



Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting – 12 November 2016

Present

Sarah Pridmore, John Pridmore, Brian Wood, Les Maxwell, Dave Purvis, Graham Brown, Bill Cowling, Dennis Garbutt, Michael Booth, Paula Gittings, Dick Laidler, Phil Grey, Ray Ellis, Keith Ledger, Dave Leedale, James Garwell

Apologies

Anna Bryer, Laurence Tucker, Dave Edwards, Molly Pridmore

Chairman's report

Here we are again after another packed and busy year.

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

The year actually started around this time last year. I received a call from a representative of a store called Cordings, a country outfitter, to look at building a wall in their shop window. Following a bit of work on Google I found that they only had one store in Piccadilly and their main shareholder was Eric Clapton. A site visit was carried out and we agreed a plan to proceed (which included bracing the floor to take the weight—that's the weight of the stone and not the builder!!) After several visits and many buckets of stone from Fountains the wall was ready to build. A small section just over a metre was built including a corner and a brass name plaque was fixed to the last top stone. Cordings were very happy with the result and donated £250 to the Guild as a thank you

We were busy as usual demonstrating at shows and events across the region. Our first event was the Duncombe Park show and on a decent spring day the team made the most of the usual challenging stone. I'm sure they keep the same stuff for us every year The Countryside Days educational event was then followed by The Great Yorkshire Show. This year heralded the start of what we hope will be an ongoing project over several years. We are based just past the Forestry Pavilion and have been tasked with creating a picnic area with dry stone features. This year we built a two-storey seat using stone from Jacksons quarry and some reclaimed flags as a result of the new hall build. An added bonus was that James became an expert

on their water pumping system and I'm sure will be wandering over there next year. Back to Ripley show in August on pleasant day and thanks to Les and Steve for covering that one. 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 didn't go ahead this year due to lack of entries. We can discuss this at committee level but my view is that we no longer aim to run this event as the interest has been very low for sometime now which is disappointing but appears to be a sign of the times

The mainstay of the Guild's activities are the practice meets held throughout the year. This year we started a little earlier than usual with the Crimplehenge build on the site of the old Crimple Valley Golf Course first tee. Planning was done by messers Purvis and Brown with the design being carried out by Johnny Clasper. The weekend was planned and we also involved members of the YAS and the local area preservation group along with our members. The henge feature stones had been pre set by Johnny having recovered them from the wood lower down the valley. The team worked all day Saturday and Sunday but ran out of time so a return visit was planned to finish off (although word has it that if Dave and Johnny hadn't spent so long arguing left was right and right was left then we might have got finished earlier). The team finally finished on the second weekend which was followed by some dodgy Druids holding an opening ceremony. Are there were not local virgins willing to be sacrificed on the altar stone the Druids made do with posing for a few pictures. If you want to see who they were check out the website

We then got things going at Carperby on a decent spring day where the attendees include some new members on a taster day. We then moved south and west to Cropper Fold Farm where a good squad including a couple more new members started the repair on a new section a little further down the wall we have been renovating. Thanks to Meggan for the great bacon butties and sponsorship for the day. The next event was the first of our visits to The Bivouac at Ilton where we have now repaired most of the walls in the vicinity of the visitor centre. Next came our annual visit up Sutton Bank to Garbutt Farm where we further progressed the wall along the drive using reclaimed limestone. We followed that by visiting Long Liberty Farm again where decent sized team took the wall a little nearer to the corner. We will get there next year!! Thanks to Sarah for bringing up refreshments in the form of sausage butties

Unfortunately we didn't get back to Garbutt Farm due to the owner being unwell and unable to get any stone. This meant the next meet was our annual sponsored build weekend at Carperby where the team repaired a wall with a water outlet culvert along the drive. Thanks to Jonathan & Annette for their hospitality and sponsorship

Late October saw us back at The Bivouac on a damp autumn day where a squad of including some more tasters repaired a small section. On Sunday 6th November we wrapped up our activity back at Cropper Fold Farm again on rather miserable cold day in total contrast to the previous year. Despite the conditions a good section was repaired and we were well looked after again.

Many thanks to all of you who have helped out throughout the year and also to our sponsors for their kind contributions. Special thanks go firstly to Paula for all the great work she had done with the accounts this year. Thanks Paula its very much appreciated. Also a big thank you to Les who is stepping down from the Course Co-ordinators role. Les has done a brilliant job here building the courses up to record number we have seen attending this year. Les has also been the driving force behind setting up the new Advanced Course which we piloted last year and will be running next year along with helping to improve the quality and standards of Guild activities and finally to Sarah for just putting up with me for another year.

