

# DSWA Dorset News

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June 2023

## Sherborne Castle Country Fair, 29 May



Sherborne Stone delivers dumpy bags of Forest Marble to our site. Geoff, who facilitates our presence at all the local shows, said: ‘Sherborne Castle grounds look absolutely stunning in the sunshine. I briefly chatted to Martin, the Sherborne Stone quarry manager. Apparently, last year's Melplash show resulted in a lot of interest in his stone. Such that he had to revisit the Bridport area the following week with stone samples. So, he has also provided us with some 'doggy bags' (mini dumper bags) with stone samples to give to anyone showing serious interest.’



Left: Geoff on his knees as Alex, Steve and a visitor look on. Perhaps he's praying for a good turnout in the expectation that interested folk will sign on for our courses – or maybe he's just looking for his mojo!

The Fair was started by a small group of volunteers, in 1996, with the aim of raising money for local charities, especially those working with children.

To date it has raised nearly one million pounds for charities and support groups. Like all our events, the Fair was posted on our website and anyone Googling it would soon get to the relevant page. Thanks Geoff.

Right: As ever, the children's wall proved popular and these three soon had their stones piled into a creditable wall. The real one is in the background but on a foggy day could you tell the difference? (Photo used with parents' permission)



Left: Tracey Blackwell, our Trustee rep, sent me this photo of her granddaughter (used with permission) who had just finished building the Otley & Yorkshire Dales Branch children's wall at the Otley Show on 20 May. Their 'stones', realistically painted, might be a tad more inviting to children than ours.

The wall that Rob, Geoff and Alex built, no doubt with assistance from Phyllis and Stephen, keeping a low profile in the background. Altogether it was a very busy event with plenty of interest in our walling prowess. The sun shone all day as it has in the weeks since the May Bank Holiday.



Our next show will be Melplash, near West Bay, on 24 August (<https://www.melplashshow.co.uk>) Anyone who would like to be involved, please contact Phyllis ([warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com](mailto:warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com))

## Tyneham revisited 20-21 May



Right: Andy and Andy have every right to be pleased with what they accomplished.

Note the solar panels on the roof of the newly refurbished toilet block which should soon be opened. Farewell to the Portalooos ...

I featured this successful training weekend in May's newsletter, but Peter sent me more photographs which demonstrate the fantastic builds accomplished by our newest branch members. Left: In the foreground, two Andys tackle a cheekend and a section of straight wall while Alex beavers away on a straight stint in the background.



Left: Tim building his first cheek end ... and below: the finished wall.





Alex taking advice from Phyllis ... and behind his finished wall.



## Langton Herring, 27 June

A wall hidden by vegetation greets us at Langton Herring – usual for this time of year – so we have to lop, chop, and strim our way through it to begin work taking down the next section of wall.

That's after we've limboed under the electric fence because the field adjacent to the wall is full of curious young heifers. They are very cute but stand around looking gormless as we bellyflop under the live wire.



At least they make no effort to breach the fence. I suppose they learn pretty quickly that barbecues are fine unless *they're* on the menu.

Mary and Phyllis survey the mess of the wall once the wilderness is under control. We decide that it's probably time for the Branch to invest in some gardening tools rather than rely on members to bring their own which is what currently happens.



Rob and Phyllis dig out a dead tree trunk which turns out to be buried six feet under – well, almost ...



Soon, everyone is on their knees removing stone and preparing the foundation trench. Time passes until ...



... I call 'cake'. Alright, I didn't make it, but it is a Waitrose coffee and caramel confection, and I'm no baker. It's a celebration of my elevation to instructor as I'd just heard that my two assessed courses in April were good enough to win my certificate and badge. Everyone laughs as I produce a silver cake knife, something handed down from a grandmother who was a good baker. Well, if you have eight kids, baking is going to trump dry stone walling any day. But everyone laughs because I forgot the cake forks! Then, to add to the celebration, Rob produces two boxes of doughnuts.





And, finally, a third cake – this time a Greek orange cake made by Martin – is enjoyed with afternoon tea in Sally’s garden. Here they are brandishing cake forks just to show that mucky fingers are not the best eating implements. I had left by this time because I was expecting guests the following day and had to polish the knives and forks – ha, ha.

### Sea Spray, 3-4 June



It’s back to Sea Spray on a glorious weekend to continue filling the gaps left after April’s course. Peter, Phyllis and Mary dig out more foundations – on their knees again.

Uh oh, more calves. A few weeks ago we were sheep wrecked at Sea Spray, now it’s the turn of the Devon Red babes. They close in on us ...





