



# THE YORKSHIRE DRY STONE WALLING GUILD®

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2010 Held at the Annexe Thirsk Town Hall at 3.00pm

### 1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from: Paul Hill, Keith Ledger, Steve Bostock, Mr and Mrs Langhorne, Graham Dixon, John Turner, Clifford Bailey, Jeremy Morrogh-Ryan and Michael Booth.

### 2 Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting (14<sup>th</sup> November 2009) were read out as summaries.

### 3 Matters arising

With no matters arising, Dick Laidler proposed acceptance, seconded by Dave Purvis and approved by those present.

Bill Cowling, attending as our President, gave a short address to the meeting.

He thanked the Guild for its continued support of the Yorkshire Agricultural Society in their educational programmes through the year and gave us high praise for our seat construction on the Presidents Lawn at the 2010 Great Yorkshire Show. It has been greatly admired since and will get a lot of use in the coming years. Plans for next year were not finalised at this stage.

### 4 Chairman's Annual Report for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010

A warm welcome to you all.

Again it has been a busy and successful year for the Guild, with the usual mix of practice meets, show appearances and training courses. Some recent research into course costs elsewhere confirms my view that for the training packages we offer we are very competitive. My thanks go to all the tutors for the hard work they put in to make these courses so successful. A further 59 students were trained this year.

The new wall at Fountains Abbey for their outdoor plant sales area gave a different training challenge this year and was enjoyed by tutors and students alike. My thanks go also to those who described the details of the project to the passing public on their way through to the abbey.

We held one course at Beckwithshaw Cricket Club this year for the first time, and despite warning everyone present about the existence of a buried water pipe, guess who put his mattock through it!!



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We will return there next year and to Masham to continue with courses on the wall across what was so recently the Rally show field. If though you hear or know of suitable sites for training courses please let us know.

Our meet at Cowling was well attended for a first appearance there, the bacon butties that followed were very welcome. Our former chairman was blowing a bit after the steep climb up to the wall itself. We held a practice meet at Pennypot lane as another new venue this year which was also well attended. The stone is more suited to random walling, something different for those who may not have worked that way before. My thanks go to Mr and Mrs Sheryn and the Ryder family respectively. Thank you too to Mr and Mrs Langhorne for their continued support and generosity in hosting our sponsored build again this year.

The competition this year had to be cancelled for lack of numbers and my apologies go to those who entered and were disappointed. Perhaps we should look into more active promotion to a wider audience. Membership currently stands at 185 which is only 2 less than at the same time last year and has been subject to the usual turnover generated through membership via our training courses. At only £7.50 per year for adult and £2.50 for junior it still offers great value compared with many other clubs and societies.

My thanks go to the committee for wise guidance and support and all those in the Guild who attend our events and give their time freely on those occasions. None of our activities would work without that support.

On the committee we say goodbye to Michael Booth who is stepping down to allow fresh blood to replace him, we will miss his wisdom and good guidance, and of course to Woody as our 'temporary' Secretary. He has been a key member and has transformed the Guild in the last six years to make it the success it has become. It is though only a minor reprieve as he will continue to organise the training courses and manage the finances. I invite you all to show your appreciation for the best secretary the Guild has had.

John Pridmore

As there were no questions following the report, approval was duly proposed by Dick Laidler, seconded by Dave Leedale and accepted by those present.

### **5 Secretary/Treasurer's Report for the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

With great satisfaction I am able to report on another successful year for the Guild. Strangely, the recession, as last year, seems to have had little



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effect on our course bookings, with a new record number of 59 attending. That brings us up to about 240 total now, a magnificent achievement. Regrettably we had to cancel one of our courses in August, maybe it was over ambitious to expect two to fill in the same month; but we were then able to combine our scattered bookings with those from the cancelled Askham Bryan course in July and make up a full course instead. I'm sorry this limited input for those affected.

