

DSWA Dorset News

March 2023

A trip to Cumbria



On Friday 24 February I drove to Cumbria to do my Instructor training. It was the first time I had been to Crooklands and it was good to see some of the work by master craftsmen. There were 12 of us including four from the south west branch and me from Dorset. Saturday was mostly devoted to classroom learning and covered topics such as Health and Safety, the Adult Learner and learning styles, what makes a good instructor and a successful course; risk management, group behaviours, time management, and equality and diversity. Late in the afternoon, we all went to the training site to be shown our respective stints for the following day's practical tasks. We paired up and each couple had to 'teach' the various aspects of walling. Paul, from West Yorkshire, and I were given throughs and second lift.

Firstly, however, we all had to examine the site for hazards and remove them. These turned out to be everything from broken mattocks to rusty cannisters, netting and barbed wire.



Four of my fellow trainees.

Left to right: David (Dumfries & Galloway), Chris (South West), Simon (Ellwood), and Arlo (South West)

Simon is a master craftsman, one of the youngest in the UK. He recently qualified as an examiner and is now adding instructor to his portfolio.

Left to right: Richard (Cotswold), Paul (West Yorkshire / Ellwood), and Phillip Dolphin, Master Craftsman and one of the instructors on our course.



Example of a square pillar built for the Master Craftsman qualification.



Galloway dyke of granite boulders. This is really striking and I would love to work on one of these dykes. David, from Dumfries & Galloway is a senior ranger with the National Trust for Scotland, and recently worked with the DSWA on a Galloway dyke on the Threave Estate (<https://gallowayglens.org/drystane-dyke-at-kelton-hill/>) The dyke incorporates four different styles of dyking techniques. Dorset members have an open invitation to a weekend of walling in this beautiful area of South West Scotland.

Example of a turfed sheep shelter ...





... and a perfect lunky.

Below: in the foreground is the stint that Paul and I demonstrated on. Note the beautiful wall on a slope built by a Master Craftsman. Paul tells me that he often puts rounded copes like these onto his walls. He has just invested in a stone cutter to make it easier.

Having completed this weekend, I now will now instruct on three courses assessed by a senior instructor. Then there will be a final assessment, the nature of which is to be decided. If my assessments are satisfactory, I will receive a certificate and a badge!



At the end of the weekend, it's all hands on deck to rebuild the walls that we took down for our practical tasks.

The best part of the course by far was meeting eleven other potential instructors from all over the UK.

On Sunday evening I was taken out to supper by Alison and George, who is a professional waller and who I first met at Gould's Hill on our Wallathon in 2018.

A note on safety footwear



toecap) rating.

We have been in discussion about footwear with Brian Hartley, Chair of the DSWA Craft Skills Group, which is responsible for training and accreditation. A query arose during the Instructors Course about whether or not we should accept novice wallers onto a course wearing ‘stout footwear’ rather than strict safety footwear. We have agreed as a Branch to accept stout footwear but not trainers.

However, Brian also makes the point that all branch members should be wearing steel toecap safety footwear for insurance purposes, so if – for any reason – you choose not to do so, you need to be aware that you are not covered by DSWA insurance. In addition, if you plan to take a qualification and arrive at the test site not wearing safety footwear, the examiners will ask you to leave and have the authority to shut down the site.

Ideally, safety footwear should be to EN-ISO 20345:2021 standard with the added SB (impact & compression resistant

Ham Hill in the snow



Ham Hill on 8 March. Geoff says, ‘It was pretty bleak on the Hill today. Only stayed long enough for a couple of photos.’ Peter and I were walling with National Trust volunteers on the Priest’s Way at Eastington the day before and we had a flurry of snow, but it didn’t settle. It was bitterly cold though.

Crack Lane, 4-5 March

A dry weekend at this site means no mud! It only takes a day's rain to stir up the sludge and make the ground really slippery. Running alongside the field is the Swan Brook and Swanage lies at its mouth. At the moment the brook is running fairly high and swiftly and can be heard in the distance.

Trev Haysom recently excavated the remains of a ford (below) across the brook which was the main crossing at the lowest point of Crack Lane, or Creek Lane as it was called in olden days. Until 1761, Crack Lane was the only way out of Langton Matravers at this end of the village. The Norman name for the Swan Brook was La Trencheye, meaning 'the ditch'.





Wallerers take a break. The wild garlic is beginning to emerge in Talbot Woods behind the wall. Wild primroses and celandines are also appearing in our field.

We think this wall will be finished by summer although there is another long section the other side of the megalith and stile. Dave reckons it's equal to the length we're already doing, that is, a

further 100 metres!

But it's in a very poor state and the vegetation extremely dense. We'd need it cleared by the landowner before we would consider it.

Right: Phyllis and Andy bring a section to height.



Crack Lane, 17 March



Left: Dave's expert flat-topping on a finished stint and below: rubble topping in place.



