

# DSWA Dorset News

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February 2022



Whoops! Even the chunkiest stones were no match for the wrath of Storm Eunice on Friday 19 February. A retaining wall at Bradford Abbas hit the ground and closed the road (photo Dorset Police).

I hope you and your property have escaped damage from the severe weather conditions as February draws to a close. Just when we thought we'd escaped a severe winter!

As Storm Eunice reached a crescendo I watched as thirty metres of my garden fence lifted off its moorings and flattened a herbaceous border. I then noticed that half my neighbour's roof tiles had embedded themselves in my

elaagnus hedge. How generous will the insurance companies be when paying out for storm damage of this magnitude across the country?

## Winter's Lane, 28 January

Sally clears vegetation off the top of the only section of remaining wall by the farm gate. We'll be tying into this section as we work our way along the wall. However, it is so covered in ivy that it's difficult to estimate how much is actually held together by vegetation and how much can be left *in situ*. Chances are that much of it will have to be dismantled.







Mary, Sally and I begin preparing a foundation trench and we remove any embedded stones. It is once again a lovely warm sunny day at this site although when I left home there was a sharp frost which remained all the way to Upwey. The magical spot appears to be at Corton where, without fail, grass mysteriously turns from white to green and I know that we'll enjoy a pleasant morning's work. The stones in the bank were once the front of the wall.

By the time we leave there's the hint of a decent trench to begin laying foundations next week.

However, we are concerned because Tim was meant to be with us, and we haven't heard from him. But it turns out that he experienced issues with his car but managed to get himself out of trouble by employing his dry stone walling skills.



Tim wrote: 'I'm sorry I was unexpectedly not there on Friday but on a muddy, splattery road, I'd run out of screen wash, so stopped and used about a half of my drink bottles contents. I then couldn't get the bonnet to lock shut. Eventually I used my chisel to cut my bootlace and tied it shut to limp home. Plenty of use of walling gear but not for the right purpose.'

Tim's new bootlace. Tim also mentions that his poetry collective is involved in a photo/poetry exhibition at Upton Country House during the last week in February. Poets are being invited to display previously published poems as well as a poem based on a photograph. So, the pages from the November newsletter featuring two of Tim's poems will be on display.

Very good for Tim and very good for Dorset DSWA.



And here's a witty ditty from Mary, which cleverly sums up some of the projects that have been keeping us busy over the past couple of months.

## Ode to Walling

Oh, to be a-walling now that winter's come,  
With dripping nose and frozen toes and fingers that go numb.  
In summer sun then autumn leaves we completed slopey walls at Spyway  
And with Dave's close supervision, Tyneham's lettering was done "my way".

Now winter's here in Winters Lane we're clearing lots of bramble.  
Not to mention yards of plastic and old iron to untangle.  
We're walling too at Corton and also up at Came,  
Though few up there will see it which is really quite a shame.

Then at Renscombe there's a car park which often gets quite busy.  
Cars drive round and round in circles, I'm surprised they don't get dizzy.  
Yet some of them are muppets and drive into the wall  
So there's plenty of rebuilding to occupy us all!

Mary Civil



## Winter's Lane, 4 February



It's good to have Tim back with us wielding a shovel as we prepare to lay foundations.



By the end of the morning the sun has disappeared and there's a chill in the air, but we're pleased with what we've achieved.

We have rather given up expecting to see the people for whom the project was started, that is, the partners of mothers with peri-natal depression. Our Fridays at Winter's Lane are now beginning to be seen as regular branch walling practice sessions albeit that there are only four regular wallers.

## Came Down, 5 February



I was the first on site on this sunny but cold morning. There's a section of wall ready for coping, another section to complete, and a new section to be taken down and cleared for foundations. Plenty to keep everyone very busy.



Sally and Wendy begin work on the copes while Tim and I finish the section requiring a couple of thin courses. By lunchtime we've coped everything. Meanwhile, Mary and Phyllis have made a start on dismantling and clearing the next section of wall.



Here's the work gang pitching in to clean up the site. A lot of the old stone has disintegrated.



We get the foundations laid ready for another day.

I think this will be a really lovely location when the weather improves. Being on high ground and very exposed it is always windswept so it's a question of maxing out on clothing to keep warm. If it's windy *and* raining there's no hope for us!



