

DSWA Dorset News

September 2023

Tyneham – mock exam 2 – 3 September



It's a beautiful day – the start of the September heatwave – and the candidates arrive to begin the final mock before the exam. Dave will award marks to their build so they will have a fair idea of where they stand in terms of quality. Tim, Martin and Andy get to work with a will.



Tim sets up his strings – foundations are in.

Steve brings plenty of large trugs to fill with heaving.





Mary getting ahead with her first lift while Martin and Andy aren't far behind (below). All three have reached knee height and placed their through-stones by lunchtime which is a good indicator that they will complete their walls in the allotted seven hours.



By mid-afternoon the second lift is well underway for most candidates although Tim (right) and John (below) have fallen behind. Their walling is good, but speed is now



essential. We rather think that they won't finish by the end of the day. Tim is philosophical, saying that the training and

learning has been invaluable and if he can't manage the time trial on the day, it's not the end of the world.

Mary checks her wall before the copes go on.



Steve is the first to finish and Dave checks his copes.

Andy (right) and Martin also complete their walls in seven hours, as does Mary (below).



Tim (left) and John (top) return on Sunday to get their walls to height and coped. We hope they will find an adrenalin boost on the exam day.

Poetry stones above Chapman's Pool



If you've walked the coast path above Chapman's Pool, you'll have noticed the poetry stones (geopoetry) set into the dry stone wall which separates the footpath from the fields. Not all branch members were around when Dorset DSWA built these into the wall between 2009 and 2012.

We recently received an enquiry from a member of the public about the stones and our part in their placement. Sally reported on the installation when the first stone was installed in 2009. The text and photographs are worth repeating here as an important piece of Branch history.

'Eight members of the Dorset Branch of the Dry Stone Walling Association spent a very rewarding weekend on 11th/12th October at a site over-looking Chapman's Pool. The views are magnificent, the weather was kind – though a bit chilly on the Sunday, and the task went smoothly.

We dismantled a section of wall about nine metres long and re-built it using the original stone and a small amount of new material. The challenge was to incorporate a stone weighing



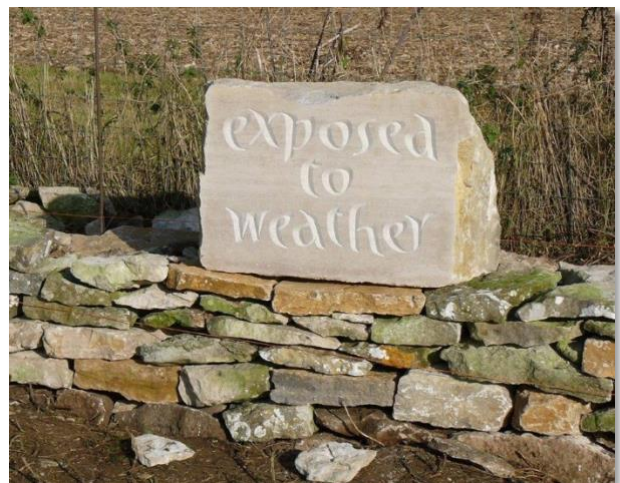
over a quarter of a ton on which had been engraved the words 'exposed to the weather'. Alan Davis came at 3.30 pm on Saturday to lift this stone into place so we had to move fairly quickly to get the wall ready to accept it. He used a tripod and engine - hoist pulley and

made it look remarkably easy as he 'walked' the stone along the other side of the fence and hoisted it up and over to rest next to the wall. Then it had to be lifted on and gently lowered into place. The tripod then had to be lowered back over the wall and the fence without displacing any of the stones.



It was a bit tricky to build the wall around the back of the stone but fairly straightforward to build up the rest around it.

The stones were carved at The Burngate Stone Centre, Langton Matravers (below). It was a project initiated by the Purbeck Keystone project which was a lottery funded initiative [Purbeck Keystone Project - Case Studies - Evaluation of](#)



[the Heritage Lottery Fund Landscape Par \(library.net\)](#) run in conjunction with the local district council to try and get Purbeck stone heritage more widely known.' The verses were written by local poet Paul Hyland.



Pictured here are four current members of the Dorset Branch from left to right: Iain, Merrie, two unknown to me, Dave and Sally (kneeling).

The poetry on the other five stones with their installation dates are:

dark brought to light May 2010
between turf and sky Sept 2010
held by gravity Aug 2011
hand built strata Oct 2011
stones lean together Sept 2012



‘When it came to the last stone the chap with the hoist didn’t turn up, so we had to lift it on a platform of stone in front of the wall, gradually raising this a stone at a time either side till we got it in place.

Langton Herring, 9 – 10 September

Phyllis and Rob bring one of the final stints of this lengthy wall to height. Phyllis said: 'We got on pretty well considering the quality of stone remaining. This will be our last branch session at Langton Herring as there's not enough stone to do another weekend. Sally will complete it with possibly some assistance from Mary.'

We plan to have a topping out session at some point so that all who had a part in building it get the chance to celebrate its completion.'



Small Copper butterfly (*Lycaena phlaeas*) settling on a chunky stone, photographed by Wendy.

Ham Hill



Ham Hill wallers enjoy the September heat wave and have been joined by two new volunteers.

Geoff says: 'We remain well on schedule to finish the Stroud's Meadow wall this year. In the meantime, we have cope stones on order, together with a 2023 date stone.'

Ham Hill has its own regular volunteers, three of whom are featured here. Currently, only Geoff, Margaret and Paul from the Branch wall at Ham Hill on Mondays but if you fancy working at this wildlife haven centred around an Iron Age hillfort which is also a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest, please contact Geoff directly (rowland.geoff@gmail.com)



On 25 September, Geoff wrote: 'Today, we had a total of ten folks (including me) walling in the sunshine.'

