

# DSWA Dorset News

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## April 2021

‘April brings the primrose sweet, scatters daisies at our feet’. They do say that spring comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb and we’ve certainly had some chilly breezes despite the glorious sunshine across the county. Primroses, celandines, cowslips, violets and bluebells are cheerful and welcome signifiers of spring. If you happen upon wild or even garden escape flowers growing out of a wall please do take a photograph and email it to me for inclusion in next month’s newsletter.



Creeping Jenny growing in a wall (photo: Nettlemere) ...



A ‘walled garden’ (photo: sweetsurrender68)

From Cumbria my wall-loving friends sent me this photograph of giant cowslips growing against a wall – the largest they have ever seen! Well, they do live near Sellafield – not sure they appreciated this comment.



... and Campanula (photo: Nettlemere).





## Langton Herring, 3-4 April



Easter weekend saw branch members enjoy the first walling session after far too long in lockdown. This is a beautiful site and over the next couple of months we'll be rebuilding this farm wall. The reclaimed stone is forest marble, which Wendy described as 'mostly pretty rubbish'.

During lockdown, Sally, who lives in Langton Herring and who spent weeks up to her ankles in mud digging out the stone, built this lovely walk-through during lockdown. Wendy called it a 'squeeze point' but unless we get a visit from the Incredible Hulk I think most of us could pass through it without holding our breath.







The old wall yet to be cleared – not sure when this wall last stood upright but Sally excavated it over a number of weeks because it was well hidden by brush and brambles. She called it ‘the lost wall of Langton Herring’. It appears on the 1840 tithe map - look at the map on the [dorsetdswa.org.uk](http://dorsetdswa.org.uk) web site and click on the tithe map tile on the right-hand side. It’s probably easier if you get rid of the OS grid underlying it.

There is also a well in the corner – more of a dipping pond than a well where villagers used to come for water when the main one in the village had dried up.

Below: beginning the build. Sally, Steve and Adrian clearing ivy and taking down the stones.



Our next visit to Langton Herring will be on the weekend of 1-2 May.



## Renscombe 17-18 April



Back at Renscombe after three months to find S-hooks, butterfly screws, strings, and other walling bits and pieces missing, and a few stones thrown off the wall or misplaced. Not too bad considering this is a very busy public site, especially this weather when people are heading for coastal walks and fishing. All the spear fishers we spoke to had caught grey mullet although as we're now getting into the spawning season it's probably not the most ecologically friendly time to catch your dinner.



David and Peter inspect the courses. The wall is looking very straight and we've been getting admiring comments from visitors.





Saturday - Ian and Tim work on building the corner of the wall ...

... which by Sunday looked like this.

We noticed that a Coastguard charity box has been set up adjacent to the kissing gate next to our cheek end. Hopefully, I'm not being too cynical when I wonder how long it will be before it is stolen or plundered. This is what happened to the honesty box in the wall we're rebuilding. It was jemmied out of the wall which was destroyed in the process.



It's not a long walk from the car park at Renscombe to the Coastguard Watch Station at St Adhelm's Head and the volunteer coastguards are always welcoming. Far better, I think, to visit in person bearing your charitable donation.

It's a great place to take visitors, especially townies!



## Wanderwell Quarry



Geoff Rowland sent this photograph of a Forest Marble dry stone retaining wall that he built last year at Wanderwell Quarry, Bothenhampton Local Nature Reserve, Bridport.

The purpose of the wall was to display the stone, otherwise scattered over the quarry floor, and also contain some of the clay talus that members of the DIGS group had cleared from the quarry face. The Bothenhampton quarries are essentially the holes in the ground left behind after building Bridport. Forest Marble was particularly valued for the rope-making warehouse buildings. It did not 'sweat' like other stone and kept the ropes dry.

