



Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild

2018 Annual General Meeting

Present: Sarah Pridmore, John Pridmore, Brian Wood, Dave Purvis, Bill Cowling, Paula Gittings, Dick Laidler, Ray Ellis, Catherine Ellis, David Heaven

1. Apologies: Keith Ledger, Dennis Garbutt Laurence Tucker, Craig Kersey, Steve Bostock, Geoff Selby Graham Brown Michael Booth, Meggan Jefferies, James Garwell

2018 Chairman's Report

Thank you all for coming along. It's great to see everybody here fit and well

Sarah will cover off membership in her report and I in Grahams absence will cover off all things about courses.

At the start of December last year I became out of contract and though I would just spend a month or two walling them look for another job. I mean our winters are never that cold what with global warming. Well December started cold and then it just got colder and wetter every month. On many occasions I had to hose down my waterproofs as they would be caked in mud. Getting dressed every day meant multiple layers both top and bottom in an effort to keep the cold out then several pairs of gloves every day to try and keep my hands functioning. This all peaked in March no less with 'The Beast from the East' which saw a 5 foot wall I was working on up at Greenhow totally covered except for the top stones. Even spring struggled to get going so eventually I landed an indoor job again on 4th June, just as the heatwave started. I love walling and have every respect for those who earn a living from it as it must be one of the toughest jobs around however some of the view I had at the locations I was working made it worthwhile

Shows were again one of the mainstays of our activity. Our first event was the new event at the Showground called Springtime live. For some reason we were outside and it was a cold and miserable day so we weren't the most popular stand. Thanks to Anna, Ray and Meggan who stuck it out with me. This was followed by Duncombe Park and on a decent spring day. As usual the same old batch of rough stone was brought out which always gives the team a nice challenge. The Countryside Days educational event was then followed by The Great Yorkshire Show. We had planned to start a new project at the back of the food hall however the show let us down on the stone supply. Some speedy re-planning by James meant we could at least demonstrate something albeit not what we wanted to do. Also congratulations to Bill who had the honour of being President this year. As I said in my newsletter I'm sure he calls the Queen Lizzy and has her mobile number. Back to Ripley show in August on pleasant day where Henry and I keep the public entertained, especially as the crutch of my trousers had exploded just

for a bit of extra ventilation. It's always the same lumpy stone but there is always a load of interest in the stand. Unfortunately we were missed off the demonstrators list for Countryside Live again despite requests to be included this year. We are planning to catch up with the shows management to see if we can get our relationship back on track. Added to the disappointment this year was the Yorkshire Farming Museum who cancelled both shows because they didn't have any budget for stone. On the plus side Stokesley Show have been in touch about the Guild demonstrating next year so let's hope that come off.

We got things going at Carperby again but only managed half a day due to the inclement conditions making it dangerous underfoot. You would never have guessed that we were due a wonderful summer at this point. Back to Bingley at the beginning of May on a good spring day. We worked on a section that needed rising to become properly stock proof. The first practice meet at Low Belford Farm saw a small group extend the wall that had been started on a course the previous year. The next event was at Pen View, Thoraby where Cliff Bailey put on some great hospitality for the team attending. Once again I missed the event so I will try again to get there next year. We then attended a venue we used to go to many years ago at High Lodge Farm, Scawton. The stone here is different to what we normally see, being thin limestone. It makes a great looking wall but does take a long time to get up. Again, you don't often need to pick up a hammer.

The next meet was at Long Liberty Farm where we started on a new section of wall after completing the previous wall we were working on last year. As there were only three of us we could only manage to make a small start on this. We then moved onto West Bolton Farm for our sponsored build and were well looked after by our hosts Jonathan and Annette. We made another visit to Low Belford farm in October before completing the year back at Cropper Fold Farm. In October one of Dave Purvis' projects came to fruition with the stone and brick plinth on the site of the old Stonefall Brickworks in Harrogate. A team of old codgers (yes I was the youngest and I'd just clocked another year as it was my birthday) combining the skills of Dave, Graham & I along with the labour of the local community conservation group threw up a combined stone and original stonefall brick plinth to house a storyboard. The result was quite good although the brickwork was a bit dodgy (that's why I build walls made of stone!!). It's a great lasting monument to a piece of local history so thanks to Dave for all his prep work and for building the frame which was invaluable (I also have a picture of a spirit level with Daves name on it. Are you joining the association Dave?)

Once again, many thanks to all of you who have helped out throughout the year and also to our sponsors for their kind contributions. Thanks to all committee members for their support and contributions over the year. As you have read in the newsletter we really need to get a couple of extra member into the Committee to ensure we have the resources and skill to keep the Guild functioning. Running the Guild is a team effort that takes time and sacrifices and without these voluntary efforts we wouldn't be here.

