



THE YORKSHIRE DRY STONE WALLING GUILD®

Minutes of the Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild's Annual General Meeting, 14th November 2009 **Held at the Annexe, Thirsk Town Hall, 3.00pm**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Lawrence Tucker, Pete Summers, Anna Bryer, Paul Hill, John Clifton, Robin Compton, Dave Leedale, Keith Ledger, David and Isabel Patton, Richard Wheeler, Jeremy and Pippa Morrogh-Ryan, Peter Whiting, Henry I'Anson and Clifford Bailey.

15 members attended the meeting.

The minutes of the last meeting (15th November 2008) were read. With no matters arising, Dick Laidler proposed acceptance, seconded by John Pridmore and approved by those present.

Chairman's Annual Report for the year ended 30th September 2009

This is my seventh AGM as Chairman of the Guild and I am delighted to report that once again the Guild has had a successful and active year.

The Guild has its origins back in 1983 when it was apparently called the N Yorks DSWA: we have thus been in existence 26 years!

In 1994 it, for some reason, fell out with the DSWA and became the YDSWG and in 2000 it became a Limited Company in order to protect its name and logo

Our membership is high, standing at 187 and as you will hear later, our financial position is secure.

Can I commence by thanking the Committee for their sterling work over the past twelve months. Once again we need to thank Woody for his dedication and hard work as both Treasurer and Secretary.

Many of you will know that Woody had a major operation earlier in the year and the attendant recuperation has kept him away from active and in particular physical duties for several months. I am delighted to be able to report, and you are able to see, that he has made a fine recovery and was able to join us demonstrating at the Careers Day and Countryside Live Days at the Great Yorkshire Showground. His presence was certainly missed at the various Meets and Shows during the year and it is good to see him back in harness!

Grateful thanks to Anna and Euan for their sterling work as Minute Secretary and Web Designer respectively.



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Can I also thank our President Bill Cowling for his continued support and encouragement and for overseeing the supplies of stone for our various appearances at the GYS.

We commenced our activities in April with Dick Laidler's Air Ambulance build at Bolton Castle, which was well supported and raised in excess of £800 which was great effort by many members. Thank you!

During the past year we have most successfully demonstrated and promoted the craft of dry stone walling at:

Duncombe Park Country Fair
The Great Yorkshire Show
Masham Steam Rally
Careers Day at the GYS
Countryside Live at the GYS
Scorton Show

At Masham Showground we have started a new wall near the roadside and hopefully over the years we can progress towards the gateway in the centre of the Showground. At the GYS we were asked to rebuild a wall adjacent to the Young Farmers' Pavilion.

Six Practice Meets have been held at various venues:; Stay Farm, Kewick; West Bolton Farm, Carperby (twice); Medds Farm, Rosedale; Hollin Bower Farm, Chopgate; and West Grove Farm Carperby. Attendance for these has been mixed but again thank you to those who did support these events.

I hope we can spend a while at the end of this formal AGM business discussing ways of addressing this matter

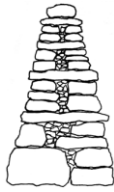
The attendance at our annual sponsored build which was at West Bolton Farm, Carperby was good. The Guild is most appreciative of Mr and Mrs Langhorne for their generous sponsorship.

Our Annual Walling Competition was held at Stay Farm, Kewick and much better attended than in the recent past, with the welcome appearance of some new faces on the day. Thank you to Judge Thomas Harker assisted by Clifford Bailey.

The results were:

Open	1. Brian Edmunds;	2. John Pridmore;	3. Michael Booth.
Amateur	1. James Bailey;	2. Paul Clayton;	3. Andy Summers.

Particular praise needs to be given to Brian who only last year won the Amateur class and this year wins the top award! Commiserations to Dave Leedale who had to withdraw, part way through the Competition, with a damaged shoulder.



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During the year our excellent instructors have trained 54 individuals to the usual high standard at our two locations, Thirsk Auction Mart and Fountains Abbey. Praise to our Instructors - the courses wouldn't work without them. All participants have without exception been very complementary on their feedback sheets of the friendly and knowledgeable way the courses have been run.

