



## THE YORKSHIRE DRY STONE WALLING GUILD®

### **Minutes of the Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild's Annual General Meeting, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2007 Held at Sowerby Parochial Hall, 3.00pm**

Apologies for absence were received from: - Lawrence Tucker, Annie and Tariq Anwar, John Turner, John Pridmore, Henry l'Anson, Justin Wormald, Clifford Bailey, Dennis Garbutt, Edward Raw, Paul Hill, Margaret Handley and Chris Clifton.

16 members attended the meeting, including our President Bill Cowling.

The minutes of the last meeting (16<sup>th</sup> November 2006) were read. With no matters arising, Ian Varty proposed acceptance, seconded by Keith Ledger, and approved by those present.

As there were no matters arising, the Chairman invited Bill Cowling to address the meeting.

He began by saying he considered it a great honour to be asked to be our President, which he very much appreciated. He praised the Guild for another good year and noted in particular the enthusiasm shown by the membership at the Great Yorkshire Show and the Children's events also held on the showground. He thanked the Guild for its continued support at these events, including the Careers day for secondary school children held last week as a new venture.

The wall around the wildlife pond at the Brown Gate was a source of personal satisfaction; its presence enhanced the site both visually and aesthetically and he looked forward to seeing it extend again in 2008.

The supply of stone for the wall was not inexhaustible, but he would ensure its provision and in response to a request for easier stone to work with, he promised that Keith Ledger would spend at least ten minutes in selecting it for us!

He concluded by wishing the Guild another good year to come.

### **Chairman's Annual Report for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

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

I would like to commence by thanking the Committee for their sterling work over the past twelve months. In particular we need to thank Woody for his dedication and hard work as both Treasurer and Secretary. He is truly the



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engine room of the Guild and its increasing success, activity and exposure are in the main due to him.

Also grateful thanks to Stuart Matthews who is standing down as Company Secretary, a position he willingly volunteered to hold whilst we were improving our committee structure.

During the past year we have most successfully demonstrated and promoted the craft of dry stone walling at: - Pickering Game and Country Fair, Duncombe Park Country Fair, Countryside Live days at the Great Yorkshire Showground, the Great Yorkshire Show, Masham Steam Rally and the recent Careers day at the GYS. Thank you to all those of you who have assisted at those events. I am sure that you will have enjoyed the experience of walling 'in public' so to speak and I do hope that you have also enjoyed the fellowship of your fellow wallers.

Practice Meets have been held at Sutton Bank with it's awful stone, Rosedale, Aysgarth and Kewick. Support for these has generally been good and again thank you for supporting these events where we try to mix experienced wallers with those having less mileage under their belts. It is also an opportunity for Basic and Master tests to be taken when appropriate.

The attendance at our annual sponsored build at Healaugh was a touch disappointing, particularly on the Sunday. Please remember that this is our one major fund raising event of the year, which provides monies to tide us over the winter months, giving some financial insurance for future unpredicted expenditure. Having said that, the Guild is again greatly appreciative of the generous financial sponsorship from Mr and Mrs Morrogh-Ryan.

Our annual Walling Competition was held at 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 Clifford Bailey and Ian Woodhead for his sponsorship.

The results were:

Open	1 <sup>st</sup> Dave Leedale	2 <sup>nd</sup> John Pridmore	3 <sup>rd</sup> Michael Booth.
Amateur	1 <sup>st</sup> Dave Williams	2 <sup>nd</sup> Andy Summers	3 <sup>rd</sup> Bryn Gifford.

During the year our excellent instructors have trained over 40 individuals to the usual high standard at both Thirsk Auction Mart and Fountains Abbey. We 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.

Your committee has spent a considerable period of time considering the Guild qualifications and following the formal part of the AGM we will discuss the proposals for the new Master Waller test specification. The launch of our



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excellent website has inevitably exposed us to a much wider and potentially critical audience and we recognise that we must move forward.

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  
Chairman

### **Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

I don't want to make a detailed analysis for fear of boring everyone, but briefly the Guild has had another very successful year financially. The account summary shows a healthy situation, despite finishing the year a little over £200 less than at the start.

The Guild made some big investments this year, notably in equipment with the purchase of 3 gazebos at £570 for weather protection at shows and similar events; something we have really appreciated. They also project a professional image at these events, for example at the Great Yorkshire Show where we sold 8 training places over the three days; a full course worth valuable surplus funding to the Guild. Sadly that was not repeated at Masham, a raised walk-way would have been more appropriate.

First aid includes the cost of a course for 6 of our tutors at £50 a head to satisfy the legal responsibilities in running training courses for beginners.

We have also been able to pay for the launch and operation of our website, a very worthwhile investment; please have a look at it if you haven't done so already. We have had course bookings and memberships from it already, but perhaps more importantly, put our mark on the Internet as a result.

You might question the expense in entertainment. This was a 'one-off' buffet supper to thank the tutors, their long-suffering partners, and FWAG, our major source of candidates at the time, in getting the training courses away so successfully last year.

