

# DSWA Dorset News

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April 2023

**It's that time of year again ...**



A group of proud mums take their babies for a walk along the Priest's Way, South Purbeck. They are very cute and curious at this age but alas, will all end up as rib, loin, brisket and shank at a supermarket near you. Their dad, Jeff, is a third generation champion stud. We always greet him with respect on our way to the National Trust walling site.

April has been a very busy month for the branch, with walling at Langton Herring, Crack Lane and Ham Hill, plus two courses – at Corton Down and South Purbeck.

Alex, Tim and Mary begin the month at Langton Herring where this difficult wall is taking shape.



## Langton Herring, 2 and 15 April



A hive of industry as five wallers bring four stints to height, fuelled by Belgian buns supplied by landowner, John Mowlem! It is a beautiful sunny day. We seem to have had so few of these since Spring officially began, that each one is memorable and gives us such a lift.

Mary demonstrates her walling strength by attempting to push this tree to one side so that she can wall behind it! Or is it the strength of the Belgian buns ...



Ian and Sally finish the day by coping a couple of stints. There isn't much decent coping stone so Ian takes a club hammer to some of the large, unwieldy pieces.

Then everyone departs to Sally's house for a refreshing cup of tea. That is, apart from Phyllis and me. We meet up with Geoff to check the site at Corton Down where the following week we will run a course for agricultural students from Kingston Maurward College.

## Kingston Maurward College students sample dry stone walling

This is the second year we have run a taster course for these students at Corton Down. The students are taking Level 1 Introduction to Agriculture and the Environment, and Level 2 Technical Certificate in Agriculture. They are of mixed ability and needs and were not told in advance that they would be dry stone walling.



Unlike last year, we had different students on each of two days (19 and 20 April). There were 21 students on the first day, and 12 on the second day, all aged 16 to 17 years. It was therefore only possible to give the students an idea of walling by having them work on several aspects of the craft, namely digging out, foundations, first lift, throughs, second lift and copes. Here they are at the end of day one, having coped this section of wall. One of their teachers is in the foreground. Apparently, the college liked this photograph but because one of the students was vaping, it can't be used for college publicity! Daft really because it's not at all obvious that he's vaping.

## Crack Lane, 14 April



We have been so busy this month that Peter, Merrie, Dave and I have only managed one visit to Crack Lane but there isn't much more to build. The site is lovely at this time of year with the scent of wild garlic permeating the air. The landowner, Trev Haysom, has another wall for us to build, near their quarry at Haycrofts Lane. At least it will be handy for stone.

### Spot the wall?

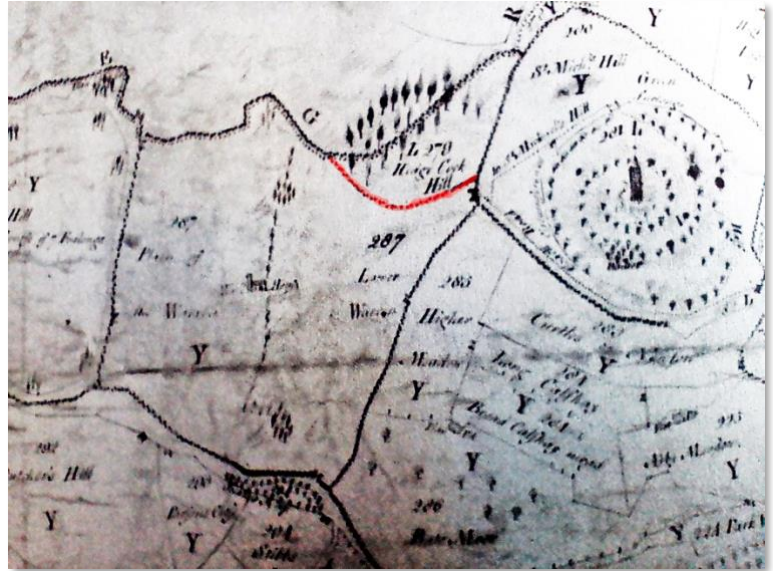


Geoff says: 'Below the wild garlic, on the left-hand side of this public footpath are the footings of a dry stone wall. This wall is present (red highlight) on Sam Donne's 1774 Montacute Estate map (below) for the landowner, Edward Phelips.'

However, it is not marked, or only a partial field boundary or just a track on later maps. So, the wall probably fell into dereliction or was actively removed during the 1800s.

Probably not a realistic candidate for restoration but at least it gives confidence in the accuracy of the 1774 Estate map.'

Thanks to Mark Musgrave (Lead Ranger with the National Trust, South Somerset Portfolio, Montacute House) for giving access to the Montacute archive and Conservation Plans.



## Weekend course near Sea Spray, South Purbeck, 22-23 April



It's a beautiful day on Friday 7 April when Peter and I take the half hour walk from Spyway car park to the site of our first course of the year in a field high above the coast path between Dancing Ledge and Seacombe. Today, we are taking down a couple of sections between the two proposed stints to act as walkways between the two sides of the wall, and also to create enough stone for the builds. This field boundary wall is in a poor state, and we have been given permission to rebuild the entire length during the summer. The land is owned by the National Trust and used for sheep and cattle grazing by a tenant farmer. Near the wall there is a private property called Sea Spray, which looks like a Victorian haunted house – very spooky and surrounded by high walls and fences with overgrown vegetation in what passes for a garden.



