

DSWA Dorset News

November 2021



to have gone unremarked.

Here's another one. Are these structures entirely dry stone or have they been given a little assistance to ensure their structural integrity? To find out more I contacted Alison Shaw at Head Office who confirmed that the mystery of who created them hasn't been solved. However, she and others believe that they are very small but photographed in such a way as to appear significant structures in the landscape. Photos *The Guardian*.

So I asked my friends, Mike and Jill, who live in Cockermouth, and regularly walk all over the Lake District, to help investigate.

'Dull November brings the blast, Then the leaves are whirling fast.' This year, November has been anything but dull. It has been unseasonably warm and sunny although as I sit down to begin this newsletter, a decided drop in the temperature had me hunting for my woolly walling hat.

I don't know if anyone has seen this photograph. It has a painterly quality and featured in *The Guardian* on 20 May under the headline: 'Borrowdale Banksy' mystery over stone artworks in Lake District'. You can read the article here:

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/20/borrowdale-banksy-mystery-over-stone-artworks-in-lake-district>

The link was sent to me by Adrian and I wondered why these stone sculptures appear





They sent me the photo left, showing their two miniature Schnauzers, Mr Big and Diddley Doo, beneath one of these arches on Carrock Fell, 8 miles north-east of Keswick. They confirmed that they are fairly small structures but that local people are very against them and often push them over. Hopefully not when two little dogs are enjoying a ‘selfie’ moment.

Mike and Jill also sent me this photograph of a red bridge across a river in the Grisedale Valley. It was a temporary structure built in 2015 by environmental artist Steve Messam using more than 22,000 sheets of paper.

You can see more of his work at:
<https://www.stevemessam.co.uk>



Came Down, 6-7 November



We started on this new site with a very crumbling old farm wall which belongs to the same farmer, Joe Foot, as the Gould’s Hill wall. Over the next few months we’ll be repairing the sections that are in a precarious state. Phyllis, Peter and Tim inspect a section which has all but fallen down and around which they have cleared the vegetation. Geoff says that the wall probably dates to the early 1800s. There are nearby stone barns dated 1827 and 1828.



The copes have been cemented onto the wall and take a bit of getting off. Sally resorts to the bar!

Peter and Keith lay foundations. This is Keith's first walling day with the branch after doing the weekend beginners' course at Corton Down in September. Unfortunately, he slipped and injured his hand so didn't join us on Sunday. It turned out that he has fractured his thumb. We are all very sorry and wish him a speedy recovery. He assures us that he hasn't been put off walling by his injury.





The cheek end is about to collapse so Sally makes this her priority.



Lunch time and we enjoy a box of After Dinner Mints. Peter takes time to make his selection from the varieties on offer, but we end up sampling one of each and quickly finish the box.

It's always good to have chocolate or cake with our tea and stones!

On Sunday, Adrian and David make short work of the section of wall started by Peter and Keith. Came Down is a lovely location and it's very convenient that we are able to park on site although this is private farmland with no access to a public footpath. This is a disadvantage in that we are unable to engage with the public, display our banners, or encourage interested bystanders to join one of our courses.





Sally completes her repair of the cheek end which now looks a lot safer than when we found it.



Winter's Lane, 12 November



This project, for the partners of mothers with perinatal depression, is a once-weekly session on Friday mornings. The new section of wall has been six weeks in reconstruction although attendance by the dads has been rather sporadic – somewhat disappointing for me who is new to the project.

However, on this particular Friday, we are joined by Matt (left) who can't always get

time off work to come walling but enjoys it when he's able to escape for a morning. We also welcome baby Fergus and his dad. As some of you will recall from past newsletters, Fergus celebrated his first birthday on the wall, but the day after this session, he turned two. Fergus is becoming a well photographed little boy – he appears in some of the advertisements featuring the John Lewis ANYDAY range of children's clothing.



Tyneham farm wall completed



Saturday 30 October was a beautiful warm, sunny day for the seven members who gathered at Tyneham to complete the farm wall. It's hard to believe that we began this project during the cold frosts of January 2020 when Covid was something happening across the other side of the world.

Dave and Mary set to work on the final course against a backdrop of stunning spindle trees (*Euonymus europaeus*) in the woodland area.



At the other end of the wall, Wendy and Tim bring their expertise to curved coping ...



... whilst Peter and Phyllis make heavy weather of shifting three tonnes of stone out of the car park and into a 'safe' place within the farmyard. We hope this move will deter visitors from bundling stone from bag to boot!





Mary and Phyllis begin coping at the barn end of the wall and the race is on to complete the wall before the sun begins to slide. This is the evening before the clocks return to Greenwich Mean Time and shorten our walling days.



‘The Magnificent Seven’ pose behind the completed wall which looks fantastic! And just in case you’ve only counted six wallers, I was, as usual, behind the camera.

Poetry Corner

Once upon a time, Tim and I were walling at Winter's Lane when we discovered a mutual love of poetry. I am a reader of poetry but Tim is both a reader and a writer – and indeed, a performance poet. I asked him if he would submit some poetry for the newsletter and after some hesitation, he agreed. I hope you enjoy these poems as much as I do.

Tim says: 'I started this poem in my head three years ago on a weekend on the Gower peninsula which was a birthday present. There was a flattish area on top of a lump of cliff, with a curved ditch making a sort of high island of land. To one side of this was a slope down towards the sea. There were dotted houses inland and cattle in fields. I just let my imagination play about the lives of people who had been there in the past.'



