

DSWA Dorset News

January 2024

Restoring Opus 40 – Woodstock and the dry stone walling project



Adrian sent me this very interesting story and a potential project for anyone who would like to do some walling in the US. He writes: ‘Last autumn we visited the United States to stay with an old schoolfriend of Alison's who lives in upstate New York at Woodstock. One thing we found out while we were there was that the famous pop music festival in 1969 didn't actually take place at Woodstock at all. It was meant to, and it had been publicised as happening there, but at the last minute the local council got cold feet and refused it permission. Very hastily, the festival had to be moved to a farm at Bethel Woods about 50 miles away and the chaotic scenes that ensued there have become legendary.’



Billed as “Three days of Peace and Music”, it was attended by more than 460,000 people. (Note from Carole: One of my friends attended as a baby although she can’t remember anything! Her parents were “flower people” and took their 6-month old daughter to experience the vibe).



Adrian continues: ‘Amongst other places we visited near Woodstock, we were taken to what we were told was a sculpture park in a disused quarry with the name Opus 40. It didn't turn out to be quite what we expected. The “sculpture park” was a remarkable place to come across in a beautiful setting in the rural depths of upstate New York with the Catskill mountains in the background.

The story is that a sculptor called Harvey Fite (right) bought up the quarry in 1938 with a view to exhibiting his sculptures there.

He started to build massive dry stone walls, terraces, pools, ramps and plinths (below), working virtually on his own and just using a quarryman's traditional hand tools. As work progressed, he came to realise that any individual sculptures would be overwhelmed by the scale of the setting, the site was becoming a sculptural work of art in itself and there would be no need for relatively small pieces of representational art to be placed in it. It thus developed into a precursor of what came to be known in the U.S. as the Land Art or Earthworks



sculptural movement of the 1970s.

Fite called the project Opus 40 because he thought that it would take him 40 years to complete. It gradually expanded to cover an area of 6.5 acres and in the early 1960s he erected a massive monolith in the centre, standing 13 feet high and weighing 9 tons.

The huge piece of bluestone (right) had been found in a nearby river and he thought it was large enough to be in keeping with the rest of the overall design.

Sadly, Fite died in 1976 as the result of an accident when he was working on the site, just a few years before he might have felt that his work there would finish. Subsequently, his widow set up a Nonprofit Trust to maintain and preserve the park and to enable it to be open for the public to visit.



In the 2010s, damage was caused by a storm and parts of the structure started to deteriorate. A programme of restoration was commenced and this continued with a second phase being undertaken in the 2020s. A plaque on the site acknowledges the help given by the Dry Stone Walling Association of

Great Britain and, in an outline of Opus 40's history on its website, it is stated that “Welsh master stonewaller” Sean Adcock was one of the experts involved in the programme and who gave guidance.’

(Note from Carole: Sean has just been awarded a British Empire Medal 2024 for his services to dry stone walling).

For more information about the Opus 40 ongoing restoration project, visit:

<https://opus40.org/rock-steady/>
<https://www.standingstonevt.com/news/>

Walling in New Zealand

I am thinking of travelling to New Zealand this year. Like many British people, some of my ancestors emigrated there in the 19th and early 20th centuries. I recently discovered that my father's paternal grandparents had both been married previously, their first partners having died – not unusual in the 19th century. Adult children from their first marriages emigrated to New Zealand and my father recalled, as a boy, receiving copies of the *Auckland Weekly News*, mailed from these relatives. Apparently, some of the young men also turned up in the UK at the end of the First World War, having served with the Anzacs in France. They made it clear that New Zealand had a rugby team (the All Blacks) that would beat the pants off our national squad!



