



# Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting – 8 November 2014

### **Present**

Sarah Pridmore, John Pridmore, Molly Pridmore, Brian Wood, Les Maxwell, Dave Leedale, Dave Purvis, Graham Brown, Bill Cowling, Dennis Garbutt, Johnny Clasper, Michael Booth

### **Apologies**

Anna Bryer, Laurence Tucker Annie and Tariq Anwar, Dave Edwards, Dick Laidler, Steve Bostock, Keith Ledger, Chris Morgan, Suzi Vestri, Ray Ellis Thanks to everyone for attending this year's AGM.

### **Welcome to Bill Cowling**

Bill: Thank you for inviting me and congratulations on the year that you have had and the events that you have staged. It has been a very good year with the feature build at the showground. Bill also thanked the Guild for their support at all the educational events throughout the year and asked if the Guild were happy for him to stay on as President which they were.

### **Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting**

Read by John Pridmore proposed by Brian Wood seconded by Dave Leedale

### **Matters arising**

None

### **Chairman's report**

The wheels of time keep turning and here we are again after another year which as usual has been a busy with plenty of activity and a few new things to report on.

I like to congratulate Bill on his successful tenure as Show Director since 2005. I'm sure it's been a great experience and you've probably lost count of all the dignitaries and famous people you have met over those years. The Guild has enjoyed a great working relationship with you and your colleagues and we have undertaken some interesting projects over the years, hopefully adding to the fabric of the show. We wish you well in your retirement and hope we can continue our relationship with your successor.

Sarah will cover off membership in her report and I will let Les cover off all things about courses.

On this year's activity I will kick off with the demonstrations at shows which are a great way for the Guild to promote itself and the craft. Bishop Burton College again didn't happen so in future we will wait to be invited rather than chasing our attendance. Our first event was the Duncombe Park show and with the usual load of 'challenging' stone the team managed to complete a nice demonstration and generated some good interest. The Countryside Days educational event was then followed by The Great Yorkshire Show, where we undertook our most challenging project to date. This was the year of 'The Crimple Valley Oracle! Bill had asked if we could construct a wall at the Brown Gate that would act as a small barrier for people entering the show. Rather than just constructing a standard wall we wanted to go for something eye catching and totally unique so we called upon the creative talents of Guild member Johnny Clasper. After much scribbling and multiple versions the design of The Oracle was born. The work to pull all this together then kicked off with Dave Purvis at the helm. Materials were the first challenge as this was going to take quite a bit of stone. Dave, never one to miss a good opportunity noticed that there was quite a bit of stone being used at the flower show. A few conversations later Dave had managed to secure a good batch of stone for the job. This was added to with a drop from Frankie Jacksons quarry and with a bit of labour from a volunteer work squad (thanks to all those attending) we were ready to roll. The show got underway and the work squad was boosted by volunteers from The Yorkshire Dales National Park. Wednesdays build was rudely interrupted by a visitor to the show, only HRH Princess Anne who Bill had very kindly arranged to visit the stand. Johnny, Dave & I lined up like 3 blokes about to be thrown into the tower and greeted HRH. Despite the warm summers day she kept her gloves on as touching dusty wallers was clearly off limits. Anyway she showed a good interest in what we were doing and also a bit of knowledge about how walls are built. After 5 minutes chatting she moved on although not before Dave managed to slip a gift her way (and possibly a Coracle Society membership form). You can see the results of the build on the website and I must say it looks very impressive. A big thanks to Bill for enabling the project, to Johnny for the design, to Dave for the organising and to all those who attended on the 3 days. We returned to Ripley Show again this year but picked probably the worst day of the whole summer however the team were not going to be beaten so carried on despite the weather. Needless to say there weren't too many visitors. The last show was countryside Live a couple of weeks ago which turned out to be a good weekend with plenty of interest in our stand and hopefully some course sales for next year.

The walling competition was again cancelled this year due to lack of entries. We might have to have a re-think on the timings and prizes next year or alternatively just not bother. We will sort that one out at the first committee meeting.

The mainstay of the Guilds activities are the practice meets held throughout the year. We got things going at Cold Kirby extending the wall we started last year which was closely followed by our first visit to Carperby where only a couple of volunteers turned up. We then moved south and west to Cropper Fold Farm where I took 2 ladies on a taster through their paces on a glorious spring day. The next event was the first of our visits to The Bivouac at Ilton. We started on a new wall at the rear of the café on a miserable Saturday so the Guild gazebo made its first appearance of the year. It ended up quite a battle to work on the section under the gazebo in an effort to keep dry. The great & unpredictable British weather meant that by the time I had made it home I could actually sit out and have a glass of wine on the same evening. You wouldn't have believed it was the same day. In total contrast later that month we were back at Long Liberty Farm on one of the hottest days of the year. As small squad of 3 extended the wall a little further and we are getting nearer the end of the length every year.

The next 2 visits were back to Garbutt Farm at Sutton bank where we continued to extend the limestone wall along the drive. This site offers a great opportunity to work with a different type of stone and it's also nice not to have to pick up the hammer much during the day. Early September signalled our annual pilgrimage up to West Bolton Farm near Carperby for our sponsored weekend. A good turnout resulted in several sections of derelict wall being repaired and those attending on Sunday certainly had the better of the weather.

Early October saw us back at The Bivouac on a beautiful autumn day where a good squad tackled the wall on the other side of the gate that we had previously repaired. Steve Bostock made it a matching pair of wall ends and the rest of the team repaired a good section. Just last Sunday we wrapped up our activity back at Cropper Fold Farm again on a glorious autumn day. Congratulations to Graham Brown who successfully passed his basic walling qualification

Next year we hope to have a new challenge of repairing a derelict pig pen at Swinton which should prove to be an interesting project

Many thanks to our kind sponsors Meggan Jeffery, Jonathan & Annette Langhorne and Sallie & Julian Lloyd, your support is greatly appreciated. Finally thanks to all members who have attended meets and helped out at shows this year.

