



Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild

Autumn Newsletter 2015



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Cover photography credits

Front cover: The One Show Arch Build

Above: The November crew at Cropper Fold Farm

Back cover: Wall top from a course build at The Bivouac

Welcome

Dear Member,

This is now a regular end of year format for the Guild to let members what's been happening and we hope you will enjoy reading through it. We are always looking for new and interesting things to add so if you have any unusual or interesting articles or photographs please send them into us, and we will include them in our next edition. We can also add them to the website with your permission.

I do hope you enjoy reading through this latest edition

*John Pridmore
Chairman*

Chairman's Chat

The leaves have just started to turn on the trees which signals the time for me to don the thinking cap to recall and replay the events of the year and as with previous years, wish I had written stuff down throughout the year rather than trying to memorise everything at the end of the year. Anyway here is my best effort.

Firstly the formal stuff. The Guild AGM takes place on Saturday November 14th, 3pm at Thirsk Town Hall. Your attendance and input into this meeting would be greatly appreciated, as it allows an opportunity to air and discuss any new ideas or ways the Guild can further improve how it functions. We are always open to suggestions and great ideas! Refreshments will be provided after the event (*please email the Secretary or call by 11th November to confirm what you would like, either pork pie or vegetarian quiche, contact details at the end of the booklet*) which is a great time to catch up with other wallers on what they have been up to all summer. New members are most welcome to come along and seek advice or help from more experienced wallers who will be attending.

I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new members who have joined us this year either as direct entry, from one of our many courses or on a taster sessions at one of our practice meets. I do hope you will continue your membership into 2016 and take the opportunity to attend some of the events we have planned for next year.

Membership numbers have increased again and now stand at a record 195 which is great news. The main increase in membership is through the great courses we run over the year.

The Guild courses have been even more successful than the previous year with nearly 80 people attending between April and September. We managed to maintain the very competitive price of £99 for the weekend which offers great value. People have travelled from all corners of the country to attend and on most occasions we have been lucky with the weather. The feedback from all students has been very positive and I know speaking to our instructors we have really enjoyed training all those attending. From



some of the pictures I have seen there have been some impressive walls built, especially bearing in mind this is the first time for most of those attending. As part of the course fee all students become members of the Guild until April next year and can attend all Guild events free of charge. I'm not sure when you will receive this but we still have a practice meet at The Bivouac on 24th October and finally at Cropper Fold Farm on 1st November, so if you get chance why not come along for a fun day out? There are always experienced wallers on hand to answer any questions and help improve your skills.

Over the last year we have demonstrated at several shows and events which are a great way for the Guild to promote itself and the craft. The



first show of the year was a new event for us, Springtime Live at the Harrogate Showground.

This was an indoor demonstration and hopefully a permanent new fixture on our show calendar. The next event was Duncombe Park Show at Helmsley where the usual batch of challenging stone kept the

team on their toes.

The visit to The Great Yorkshire Show wasn't as grand as last year build-

ing The Oracle. We constructed some low level seats around the pond at the Brown Gate and also repaired the existing wall which had suffered some mindless vandalism. The show did have a highlight on the Wednesday as The One Show was broadcast from the show-ground and it included a short feature on the Guild. A demonstration arch was built before the show and the former



was removed live on the show and guess what? No it didn't collapse, it stayed up and was even stress tested afterwards with members Molly and Johnny standing on top. A new event this year was the popular CLA Game Fair held at Harewood House. Other than having no stone to start with, the event we eventually got going and the 3 days were good with plenty of interest in the stand.



Ripley Show was a much more enjoyable event this year as the weather stayed fair and we had a better location. Steve and Dick even made it into the local press and it wasn't in the courts section. The show season will end on

17th & 18th October with the Countryside Live event at the Great Yorkshire Showground. Pictures of these events can be seen on our website ydswg.co.uk so please go and have a look if you haven't seen them already.

The practice meets kicked off again at Carperby in April - a pleasant spring day resulted in a good turnout. We then travelled to West Yorkshire in May for our meet at Meggans farm near Bingley, where a team of 6 tackled a section that had come down



over the winter. As you can see from the inside cover the finished wall was a vast improvement on a collapsed section.

