

DSWA Dorset News

November 2022

Portesham



Vaughan attempts to keep up with us and eventually runs out of mortar!



November – what a difference a month makes! Huddled under a brolly sheltering from torrential rain seems to have been our lot this month. And the mud ...

Phyllis and Mary enjoy soggy sandwiches while hoping that the rain might ease up. Although Vaughan can't make lime mortar during a downpour, we have a very productive Saturday at the very end of October with ten wallers working on the wall – five from the Branch and five from the community.



Sally and Karen slap it on. I also give it a go for the first time ever – and probably the last time as I'm really not keen. I was never good at icing cakes ...



Phyllis and Dave seem to know what they're doing and begin their first course over the mortar.



Meanwhile, further along the wall, the final (dry stone) courses are looking good. In fact, there aren't enough copes to complete the wall even if we get to height. Vaughan and his colleagues will be collecting more from Bonfield's quarry.



This is the part of the day we all look forward to. Maureen, who lives in a house opposite the wall, brings us tea, coffee, and cake morning and evening. Today's cake is rocky road, which we eat before I have time to take its photo ...



Mid-November and most of the wall is up to height and the cheek end is finished. Unfortunately, the community wallers don't seem to like the rain (who does?) so most of them haven't come out for the past couple of weeks.





A couple more days should see the completion of this wall. We'll miss Maureen's hospitality.

One of the positive outcomes of this project is that there are now a few really good wallers amongst the Portesham volunteers so maybe, if there are further walls that need restoring, they will be able to take the lead.

Almost there. It's a sunny Saturday so the Portesham wallers are out in force for the final push to come up to height. John and Dave, arguably the best of the local wallers, start the day at the section that needs most work.



And finish the day with it fully coped.

Crack Lane



Guy Fawkes day sees three of us at Crack Lane in the pouring rain and mud. Peter gets down and dirty as he digs out the old foundations. I really irritate everyone by singing ‘Always look on the bright side of life.’

This is one of our most sheltered sites but even the trees in Talbot Woods can’t keep out the rain, especially as they are losing their leaves.

The foundation trench is finished and I get the task of laying the first stone. I am so muddy that all I can do is smile – we are all past the point of no return!



Meanwhile, Dave is making a lovely job of coming up to height and rubble topping his completed sections. This is one of the best examples of rubble topping that any of us has seen. It’s Dave’s job from now on!





The following day begins dry and five of us arrive to enjoy a day's work. Wendy and Phyllis bring a section of wall to height, Peter and I work on the foundation of the stint we started yesterday, and Tim begins taking down the next section of wall. It is now too wet to park in the field which is waterlogged and boggy. Fortunately, there are a couple of laybys in Crack Lane.



It doesn't stay dry for long and we are soon slick with rain. At coffee break I attempt to dry off my gloves – stupid really.





But suddenly the sun comes out and Peter spots the rainbow or maybe he's magicked it. This makes us all excited as we wonder who'll find the pot of gold!



The photo below shows how we left the wall at Crack Lane.

The branch will be back here at the beginning of December, although Peter, Merrie and I are regular wallers at the other end of the field. Eventually, the two sections will join up but we've estimated that there's a further 30 metres or so of wall to be built before that happens.



Langton Herring, 19-20 November



We return to this peaceful AONB site on a cold but sunny Saturday. I had to scrape my car windscreen free of frost for the first time this autumn but days like this are a welcome relief from the incessant rain. The photo above left is a reminder of the section of wall we finished last year, and now we're continuing to the top of the field (above right).

Our task this weekend is to take down the remains of the very old wall which dates to the early 19th century and make a start on the foundations. The stone is forest marble and much of it disintegrates as we pull it off the wall and out of the ground. Considering we've had so much rain the ground is relatively dry – hooray for a mud-free day!





Sally and Rob find the deepest stones until I butt in with 'Grunt' – my mattock. Sensibly, Rob gets out of the way as I'm not known for my finesse with heavy tools.



By mid-afternoon, however, we have cleared a good section of the wall, dug out a foundation trench, and Sally has laid the first foundation stones.



We suddenly hear the distant sound of barking dogs – lots of them – followed by horses cantering along Langton Herring Road. They're too far away to take a decent photograph but Sally recognises the Cattistock Hunt out for a jolly. It seems that they are trail hunting because we heard quad bikes before we saw the riders.

This photo, from the Cattistock Community website, shows the kennel hounds relaxing in the sun.

The following day, Phyllis, Sally and new member, Nick, lay foundations and a couple of courses, an amazing achievement. Welcome Nick!

Langton Herring will be a regular walling site over the winter. It's a lovely location so if you haven't been out for a while, or have never been out since joining the Branch, this is the place to flex your walling muscles while enjoying the wonderful views.



Dry stone structures on Dartmoor



Sally recently spent a walking weekend on Dartmoor and photographed these dry-stone structures. An impressive cheek-end near the River Teign between Fingle Bridge and Castle Drogo. It is the boundary of an old deer park - note the copes oversailing the top to discourage them from jumping out.