## **Secretary's Report**

Welcome again to everyone and thanks for coming along. Paula will report on the financial situation and Les will give an update on the courses and I will now fill in all the bits in-between

Membership is up on last year at this point, currently standing at 161 against 156 last year which is an increase of 5 but a marked improvement on the previous year when we lost 26 members. This is made up of 14 honorary, 11 life and 136 paid members. In total 61 existing members did not renew which is up 8 from 53 last year, however we did gain 58 new members through our courses & taster sessions run this year. We do hope to retain more members but this always seems to be a challenge so any suggestions to improve retention are always welcome.

The sponsored builds were well attended this year and we raised over £400 from all those held. Once again thank you to Mr & Mrs Langhorne, Meggan Jefferies and Sallie & Julian Lloyd for their kindness and generosity in supporting us on these events. These events form a vital source of funding for the Guild and they will be held again next year so we hope you can come along and support us.

As ever the Guild website is the home of all our information and continues to grow in content every year with new pictures and reports being added. Many thanks to Euan for his efforts in keeping this up to date and relevant. We are always open to the suggestions from members on how to improve the web site so do please bring them to our attention. We also have a Facebook page which growing and complimenting the website. It's a great way of pushing information to members (and those interesting in walling) especially reminders about events. If you haven't already signed onto it please do as you can also click a link to join the Facebook group where you will receive updates and reminders straight into your email account. We now have a total of 182 like on the page from afar a field as Spain and Japan. You can access Facebook through the website or by searching on Facebook for YDSWG.

John has covered most of the activity of the year in his report so I would just like to re iterate his thanks to all those who have attended shows and events on behalf of the guild. The days do prove beneficial to the guild in promoting our craft, courses and sometime gaining work for our full time walling members. The venues and events next year will be publicised in the spring newsletter but should be on the website much sooner. A new event we are trying to attend is the CLA Game fair which if successful should be a great event to promote the Guild. I do hope you are able to attend some of them.

I hope you all enjoyed the booklet newsletter which is now a regular feature of the Guild and a nice way of communicating to all our members. Thanks again to Euan for sorting the production along with all those who contributed to the articles. Also thanks to all those who have advertised in the booklet which has helped make the production commercially viable.

Thanks to all the committee members for their contributions and especially to Anna for trying to make sense out of the discussions and turn them into minutes.

Finally I would like to thank Woody for all his contributions and hard work over the years on the committee. I would also like to thank my assistant secretaries John, who has helped out with many aspects of the job and to Molly for the stuffing of envelopes with member information twice over the last year (yes the rates have gone up again this year) however she has made the cakes for refreshments.

### **Treasurer's Report**

2014 has proved to be a good year for the Guild. Although membership has remained fairly static there has been a big increase in course attendees thus boosting Guild funds. That coupled with the reduced instructors rate that was agreed for a 2 year cycle led to the courses being very profitable, Now we are looking financially healthy we can look to restore an improved rate for the instructors next year.

The reason we are showing a small loss this year is down to the payment from the GYS just running over the year end period. This means we start the next year's accounts with a rather healthy boost which means we can look to invest further in improving the Guild. We made some small improvement steps this year by purchasing a new swing sign and flutter flag which gives a much better image at shows and events. Hopefully we can build on this start.

The rest of the running costs were, as usual kept to a minimum throughout the year and we will continue to save money where we can and spend wisely where necessary.

### **Course Coordinator's Report**

Following a disappointing year in 2013 i.e only 28 people attending our weekend Beginners' Dry Stone Walling Training Courses, a review of our course fee was carried out at the end of 2013. This resulted in the course fee being reduced from £116 to £99 in order to compete with courses being offered by other dry stone walling groups and therefore attract more trainees.

This reduction in costs had the desired effect and as a result 56 people attended courses in 2014. i.e an increase of a 100%.

As it stands, our fees at @£99 are a bit higher than other groups but we offer smaller training groups with a maximum ratio of 1:5 i.e one instructor to five trainees. This leads to maximum personal tuition. Therefore this represents excellent value for money when you consider other groups run courses with just one trainer and numerous trainees. In my opinion this is poor value for money. In 2015 we are looking for an increase in beginner numbers on training courses as we now have two new course venues. One at Cold Kirby at the top of Sutton Bank and another at Coverdale near Leyburn.

### **Election of Officers**

There was an application made to accept Graham Brown onto the committee. This was proposed by John Pridmore and seconded by Sarah Pridmore. The floor voted unanimously to accept Graham onto the committee. The committee is now made up as follows:

Chairman - John Pridmore

Secretary - Sarah Pridmore

Treasurer - Paula Gittings

Assistant Secretary - Anna Bryer

Course Coordinator - Les Maxwell

Committee - Dave Purvis, Dick Laidler, Dave Leedale, Chris Morgan, Dennis Garbutt

### **AOB**

Dave advised that the Malta trip looked doubtful as there had been no response to several emails

Les brought up the possibility of the Guild offering Lantra awards however the training costs were thought to be prohibitive.

John suggested that those attending shows and events should be able to purchase guild branded polo shirts and claim back the cost from the guild. These could be promoted on the website with a link to Foxstitch to make ordering easy. Michael suggested that we should create the new logo right across the back of the shirt with the badge still on the front.

Graham Brown suggested that the web site should advise where walling tools could be purchased

Sarah brought up the suggestion of creating a generic A5 new member booklet rather than using the green folders. Added to this we should also think about refreshing the contents of the information to make it a bit more visually appealing along with more information. This can be picked up in the first committee meeting

Meeting closed at 4.03pm