The first lift of the last remaining wall section is now completed (left).

Four regular Ham Hill volunteers undertook sterling work laying-out our fresh delivery of 50 metres of cope stones, courtesy of the Country Park and Harvey Stone.'

The BIG DAY – qualifications Saturday 16 September



On your marks, get set ...

Peter oversees the start of the seven-hour time trial for six wallers attempting their exams.

John, in a striking terracotta tee-shirt, is aiming for level two alongside Steve, Mary and Tim. Andy and Martin are going for level one.



The examiner, pictured taking notes at centre, is Alan Rhodes, a Master Craftsman and professional waller from Lancashire. Alan has travelled with his wife, Denise, and cute little dog Alfie, and fortunately the weather is set fair apart from a few splits and splats of rain first thing.



Alan was the examiner for my level one exam in 2019 and I recall him collecting up buckets of hearting at the end of the day to help us finish our stints on time!

Steve and Martin (above) set up their batter frames while Tim continues to strip down his stint.

John (right) lays his cheek end foundation stones, but Mary and Andy are already on their first course (below). The race is on ...



Steve (right) is ahead of the group at this stage.





Just after lunch and it looks like everyone is more or less at the same height.



Mid-afternoon and Steve (left) is the first to begin coping his wall. Alan (below) checks that Mary's wall is level ...



... before she lays her first copes (left). Closely followed by Andy (below).





John's copes (left) are looking good, and Martin (below) beats the clock with time to spare.



Alan very kindly gives Tim (left) a little extra time to finish his stint.

Everyone passes their exam with Martin gaining the highest marks – 88 out of 100 for his beautifully coursed level one wall.

We thank Alan for his helpfulness throughout the day and for his very calm and kind approach to all the candidates. Also, thanks to Peter for running three weekend training courses and to Dave for running two mock exams. There is no doubt that the work put in before the exams by instructors and candidates helped gain the 100 per cent pass rate. Many congratulations to all the candidates.

Corton Course, 23 – 24 September

Sunday 17 September – it's very wet and windy when Peter, Phyllis and I arrive to prepare the site for the course the following weekend. Phyllis strims the areas around the wall whilst Peter and I move stone from the recently delivered pile to stack alongside our chosen stints. The weather forecast for the course weekend seems to be 'changeable' but we hope it changes for the better. By the time we leave we are soaked to the skin.



Saturday 23 September and we welcome 20 participants from various parts of the country who are all very friendly and up for enjoying a wall-building experience. And hooray! The sun is shining, it's relatively warm, and the views are stunning. Peter and I instruct while Phyllis and Steve assist. By coffee break both teams have stripped out their stints and are preparing the foundation trenches.



Peter's team (right) lay their foundation stones under his and Steve's watchful eyes. They are looking good.

Carole's team (below) begin their first course making as much use of the old stone as possible. This site has a number of Bronze Age round barrows, like the one behind the wallers.



Over the past couple of years, National Grid has removed 22 pylons and 8.8 km (5.5 miles) of overhead cable from this AONB site.



The stone of the day! A huge (and very heavy) through stone takes three people to lift onto the wall. Fortunately, it drops into place with no manoeuvring otherwise I wouldn't have been very popular ...



On Sunday we arrive to a dull, drizzly and windy site. Fortunately, the drizzle subsides after an hour or so, but the day remains very windy indeed. We have lost two participants – fortunately it isn't something we have done but it sometimes happens as folk realise that walling isn't for them.



Only one hardy waller is in short sleeves today. The rest of us are muffled in windproof and waterproof clothing as it's all systems go for second lift.

By day two I have realised that my stint should have been longer, and Peter has also identified this issue with his stint. Whereas we begin with a stint which is adequate for ten people, it has to be stepped up to enable us to tie into another section of wall at a later date. By the time we get to second lift the length of the stint has considerably decreased.

Because of this, three of my team are taking on the job of laying foundations between the two stints and starting to tie them in. Phyllis (right) offers advice.





By mid-afternoon, the sun has offered a little warmth as the teams bring their walls to height (left).



Peter's team are the first to cope (right) ...



... although Carole's crew aren't far behind.

Once the copes are on, everyone enjoys a cup of tea and peruses our bookstall, i.e. the back of my car. We sell every copy of *Dry Stone Walling: A Practical Handbook* (our walling 'Bible').

I have managed to buy these from the distributor for more than £10 cheaper than they are selling on the DSWA website.



And here are our teams with their completed walls. If you'd like to see more photos from this weekend, please visit our Flickr page:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/192778251@N07/sets/72177720311477482>

Upcoming events

To keep up with Branch events please visit our website: <https://dorsetdswa.org.uk/events/> and get the dates in your diary. However, as I write this, our website is down. We're not sure why because although the message states that we have exceeded our bandwidth we know this not true. The internet gurus are in the process of getting us back online.

Currently, the dates in our diary are as follows:

Saturday 30 September: AGM at Portesham Village Hall, 11 am. Please let Phyllis know if you intend to be there (warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com).

7 – 8 October, walling at Sea Spray, South Purbeck.

14 – 15 October, walling at Corton Down.

21 – 22 October, walling at Sea Spray.

Please contact Phyllis if you require maps / directions to these sites. If anything changes Phyllis will send out the relevant information.

DSWA 2024 Calendar



The DSWA calendar is now available price £6.

I have a few spare copies and will bring them to the AGM and to the next walling site at Sea Spray.

Please let me know if you would like a calendar.

As ever, I welcome contributions from all members. A few members have sent me images and information for this month's newsletter but I'm saving them for October's issue because this one is full to the brim!

Carole Reeves