the park are the Council’s responsibility! Bill received such a request in February and asked for volunteers. I had a look at the problem and put my hand up, setting out to start in mid-March.



The wall was 1.8m high, right up against a 1m high fence with about half the height a retaining wall on the fence side. The gap was about 3m which rapidly grew to about 5m once I had removed the most unstable bits leaning into the field. No spare stone and quite a lot of very rotten and crumbly stone which had caused the tumble. Never having ‘walled over’ this looked like an interesting challenge. I managed to salvage some reasonably solid footings on the field side and then Covid struck and the project got put on hold!

Once allowed out again in mid June I was able to revisit the site, unfortunately the walling fairies hadn’t completed the job! My only companions were 3 large horses which occupied the field. I’m not a great fan of close encounters with large and potentially unpredictable animals, so I’m happy to report that there were no untoward incidents such as the Tuesday group experienced above Keighley last year when we had a close encounter of a bovine kind, but that’s another story!

The Chairman and secretary trialled the DSWA Covid-19 protocol on the wall in mid July and it was finally finished by the end of July. On this basis Covid speed looks like about 1m per month!



I enjoyed the project, but it’s good to get back to more of a team effort.

Roger

For those who wish to check this build out, you will find it at the South Eastern end of Danefield, grid ref: 231 441.

Training Course Experience

Brian Hartley

After a season of cancelling courses and moving Students to later courses or even to next year, we were finally able to put on two courses at the end of September.

Originally one course, it had to be split to meet the COVID protocols issued by Crooklands, a total of 21 students were trained.

The Beacon House site being unavailable, we used the White House area.



Where students were from the same household they worked as pairs opposite each other. The single students were spaced out on the old initial test wall by the maze where we created a gapping scenario with adequate spacing between the stints.

Although, to the students, the events were a good experience, the instructors felt that it was less ideal. However, we ran courses, tested the national protocols and got some excellent feedback about the efforts we had gone to to it work. Even members of the public were pleased something happening amidst all the restrictions.



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Now on to planning next year. currently we have twelve students on each of three courses in April, May and June. Spaces are still available for the later events.

Buckden Weekends



Many of you know of or have indeed taken part in, our twice-yearly walling weekends in Upper Wharfedale. Our goal is to repair walls for the National Trust. Our first visit was actually as far back as 2005, when it was a single weekend, as was the following year. Since then we



have been playing with limestone twice each year. This has been the format until this year when, of course, by the time our scheduled May visit came round, the country (& countryside, as far as the Trust was concerned) was shut down.



For those who are not familiar with these trips, some more info: A work site would be agreed between the Trust (usually Peter Katic, the "Area Ranger" up there), & ourselves. Ideally it would be a structure that is close to a well-used footpath. This allows us to do a bit of recruiting, as well as showing off our skills. The site would be one that the Trust themselves don't have the

necessary resources (time &/or personnel) to work on but see that the work will be useful &/or enhance the environment.

Currently the Trust is pretty well shut down with many of the work-force on furlough. Peter Katic is one who has been working through & has kept me informed of their plans. The Barn has not been available for holiday lets since the start of the pandemic & there have been no volunteers working. This situation should have changed at the beginning of November when staff were due start to return. All is now uncertain but Peter K does assure me that, when the situation clarifies he will be in touch to arrange a project. He also noted that a couple of weekends ago the river level rose so much that a lot of walls were taken out!



And now.....back to our weekends: As if working with limestone isn't sufficient incentive in itself, we also have the benefit of free use of the Trust's residential barn in Buckden for the weekend. Facilities are good, generally 6 or 8 stay, beyond 10 & it starts to get a bit "cosy". Also, a good pub, The Buck Inn, just round the corner & sometimes open! In addition to the barn dwellers we have "day trippers". Total daily numbers range from 10 to 20 or so.

A couple of sheepfolds featured in the first two years. Since then we have built enclosure walls around a field barn & a fold yard, a winding retaining wall by the side of a stream, we've enclosed a gully to keep cattle away from the trees, gone up & down steep slopes, putting in



lunkeys to allow water to flow out in times of floods (& plenty of experience of such conditions). We've worked the hillside of Buckden Raike (path between Buckden & Cray) & alongside various stretches of the Dalesway between Kettlewell & Raisgill & always interesting with plenty of passers-by to draw into the web of drystone walling.



