



## THE YORKSHIRE DRY STONE WALLING GUILD®

### Minutes of Annual General Meeting 12<sup>th</sup> November 2011 Held at the Annexe Thirsk Town Hall at 3.00pm

#### **1 Present/Apologies**

Present were: Brian Wood, Judith Wood, Roy Ellis, Anna Bryer, Dick Laidler, Sarah Pridmore, John Pridmore, Michael Booth, Geoff Selbey, Lawrence Tucker, Bill Cowling, Dave Purvis, Hazel Purvis, Euan Raffel, Clifford Bailey, Annie Anwar, Tariq Anwar, Molly Pridmore and S Simpson.

Apologies for absence were received from: Keith Ledger, Richard Wheeler, Dennis Garbutt and Steve Bostock

#### **2 Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting (13<sup>th</sup> November 2010) were read. All agreed and JP signed.

#### **3 Matters arising**

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting

#### **4 President's Report**

Bill Cowling spoke to the assembly. He is grateful for his continued position of President of the YDSWG and then he talked about the importance of walling in the farming environment.

Bill thanked us for the seat that we built for the GYS in memory of Richard Howard Vyse; he thought the seat was terrific. Bill also thanked us for our continued support and work at the Educational shows, and continued to talk about the importance of showing the younger generation how walls are built and so keeping the skill alive.

John P thanked Bill for his continued support throughout the year.

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

A warm welcome to you all. Another busy year for the Guild with plenty of activity. Membership is still healthy along with the Guild finances, which Woody will run through in more detail later

Training courses whilst down on last year have been a continued success. They still offer great value compared to other schemes and the feedback has again been very complimentary so thanks once again to all the instructors that have made this such a success for the guild.



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Our attendance at shows this year had mixed results. The build sites at a couple of shows such as Masham and Scorton were a little away from the main event and the stone supply was limited. In contrast we had two excellent shows at the GYS and Countryside Live where a great deal of interest was generated in the guild.

At the Great Yorkshire Show we undertook the most challenging project the Guild has embarked upon. The build was a horseshoe shaped seat consisting of 15 tonnes of newly quarried stone from Windy Hill quarry near Darlington. A pre show squad turned up for a day the week prior to the show and sorted the stone, cut coping stones and excavated the site ready for building (thanks to Dave Purvis, Dick Laider for sorting the squad out and to Keith ledger for the digger). Without this prep work we would have only been able to start building by day 2 of the show. The build progressed well throughout the 3 days of the show however we just ran out of time. A final 'finishing off' team returned a couple of weeks later to complete the remaining tasks. Thanks you to all those involved in the project, especially to Paul Hill for the stone carving and to Dave Purvis for all the preparation and planning. A final thank you must go to Bill and his team for funding the build and allowing us to work in such a prime location within the show. I hope you are pleased with the final result.

Better news on the walling completion this year. We managed to gather enough entries to stage the open class on a beautiful Saturday in early October. The Saturday was one of the hottest on record for October, which meant plenty of sweat and toil for the competitors. Many thanks again to Keith, who kindly agreed to judge the competition, to Sarah for providing sausage butties and to Shirley (mother in law) for the cakes. Many thanks to all those who took part, the final result was as follows:

- 1<sup>st</sup>- John Pridmore
- 2<sup>nd</sup>- Brian Edmunds
- 3<sup>rd</sup>- John Ford

We again held several practice meets throughout the year, which from a meteorological point of view could be described as a rain sandwich made with sun bread. Spring & autumn beautiful with a damp squib in the middle. However it didn't stop us getting going early in the year at Carperby followed by a new venue at Cropper Fold Farm near Bingley which was very well attended despite it being quite a fresh day with a bit of rain in the air (thanks Megan for the bacon butties). The only casualty was the meet at Cowling which was a June Saturday that could have been mistaken for November with driving drizzle. I was the only one there, which did make me think I had completely the wrong day. After checking with Woody I then realised I was the only one daft enough to turn up. At Bilsdale we managed to muster 4 volunteers this was followed by Long Liberty Farm near Harrogate which was well attended despite a rather autumnal August Saturday (again I was there, are you seeing the pattern now). The sponsored build was as usual held at



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West Bolton Farm, Carperby and again many thanks to all those attending and to our hosts Mr & Mrs Langhorn for their generous support and hospitality. The post build teas were excellent and very much appreciated by all.