However, the alternation of wet and dry periods over the winter, that has triggered landslides elsewhere in south Dorset, has resulted in the collapse of the quarry face. But the retaining wall is still... retaining :-)



You can find more information about Wanderwell and the Bothenhampton Quarries at: <https://dorsetrigrs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Wanderwell-Quarries.pdf> and at: <https://dorsetrigrs.org/southwestrigrs/wanderwellquarry/>

Geoff - what I want to know is whether that's a mattock leaning against your cheek end or whether it's a prop holding it up!

## Dinosaur footprint discovered in a Purbeck wall

When Peter, Merrie and I began repair work on a very old field boundary wall, we hoped to find 'buried treasures'. It's one of the joys of walling – you never know what you might uncover. The wall was originally constructed of a mix of Purbeck marble (which by now is very friable), roach, burr, and Purbeck stone. Carefully taking out some of the stones we discovered this large block (once mud) on which a dinosaur had left his / her footprint.

Don't take our word for it. We have had it verified! Dinosaur prints are not uncommon on Purbeck. Have you visited the dino print-studded watering hole at Keates Quarry, just off the Priest's Way near Acton?



These footprints were probably made 140 million years ago by plant-eating brachiosaurs, a type of dinosaur from the group known as the sauropods. Our dino print is probably the same species.



For more information about the dinosaur footprints at Keates Quarry visit:  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/spyway/features/the-spyway-dinosaur-footprints>

Photo above right (National Trust).

## Slopey wall on Purbeck



On Saturday 24 April, committee members visited the slopey wall off the Priest's Way which we have been given permission by the National Trust to restore. As you can see, it's a very long wall so plenty of space for all interested members to have a go. We took along tools to clear any vegetation and perhaps get started under the expert eye of Dave.

Unfortunately, we discovered sheep in fields on both sides of the wall and no means of securing the gaps between walling sessions. A couple of us who know this area of Purbeck, have never previously seen livestock in the fields! I have now contacted the National Trust to ask for metal gates to be available as livestock barriers. Slopey walling is timetabled for those who wish to come out on 1-2 May but this will depend on when I hear back from the rangers on South Purbeck.

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## Abbotsbury wall



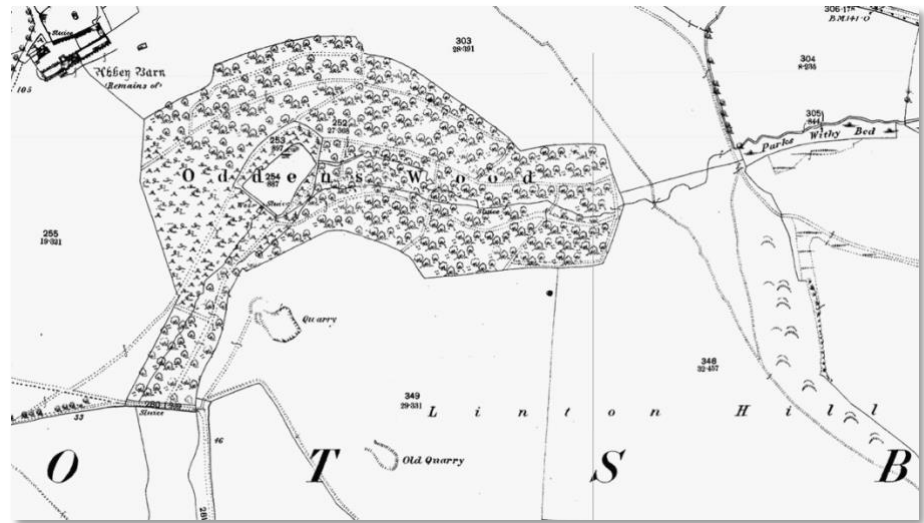
A 'pretty' wall behind Bishop's Limekiln, Abbotsbury, photographed on 3 April by Geoff Rowland.

Most of the build is honey-coloured Abbotsbury Stone (Corallian Group, Osmington Oolite Formation), probably from the Ilchester Estate's Oddens Quarry (Linton Hill), though some of the large foundations and copes



are local cherty sandstone and sandy limestone (Upper Greensand Formation, Eggardon Grit Member).