Many a starting point has been a site with not much more than an outline of where the wall



had once been. Usually stone lying about, but grave doubts raised as to whether there will be enough - generally there has been, but often well buried. Naturally, over this time we have had a good mix of weather - clear blue skies with snow on distant hills, warm sunny days, raging torrents flowing through the site, a flooded Wharfedale, mud into which the stone (& your boots) disappear. In October '15,



working at Raisgill up Langstrathdale, we were entertained by the passing-by of over 50 Maserati cars, obviously on a rally, slowing down just where we worked, to cross a cattle grid, before opening up to race up the Dale. What a sound!



These weekends are open to all-comers, beginners & experienced ones, the only limitation being the number of places in the Barn - first come, first served! The aim has always been to get everyone putting stone on stone at the start on a Saturday & not to spend half



a day dismantling. This is why a preparation team usually go up on the Friday to get the site ready with, if possible, lines in place. May do a sneaky bit of walling whilst there.

It's a fun weekend pleasure & pride what we have a walk with can show off &/or walling skills. It is jolly, as some may



that gives a lot of when you look back at achieved. When out for friends & relatives you bore them with your NOT just a weekend suspect.

Martyn Smith

O&YD walling and background - Grass Wood, Grassington

Saturday 19 September 2020 walling session at Grass Wood, Grassington

On a pleasant autumnal day three hardy Branch members trekked through the wood to the far (i.e. Grassington) end of Grass Wood which is now sadly suffering from ash-dieback disease.

There, 3 separate small gaps were repaired on the steep sloping boundary wall with Belfort Wood. While not major rebuilds, they involved some strenuous lifting of stones up to the wall top.

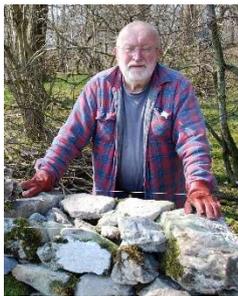
The October session was cancelled because of a bad weather forecast, which unfortunately proved wrong.

As usual, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust (owners of the wood) expressed gratitude for our continuing repair work on walls in the Wood.



History of the Branch's work at the Wood

As far as I can tell, the first Branch walling practice I attended at Grass Wood was on 01 March 2003. Perhaps there were earlier ones, as a session in February that year was cancelled because of wintry conditions. Does any venerable Branch member from that era



know of earlier sessions there? Anyway, we were led by our own Master Craftsman John Butler (left) who had worked there professionally in the past. As was to prove a regular occurrence, John and his friend Tom Gibson kept us entertained with tales of Dales characters and their dubious carryings-on. Grass Wood is one of the few places in the area covered by the Branch which has limestone walls, which is very different in nature from the usual sandstone and gritstone we work with.

For many years John Butler led our sessions at Grass Wood. He eventually handed over the role of coordinator and organiser to Patrick Wallace (when his golfing exploits in Portugal allowed). One year, Branch members rebuilt a stile in the wall between Grass Wood and Bastow Wood. This had to involve bodies such as The Yorkshire Dales National Park specifying a design 'safe' enough for public use.

Roger Parker took over from Patrick after several years and more recently I succeeded him. The Wood is owned by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, with members based locally in Grassington and who really appreciate our continuing work. Some of the walls are more than 200 years old, dating back to times when it was a deer park for the use of a privileged

few. Each year in November some Trust members survey the whole Wood and produce a map showing the location of all existing gaps. Also, there is a photograph, a description and a difficulty rating for the repair of each gap. This has been our invaluable guide. We have lately managed to reduce the number of gaps, despite new ones regularly appearing. Currently, the Wood is suffering badly from ash-dieback fungus.

As always, our work is to repair boundary wall gaps, some being along Grass Wood Lane. To start with we were repairing the 'simpler' gaps in walls adjoining neighbouring fields and were mainly on level or gently sloping ground. More recently we progressed to more 'challenging' gaps along Gregory Scar, part of the boundary with Bastow Wood. The Scar stretches for about half a mile and consists of small cliffs varying from about 2 to 4 metres in height (6 to 12 feet for Imperial measurement fans). These gaps are generally at the top of steep slopes, which means a lot of hard work just bringing stones up to the wall before we even start the rebuilding of the gap.



March 2003



January 2004



Gregory Scar 2019

Richard Kitchen