## Courses 2022



7th-8th May 2022: Purbeck



2nd-3rd July 2022: Corton Down, South Dorset Ridgeway, near Martinstown

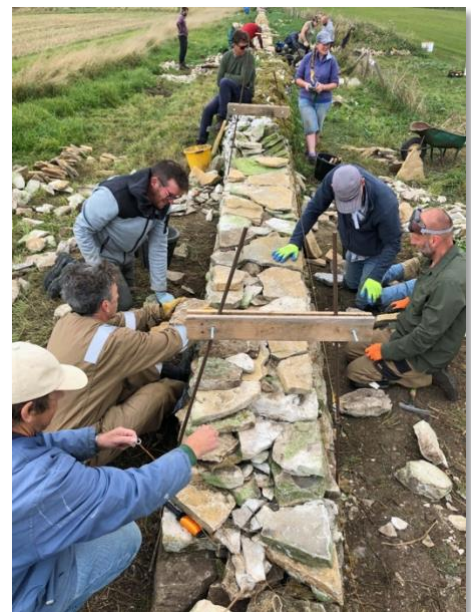


24th-25th September 2022: Corton Down, South Dorset Ridgeway, near Martinstown

Another reminder of the dates of this year's walling courses for beginners. If you know of anyone who fancies a weekend learning the skill, or you're looking for a gift that keeps on giving, check out the web page at:

<https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/courses/>

The cost of a weekend course is £90.00



## Branch representatives meeting, 10 February

For the second time I represented Dorset at a Zoom meeting of UK branches. At this meeting, 17 out of 19 branches were represented which was a great improvement on the first meeting held last September when only nine branch reps attended. Also present were five Trustees of the DSWA. The subject of the meeting was 'What ways can we improve the two-way dialogue and support between Branches and Trustees?' Under charity law the DSWA is governed by a board of Trustees, who are volunteers. The Trustee Board consists of up to twelve elected Trustees and from this number the Trustees elect a Chairman and Deputy Chairman. All the Association's

legal responsibilities lie with the Trustees who formulate the Association's direction, policies, budget and staffing levels.

It was generally agreed that branches that have a Trustee as a member generally have good Trustee contact. Branches that have a Trustee in their 'local' area also have good Trustee contact. Our local Trustee (and SWEDSA member) is Ray Stockall who has always been very supportive of Dorset, has attended our branch AGMs, and has occasionally been out walling on branch weekends. However, when Ray and other Trustees stand down at the Association's AGM in March, there will be no Trustee representation in Wales or Scotland, or in England south of Derbyshire. Prior to Covid lockdowns, all Trustee meetings were held in person at head office in Milnethorpe, Cumbria, and the travel distance was not conducive to members from Dorset standing for Trusteeship. This has now changed, and all Trustee meetings will now include remote attendance via Zoom.

If you would like to be a Trustee at some time in the future, then it would be worth attending the DSWA AGM on Saturday 12 March at 10.30 am. You can join via Zoom but please contact Alison Shaw ([information@dswa.org.uk](mailto:information@dswa.org.uk)) at head office to obtain the joining instructions. It goes without saying that you really need to be a regular waller to be a useful Trustee.

The DSWA would also appreciate help with the following skills:  
Web Master, Graphic Arts, Social Media, Fundraising, Public Relations.

If you have skills in any of these areas or could willingly offer advice, then please also contact Alison Shaw. I think we all realise that these are time consuming professional activities, but if these are your professional skills and you have time to help, then I know this would be very gratefully received.

## **Subscription Renewal**

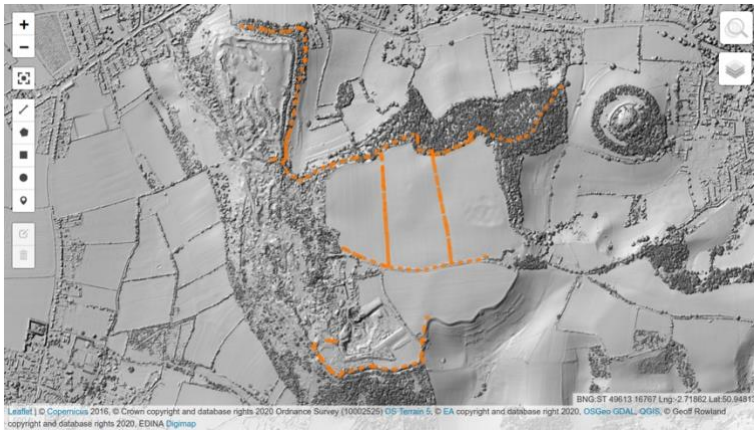
Whilst most members have renewed their subscription for this year (ordinary membership is now £45 rather than the previous £38), some haven't yet done so. I have sent reminders to everyone with an outstanding renewal and several people have indicated that they will not be renewing. It would be really helpful to hear from others who don't intend to renew so that I can pass this on to head office for their records to be amended, and remove you from our mailing list. We're sad to see anyone leave but understand the reasons why people make these decisions. It's important also to remember that branch membership includes insurance so you will not be able to come out on members' weekends unless you are a paid up member because you will not be insured for accident or other misadventure.