Secretary's Report

Welcome again to everyone and thanks for coming along. John will report on the financial situation and I will give an update on the courses in the absence of Les and Graham

Membership is up on last year at this point, currently standing at 199 against 178 last year which is an increase of 21 building on; last years increase of 17 members and has increased now for the 3rd year in a row. This is made up of 14 honorary, 16 life (an increase of 6) and 169 paid members. In total 87 existing members did not renew which is up 27 from last year. This is unfortunate but to be expected due to the increased number of courses however we did gain over 100 new members through our courses & taster sessions run this year, which is a record for The Guild. 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 Cordings Harrogate for their kindness and generosity in supporting us on these events. Due to the success of our courses we are not as reliant as we were on these but they still form a useful part of our income.

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 is growing and complimenting the website and has over 400 likes from all around the world, up from 287. 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 so.

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.

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. If you ever have anything of interest please let us know and we can maybe feature it in next year's issue as it does get harder to think of content every year.

To finish I would like to thank all those who have contributed some of their time to the Guild this year. I would especially like to thank Les for all the great work he has done in producing record numbers of course sales and also to Paula who has taken on the accounts and improved the reporting so we can closely manage the finances throughout the year. We must remember that everyone gives their time on a voluntary basis and as well as the visible activity such as shows and events there is a lot of work done behind the scenes to keep everything running.

Treasurer's Report

2015 - 2016 has proved to be a good year for the Guild. Membership has increased to nearly 200 driven primarily by the courses we run. Even though we have increased the expenses paid to instructors the courses have continued to produce a good source of income for The Guild and they have also helped swell the membership number.

Overall for the year we have made a profit of £637. This is in keeping with the tax constraints we need to work within. This means we have invested some money into further improving and investing in The Guild. Here are a few highlights:

- Equipment. We have invested in a set of portable chairs and a sturdy folding table. This replaced an old borrowed plastic table and ensures our demonstrators have somewhere to sit during shows
- Equipment. Due to some issues with tools last year and the challenges of continually moving bags of hammers around the county we have purchased some additional hammers. Two will be loaned to each instructor for courses and it will be their responsibility to maintain the tools. We have also purchased a first aid kit for each instructor
- Postage. We have purchased 600 2nd class stamps for the bi annual mailings
- Stationery. We have purchased laminator pouches, a new laminator, brand new car stickers with the latest guild logo, ink for printers, a large volume of the postcard flyers for courses amongst other items
- Expenses have been paid again to cover mileage of the committee on Guild business. These will remain in place as long as The Guild is financially able to support them
- Sponsorship. Due to our healthy financial position we have not charged our sponsors the full rate. They have supported us when times were lean so we are returning the favour by reducing the sponsorship rate. A judgement will be taken on this on an ongoing basis

Making payments is becoming easier as most are now done by electronic bank transfer.

The great work by the team to develop and promote the courses has helped The

Guild move into a strong financial position. Monthly financial reports are produced for the Chairman to constantly monitor the financial position of The Guild which ensures any action can be taken promptly if required.

Bill Cowling congratulated the Guild on its continued success and ongoing relationship with the YAS & GYS

Course Coordinator's Report

This has been a record year for courses and the most successful in the history of the Guild. A total of 96 trainees attended courses and we even had to hold an additional course in October with 4 more trainees taking the total to 100. A few years ago we were down to 28 so this is an amazing transformation. We also had our largest number of attendees this year with 19 attending the final course of the year at Yate House

Generally the feedback has been very positive so a big thanks to all the trainers for all of their efforts during the year. We had trainees from afar a field as Germany and the Channel Islands

The introduction of an "Advanced Training" Courses will hopefully address the needs of Guild members who would like to increase their skill levels.

These short courses will be run under the supervision of Steve Bostock and will give members the opportunity to build features such as building an arch, steps and pillars. Also a big thank you to Steve for donating the "former" structure he built when he ran his initial course.

I am hoping these courses will be popular with people who have attended courses as a means of encouraging people to become active members of the Guild. Graham Brown has taken over the course coordinators role and we hope to further build on the successes of this year. We have some new venues for next year and have moved to 7 sessions rather than the normal 6.

Election of Officers

Proposal – Molly Pridmore to become Vice Secretary. Proposed John Pridmore, Seconded Dave Purvis. Voted in unanimously by the floor

Proposal – James Garwell for Committee Member. Proposed Graham Brown, Seconded John Pridmore. Voted unanimously by the floor

Les Maxwell has stepped down from the Committee

AOB

DP asked if we would reconsider registering as a charity again as Coracle Society & DSWA are both charities. To investigate over the winter months and discuss at the first committee meeting.

GB Should we add to the course questionnaire how they heard about the course

BW. Could we put contact details on the web site of the day leader for practice meets for people to check before they travel. JP to add a note in the spring news letter asking people to check Facebook or the web site before travelling

Meeting closed 3.52PM