I am only too happy to endorse the Chairman's praise for the tutors, being one himself he is maybe too modest to acknowledge his own input. They do a first class job in all weathers, attracting very positive pupil comment. Words like friendly, knowledgeable and professional frequently appear in the feedback sheets. Bookings for next year are already coming in.

Guild membership took an unusually big hit at renewal time this year; these came mainly from those having membership as a course benefit, but there were some losses from longer established members too

Our sponsored build at West Bolton farm in Carperby was rather poorly attended this year with only 10.5 metres of wall repaired. I'm also guilty of not attending the event this year; a brief Northumberland holiday with my wife took precedence. As always we are very grateful to our hosts Mr and Mrs Langhorne for their generous support and the splendid teas they lay on to feed us at the end of the day.

For those interested in these matters, there are a few high-lights with the accounts. Bank interest on over £3000 in our savings account has now slumped to just £2.50 for the year, words fail me. Before the credit crisis that stood at about £75.

Those of you with long memories will recall the Guild becoming a Limited Company 10 years ago; to protect our registered name for a further 10 years has cost us £300.

Stone supply and bridging expenses cover the temporary funding with ourselves as 'bankers' for materials used for building our stone seat at the Great Yorkshire Show; it includes demonstration or travel expense for members which we can claim back.

I also have a short website report from our designer Euan Raffel to read to you.

### Summary

Following last year's AGM there have been a few minor changes to the website. After a review of various sections of the website, information regarding courses was reviewed and given a dedicated section to enable visitors to access all the relevant information with ease and speed. Information on other events was reviewed as well with some tweaks to improve clarity.



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On the home page, an information bar was installed at the top of the page highlighting the next upcoming event as well as the next available course with places available. This was done following discussion at the last AGM and is proving to be a useful and worthwhile addition to the website.

The New Year saw Yorkshire blanketed in snow for a number of weeks, which gave us an ideal opportunity to bring some new images on to the site to bring a fresh look and make it more relevant to the season. A new section was started in the Gallery from this - Seasonal Walls.

Throughout the year new slideshows have been uploaded, reflecting some of the year's courses and events. Recently new software has been installed which enhances the photo slideshows, allowing for more detailed captions and larger images. The Guild has also experimented with video; on the Fountains Abbey project page is a video, hosted by YouTube. The video is generating interest - at time of writing, the video had received 75 views since the page was published a couple months ago.

Finally, one of the most important changes this year has been of a technical nature, which has allowed the Guild to benefit from an instant reduction in running costs this year of 30% (compared to 2009 costs) - a reduction which will continue for years to come; welcome news given the still uncertain economic climate.

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### Statistics

For the period November 7<sup>th</sup> 2009 to November 5<sup>th</sup> 2010

Total hits (the number of pages, documents and pictures that have been viewed) - 31,416

Total visits (the number of visitors, excluding search engines) - 8479

### Top 5 pages:

Events

Courses minisite

ePayments minisite

About

Membership

Within the Gallery, the top features were:

Chamber of Horrors

Walls in the Landscape

Masham series

Thirsk Training Course Aug 2009

Long Liberty Farm 2010



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Fountains Abbey 2010

Most common search terms leading to the website:

Dry stone walling courses Yorkshire

Dry stone walling

Yorkshire dry stone walling

Ydswg

There being no questions on the report, approval was proposed by Dick Laidler, seconded by Dave Purvis and accepted by those present.

### **6 Election of Officers and Committee**

The Chairman had received nominations for Sarah Pridmore as Secretary and Dave Edwards for committee. The remaining members of the committee were prepared to serve a further term. There being no further nominations. Dave Purvis proposed approval, seconded by Judith Wood and accepted by those present.

The new arrangement will be as follows:

#### Officers

Chairman	John Pridmore
Secretary	Sarah Pridmore
Treasurer	Brian Wood
Company Secretary	Judith Wood

#### Committee

John Pridmore, Sarah Pridmore, Dave Purvis, Dave Leedale, Dennis Garbutt, Clifford Bailey, Anna Bryer, Brian Wood, Dave Edwards and Dave Leedale.