We have now trained 180 or so individuals over the past 4 years when we commenced the scheme. A magnificent achievement! We again had a useful Instructors Evaluation Day at Masham at the start of the year to discuss how things had gone the previous year, enrol new instructors and generally strengthen the training procedures.

Thank you for your support during the past year. The continued success of the Guild is solely dependent on that support from its membership.

Michael Booth
November 2009

As there were no questions following the report, approval was duly proposed by Dick Laidler, seconded by Dave Purvis and accepted by those present.

Secretary/Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30th September 2009

Once again, it is with great pleasure I am able to report on another successful year for the Guild. With the recession it could have gone either way, but we have actually had the best year yet with our training courses, every one of which, bar the last has been filled to capacity. More than a quarter of the 55 places taken up were sold as Christmas and birthday presents via our website; now very obviously an indispensable part of the Guild framework. I am only too happy to endorse the Chairman's praise for the tutors; they do a first class job and attract very positive pupil feedback. Already there are four bookings and several enquiries for next year.

Those courses planned on behalf of Askham Bryan College and FWAG were however very disappointing with only 5 participants on one course for Askham Bryan; all three of the others were cancelled for lack of interest. One reason perhaps is the Askham website; it has a rather stodgy corporate image and they are currently looking at the way ours is laid out for inspiration. Another might be cost with the big mark up that Askham Bryan in particular adds to our charges.

Guild membership is now 188, a new record and if past behaviour is a guide that will perhaps decay to a new core level of about 150 when the time for renewals comes round.



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We had a very successful Sponsored build in September which has added £720 to Guild funds. We are very grateful to Mr and Mrs Langhorne at West Bolton farm in Carperby for their generous support and the splendid teas they lay on to feed the teams at the end of the day.

Turning briefly now to the accounts, the effects of the upheavals in world financial affairs are shown in the interest paid by our Bank on our reserves; now down to just over £10, about 1/7th of that paid last year. If this continues at the current truly magnificent interest rate of 0.08%, (that's 80 pence per thousand pounds) next year will be worse still; it will be £3 or so. To be positive though, we do have plenty of reserves and the way ahead is looking good. The apparently large sum allocated to Competition cash is in fact for both last year and this, just an effect of our accounting date being so near the Competition date and the timing of the withdrawals.

As Michael has mentioned, the major surgery I had this year was for Prostate cancer by keyhole surgery at James Cook Hospital, Middlesbrough. Thankfully it was tackled in time, follow up tests are excellent, the tedious post operative effects are finally a thing of the past and I am able to carry on again with my life as before. It will though be five years before I am considered cured.

The whole experience has however confirmed my views, and those of my long suffering wife, that a change of Secretary at the next AGM would be appropriate. I have greatly enjoyed the challenge and the trust placed in me for which I thank you all. By then I will have done 6 years in the job, a long enough sentence for a 'temporary' position I think! Fresh thinking and new ideas will be needed for the future to continue taking the Guild forward. So, and don't all rush at once but, someone, please step forward.

Before we move on to the election of Officers, our website designer Euan Raffel has prepared a report on site usage for the year 2008-2009.

"This year has been fairly quiet for the website. The website received a minor refresh in the New Year - a task that took place across all the websites that are managed by Euan Raffel, which cleaned up the site 'behind the scenes', tidied the visual appearance of the site to the visitor and optimised the site for use in all major browsers and the most commonly used display sizes (15 and 17 inch). The task of converting all the image-sets to slideshows was also completed, making them more accessible to visitors.

Throughout the year, a few new slideshows and images have been added to the Gallery. More will go online before the New Year. This year has seen more use of the News section of the website, with articles from the media, as well as items that were felt to be of interest to members of the Guild.



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There will be some minor changes to the website in the coming weeks, to improve the availability and clarity of information for visitors.

To November 6th, 2009:

Total hits - 97,771

*Total sessions (visits, not including search engines) -
19,875 Data served - 2.1GB*

Hits to the website are up by approximately 7% on the previous year.