All these photographs were taken around Whangārei which is the northernmost city in New Zealand and the regional capital of Northland Region. The Northland landscape is dotted with volcanic cones because 300,000 – 500,000 years ago this land was on fire as the earth's crust buckled and split. Fire fountain volcanoes spewed lava and rocks across the land, creating the landscape seen today – small cones, gentle valleys and frequent waterfalls. The hundreds of kilometres of dry stone walls were created from the debris from these volcanoes – the rocks scattered across the landscape. In the background (above) is Maungatapere Volcanic Cone.

Northland author, Catherine Ballard, who has given permission for me to include her research in this article, says: 'Dry stone walls snake across Northland's landscape everywhere there has been volcanic action. I





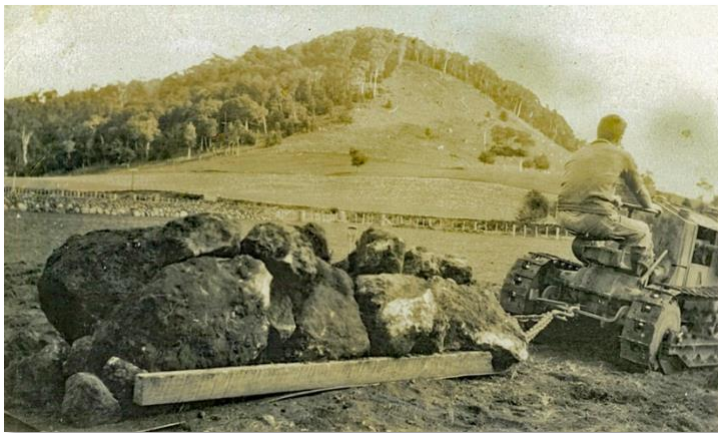
have been researching them for many years and have written two books about them: *Stone Wall Country: the Dry Stone Walls of the Bay of Islands and Kaikohe* (ISBN 9780473595296 paperback, 2021), and *Stone Wall Country: Drystone Walls of the Whangerei District* (2010). (Note from Carole: I can't find an ISBN number for this book). These books are not easy to find in the

UK but you can access Catherine's excellent blog at: <https://stonewallcountry.wordpress.com>

Catherine continues: 'The people who built the earliest drystone walls in New Zealand came from many different backgrounds but were broadly divided into three groups: those who built walls on their own land, those who worked for wages or were contracted to build walls for others, and those who worked on various government-subsidised



work schemes.'



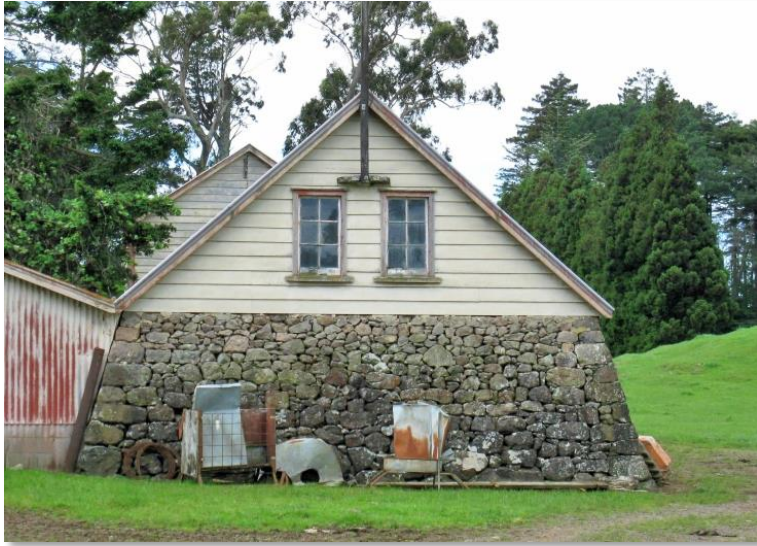
Left: Collecting stones from the paddocks for wall building with a Cletrac crawler in the 1930s.