(~1880) OS Map showing the Abbotsbury Stone (Corallian Group, Osmington Oolite Formation) quarries.



As well as many other local buildings, the stone was used in St Catherine's Chapel (photo: Herbythyme).

The chapel was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> century by the monks of nearby Abbotsbury Abbey as a pilgrimage chapel. Virtually unaltered since, it is one of a handful of chapels of this kind which



are located outside the precincts of the monasteries that built them. Its isolated setting allowed the monks to withdraw from the monastery during Lent for private prayer and meditation.

Much of the Ridgeway slope above Abbotsbury is a landslip of Upper Greensand known as Lime Kiln Crag. Hence the ready availability for foundations and copes.

For more information visit: <https://dorsetrifs.org/southwestrifs/abbotsbury/lintonhill/> and <https://dorsetrifs.org/southwestrifs/abbotsbury/limekilncrag/>



Professional member, Shaun Seaman who rebuilt this wall ‘a good few years ago’, says that it is an important historical feature in the Abbotsbury area. The wall follows the ancient parish boundary between Abbotsbury and Portesham and this is the same boundary as that recorded in a grant in 1023 of land at Portesham by King Cnut to his housecarl Orc (the original document still exists). Orc was the person who established the Monastery at

Abbotsbury soon after. It is likely that this boundary was created in the 10th century and the 'stepped' nature of the boundary wall length which Shaun rebuilt shows that it cut across a previous field-system, probably created in the late 8th/9th century. There appears to have been two phases of wall building at Abbotsbury: one following a major re-arrangement of the farming tenures and management in the early 17th century and another in the late 19th century. Shaun suspects that the lower lime-kiln wall is from the earlier period - the remnant of wall higher up (not restored) is thinner and partly mortared and is probably 19th C.

Shaun made the decision to use new quarried local stone as most of the old stone was in a bad state, and the old stone didn't match the new. However, he replaced the original foundation stones and used other original material as the coping. He says, ‘I'm probably the only person aware of that. I wanted to keep some of the history there.’

Note from Carole: I wrote a short history of the Abbotsbury Swannery which was founded during the monastic period. It's not strictly walling history but I'd be happy to include this in May's newsletter or post it on our website if members are interested.



## Tyneham, 25 April



Dave, Phyllis and Sally returned to Tyneham to work on the lettering to be incorporated into the farm wall. This will read ‘Tyneham Farm’. Phyllis said: We made reasonable progress but it is very slow going. The letters are not so much the problem as finding the right size bits of stone to fill around them. We had fun. Hopefully you can see the T, Y and N.’

Members interested in working with Dave at Tyneham to complete this wall and the lettering please contact Phyllis ([warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com](mailto:warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com))

## Walls in Las Alpujarras

Las Alpujarras is the mountainous region in Andalucia, Spain, on the south slopes of the Sierra Nevada. It’s a place I know reasonably well because I like to go walking there.

I am always on the lookout for walling, some of which is functional as in this long retaining wall, and the smaller retaining wall in the field to the right of the path.







A closer look reveals the careful crafting of the stones which are found in abundance throughout the region – no one brings in stones from quarries!

A pretty house built entirely from local stone.



Capilerilla is the tiny village shown in the photos above. It is one of my favourite spots – an agricultural hamlet with an abundance of almond trees.