... until Cowgirl Phyllis gives them the evil eye, which stops them in their tracks ...



... apart from one mean-looking cow who edges right up to the wall and splatters us with putrid diarrhoea – too disgusting to photograph.



On days like this, Sea Spray is a wonderful site, as far from the madding crowd as Purbeck gets. On the way here we passed groups of lads doing their Duke of Edinburgh awards. They were wary of crossing a field where Toro the bull and his harem were holding court.

They tentatively crept around the back of the group whilst admiring the size of Toro's testicles. Peter reckoned they were all kids from private schools otherwise the word 'testicle' wouldn't have been the first word in their vocabulary.

By the end of the weekend, the two sections are almost up to height and we'll be returning here following the next course at Corton which is the weekend of 8-9 July – gratifyingly fully booked.



## Ham Hill



The lovely site at Ham Hill although the summer vegetation appears as though it's getting out of hand. It looks like Geoff (centre) is wearing his new ranger uniform teamed with an elegant leather fedora. Doesn't he look the business? Well done on your new job Geoff.

Common Spotted Orchid on Ham Hill.





Left: More foundations and a lovely bee orchid.

## Agglestone Rock

Merrie and I went walking on Godlingston Heath to see this giant mythological stone, weighing in at an estimated 400 tonnes. There are many daft tales of how it arrived in the middle of the heath including the story that the Devil threw it from the Isle of Wight – Agglestone taken to mean ‘Devil’s Anvil’.

The rock is a lump of iron-rich sandstone and has toppled from its original flat-topped position which gave it the appearance of an anvil.

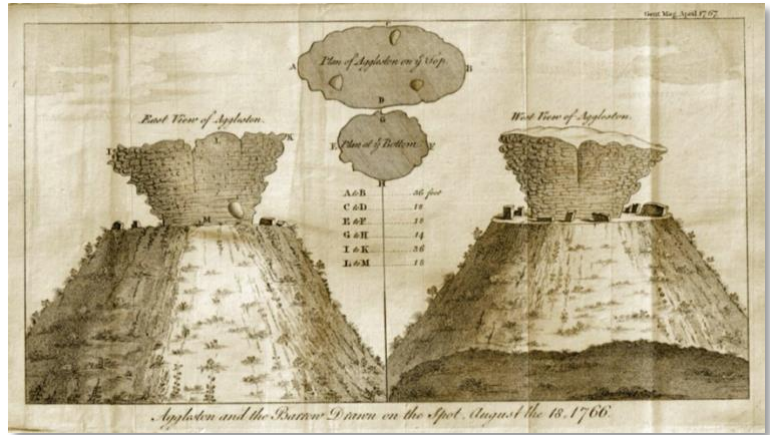


A photograph of the rock in 1906 before it fell onto its side.



You can see how the stone fractured at its base and toppled. The large stone is encircled by eight blocks of seemingly quarried stone which have given rise to more tales about the importance of the site through the centuries for religious or other more pagan rituals.

Illustration of Agglestone ‘drawn on the spot’ dated 1766.



## Cumbria – ‘Nine and a bit’ Standards Rigg



Last month I featured Nine Standards Rigg which is the summit of Hartley Fell at 650 metres on the line of the Coast to Coast Walk between Kirby Stephen and Keld. After I’d mailed out the newsletter, I received an email from Iain, our Treasurer, along with the photograph below:



Iain wrote: 'Re last month's newsletter, there are now 9 and a bit Standards ...'

Iain was on holiday at the time so maybe he built this rather understated beacon. Whatever the truth, he was keeping very quiet.

## BBC Radio Solent

On Friday 9 June I was the 'mystery guest' on Alun Newman's breakfast show. He had to guess what I did and while he was asking questions I was only allowed to answer 'yes' or 'no'.

He began by telling me what he thought I did from the sound of my voice (I did 'posh' it up a bit). He 'guessed' from my voice that I was an ex-teacher and that I made jewellery. Nope.

From then on it was a strangely gendered conversation although I could only answer yes or no to his questions. He eventually guessed by a process of elimination (he asked me if I was creative and I replied 'yes') that I worked in stone but couldn't get past jewellery or sculpture.

When he gave up and I told him I was a dry stone waller, the producer sent him our website and so I was able to plug what we did, the courses we ran and why dry stone walling was so important in the environment.

I thought I did rather well by coming up with the term 'linear nature reserve' to describe a wall. I think I stole it from a DSWA leaflet but it sounded impressive.

At the end he said he thought I would have dreadful hands (he knows how to flatter a lady). I told him that we were all physically wrecked but that it was worth it ...