'Most worked in only one district, but some were professional, full-time wallers and worked at many different

sites and on structures other than walls, like railway, bridge and harbour embankments. Some of the contracted builders were farmers themselves, financing the development of their farms by building walls elsewhere for wages. For those who were not full-time stone wallers the occupation was seasonal, fitted in when farm work was slack (note the A-frame roughly constructed of wooden planks). It appears that stone walling was included in the list of farm work undertaken by casual labourers in the same way as



scrub-cutting, hay-making, ditch-digging and fencing. In the winter many men moved from the sodden gumfields to the free-draining volcanic lands, changing occupation from gum-diggers to



wallers. Gum-diggers were men and women who dug for kauri gum, a fossilised resin, in the old kauri fields of New Zealand at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The gum was used mainly for varnish.'

'The level of walling experience and skill varied considerably. Some immigrants from Britain and Croatia were experienced stoneworkers. Others, including Maori, picked up the skill from working with expert wallers and went on to work on their own.'

Above: A barn constructed in 1887 or 1895 (dates vary) by Tom and William Cameron, professional wallers from Yorkshire, for the Hutchinson family, also settlers from Yorkshire. The stone is basalt which has no grain so the stones had to be shaped by drilling a series of holes into which metal spikes were tapped until the stones split – rather like the volcanic rocks used in the Pedro Cortada (cut stone) walls in Lanzarote which I featured in November's newsletter.

From the beginning of pastoral farming on these volcanic soils, rocks have been collected and built into dry stone walls.



Local volcanic stone used to build this nice-looking wall around a modern house.



Corton, 20 January

Seven of us brave strong winds to begin a new, final, section of wall and also to complete a fairly long stint. Fiona, Tim and I begin work on the arduous task of taking down what remains of the old wall and digging a foundation trench.



Karen, Phyllis and Mary work on building. Peter joins us later.



Tea break, and we all hunker behind the wall for shelter from the biting south-westerly. Mary sensibly decides to relax with a coffee in her car.



We can see Storm Isha brewing as the day gets colder and the winds get stronger.



By the end of the day, we have achieved a fair amount but decide not to return on Sunday because of the yellow weather warning. If Sunday's winds are predicted to be twice as strong as today's it will no fun trying to remain upright whilst carrying stone. As branch Health and Safety officer, Peter makes the final decision.

Driving back down the chalk track was no fun either. The track was frozen when we arrived but had thawed during the day and was churned into a thick, slushy white mess. My car slid down the slope as it gathered the muddy chalk onto the tyres, and I had to stop in the farmyard and scrape it off with my bolster before venturing out onto the road. Needless to say, it was a hose down job when I got home.

Upcoming events

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

Currently, the walling dates for the next couple of months are as follows:

Saturday 3rd/Sunday 4th February – Corton
Saturday 17th/Sunday 18th February – Corton
Saturday 2nd/Sunday 3rd March – Corton
Saturday 16th/Sunday 17th March – Purbeck

Please contact Phyllis (warrenphyllis@rocketmail.com) if you require maps / directions to this site. If anything changes Phyllis will send out the relevant information.

May I remind members that subscriptions to DSWA are due at the beginning of the year unless you joined after September 2023 when your subs will carry over into 2024.

As ever, I welcome contributions from all members.

Carole Reeves

Christmas Quiz answers

Well, these were easy, weren't they?

Questions set by David Attenborough (well, they could have been):

1) The Brown Recluse is a venomous creature, but is it a) Spider b) snake c) Scorpion
Answer: spider

2) Sheep are widely farmed in the UK, but as of 2018 how many sheep and lambs were in the UK? a) 10.5 million b) 22.5 million c) 52.5 million
Answer: 22.5 million – Yorkshire has most of them!

3) Native to Ethiopia, what type of animal is a Gelada? a) Bird b) Snake c) Monkey
Answer: Monkey

4) Shiba Inus are small hunting dogs, native to which country?
Answer: Japan – these are really beautiful dogs; I saw some in Nagasaki.