We have a new venue to hold a practice meet and course next year out at Ilton near Masham. One of our members, Steve Hardwick is involved in a large development on the site, which involves the construction of log cabins and yurts so if anyone fancies an overnight stay after the practice meet then there should be some details out shortly. The newsletter gives details of the website so keep an eye on the development ready for next year.

This year two members successfully achieved their basic level so congratulations to Colin Short and Peter Sudron and also to Dick Laidler for coming through his first judging experience at the Wenslydale show (I hope they weren't paying you by the competitor).

As usual there are loads of pictures on the website so if you haven't had a look recently please go and do so.

I would like to thank all those who have helped out throughout the year at shows and practice meets and especially to Woody for running the courses and Sarah (with a bit of me) to taking on the role of Secretary whilst looking after me at the same time, not easy I know.

I would also like to thank Cliff Bailey, who has decided to step down from the committee this year. His contribution has been invaluable in setting up the new master waller criteria and in all matters of quality and skill standards within the guild. I have certainly learnt much from you over the years I have known you. I hope we will continue to see you at some of the events next year, so once again thanks for all your input over the years

On a final note we are looking for someone to take over the roles of course co-ordinator (during 2012) and treasurer (during 2013). Woody has decided to gradually hand over these roles after doing a great job over the last few years. Ideally we would like someone in place before the spring next year for the Course Co-ordinator role so they could learn the ropes with Woody in 2012, then fully taking on the role in 2013. Whilst there is a bit more time for the Treasurers' role, if anyone is interested then please get in touch.

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

This is my first time in the Secretaries hot seat so please bear with me as I run through my first report. I agreed to take the role over from Woody last year and the fact that we have made it to this AGM means that I must have done some things right.



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I'll let Woody cover off all the information about courses this year along with the financial details of the guild. Membership has remained steady this year which is encouraging as we have gained less members than usual through training courses. At the last count there were 190 paid up for 2011.

The sponsored build was better attended this year and we raised just over £500 for the Guild. Once again thank you to Mr & Mrs Langhorne for their kindness and generosity. We re also pleased to announce that Colin Short and Peter Sudron both passed their basic test on the weekend so congratulations to both of them. I hope they continue to improve.

The Guild website continues to be a success with new pictures being added and news and events being publicised to the wider world. Many thanks to Euan for the effort in keeping this up to date and relevant. We are always open to the suggestions from members on how to improve this further.

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. There are some new venues and events next year which will be publicised in the spring newsletter but should be on the website much sooner. I do hope you are able to attend some of them.

Finally I would like to thank Woody for the support he has provided throughout the year. Hopefully the number of questions should start to come down a bit next year and to my assistant secretaries John, who has helped out with many aspects of the job and to Molly for stuffing envelopes with member information twice over the last year (although she does charge a good rate).

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

Thank you all for coming, it's good to see so many of you here.

First of all, wearing my financial hat; you will have all seen a copy of the accounts, are there any points you would like me to give more details on?

Summarising briefly then, we have done well in a difficult year and added another modest increase to funds. It didn't protect us from the attention of the Tax office with a demand for assessment for Corporation Tax, which could have been costly. After exchanging several letters and getting some free local accountancy advice they appear to have accepted our argument that our 'trading' is mutual in nature. The clincher for this was proving we give introductory Guild membership to training course attendees as a benefit of attendance. They will leave us alone now for the next 5 years, but make no mistake; they will have another go after that time.



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### **8 Training courses report**

Changing hats now to the course organising; it is very satisfying to report another successful year for the Guild despite the recession catching up with us this time. We had to scrub the July course for lack of interest; it coincided with the start of school holidays, and was perhaps an unfortunate planning choice. We finished up with sales of 52 places of which 49 came on courses this year; some have deferred to a course next year rather as was the case last year. By comparison, last year [our best yet] we had 58 course attendees from over 60 bookings. The Gift voucher sales remain popular; many of our courses are taken up in that way.

As Sarah has said, membership took a big hit at renewal time early in the year, but it has returned to strength at 189 when the last courses are added in.

I must again praise the tutors for their unfailing support and input; they do a first class job in all weathers, always attracting very positive comment and feedback. I have done a little research from the records and to date in the 6 years since launch in 2006, they have trained very nearly 290 beginners. I think that is a magnificent achievement and the Guild must surely be heading for an award in top sales of the BTCV handbook as a result. Of all the other organisations in this country offering training in walling, we are I believe the only one that gives our candidates this splendid handbook as course material.

