

DSWA Dorset News

April 2020

I hope you and families have stayed well during this very unpleasant virus pandemic. COVID-19 has affected us all in various ways, not least because most of us are currently in isolation at home and unable to enjoy our regular country pursuits other than a daily walk. In Dorset, we are fortunate to have access to glorious countryside during a spring that is proving to be dry, sunny and warm – a wonderful relief from the long, wet autumn and winter. Hopefully, many of you will be able to walk if you aren't able to wall! All DSWA walling activities countrywide have been cancelled until further notice, including the Reeth Wallathon, North Yorkshire, which was due to take place on 23-24th May. Four members had planned to represent Dorset.

In addition, Sally had been invited to attend a Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on Wednesday 27 May. Fortunately, this has only been postponed and we hope that Sally is soon able to enjoy royal recognition for her services to Dorset walling. Well done Sally!

Tyneham, 29 February – 1 March



Storm Dennis had forced us to cancel our weekend at Tyneham on 15th and 16th February so it was good to continue this curved farm wall on a weekend of wintry sunshine. Thirteen wallers enjoyed what was to be the last walling session before the lock-down. I wasn't among them because I was already experiencing the full force of Coronavirus on a cruise ship floating around the Caribbean, seeking for any country which would allow us to dock and fly home.

Merrie, Ian and Wendy pose for the photos I asked Sally and others to take while I was away. I take my new duties very seriously! I was attempting the cheek end of this wall in preparation for my level two exam in September. Whether this will now take place is uncertain. Sally has been able to work alone on a farm wall near her home but, unfortunately, this opportunity is not available to many of us.





Dave and Tim began to place their previously trimmed stones into the wall to spell 'Tyneham Farm'. This was meticulously planned by Dave using scaled diagrams, and the stone was fixed with lime mortar. You don't want too many people working on the business end of this wall so it remained a double act.

The photograph below shows the lettering beginning to take shape by the end of the weekend. It's really satisfying to incorporate design into a wall but very exacting to make it work effectively.



DSWA AGM, 7 March 2020

This took place near Bridgend, South Wales, and was attended by Merrie, Sally and Phyllis. Three workshops discussed Training, Promotion, and Future Planning. **Training** – it was felt there should be continuity throughout the DSWA for instructors' fees and possibly course fees. Although our April and July courses have been cancelled, our course fees of £80 are lower than those of some other branches. Cheshire branch signs up members and course trainees at shows

and offers a ten per cent course discount for both immediate payment and payment within ten days. Lancashire runs six to eight courses a year, which is impressive for a small branch.

Promotion: We were complimented on our web site, which has recently been re-designed, and we have to thank Geoff and Peter for their constant work in this regard. An observation that many people who sign up for courses do so because of a personal walling project has prompted one branch to include photographs of these projects on its website. We thought this was a very good idea, so if you've attended one of our courses during the past couple of years and used the knowledge gained to build a dry stone feature, please consider sharing the photos. Email them to me (doctorcarole6@gmail.com) and we'll upload them to our website.

Development and Planning: A number of branches have a regular presence at county shows and other events. Although this can be very enjoyable, it is time consuming. Consider, for example, the Great Dorset Steam Fair which is a five-day event. The Lancashire branch seems to have a group of volunteers who are happy to attend shows but don't do much walling. If there are Dorset members of a similar persuasion, please let us know.

The Archaeology of Walls

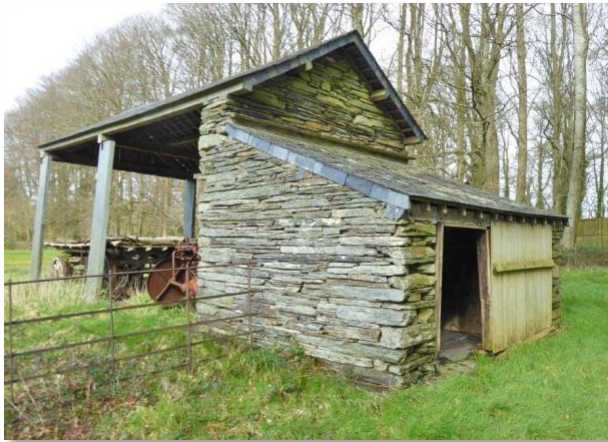


Stuart Fry, one of the founding members of the South Wales Branch, gave an interesting talk on the archaeology of walls. He described some of the clues about the age of walls. A low wall with a ditch on one side would keep out cows (walls were often used to keep animals out rather than in) but walls to keep out sheep, which are agile jumpers, needed to be much higher. Walls were built with gangs of eight people, using available stone. The wall

in this photograph incorporates a small lunk for geese, which were commonly used to control the liver flukes that affect sheep. Geese eat the snails which are intermediate hosts in the fluke's life-cycle. Most old walls don't have a batter and when the mid-Wales branch held their first exams the professionals who took them failed because they re-built the walls in the original style, without batter. DSWA demand a batter and there had been a big argument about the merits of this at the time.