## Ham Hill, February



Although in Somerset, this is a regular Monday walling session for any Dorset members who wish to work with this lovely stone. As Geoff says: ‘Really nice regular walling stone, which is making the job easier.’ Photo Margaret Dike



Geoff has also prepared this map of the condition survey of Ham Hill dry stone walls. 4.5km of walls, of which 3.5km are within the Country Park. The more dotted the line is, the more derelict the wall! He says that the map is still a work-in-progress, but is feeding into public consultation, over half-term, about future conservation plans for Ham Hill Country Park.

For the dynamic web version of this map go to: <https://geoffrowland.github.io/Ham-Hill/>



## Statue of Mary Anning

Last month the lovely clay statue of Mary was revealed. This month Mary has been covered in silicon in preparation for being cut into manageable pieces for bronze casting.



Once the pieces have been cast they will be seamlessly joined together at the end. The little black fins show where the statue will be seamed together.

The image at right shows the statue's resin jacket which will ensure the stability of the rubber silicon.

Photos Evie Swire and Anya Pearson





## Winter's Lane, 11 February



Meanwhile, back at our Portesham location, we plan to complete and cope the existing wall before building onto our new foundations. It will be good to see a finished section. We don't see much vehicular traffic on Winter's Lane, but cyclists and walkers occasionally stop and chat over the wall. At least everyone (including Paul the farmer) will appreciate what we've achieved.

In the photograph below, which was taken at the end of a whole day's walling you will notice a patch of grass in front of the wall at far right. This is where we began this section of wall last October. The section we're about to begin is at least as long again.



The session at Winter's Lane on 18 February was cancelled due to the perils of Storm Eunice. Tim and I each have a 60 + mile round trip to this site which we chose to forgo because of potential hazards on the A35 and country lanes.



## Renscombe, 19 February

In fact, it wasn't much better the following day at this car park site. It wasn't raining when we arrived, but it was certainly blowing a hooley!

Here's Stuart the Dorset Council Ranger, loading his trailer with the stone we haven't used. It will be taken to Durlston to be used by the Country Park Dry Stone Walling Party which meets on a Thursday.

We help Stuart load three tons of stone but there's at least another three tons to pick up. Hopefully, he won't have to do this on his own.



Fortunately, there's only a small section of wall to cope. Sally and Tush work at one end while Phyllis and I start on the other end. By now, it is raining fairly steadily.



By lunchtime we have finished and are very wet. The rain stabs like needles into our faces and opening our car doors is a feat of strength. Sally, Phyllis and I head off to The Kings Arms in Stoborough for hot drinks and a hot meal.

## Came Down, 20 February



Despite another rough old day on an exposed site, four wallers make decent headway in building onto the foundations laid a couple of weeks ago.

Wendy sent me these photos and wrote: 'It was a tad on the windy side at Came today, 50+mph and increasing but luckily no rain although it was starting to drizzle when I left at 3pm. I don't think the other three (Sally, Phyllis & Keith) were planning to stay much longer although Sally wanted to carry on as she still had no power at home!

I think we made good progress but will need the farmer to bring up more stone before next time there.'

Let's hope that Sally's power is soon restored. This morning I had an email from Shaun saying that he returned home from a wet week in North Wales to be greeted with no power for three days. Ugh!





## Sherborne Castle Country Fair, 29 May



A reminder of this year's intention to have a presence at Sherborne fair which is organised and run by volunteers to raise funds for West Country Children's Charities.

Steve Bartlett, one of our professional wallers, has kindly offered to join us on the day.

If anyone else fancies joining us at the fair, in whatever capacity you feel that you'd be most useful, please contact me. We'll be building a demonstration wall with free stone from a local quarry. If you want more information about

Sherborne Fair, visit the website at: <https://www.sherbornecountryfair.com>

Fellow Wallers – that's February's news. We've had a month of very mixed weather but it's winter and only the fiercest storms have interfered with our activities. It's always good to get photos and features from branch members so, as ever, if you have something interesting to contribute, I'd love to hear from you. Also, it's very helpful to receive feedback on this newsletter. We tend to focus on branch activities but as our chairperson, Wendy, points out, the newsletter serves as an important archive of these activities as well as keeping in touch with branch members. If there are newsletter topics you'd like to know more about, please let me know. However, like most committee members, I don't sit around from month to month planning and writing newsletters!

Carole Reeves