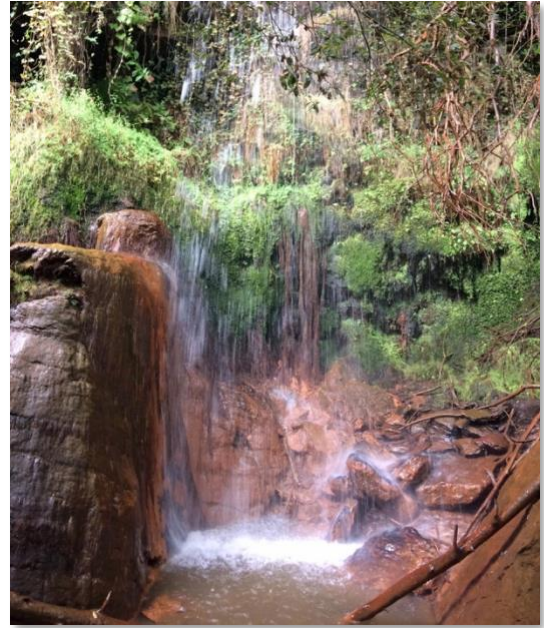
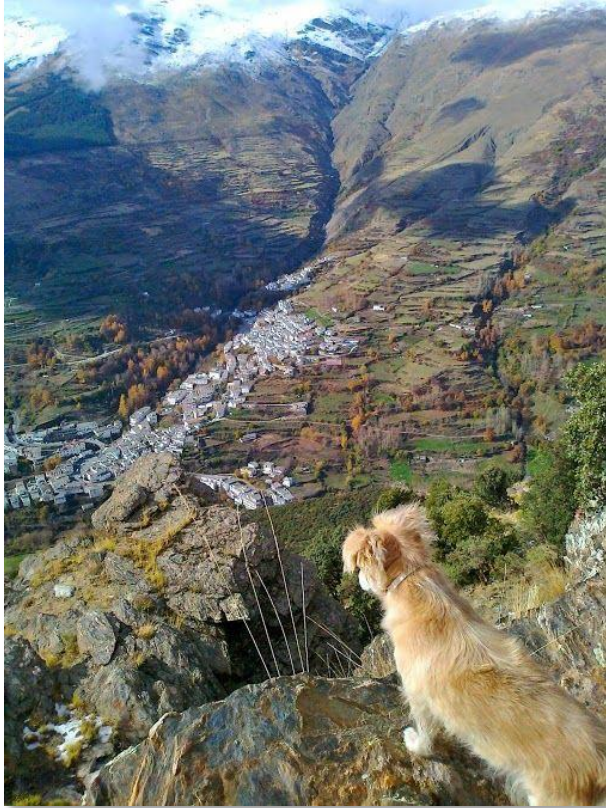
Behind the signpost is a small dry stone shelter. Note the long stone roof tiles jutting from the corner of the end wall.

The GR 7 (Gran Recorrido) runs from Tarifa, near Gibraltar, across Spain, through France into Andorra, and back into

France. Part of GR 7 forms the south-westernmost part of the European walking route E4 in Spain.



The geology of the region is mostly Triassic limestones and slates and crystalline schists. There is iron mineralisation in schistose rocks and this can be seen in the many chalybeate or ferruginous springs and waterfalls. The water is potable but it's something of an acquired taste.



Looking down on Trevélez, the centre for the region's famous air-cured Jamon Serrano – you can smell the ham as you approach the town. In the background is Mulhacén, at nearly 3,300 m it is the highest mountain in Spain. You often find a dog accompanying you on your walks and one nearly saved my bacon (pardon the pun) on a particularly lonely trail. But that's a story for a walling weekend lunch break or a beer at the Square and Compass!

## Quarry Map and Dorset Geology

Check out the Quarry map on our website (<https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/about-dry-stone-walls/quarries/>).

This map shows active quarries in and around Dorset that provide the types of walling stones that have been traditionally used within the county. Click on a map marker for more information and contact details. The local stone, from the quarry





itself, is identified. A number of quarries also act as stone yards and maintain stocks of other stone from further afield.

Photo: California Quarry, Swanage.

For Dorset geology, visit: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/about-dry-stone-walls/geology/>

Well, fellow wallers, I hope you enjoy reading April's newsletter and thanks to all contributors. Just a reminder that we are now able to run weekend courses and the first one is on 3-4 July at Spyway, Langton Matravers. The dates of further courses will be 7-8 August and 25-26 September. If you know anyone who would enjoy learning our craft, please direct them to the relevant page on our website: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/events/>

You can book online for any of the courses at: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/courses/online-course-booking/>

Have a great Bank Holiday weekend and I look forward to seeing you on a wall very soon.

Carole Reeves