Thanks to James for organising and running the GYS demo despite the difficult circumstances. Special thanks go also 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 Graham who has taken the courses from strength to strength and ensured the seamless and smooth running again this year. Finally to Sarah for just putting up with me for another year and for all she does in helping to run the guild.

Secretaries Report

Welcome again to everyone and thanks for coming along, it's great to see everyone again. Thanks to John for the review of the year. John will report on the financial situation and also cover off Grahams course report

Membership is up on last year at this point, currently standing at record 226 against 210 last year, which is an increase of 16 building on last year's increase of 11 members and has increased now for the 4th year in a row. This is made up of 14 honorary, 16 life and 196 paid members. In total 93 existing members did not renew which is only up 3 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 again is a record for The Guild. We do try to encourage all the trainees attending to continue with the new skill they have learnt but often they come along as a 'one off' as the course has been given as a gift

The Guild website is the home of all our information and grows from strength to strength each year. We still hit nearly at the top of the first page when you google Dry Stone Walling Course. Many thanks to Euan for all his efforts in maintaining the web site. 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 500 likes from all around the world, up from 470. It's a great way of pushing information to members (and those interesting in walling) especially reminders about events. Recently the Guild have also set up an Instagram page to again help promote what we do. It's only a couple of weeks old and there are already over 70 followers.

John has covered most of the activity of the year in his report so I would just like to reiterate 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.

You should all have received your Autumn newsletter recently. 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.

Finally it takes a lot of time and effort to keep the Guild running so I would also like to afford a special thank you to Paula & Graham for the work and time they put into running this organisation. We wouldn't be sitting here today without their unselfish efforts every week of the year so thanks to you both.

Course Report 2018

2018 was another record year for course sales as demand seems to still be growing. We trained 103 students this year along with a bespoke course for a group of friends from London. We again had to fit in extra places towards the end of the year and could have potentially sold more. Unfortunately there were no takers for the advanced courses so we will need to review how we promote these going forwards

In terms of 2018, the plan is to run an extra basic training course, to bring the total up to eight, and a further extra course planned to be on standby, should the demand be there. Additionally, and in line with the feedback from instructors, each course will now be run on a ratio of 4:1, trainees to instructors, to a planned minimum of twelve places, giving a total of three instructors. This, coupled with the extra course will give a programme of 96 places, possibly 108, if the extra standby course is used. Additionally, there is the scope to grow some courses and to use extra instructors. This has already occurred, with the first course of 2018, and that now stands at sixteen places, already now giving us a total of 100 places, possibly 112.

It is also planned to run a similar number of specialist courses, with up to 24 places.

The instructor numbers have been reduced for 2018, due to one instructor not abiding by the requirement to attend at least two events/meets during 2017. As reported previously, there are efforts to recruit new instructors and to that end two people have been invited to join the instructor body. This will only result in the number recovering to what it was at the start of 2017, so efforts to recruit others will continue.

The annual instructors breakfast meeting will take place in early March 2019, at the usual venue. Instructors are requested to look out for the invite and to make every effort to attend.

2018 Treasurers Report

2017/18 has proved to be yet another good year for the Guild. Membership has increased again now well over 200 driven mostly again by the courses we run. We have maintained the expenses paid to instructors and the courses have continued to produce a good source of income for The Guild whilst helping swell the membership numbers.

Overall for the year we have made a profit of £2060 up from £1363 last year. We avoided any corp tax requests last year however our continued success may bring us onto the radar. Ultimately if we do need to pay any it's a measure of our success.

There have been no major purchases this year which again accounts for the increase in profit. Next year we intend to refresh our instructors' shirts and will need to purchase stamps again. We are also reviewing the expenses we pay our instructors which should help contain the profits/ We are able to do this because we have built a solid financial platform

Most payments are now made by electronic transfer so we don't now issue many cheques at all

The stripe payment platform is working well and making life easier

We have had another excellent year thanks to the efforts of everyone involved in running the Guild

Future committee set up

The actual admin of the committee falls on just a few members. To try and spread the burden the following has been agreed by the committee

1. Have a role rotation between the key roles in the Guild. This can be a one or 2 year stint and currently would cover Secretary, Course co-ordinator and the new role of Events co-ordinator
2. Create a role of Events Secretary responsible for setting up and managing the programme for the year
3. JP requested new blood in the newsletter emphasising they don't have to be good or regular wallers. Need more administrators. No enquiries to date
4. Suggestion of dropping the main committee meetings to 2 per year with a smaller management committee (us 3 plus any potential newbie that may come along)
5. Make both of you vice chairs with the aim of rotating this rollover say a 2 year period

Election of Officers

No new officers were elected so the committee remained the same

AOB

BW. Mentioned about the charity status going forwards. JP advised this will try and progress this over the coming year

Meeting Closed 3.55pm