

# DSWA Dorset News

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May 2023

## Sheepwrecked ...



I know you're watching me ...



But I'm still going to climb on it ...



And invite all my friends.

The wall at Sea Spray proves an irresistible climbing frame for lambs. Our first task at this lovely Purbeck site where we held our first course of the year in April, is to bring the walls to height and close the gaps.

Unfortunately, these little critters have other ideas. As fast as we build they knock off the stones and dismantle the batter frames. They also seem to enjoy the taste of yellow string.



Mary and Geoff building the wall that is later sheepwrecked. This will be our Purbeck site for the rest of the summer. There is a significant length of wall to restore and when this photo was taken on 29 April, the field was still too wet for the trailer load of stone to be delivered.

Two weeks later, we have the new stone – hooray! It is just Fiona and me on the Saturday, but she brings delicious chocolate muffins, so I have two. I could eat more but that would be seriously greedy.

It is a beautiful day with a gentle breeze, and we soon remove our jackets.





The lambs, sensing a new climbing challenge, move in nonchalantly. I'm not sure what we'll find when we're next at Sea Spray.

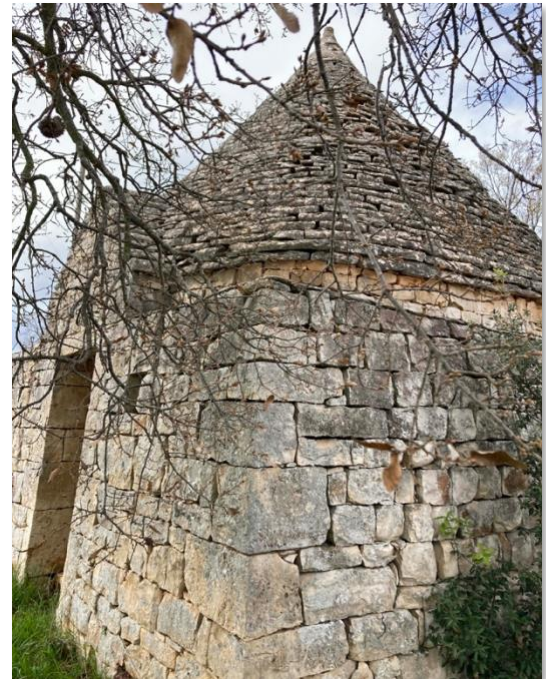


On Sunday, I am on my own so I'm not able to complete the wall and cope it. Nevertheless, I get a good section to height and repair the sheepwrecked wall as far as possible. Now that we have some heavy foundation stones, we'll be able to begin dismantling and rebuilding the entire wall. However, as you can see in this photograph there is a huge pile of old barbed wire fencing to be removed before we can go much further.

## The Trulli of Alberobello, Italy

Fiona recently enjoyed a cycling holiday in Puglia, southern Italy and took these photographs. These limestone dry stone houses, some of which date from the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, were originally built as field shelters, storehouses, or as permanent homes by agricultural labourers. They follow the same style – rectangular or circular walls with conical corbelled roofs.

The stone was collected locally from surrounding fields and rock outcrops.



Right: inside a Trulli looking up through the conical roof. The roofs are double-skinned, comprising a domed inner skin of wedge-shaped stone capped by a closing stone; and a watertight outer cone (above) built up of corbelled limestone slabs.



For more details of Trulli and to see a group of these ancient dwellings still in use as homes see:

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/787/>



This lovely dry stone wall (*parite de pietra*) surrounding an orchard is from the same area of Italy and is typical of the area.

The earliest examples of dry stone walls in Puglia date from between 4,500 to 7000 years ago. The dry stone wall had a profound influence upon the nature of the landscape in that it turned a defect – that of unworkable fields strewn with rocks and stones – into a resource, with ample supplies of material for the demarcation and protection of cultivated areas. The walls also served as protection for livestock and a way of minimising damage by fire and flooding, which was often so destructive to the thin topsoil. A large mass of rocks also creates condensation, which is passed down to the surrounding soil – important in a dry climate. Furthermore, the

walls also give protection to a host of different species of plants, small animals and insects, all of which find shelter among the spaces between the stones.

## Ham Hill



On 4 April, Geoff wrote: ‘Despite the mizzle last week, a few of us made good progress getting the wall section up to height and even placed a few cope stones. This has now closed off a ‘desire line’ shortcut across Strouds Meadow that had developed over recent years. This should help reduce disturbance of nearby orchids and nesting skylarks.’



‘We have just completed the foundations for the next section.’

### **Stop Press – congratulations to Geoff!**

Geoff has been appointed Assistant Countryside Ranger at Ham Hill Country Park. He says: ‘I’ll be joining the existing Ranger team in support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund project "Uncovering Ham Hill's past for its future" including a new Visitor Centre.

Running a regular (weekly) volunteer walling session will be part of my responsibilities. I have also been offered training in and use of an all-terrain-vehicle. Boys and toys! No more yomping across fields laden with mattocks and walling buckets ;-)

Geoff takes up his post on Monday 5 June and we wish him every success in this new venture.