We would have had more stone for the course, but the ranger attempted to deliver this huge trailer load and got it stuck fast in the mud. The top field is totally waterlogged, and the trailer is too far away to be of any use to us.

The following Sunday, Mary, Phyllis and I spend most of the day taking down a couple more sections of wall and neatly stacking the stone. It is a very peaceful day with the sea in the distance and the lovely call of the skylarks.



The wall dates to about the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and as you can see, the existing stone is very thin – possibly quarry waste from the paving and roof tile industry. The builds will take longer than if we had a good range of stone sizes. We are also dismayed to find a dearth of decent foundation stones. In addition, much of the wall has been traced.

The course begins well and the weather, although cool and overcast, remains dry for the weekend. A couple from London have decided not to come on the course because rain is forecast but, clearly, they have been looking at the wrong weather map.

We have 19 participants; Peter instructs one group whilst I instruct the other. Because I am a fledgling instructor, Dave is assessing me to make sure I do everything by the book.

Right: this is my group taking down the wall.



Left: Peter's group tackle foundations as best they can with pathetically thin stone.

You can see spooky Sea Spray in the background, all but buried in vegetation.

Right: my group finishing their first course. Dave has instilled into me the importance of placing hearting (never call it fill) correctly, and I pass this onto the participants.

Dave is watching me, so I have to get this right!





Left: Peter's group making a nice job of straight coursing – difficult here because the wall is on sloping land. In fact, this isn't an easy site for a novice wall although it is one of the most peaceful and stunning locations on South Purbeck.



Right and below: Happy wallers enjoy the sun.



For the first time since 2019 we were able to provide hot drinks for our participants and this proved to be most welcome. During the Covid years we asked people to bring their own flasks, but refreshments are an integral part of any outdoor event. The biscuits also prove popular.





A cheer goes up from my group as they finish capping their stint with large flat stones ready for copes. And what a really excellent job they've done. I am very proud of them (and relieved, I have to be honest).

For more photographs of the course and to see the finished walls, visit our Flickr page: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/192778251@N07/sets/72177720307830667>

## Cotswold Walls



Geoff writes: ‘During the sunshine in the early part of the Easter Holiday, I spent a few days visiting relatives near Broadway, on the edge of the Cotswolds.

The Cotswolds are famous for their dry stone walls, in total stretching at least 4,000 miles (longer than the Great Wall of China). Dry stone structures, in the form of Neolithic chambered long barrows, date back at least 5000 years though most Cotswold dry stone field walls are more recent, built during the enclosures of the 18th century and the times of depression in the 19th century when landowners built walls around their estates to provide employment for those who were out of work.

The walls in the photos were probably built in this second phase after the completion of the Broadway Tower “folly” (above) in 1798. Right: Mossy wall.



The village of Broadway, the Broadway Tower and the walls on this part of the Cotswold escarpment, are all constructed from the locally quarried Birdlip Limestone. This is part of the Inferior Oolite group laid down in the Middle Jurassic about 170 million years ago. The honey-coloured stone is similar to the Inferior Oolite used in Dorset around Burton Bradstock, Mapperton, Beaminster and Sherborne, and also Hadspen Stone and Doultling Stone in Somerset.’

## National Stone Centre and Derbyshire Eco Centre



Wendy writes: ‘I’m just back from visiting a friend in Derbyshire who just happens to live a stone’s throw away from the National Stone Centre and the Eco Centre where I met up with Sally Hodgson, a professional waller and DSWA examiner. She showed me round their training and examination site and generally talked me through the various features – including curved wall, lunkies etc.

The photo above shows Level 3 exam walls which include a retaining wall and a wall built on a slope.

And on the right, you'll see a seat and table built by Dorset and Derbyshire member, Ian Clough (see page 2 of the newsletter), and which is now called the "Gin & Tonic" seat.



Left: Sally is pictured showing me the cob oven – the lower part being dry stone built and the upper over traditional cob. They use the oven to make pizza (presumably to go with the G&Ts.)

I did walk the Millennium wall in the National Stone Centre and took a few pics of boulder type dykes from Scotland – glad that we don't have to wrestle with stones so large.



The nearest wall style to our part of the world was Cotswold limestone, and there was a nod to the Cornish hedges from the North Wales clawdd – a hedge dyke or embankment (right).<sup>7</sup>



## Cumbria



I haven't heard from my Cumbrian friends, Mike and Jill, in a while. Unfortunately, their two miniature schnauzers – Diddley and Biggal (pictured right) – at the age of 14 have gone for the 'long sleep' following terminal health problems.



With two new puppies, Ranny and Mosser, they are now back roaming the Lake District. The photo above is Holme Wood Bothy, next to Loweswater, near Cockermouth, described by the National Trust as a 'stone tent' (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/holidays/lake-district/holme-wood-bothy>)



And then they came across Shaun who was kindly sharing his field with a couple of fake sheep ...

## 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 will also be 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](mailto:warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com)) know.

The next weekend walling and other events are as follows:

Sat 13th/ Sun 14th May - Langton Herring  
Sat 20th/ Sun 21st May - Tyneham  
Sat 27th May - Langton Herring  
Sun 28th May - Preparation for Sherborne show  
Mon 29th May - Sherborne show

Anyone requiring directions to the sites please email me or Phyllis ([warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com](mailto:warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com))

As ever, I welcome news and images from all members. Until next month, enjoy the Spring weather – am I having a laugh?

Carole Reeves