The majority of visits are from the United States (mainly search engines), however visits remain high from within the UK, Australia and New Zealand, Europe (predominantly Germany and Holland) and China.

Data served to visitors over the past year totalled 2.1GB. In context, this is equivalent to:

- *Nearly 4 hours of television from BBC Player or*
- *200,000 emails or*
- *21,000 web pages or*
- *600 music tracks.*

Most popular pages on the website are: The Gallery, Courses, Events, News and Membership. Within The Gallery, the most popular pages are Chamber of Horrors, Walls in the Landscape, Guild Archives, Masham Steam Fair Series and the Daggerstones series.

*81% of sessions served had up to 6 page hits.
13% of sessions lasted up to 15 minutes; 16% lasted up to 30 minutes.*

And finally, a couple of interesting facts:

- *In the week following the 2008 AGM, website hits were 20% higher than average, and that week recorded the second busiest day with 577 hits.*
- *The busiest day on the website to date was October 11th 2009, with 580 hits."*

On a different topic, at the recent Durham walling and Hedge Laying competition, the Guild had a clean sweep in the Intermediate section for those who don't earn more than 50% of their income from walling with the following results:



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1st place Les Maxwell

2nd Brian Edmunds

3rd Andy Summers

John Pridmore was awarded 3rd place in the professional category.

Dave Purvis asked about whether the Guild had plans to become a registered charity and take advantages of any benefits in claiming tax from contributions and donations.

The Secretary replied that we were currently not following that route and any advantages with Bank charges didn't arise as we currently enjoy a charge free status

There being no further questions on this report or the accounts, the Chairman invited approval, duly proposed by Dennis Garbutt, seconded by John Pridmore and accepted by those present.

Officers and Committee

The present officers and committee were prepared to serve another term and the Chairman was very pleased to accept both Dave Leedale and Richard Laidler as new Committee members volunteering from the floor.

The members present endorsed the change, following proposal by Keith Ledger and seconding by Anna Bryer; the posts are therefore as follows:

Officers

The committee as a whole were prepared to serve another term and the Chairman was very pleased to announce several nominations for John Pridmore to take on the task of new Chairman. These were formally proposed by Les Maxwell, seconded by Tarig Anwar and endorsed by the meeting. The new arrangement will be as follows:

Officers

Chairman	John Pridmore
Secretary	Brian Wood
Treasurer	Brian Wood

Committee: Dave Purvis, Clifford Bailey, Dennis Garbutt, Michael Booth, Anna Bryer, Dave Leedale and Richard Laidler.

Any Other Business

1. In response to calling for more suitable photos for the website, Judith Wood asked for contributors to ensure reasonable file sizes that could be downloaded readily. Euan Raffel pointed out that over compression spoils the quality.

2. Bill Cowling thanked the Guild for its continued support and enthusiasm for the Yorkshire Agricultural Society activities at the Showground; in particular



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that so willingly given to the children's activities with 'hand's on' participation at our demonstrations. The kids love it and the teachers accompanying them enjoy it.

3. Judith Wood questioned the patchy attendance at practice meets, Michael Booth asked for that to be discussed informally after the meeting closed.

4. After some prompting by Dave Purvis, Meggan Jeffery felt that she should get more experience before feeling ready to take up any tutoring for the Guild after such a short time as a member. Les Maxwell has joined the team as a tutor for next year.

With no further formal business to discuss the meeting closed at 3.55pm. Prior to the pork pie and continental biscuits supper that followed, and as a lead in for the new Chairman, various ideas were discussed for the Committee to consider in improving attendance at meets and encourage more support for the other events.

Amongst these were e-mail reminders, a questionnaire, travel expenses and possible text rounds. The meeting was comfortable with the purchase of a laptop computer to help the hand over to a new Secretary

Members present: Dick Laidler, Les Maxwell, Bill Cowling, Tariq and Annie Anwar, Terry Marshall, Meggan Jeffery, Euan Raffel, Dave Purvis, Dennis Garbutt John Pridmore, Judith Wood, Brian Wood, Michael Booth.