Dorset Geologists Association events highlighted by Geoff:

Field Trip to Frogden Quarry, Sherborne, 10 June

(<https://dorsetgeologistsassociation.org/index.php/event/field-trip-frogden-quarry/>)

Origins: How the Earth shaped human history, 22 June

(<https://dorsetgeologistsassociation.org/index.php/event/origins-how-the-earth-shaped-human-history/>)

Field Trip: Somerton & Langport Quarries, 24 June

(<https://dorsetgeologistsassociation.org/index.php/event/field-trip-somerton-langport-quarries/>)

Field Trip: Purbeck Quarries, 13 July

(<https://dorsetgeologistsassociation.org/index.php/event/field-trippurbeck-quarries-day/>)

Some of you might also be interested in: A Building Stone Atlas of Dorset

([https://www2.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/download/EHCountyAtlases/Dorset\\_Building\\_Stone\\_Atlas.pdf](https://www2.bgs.ac.uk/mineralsuk/download/EHCountyAtlases/Dorset_Building_Stone_Atlas.pdf))

## Wall Dale Cubed – could we create a sculpture like this?



On their way to Scotland for a holiday, Peter and Elaine visited the Yorkshire Sculpture Park near Wakefield, West Yorkshire. This beautiful stonework was created by Irish artist, Sean Scully, using 1000 tonnes of locally quarried stone. Scully says that it is built in the same way throughout so that ‘when looking at the outside of the block, one can feel the inside without being able to see it.’

## Glencoe – reconstruction of a 17<sup>th</sup> century turf house

This turf, wattle and thatch house, at National Trust Scotland’s Glencoe National Nature Reserve, was erected using traditional materials, tools and techniques by a team of skilled craftspeople in 2021. The heather-thatched roof and earth walls blend into the mountain backdrop.



Top left: the interior of the house, which includes a sound installation, and top right: the building under construction. Turf builders cut and lay chunky turf blocks to construct the 80cm-thick exterior walls. These blocks are laid in an intricate herringbone pattern to offer maximum strength and stability. Mud masons mixed up a concoction of Glencoe cow manure, straw and clay to create the 'daub' which they applied to an internal partition wall, dividing the building between a living room for people and a byre for livestock.

## Peter goes Commando

Peter's father was a Commando during World War Two so his visit to the monument at Spean Bridge was especially important.



The Commando Memorial stands some 5.2m (17ft) high and comprises a group of three bronze commandos dressed in typical World War Two uniforms and equipment including cap comforters, ammunition pouches and weapons. They are looking south towards Ben Nevis. A large inscription on the plinth just beneath their feet reads 'United We Conquer', while the plaque on the front of the plinth reads: 'In memory of the officers and men of the commandos who died in the Second World War 1939–1945. This country was their training ground.'

## Buddha

Sculpture by Niki de Saint Phalle, Yorkshire Sculpture Park. The mosaic surfaces are inspired by the Catalan architect Antoni Gaudí and the technique he pioneered which involved applying pieces of broken ceramic tiles.





## Tyneham 20-21 May



Right: Tim and Phyllis build a cheek end.



Left: Wendy snoozing on the ‘comfy’ sofa we built in 2019.

Right: Fiona, Andy, Tim and Peter enjoy a break.



## Cumbria – Nine Standards Rigg



Nine Standards Rigg is the summit of Hartley Fell at 650 metres on the line of the Coast to Coast Walk between Kirby Stephen and Keld.



The Nine Standards are nine large dry-stone, conical cairns, that lie in file along the edge of the Rigg. Their origins are at least 800 years old, but they have been rebuilt a number of times. Their reason why they were constructed is not known but some of the cairns once stood up to 4 metres high. It is speculated that there may at one time have been as many as thirteen cairns and that there could be a long barrow beneath them.

Left: Mike with Ranny and Mosser, on top of the trig point at Nine Standard Rigg. The pups are being trained up gently for longer walks.

## North Cornwall

Mary recently enjoyed a walking holiday in North Cornwall and spotted some interesting walls such as this cheek end on a Cornish hedge near Chapel Porth. This area was once an industrial landscape, and the housing for an old mine engine (below) perched on the cliffs at Wheal Coates, provides a reminder of the area's tin and copper mining past. As Mary commented: 'It must have been really bleak working there in mid-winter.'



Far right: Characteristic Herringbone walling on a Cornish hedge.

## 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 23-24 September, 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.

I have just heard from Head Office that I have qualified as an instructor, having instructed successfully under assessment on two courses. Accordingly, there will be cake at Langton Herring on Saturday 27 May.

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 24-25 June, and 22-23 July.

The qualifications date for levels one and two will be on 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 27th May - Langton Herring  
Sun 28th May - Preparation for Sherborne show  
Mon 29th May - Sherborne show

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

Thank you to Fiona, Peter, Mary, Jill and Mike for interesting photos and news for this newsletter. As ever, I welcome contributions from all members. Until next month, enjoy the lovely warm and sunny weather.

Carole Reeves