St Fagans National Museum of History

Those who attended the AGM also enjoyed a visit to this fantastic open-air museum near Cardiff. I attended a weekend conference there a couple of years ago and can thoroughly recommend a visit (<https://museum.wales/stfagans/>). It's a lovely site full of old buildings which have been re-constructed from their original locations where they were redundant and in danger of demolition. Sally took these great photographs of old dry stone structures.



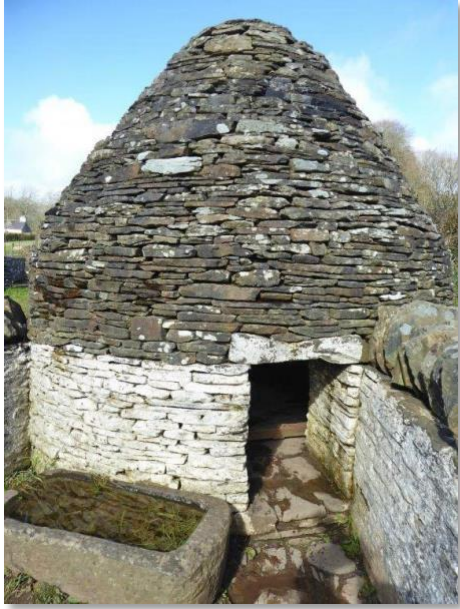
This barn has slate uprights supporting the roof as well as the dry stone shelter.

This barn was originally built in about 1600, using a cruck frame - where the structure of the building depends on two or more 'A-frames' which go from the top of the building down to the ground. These frames were usually constructed of curved timbers using the natural shape of a tree and in many cases the tree was sliced long-ways down the middle so that whatever the shape of the curve the two sides were symmetrical. This building technique was common in medieval times. Large halls were built in towns and villages and a large cruck barn also became a sign of an individual farm's prosperity.



How about this for a cheek end?





A pig pen. Merrie was wondering whether we could reproduce this at Tyneham! Wouldn't that be a challenge?

Bee boles – these are mortared for safety in a public setting but the thing Sally found interesting was the stone bases which have a small lip and groove to allow the bees access into the skep (the wicker bit). She remarked that she had seen the boles before but not with the genuine skep.



Although it is mortared, this is an interesting sculptural seat at Dunraven Castle near Porthcawl.

A lovely old wall at Margham Country Park, Neath, Port Talbot. This is a grade 1 listed garden and landscape. The 'Tudor' Gothic mansion and grounds date to c. 1830. In this wall, there is a ledge that protrudes under the copes.



Close-up of spleenwort, a miniature fern, in the Margham wall.

Waller withdrawal symptoms



This photograph was sent to me by a waller with serious withdrawal symptoms. He reckons that Weetabix works just as well but is messier.

Wild flower quiz

This great quiz was sent to me by Tush, our member from Hay-on-Wye. All the flowers can be found in Britain, and you may see some of them growing in walls. Answers in next month's newsletter. Finally, if you come across interesting dry stone walls and other structures in your daily walks, please send them to me for inclusion in the newsletter.

1. Sew a big pimple (7,10)
2. Hurry up to fetch water (9)
3. Scarlet winner drops her 'h' (3,7)
4. Gloves needed to clean this bog (5,8)
5. Overcoat for a woman (5,5)
6. Mr. Frost at the edge of a field (6,7)
7. Crazy measure of liquid (6,4)
8. Salty missile (3,6)
9. Skeleton's hat (8)
10. Growth on your belly button (9)
11. Sugary pasture (11)
12. Fliers, 12-inch and an older guide (9,7)
13. Use to flavour Bob's dinner (4,6)
14. Sugary aniseed lady (5,6)
15. Ivy's ocean friend (3,5)
16. Bovine herb (3,7)
17. Unwanted pig (7)
18. Purple chimer (4,7)
19. Farm animal fell over (7)

20. Mysterious and daring hero (7,9)
21. Penny pinch (6)
22. Do remember me (11)
23. Wake-up call (5)
24. Get better on my own (4,4)
25. Golden Gabriel (6,9)
26. Dandelion's drinking partner (7)
27. Pleasure tinged with pain (11)
28. Fatal nocturnal parasol (6,10)
29. Pursue this shrinking flower (3,6)
30. Golden baby toy (6,6)
31. Secure the edge (7)
32. Lepus ring (8)
33. Sick from severe suffering (9)
34. Prickly wine (9)
35. Thin and scraggy bird of prey (8)
36. Do give me your answer (5)
37. Popular 100 years (6,8)
38. Moving slowly on the spinning wheel (8,5)
39. Small but they're big when arranged (9)
40. Birds beak in a field (6,10)
41. Proper English maiden (8)
42. Precious but weak (10)
43. Tie up this unwanted plant (8)
44. A vessel full of cholesterol (9)
45. Canine planet (4,7)
46. Toast me over a camp fire (5,6)
47. 12-inch aquatic black bird (5,8)
48. Will thicken your sauce (10)
49. Deceased crimson stringer (3,4,6)
50. Swine's kernel (6)

Carole Reeves