A birthday walk

We hacked out earth and stone
to protect ourselves to landward
and left the seaward fastness to the cliff.
There was sustenance under the shouldering waves
and we took our chances
to take our share from the sea.

Later we moved inshore
and kept our farms.
Gruel. Dried smoked meat in winter.

Now we are sandwich eaters
wondering at the ancient monument.
Then we move off
walking eastwards
towards where the future comes from
through the greying bluebells
and the laughing, long-living gorse.

As a point of interest, the Gower Peninsula was the first AONB designated in the UK. It was designated in 1956 for its classic limestone coast and the variety of its natural habitats.

On his second poem, Tim says: ‘Thinking about food (and it is nearly Christmas), here is a much more modern subject, but in ancient form. This was my Poole Poetry Collective homework a few weeks ago - write a Pantoum on a mundane subject.’

The Fridge

A fridge whose door won't shut must be replaced,
so that we have continued access to
the thing on which the family is based -
food that will always seal our bonds anew.

So that we have continued access to
the beers, the cheese, the fairly mould-free jam –
food that will always seal our bonds anew -
the fridge they're in must always tightly slam.

The beers, and cheese, and fairly mould-free jam
are crucial to our happiness, I think.
The fridge they're in must always tightly slam,
or else the food in there will slightly stink.

And, crucial to our happiness, I think,
are things on which the family is based.
So, lest the food in there begin to stink,
A fridge whose door won't shut must be replaced.



Fridge photo: Melissa Baran



Renscombe, 20-21 November

A cold weekend saw us return to this car park location to complete this section of wall. There are only four of us on Saturday and three on Sunday so we've got some hard work ahead of us.

David and Phyllis focus on getting up to height before the copes go on ...

... while Sally completes tying in the rebuilt wall with the existing section at right angles to it.

For once, it is very quiet in the car park – mainly local people walking their dogs, and a few fisher folk and bird watchers. Just after lunch a small car draws up near the wall and we hear a commotion from inside. It sounds like a pack of ‘handbag’ dogs yapping and scrapping. We try to guess the breed from the noise and I reckon the dogs will be white, fluffy, and small enough to fit in our buckets.



And for once, I was right. The hatchback opened and out poured seven madly barking Maltese terriers all making a beeline for the kissing gate and the wide-open spaces. They were all related, according to their owners, who proceeded to point to each one in turn and name it.

Imagine bathing that lot when they return totally muddied from their walk. I would rather shift a tonne of stone.

We decide to leave the coping until Sunday and finish up the day by clearing the vegetation around the next section of collapsed wall and taking down the stones.

We have one more weekend at Renscombe before Christmas but most of this wall will be rebuilt in the New Year. It's hard to believe that 2021 is nearly over.





On Sunday, Phyllis, Mary and Wendy (who gets into the photo by casting her shadow across the wall) complete the coping and clear the leftover stone. The sky looks very dramatic.

Geoff's projects



tricky build. Not a 'text-book' vertical cheek-end, but a deliberate slight batter (honest!) to match the other side and minimise the chance of scraped knuckles for folks steering pushchairs through the gap. Walling for food and drink. Living the dream!' Geoff's photo (right) shows the cheek end before the rebuild.

During half-term week, Geoff spent a day-and-a-half rebuilding a cheek end at the entrance to the beer garden of the Prince of Wales pub on Ham Hill (photo: Jim Champion). He says: 'Given the limited available stone, quite a





‘Time will tell if it stands up to the rigours of use. If necessary, I’ll fix the top stones with discrete use of lime mortar.’



‘My other walling project is in the small-holding/garden of Wolfeton Farm Cottage, near Dorchester.

Twenty tonnes of Purbeck stone was delivered from Haysom Purbeck Stone. As the site has a large yard, we kept the cost down by ordering loose stone, rather than in dumper bags.

In total, the length of wall will be about 15 metres with four cheek ends. Quite a high build – 1.5-1.6 metres, with horizontal top stones, rather than vertical copes. So, I’m planning on two layers of through stones.’

Geoff - we look forward to seeing how the wall progresses.

Winter's Lane, 25 November



The wall at Winter's Lane is coming along nicely and this is how we left it today. The weather forecast threatened grey skies, chilly winds and rain, but the day turned out to be fine and sunny.

This site is very sheltered but turn your back on the wall and what a wonderful scene. It's a very wide vista all the way to Chesil Beach. The photograph doesn't do it justice. Normally, there are sheep in the field as well as mischief-making Sika deer, but today the field is empty apart from this old haycart.



Ancient smoot and stone-lined ditch



Last week, after a morning's walling at Winter's Lane, Sally and I went for a walk with Button the dog.

Sally showed me an unusual stone-lined ditch at the junction of Friar Waddon Road, Winter's Lane, and Cheese Lane. A little further along we came across this smoot which carries run-off water from the hillside into the ditch. You can see its well-built stone lining. This is a very old structure which is hidden from the road but one of those lovely countryside discoveries.

The Purbeck Gang



Last Tuesday I was walling on a farm field near Worth Matravers. It was a beautiful sunny day, and I was busy laying foundations and enjoying the solitude when the gang moved in. There were six of them, led by 'Beef' Wellington. Wellie has just cut his first horns but he's not above practising his mean machine face.

Was I scared? Well, maybe not but I

certainly discovered that my foundations were rock solid because the blighters trampled all over them.

That's November tied up and I look forward to seeing you on a wall before the end of 2021.

Carole Reeves