You will have seen the financial activity involved in the training courses for this year; last year we had 37 candidates, this year that rose to 41; it would have been a lot more if Askham Bryan College had been able to fill all the courses they had planned. Guild membership for the year is included in the course fee, and whilst we accept that the wastage rate in renewals will be high, we have retained about 30% of the intake from last year.

Current membership is now 154, the highest it has ever been I believe, and there are already several enthusiastic new members from courses and direct entry this year I am sure we will retain.



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So, taking all these things into account, the Guild is doing pretty well.

Guild Treasurer  
Brian Wood

There being no questions on either report, the Chairman asked for approval of them both, this was proposed by Keith Ledger, seconded by Richard Wheeler and accepted by those present.

### **Officers and Committee**

The present officers and committee were prepared to serve another term, but the Chairman called for some secretarial assistance particularly with writing up meeting minutes to reduce the workload on the Secretary. Judith Wood has volunteered for the post of Company Secretary; the Chairman was at pains to point out that this didn't represent a takeover bid for the Guild by the Wood family, but it did make for a sensible working arrangement with the necessary signing of the papers involved.

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

### **Officers**

Chairman	Michael Booth
Secretary	Brian Wood
Treasurer	Brian Wood
Company Secretary	Judith Wood

### **Committee**

Dave Purvis; Clifford Bailey; Dennis Garbutt, Michael Rosher, and John Pridmore

### **Any Other Business**

#### 1. Master Waller Test Specification

A summary of the proposed changes had been sent to the membership; full copies of both old and new specifications were circulated to all those present for reference and are attached to these minutes as appendices.

The Chairman outlined the background to the changes proposed in the Master Waller Test specification, brought about by recent criticism of some weaknesses and inconsistency under the current arrangements. He felt the test needed a more robust demonstration of the candidate's suitability for our top qualification, but was at pains to point out that current holders would not be expected to re-qualify under these proposals.



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In particular, the present test was only a snap shot of performance on the day. The judging for the CLA competition, which involves examples of previous work, was in his view a part of the evaluation of a craftsman's abilities in the longer term. It was felt that most or all of those applying would be professionals earning their living this way, and to qualify as Master wallers they should represent the best the Guild had to offer.

It was also appreciated that there were perfectly good and skilled wallers not working as professionals and that these proposals were not intended to exclude them from demonstrating a searching test of their abilities; this was an additional aspect of the changes not yet resolved.

There was a lively discussion from the floor, particularly on the requirement for a written stage in the test. Historically the current multi choice paper was used to assess background knowledge of the craft and was set up in the early days of the Guild, but it was also clear from many other speakers that they questioned its value in judging the ability of a candidate in a practical skill; and that it could indeed put them right off from attempting the test.

A valid point here was in risk assessment; a necessary fact now of our times and that this aspect might form a part of the test. Several speakers suggested that any pre-written material could easily be plagiarised and offered as the candidates' own work; an unavoidable part of any such scheme.

The proposed costs involved were not thought sufficient to cover the expenses involved for the examiners in committing the time and travel costs to look at field work, and later the observed run which demanded a full day. The Chairman admitted that the committee had agonised over this aspect hoping to make it less demanding: the DSWA for example had costs running to £570 for their Master Craftsman's qualification which he felt was onerous, but opinions differed.

Other considerations included backing from the landowner whose walls had been worked upon, presentation of a portfolio of work completed, pre set questions for research by the candidate with verbal answers and a pre requisite course attendance on these aspects by prospective candidates. This raises the question of who runs the course and sets its content, a further difficulty.

The question was asked if a marginal failure under the new rules could constitute a pass of an 'intermediate' qualification. The Chairman stated that any retest would only examine the failure area, and would not a complete retake of all stages.

What was generally agreed was the need to demonstrate a high standard of practical achievement to gain the award. The committee would look again at



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the need for written work, set a realistic charge and resolve the question of another level of qualification for the non-professional to aim at. The final draft will be circulated to Instructors and existing Master for further comment and ratification before being put into practice next year.

2. One aspect of low attendance at meets offered from the floor was the clash of fixtures at fixed holiday weekend. The Secretary accepted this but pointed out that planning our calendar was not easy, and some such clashes were inevitable.

3. As a result of our attendance at the Careers day, the Guild had been approached to hold a course and assist the pupils in building a wall at Boroughbridge High School. They have funding to cover the purchase of stone and the day rate for two Instructors, and maybe some expenses for a limited team from the Guild in support. Keith Ledger was evaluating the project on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> November

Advice from the floor pointed out one aspect of such work was for us to insist on having a teacher present to avoid the need for our team to be CRB checked.

With no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 4.30pm.

It was followed by a presentation on our website by Euan Raffel, which was well received, and a social gathering with attending partners over fish and chips.

Those present: Ian Varty, Chris Morgan, Heather Dickinson, Anna Bryer, John Clifton, Keith Ledger, Dave Purvis, Brenda Koo, Richard Wheeler, Stephen Scaife, Dave Leedale, Judith Wood, Brian Wood, Michael Booth, Bill Cowling and Ralph Turner.