The retiring Secretary added the following comments:

After my appeal last year, I am delighted we have a volunteer to take on this job. Sarah will bring fresh views and ideas to take the Guild forward and perhaps offer new insights to challenging enquiries. Here are a few of the more unusual ones to show it is not all about walling.

Quite early on I had a call from a lady asking about the engraving and supply of a headstone; she was all ready to dictate the wording required. A man phoned to ask us to promote his rabbit catching skills to farmers in Derbyshire; he said to prevent the undermining of their walls. We get frequent offers of surplus stone to collect or buy, some of it obvious rubbish and of course there are many requests for advice, particularly from journalists for articles, often, sadly, without thanks or acknowledgement.

Perhaps the strangest call was during last winter, the caller wondered if we had road salt to supply; the cheekiest came by e-mail from South Africa and



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expected me to list the bus routes and connections from one of our courses to a DSWA course at Bailden Leeds!! We didn't even get a booking in the end. I feel sure Sarah will handle all this with skill and confidence, ably supported as necessary by John.

I have though greatly enjoyed my involvement in Guild affairs over the last 6 years and feel modestly proud of where we have got to. Perhaps now I will find more time again to play in my workshop. Thank you all for your trust and support over those years

So, since Sarah is not able to be here today, perhaps John will accept this memory stick on her behalf. Please don't leave it on the train.

Brian Wood

### **7 Mileage Expenses for official Guild Business**

It is a requirement of our Constitution to obtain membership approval for expenses incurred by members on Guild business. The Chairman asked for such approval, it was duly proposed by Dave Leedale, seconded by Dick Laidler and carried by those present.

### **8.0 Prospectus for an Advanced Training Course**

The following comments on the attached prospectus were made:

8.1 Dick Laidler asked where such training might lead, was this for example a precursor to an Advanced Skills test? Brian Wood replied said it was intended as a stand- alone training session without strings, mainly in response to the occasional enquiry on what we could offer beyond beginners training.

8.2 After some discussion on Risk Acceptance arising from new policies put in place by the Dales National Park, Dave Edwards (speaking with National Trust experience) felt we would be satisfactorily covered by using our existing generic version, listing this course as applicable.

8.3 Les Maxwell suggested that replacing the term 'tackle' with 'equipment' was more suitable in this instance

8.4 The meeting agreed that tutors selected to deliver this training would need to be very versatile to cover all the likely demands. Brian Wood replied that they would be selected carefully with full committee approval.

8.5 The cost at £200 was thought about right and with 2 attendees per course would meet tutor expenses satisfactorily

8.6 Dick Laidler asked how we would know that submitted photos were the candidates own work, and should we sight it directly. The answer is of course we don't know - a site visit would not help resolve that anyway.

It was agreed we would trial one course in 2011 to test response.



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### 9.0 Any other business

9.1 Les Maxwell made the suggestion that we combine the sponsored build with the competition, separating the activities with a stretch of wall to rebuild on day 2. It had the merit of making the competition self-funding. A note of caution was raised by members pointing out there might be complications with offering stint money to competitors working next to volunteers.

The Chairman said we would look at it as an idea in committee and ensure that our sponsors could go along with the increased cost to them if it was adopted.

9.2 Les also reported that the Masham Rally situation was due to be resolved soon, but he was not sure how that would be announced. He also asked if the Guild had plans to include a plaque on our constructions there.

The Chairman agreed that a plaque of some sort would be a nice addition for walkers and visitors to see, we would look into it.

There being no further formal business to discuss, the meeting closed at 4.15pm.

14 Members attended: John Pridmore, Brian Wood, Judith Wood, Dick Laidler, Dave Leedale, Anna Bryer, Richard Wheeler, Dave Purvis, Bill Cowling, Dennis Garbutt, Les Maxwell, Megan Jeffery, David Edwards and Lawrence Tucker.

There were 3 Guests: Viv Leedale, Hazel Purvis and Euan Raffel