At the end of May we went to The Bivouac and made a good start on the wall on the opposite side of the entrance. A good turnout managed to repair a nice length along the drive. The highlight of the day however was lunch, where Suzie misread Les' Advanced Waller badge on his shirt thinking it read 'Average Waller' much to the amusement of all there. As you can guess Les did get some ribbing for the rest of the day (and at subsequent events). Suzie felt that bad she got Les the polo shirt in the picture on the right.



In early June we continued the wall at Long Liberty Farm and had the added challenge of building over an orthostat. Congratulations to Hugh Woolner who passed his basic test at the meet.

We then had two meets at Garbutt Farm on top of Sutton Bank and were lucky with the weather on both days. I always enjoy walling here as the stone is totally different to most I normally wall with and because

it's brittle limestone, the hammer stays in the bucket for most of the day.



We still have two practice meets left this year on 24th October at The Bivouac and finally on 1st November at Cropper Fold Farm near Bingley. As always you can find the venue details on the website. These events are free to all members and a

great opportunity to come along and improve your skills alongside experienced wallers and other members. And most importantly have a fun day out.

You can also take the basic or advanced waller certificates at practice meets, all you need to do is book in with the Secretary beforehand and remember the basic test is free to take and all you need to do is rebuild a small section of wall. Full details of all the tests can be found on the website.

Finally as Christmas approaches why not consider giving a 2 day Dry Stone Walling gift voucher as a present. The price of £99 has been held for 2016 and these can be easily purchased through the website.



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, all your support and help is very much appreciated.

John Pridmore

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A Show Champion

Bill Cowling, the Guild's President, has stepped down as Show Director of the Great Yorkshire Show and Countryside Live. We have enjoyed a wonderful relationship with Bill and the show over the years and Bill has



been one of the driving forces in allowing us to play with stone at various locations across the site. Over the years we have built the wall around the pond along with several seats; the kissing seat on the Presidents' Lawn; the memorial seat near the food hall and the impressive

Crimple Valley Oracle near the brown gate entrance. We would like to thank Bill for all his support and input into these projects and wish him well in his retirement (although I'm sure there are plenty of jobs waiting at home). Also in recognition of his services to agriculture, Bill was made a Deputy Lord-Lieutenant of North Yorkshire. We are pleased and proud to have you as our President.

Dacre Walls Walk

On a decent dry September Sunday, the Chairman and Secretary set off on a walk we found on the internet, with our camera and a flask of coffee. We parked up in The Wellington Pub (well, there had to be some reward at the end) however you can also park in Darley Mill. The first of



many step styles is through a wall off the main road and in this early part of the wall, look out for a Stang Stoop or Yatstead. This is an early form of gate where grooves are carved into the stone to allow timbers to be slotted in to form a removable barrier. Right through the walk you will appreciate the value of stone walls as a barrier

and even though some of them are showing signs of age, they are still standing and providing an effective break between fields.

You will then pass through the first squeeze style to access a small foot bridge over the river. Squeeze styles are a narrow gap built into walls that allow people through but not live-stock. There is usually a base stone right across the wall then the sides are built and can be straight up or slightly narrower at the bottom than the top. A good gauge for the bottom is the width of a boot. You will also notice a couple of culverts built into the wall to the right of the style at the base of the wall. There are more step styles and stone steps to enjoy as you make your way up the hill.



Once you cross the road you continue up the hill where you will notice naturally occurring outcrops of rocks and boulders. The wall running along the hill half way up has a couple of nice examples of Orthostats on the right. These are large boulders that are too big to move, so the wall is simply built over the top of them and they become part of the wall. Don't forget to look behind as you near the top. As you come out of the end of the wood you will notice some repairs have been made to the field walls.

Continue to the main road and down the hill. Look out for a nice stone arch in the driveway of a house on the right. Once you pass over the ford you will notice a great example of a pack horse bridge on the right. As soon as you have gone over the bridge you will notice a massive wall on the right which must be nearly 12 foot tall. Just trying to imagine how it was built all those years ago is quite mind boggling. Another step style takes you through the wood where you will again notice some huge boulders embedded in the ground.