## Crack Lane, 18 June



This is all that's left to build at Crack Lane. We've not been able to do anything there for a few weeks because Trev Haysom was in hospital but as soon as he was convalescing he arranged for Peter and I to visit the quarry and choose the final pieces of stone to finish the wall. We did this on 2 June and then Merrie and I spent a day getting as much as possible to height. Another day should bring the wall to height and then a further day to rubble top. And that will be the completion of 100 metres of wall, which was begun in April 2021.

## Branch Reps Meeting, 8 June

As usual I represented Dorset at this Zoom meeting. It was chaired by Jack Hartley (Cheshire Branch) and attended by 11 reps from across the UK. Brian Hartley, Chair of the Craft Skills Group, outlined a new process that will be proposed for the recognition and training of instructors, all of whom must already have achieved their level 2 qualification. This will be as follows:

- *Each branch has a nominated Training Lead registered with the Craft Skills Group.*
- *When Level 2 qualification is achieved, the person declares an interest to become a candidate for the instructor course.*
- *The branch Training Lead mentors the candidate during training events and assesses the candidate's suitability to become an instructor.*
- *If and when ready, the candidate fills out an application for the course, which is countersigned by the Branch Training Lead.*
- *Course attended and feedback given.*
- *Feedback is shared with the Branch Training Lead and any issues are ironed out.*
- *When the Training lead is satisfied, a request is made to the Craft Skills Group for the candidate to be entered on the Register of Instructors.*

Will this work? Who knows. The course that I did in February wasn't the greatest experience.

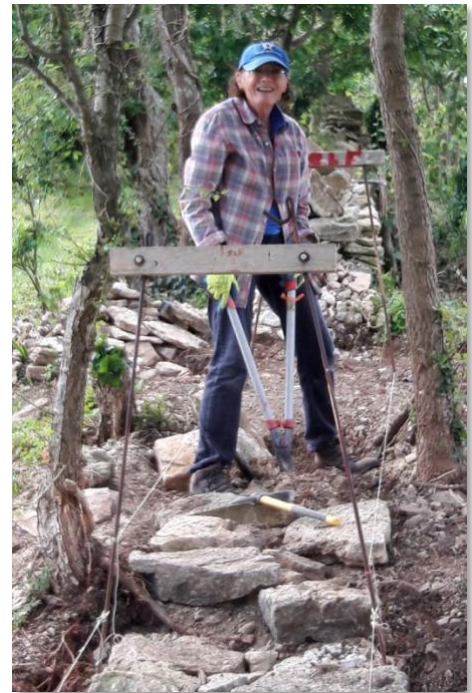
Another discussion topic was how branches go about finding sites on which to train, and it appears that a dearth of walls isn't much of an issue around the UK.

I was very amused when the rep from Derbyshire said that they are so spoiled for choice with walling sites that they are able to specify no roadside work, refreshments including bacon butties and cake, toilets, parking and shelter before the Branch will undertake any walling work. Are they having a laugh?

## Langton Herring, 17-18 June



There are six of us at Langton Herring on Saturday, so we expect to make good progress on this wall. Sally and Wendy begin taking down another section ...



... while I lop my way through a few wayward tree roots although I end up building a couple of 'lunkeys' over the larger roots to protect them and the wall.



We make a couple of exciting finds – a small ammonite fossil in a stone (left), and a piece of fossilised wood (below).



John and Tim make great progress laying a long section of foundation stones and a few courses ...



... while Rob collects hearting. There are very few large stones amongst this Forest Marble so a great deal of fill is required to stabilise the wall.

## Lligwy Burial Chamber, Anglesey



I haven't been to Anglesey for a few years, but I was reminded of this stone structure when I received my latest 'Heritage in Wales' magazine. It was built by our Neolithic ancestors (c. 4000-2500 BCE) and comprises eight uprights which frame a natural fissure in the limestone bedrock. The uprights support a capstone measuring 5.5m by 4.6m by 1m and estimated to weigh c. 25 tons. Excavations in 1909 revealed the bones of 15-30 men, women and children, together with a bone pin, Neolithic/Early Bronze Age pottery, animal bones and shells. These came from two layers of deposit separated by stone paving.

## Southend pigeon



Anyone planning a holiday in Southend this summer (no, me neither) needs to steer clear of these giant gang members in their distinctive blue hats.

This one is perched in an alcove at Southend Station – photographed by my sister on her way to get ice cream.

## 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.

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 this coming weekend, 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.

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

As ever, I welcome contributions from all members. Until next month, enjoy the continuing warm and sunny weather although we do need a downpour or two for our parched landscape.

Carole Reeves