5) Which breed of dog, a favourite of the Chinese royals, is thought to be a cross between a Pekingese and the Lhasa Apso and has a long double coat?
Answer: Shih Tzu – cute but a bit of a handbag mutt.

6) The Komodo Dragon is native to which area of the planet?
Answer: Indonesian Islands

7) Found in all water regions of the world and feeding on tiny fish, algae and plankton, their name is synonymous with a derogatory name for a small person.
Answer: Shrimp

8) The Shrew is a relatively solitary animal that weighs up to 4 ounces, but what is its top speed?
a) 8mph b) 16mph c) 32mph.
Answer: 8mph

Know your flowers

1) What flower did the Victorians call a gilliflower?
Answer: Carnation

2) Which blue flower of the genus *Veronica* is also the name of the ship which was to accompany the Mayflower with the Pilgrim Fathers?
Answer: Speedwell

3) Which daisy-like flower, which is the national flower of Mexico, gets its name from an 18th century Swedish Botanist?

Answer: Dahlia - bestowed by the pioneering Swedish botanist and taxonomist Carl Linnaeus to honour his late student, Anders Dahl, author of *Observationes Botanicae*.

4) Which flower according to legend bloomed everywhere that lord Buddha walked. These days its seeds can be eaten raw, and its stamens dried to produce fragrant teas?

Answer: Lotus

5) The anniversary of which prime minister's death is commemorated in the UK as Primrose Day?

Answer: Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881). The date is 19 April. Primroses were said to be Disraeli's favourite flower.

6) Which small flower, usually with five blue or purple petals, is associated with freemasonry and has the scientific name *Myosotis*?

Answer: Forget-me-nots

7) *Lathyrus odoratus* is a flowering plant used in early experiments in genetics, by what name is this flower better known?

Answer: Sweet pea – Gregor Mendel (1822-1884) selected the pea for this investigation because the plants and seeds have a wide array of distinct features, or traits, and a short growth period. Over 8 years and involving 28,000 pea plants, Mendel found inheritance patterns for the 7 traits he studied. He identified a consistent mathematical formula that explained the frequency with which each appeared and observed dominant and recessive traits. These traits are now termed Mendelian inheritance.

8) Which flower is often called the 'winter rose' or 'Christmas rose'?

Answer: Hellebore

Quote unquote, or Who Said What in 2023:

1) 'I need your support, now more than ever. More than I imagined I would. More important than any of that is that you please, if you can, stay free.'

Answer: Russell Brand: throwing himself on the mercy of his 'fans' following accusations of rape, sexual assault and emotional abuse.

2) 'It's the best day ever. So was yesterday, and so is tomorrow, and every day from now until forever.'

Answer: Barbie: from the film of the same name.

3) My dad had an expression. He said, 'Don't tell me what you value. Show me your budget, and I'll tell you what you value.'

Answer: President Joe Biden announcing the Fiscal Year 2023 budget.

4) 'Nobody warned me that it was against the rules, because I would have remembered that.'

Answer: Boris Johnson, quizzed about the legality of lockdown parties. Duh.

5) ‘When I bought my first property, going abroad, the EasyJet, coffee, gym, Netflix lifestyle didn’t exist. I used to walk to work with a sandwich. And on payday I’d go for a pizza, and to a movie, and buy a lipstick. I don’t want to belittle those people who can’t do it. But there are loads of people who can do it and don’t.’

Answer: Kirstie Allsopp: Avocados were so 2021: this year, the nonsensical reason young people can’t afford anything is that they spend all their money on their Netflix lifestyles. Don’t you want to lynch her?

6) ‘Christ is risen, Alleluia. He is risen indeed, Alleluia, Alleluia.’

Answer: Jacob Rees-Mogg: It was Rees-Mogg, the man least likely to pass through the eye of a needle, who briefly took himself to be God’s representative on Twitter, at Eastertide.