Picnic at Crack Lane, 23 March



It's just Merrie and me today so we have a picnic. Okay, so it has started to rain by this time but Merrie has made the most divine lemon Victoria sponge cake, so we just have to stop and enjoy it. Spreading a beach towel on the wall might seem weird on a building site but it's very cosy.



We know that Spring is here because Peter's tortoise, Malcolm, has woken up and is in his summer residence. Contrary to the tortoise stereotype, Malcolm can really scoot across the garden when he has a touch of Spring fever.

Winters Lane



Sally writes: 'Winter's Lane is now complete. We have re-built or refurbished approximately eighty yards of wall. At least fifty yards was a complete re-build, with about ten yards left untouched or with only minor work. The remainder was a partial re-build either above the mortared layer or a front facing where the back was still secure or could be secured. For the most part (after Jan 2022 it was just Tim, Mary and me). We did not need any new stone and ended up with three dumpy bags of surplus hearting with no useable building stone or copes.'



Langton Herring, 18-19 March

It has rained all the way to Langton Herring but when I arrive in the village, the clouds part and there is sunshine. I am the first on site and am pleased to see a field of pregnant ewes munching away while waiting for their lambs to arrive. Let's hope mums and babies are still in the field when we're out again at the beginning of April.



Sally says: ‘Since we were last here a month ago, John (the owner of the wall and sheep field) has brought the rest of the foundation stones from our neighbour’s dismantled rockery. Some are very large, but we have already used a few and they are running out. We must be especially careful in any take down to identify foundations and copes – we have used all those we had so far.

We will now need to concentrate on taking down (above and right) and laying foundations. John has cleared the remaining vegetation and mowed farmer Jane’s side of the wall, so the work area is lovely and clear. I have taken down the rest of the barbed wire up to where the electric fence stops.’

There are only four of us out on Saturday but we clear a good section of ground just in time for





... Belgian buns! John arrives at coffee time with delicious iced buns – a real treat when we’ve been wielding mattocks and spades all morning.



Right: Sally and Phyllis set lines ...



... and Mary and Phyllis lay a large foundation stone, almost certainly one from the defunct rockery.

Rob's first wall, Plymouth



Rob did a beginner's course last year and has joined us at Corton and Langton Herring as often as he can make it – it's a two-hour drive from Plymouth. He says: 'My first effort solo at stone walling ... not too bad for first time.' No, indeed, Rob, although we'd like to see photos of the corner and cheek end. Next month, maybe?

Heritage on Purbeck



On a misty morning I'm roaming the area around Spyway in my task of monitoring National Trust monuments. This is an artificial clay-lined watering hole or pond which probably dates from the post-medieval or early modern period, i.e. 16th-17th century. It's in the field where we

held our first walling course last year. There are a number of capped wells in this area from where farms drew household water, but this pond was probably used for livestock. Grid reference SY 9998 7788



This well head and large cast iron pump formed part of the farm complex of Spyway Barn and is probably Victorian in date. The well head is capped with large limestone slabs and the pump is missing its handle. If you walk south past Spyway Barn, look right and

you'll spot this interesting object in the corner of the field – grid reference SY 9986 7765

Upcoming events

To keep up with Branch events please visit our website: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/events/> and get the dates in your diary.

If you know anyone who would like to participate in one of our weekend courses, please look at the relevant page of our website: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/courses/>

There are still places for 8-9 July and 23-24 September, both at Corton Down. A free course place is offered to an individual meeting one of the following criteria:

- Currently unemployed (the Branch wishes to support people into employment)
- Veteran of the Armed Forces (the Branch wishes to thank those who have served our Country)

Individuals will be required to provide evidence of their status, and the free place for an unemployed person won't be released until a month before the course.

You can also purchase a gift voucher which is valid for two years. The weekend course costs £100.

We also plan to run training at Tyneham over the summer for Branch members who want to up their walling skills, especially important for anyone hoping to take level one and level two qualifications in September. These are scheduled for 20-21 May, 24-25 June, and 22-23 July.

The qualifications date for levels one and two is now set for Saturday 16 September at Tyneham and the practice dates at Tyneham are 19-20 August and 2-3 September. You don't have to be a DSWA member to take a qualification, but you will have to pay the exam fee. The Branch will pay the exam fee for members. We do require a minimum of six exam participants otherwise we won't be able to acquire the necessary master craftsmen examiners (there are always two examiners).

If you are interested in obtaining levels one or two qualifications this autumn, please let Phyllis (warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com) know.

The next walling weekend will be at Langton Herring on 1-2 April. Anyone requiring directions to the site please email me or Phyllis (warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com)



I collected a new fleece and sweatshirt from Crooklands. These are excellent quality. Mine are navy blue although it seems that I could have specified a colour and if I had known I probably would have opted for the royal blue that most of us are wearing in Dorset. But I'm quite happy with the darker colour. The cost of the fleece is £35 and the sweatshirt £23. They do last for years though and are very warm.

As ever, I welcome news and images from all members. Until next month, enjoy the Spring weather.

Carole Reeves