As we were walking in September we came across these wonderful toadstools which, after checking, were found to be *Amanita muscaria*, commonly known as the fly agaric. After a short walk on the road you will pass over another style next to a gate showing a good example of a dressed gatepost and some nicely dressed topstones.

Cross over the moor top to another step style and over the road down to Pasture Side, going round the building to the left. Another step style in the corner of the field takes you through another farm and on to a small lane. You will notice some more repairs where trees have disturbed the walls. You are now following a short section of the Nidderdale Way. You will now cross over a couple of fields and you will notice several repairs to the surrounding walls.



As you go through a new gate you will notice what looks to be a new wall running across the field. The wall end to the left has not been built very well as there are a lack of runners going into the wall. You will then cross through several gates and keep your eyes left to see a good example of a cripple hole. These were built into the walls to

allow passage of sheep between fields using a large flagstone to block

the opening, however as sheep have been bred larger over many decade some of them may now be too small for some sheep. The walk takes you through Dacre top and down the hill towards Pyefield farm. Notice the nice regular blocky top stones on the wall along this drive.

The path winds down to the beck through several more gates and styles then follows the beck towards the road. As you near the road look left to see another example of a stone arch. A final step style takes you back to the road then it's a short walk back to the car (and a well deserved pint!) If you intend to do the walk please take the instructions from the following website: www.tinyurl.com/dacrewallwalk



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Hobbit Houses

Guild members Keith Ledger and Johnny Clasper received an interesting enquiry from an organisation called Pathways Consultancy. They were looking for some dry stone wallers who fancied a challenge in building something unique, that could be enjoyed by the public at the Sutton Bank Visitor Centre on the top of Sutton Bank (just round the corner from our Garbutt Farm venue). Part of the remit was as follows:

"You'd need to enjoy a creative challenge and be able to be part of a team, problem solving as we go, to create an unusual but exciting play feature."

Johnny came up with some interesting designs that were unique and provided a good challenge to build. Several meetings later and after much form filling and many site meetings the build could commence. The first requirement



was some stone. This was supplied by F&R Jacksons Windy Hill quarry, which some of our members will be familiar with after using the stone for the Memorial Seat and Oracle at the Showground in Harrogate.

The groundworks were done with a JCB to prepare the site ready for building. The challenge here as you will see from the pictures was the rather damp June and July we experienced turned the site into a bit of a swamp.



Undeterred by the typically British conditions, Keith and Johnny set about building the Hobbit Houses. The key to each of the houses was setting out the foundations and in the picture to the side, the position of the feature stones. They certainly didn't want to be moving

these around once they were set in place.

Once the large stones were in place the site looked something akin to a

mini Stonehenge. The aim was now to start to build in the walls (remembering to leave a gap for the entrance!) The JCB had to be brought in to place the lintel although Keith reckons he could have lifted it into place himself.



Work also started on the other houses all of which had their own unique design and offered different challenges in building. The entrance on the example below shows a unique Dolphin Fin entrance which involved

making a bespoke former of the required shape with one side concave and the other convex, which Johnny said was nearly as hard as building the doorway. The build progressed over several weeks as all three constructions were built each with their own unique features built in.



The following page shows what the finished houses look like. (Keith also says he's now heard all the jokes about building himself three new houses). A total of 28 tonnes of stone was used plus 9 gigantic rocks. All the houses were built by eye as they had run out of curved sting at the shop.





YDSWG Courses

I thought I would do a small section on the courses this year as we have nearly 80 new members after completing the two days. This has been a record year and I hope you all had enjoyable weekends and that we might have sparked 'The Walling Bug' within you to want to keep going, learn more and improve your skills. You are all members through to next April when I hope some of you will renew your membership and come along to some of our practice meets throughout the year. They are great fun and you can build something that could stand for over a hundred years just by gravity and friction - as we would say on the Beckwithshaw course, AWESOME! All the instructors have really enjoyed teaching you the skills and we would like to thank you for making our weekends equally as enjoyable. Some of your feedback is below:

"Thanks to all at YDSWG for a great course this weekend. Great company and a real sense of achievement. Lovely to know our wall will be standing for years to come!"

"The course is at the very top of its game by all barometers, instructors, structure, class size"

"The only way to improve it is to make it longer"

"Awesome two days of hard work"





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