7) ‘The working class is back. We refuse to be meek; we refuse to be humble; we refuse to wait for politicians and policy-writers – and we refuse to be poor anymore.’

Answer: Mick Lynch: The head of the RMT union ignited support in the most surprising places – for brevity let’s call it ‘everywhere’ – with rolling rail strikes and straight talking. Also said, ‘We can strike forever’ – not the brightest toy in the box.

8) ‘I think it was Margaret Thatcher who said that every prime minister needs a Willy. A woman like me doesn’t have one.’

Answer: Yes, that was Penny Mordaunt firing up the Margaret Thatcher quote generator for a nonsensical reference to trans issues. As pleasant as it would be to forget the unedifying spectacle of the Tory leadership contest, some details just won’t budge.

Royal Flush

1) Which athlete challenged Prince Harry to a sprint on a Jamaican tour?

Answer: Usain Bolt.

2) Charles I was imprisoned in Carisbrooke Castle before he was beheaded, where is Carisbrooke Castle?

Answer: Isle of Wight – of course.

3) What condition did many of Victoria's offspring suffer from?

Answer: Haemophilia – if you are really interested in this see:

<https://www3.nd.edu/~nismec/biomodel/mod9/9%20Hemophilia%20-%20the%20royal%20disease.pdf>

4) As well as Scotland, where else was Mary Queen of Scots once Queen of?

Answer: France.

5) His Royal Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum is the current ruler of which country?

Answer: United Arab Emirates.

6) What was the name of the woman who married Edward VIII?

Answer: Wallis Simpson.

7) Who is married to Autumn Kelly?

Answer: Peter Phillips.

8) As used by the late Queen, what became an unlikely Latin catchphrase in the 1990s?

Answer: Annus horribilis.

In Memoriam, deaths in 2023

1) Anna Mae Bullock, born 26 November 1939, made her recording debut under the name Little Ann, before adopting the name with which she would achieve global stardom. As of May 2023, she had reportedly sold about 100m-150m records worldwide. What was her adopted name?

Answer: Tina Turner.

2) Battersea Dogs and Cats Home named its vet hospital after this entertainer who died in March. What was his name and the name of his incredible drag act with which he first found widespread fame?

Answer: Paul O'Grady whose alter ego was Lily Savage.

3) This designer helped defined the look of 1960s London and opened her first shop on Kings Road, Chelsea, in 1955. Who was she and what was her shop called?

Answer: Mary Quant, her shop was called Bazaar.

4) One of Ireland's greatest songwriters passed away in November. Who was he? Where was he born, and what was the name of his band?

Answer: Shane MacGowan, born Pembury, Kent, of Irish parents. His band was called The Pogues, originally Pogue Mahone, a variant of the Irish phrase póg mo thóin, meaning 'kiss my arse'.

5) This lady became the first female speaker of the House of Commons. What was her name and when was she elected Speaker?

Answer: Betty Boothroyd (b. 1929), elected 1992.

6) One of the most celebrated British actors, died in June, and was also an MP. Where was this person first elected?

Answer: Glenda Jackson, Hampstead and Highgate.

7) He was regarded as one of the great American writers. What was his name and which of his novels won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction?

Answer: Cormac McCarthy, *The Road*, won the Pulitzer Prize in 2007

8) This person was a mainstay of astrology in the UK, but did she see her own demise coming? What was her stage name and her real name?

Answer: Mystic Meg, real name Margaret Anne Lake.

Christmas walling word search

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Corton

Isle of Purbeck

Forest marble – I boo bood on this one!

Sea Spray

Kirrin Island

Dog on the Roof

Square and Compass

Courses

Christmas pud

Ham Hill

Pins

Club hammer

Langton Herring

Party hat

Pigs in blankets

Stuffing

Hearthing

Mini mattock

Dorset DSWA

Tyneham village

Christmas cards

Waddon

Bubbly

Celebration

New Year

Lines

Portesham

Ivy