Irishman's wall. This is built in a dead straight south-easterly line across the moor from Cullever Steps to the eastern slopes of Belstone Tor. It was reputedly built sometime between 1800 and 1832 by Irish labourers who were said to have astonished the people of Dartmoor by their utter contempt for wearing boots and stockings. But they in their turn were probably astonished when one day they found a great part of their work destroyed. The men of Belstone and Okehampton had no notion of having their commons enclosed so they threw the wall down (right).

For more information on the Irishman's wall see:
https://www.legendarydartmoor.co.uk/irish_wall.htm





The Dartmoor walls are built with huge boulders - in some the gaps are filled (probably from the front!) with small pieces of stone but in others (below) they are left with the holes. This is supposed to deter sheep from climbing over.



Far right: Lovely old wall on which are balanced huge stones. The one below is growing lichen, ferns and pennywort.





Left: A very old stone gatepost with slots in it to put wooden bars across before gates were commonly used.

Below: Pretty little clapper bridge - all dry stone, across the stream on Scorhill Down near Gidleigh.



Cumbria Corner



Mike and Jill sent me these stunning photographs following their walk above Ullswater at Aira Force and Gowbarrow. The land around the force (waterfall, right) was landscaped in the 1780s by the Howard Family of Greystoke Castle and used as a pleasure garden. They planted over half a million native and ornamental trees, and established a network of tracks, footpaths and bridges.



After walking along this part of Ullswater, the poet William Wordsworth, was inspired to write his famous poem, 'Daffodils'.



Lovely old wall on the way to Gowbarrow Fell, and (above), honey fungus colonising a rotten tree stump.

Peter's Special Project

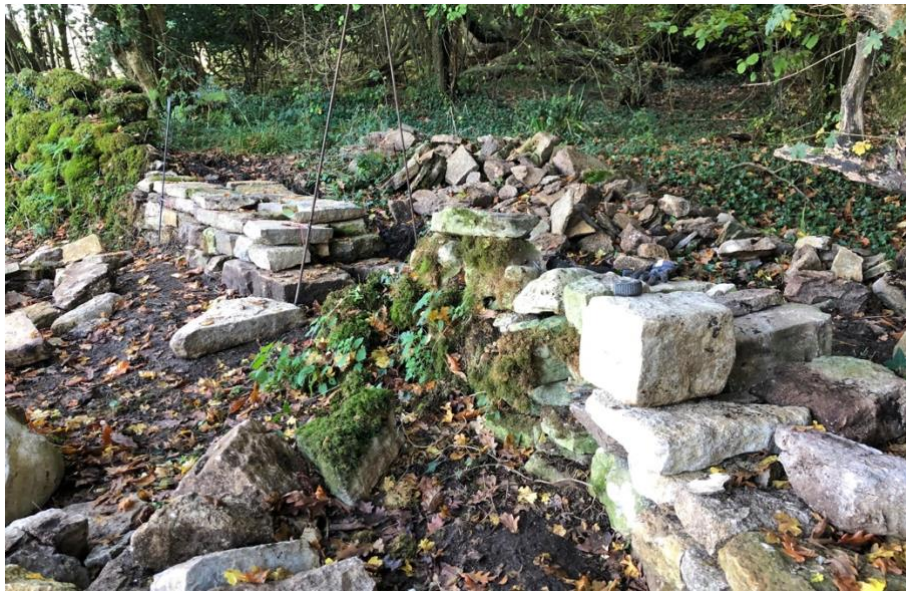
You'll be forgiven for thinking that the heap of moss-covered stone on the left of this photograph looks like a pile of old toot, but Peter sees it as a work of art in the making.

Peter, Merrie and I are at Crack Lane contemplating the next section to take down and rebuild. Peter says: 'Some ancient waller took a great deal of trouble to course this wall in a higgledy piggledy fashion and I intend to honour his commitment to creativity.'



'Oh yes,' says I, 'and how do you reckon you're going to do that without taking the lot down and rebuilding it.'

'Ah,' replies Peter, 'you'll just have to wait and see, won't you?'



So here you see both Peter's and my special project. Mine is to tie into an existing moss-covered stint which we've decided to keep. It appears fairly solid and looks very much in keeping with the ancient woodland. We've also decided to build a lunky between our projects.

You'll see how we progress in next month's newsletter.

‘Spirit of Soho’ on the Wall



Another beautiful wall mural seen in London by my sister. This one is in Broadwick Street on the corner with Carnaby Street. It depicts the Soho area between Oxford Street and Shaftesbury Avenue and includes famous landmarks such as the London Palladium and Chinatown and well-known Soho residents such as Karl Marx (1818-1883), artist William Blake (1757-1827), poet Dylan Thomas (1914-1953) and jazz musician George Melly (1926-2007).

Crowning the mural is St Anne – who lends her name to Soho’s church in Dean Street – with her skirt forming the streets and lanes of Soho. Dotted around are dogs and hares, harking back to Soho’s origins as a royal hunting ground between the 16th and 17th centuries (photo: Chris).

Waller, that’s November’s news tied up. If you fancy a trip out to Tyneham this coming Sunday (27 November), we’re tidying up the site in preparation for practice sessions and qualifications

next year. We've also got several tonnes of stone stashed away that we need to think about using on projects before the MOD snaffles it to build targets for its wretched gunnery practice.

Have a great December and, as ever, I welcome news and images from all members.

Carole Reeves