Turning now to other matters. Many of you will know I was grounded medically from driving from the very beginning of this year but I am delighted to tell you that DVLA have very recently restored my licence. It has been a most tedious business and particularly demanding on Judith having to haul me about, I am really very grateful for her unfailing support. The whole episode has only confirmed my view that I should now hand over the training role to a fresh pair of hands to take the planning and execution forward in future years. Dare I say it--but perhaps to someone younger too?

I will see the coming year through but it would be good to have that handover completed by this time next year. So, let's have some volunteers please for this uniquely rewarding task.

And finally, last AGM you endorsed our plans to run some advanced training courses but until now I have had to put the planning for that on hold. We now have a quotation for the supply and delivery of 40 tonnes of stone from Dunhouse Quarry at Staindrop, which will cost us £2220 including the dreaded VAT. We also have the money available to pay for it, so are you happy for us to go ahead? Maybe we can have a show of hands please.

A discussion took place with regard to the new training ground at Fountains Abbey, a vote was unanimous to go ahead with the site. The stone supplier



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was discussed and a suggestion was made to ask for the quarry to sponsor us with some stone if we put up advertising boards for them.

All the reports were agreed by Dick Laidler and seconded by Tariq Anvar.  
Signed by JP.

### **9 Election of Officers and Committee**

A request was put out for a new person to take over the position of course coordinator; Woody would like to hand this over by this time next year. Clifford Bailey to stand down from the Committee.

Chair – John Pridmore  
Secretary – Sarah Pridmore  
Courses – Brian Wood

Dave Purvis	Dick Laidler
Dave Edwards	Anna Bryer
Dave Leedale	Dennis Garbutt

### **10 Website update**

JP thanked Euan for all the work he has done on the website, it is looking great.

Euan spoke to the assembly – We have had 22,481 hits (individual page/content loads) to the website this year, this is slightly down on last year; total number of visits (people browsing the site) 11,764 and this is up on last year, showing that the website is being used. The countries of the world that have shown to be the most users of the website are the UK, Canada, and Ireland, with other European countries coming in after.

The website has over 100 features from events to photos, it is constantly being updated and used through the year.

If you have any photos or news that you would like added to the website you can download your photos directly to the website or pass them on (in digital format) to Dave P for uploading. Euan mentioned that he is always looking for articles of interest from the Yorkshire Post or other sources to add to the website so that the website shows that it is regularly updated. If anyone has an article or story of interest please pass it on via John Pridmore or Dave Purvis.

Euan has added a Christmas promo page this has been a hit with people looking for ideas for presents. Euan again mentioned that any ideas, photos, video clips or other would be gratefully received for adding to the website.



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A discussion followed as to what we could put on it, a suggestion was made to interview trainees at one of the training courses. Other ideas were discussed. Michael Booth commented on some of the mad photo captions!

John Pridmore thanked Euan for all his hard work, we are very grateful to him for his continued work on the website. The assembly applauded him.

### **9 Any other business**

Duncombe Park – Lawrence spoke about how it is not the same as it used to be, the organisation is not as it was and the stone quality was poor. He questioned whether we should go again next year. This year the show falls on the Queens Jubilee weekend. JP has e-mailed but will follow up that contact to discuss it with the organisers.

Pickering Show – The stone this year was poor quality again. The question was asked again whether we should do this show this year. There is some interest in the Guild from this show but nothing much ever comes from it. JP again will contact them.

Judith Wood – Spoke about the reliability of volunteers at shows, and asked if it would be possible to even out the attendance so that the coverage was more balanced. Could they 'earn' their tickets in some way for the more desirable shows like GYS by doing other less desirable shows.

JP replied to this – attendance is voluntary so it may be difficult to ask for people to 'earn' their tickets, but maybe we need to ask for more reliable commitment once they have agreed to it and not drop out at the last minute, or if this is unavoidable they need to find a replacement for their ticket. Attendance and asking for volunteers is always going to be difficult as it often may require people to take time off work.

### **Sale of Courses/training**

Annie Anwar – asked would it be an incentive to offer a discount when people sign up for training courses at a show. A discussion followed as to the feasibility of this, also of perhaps taking a non-refundable deposit at the show. We would need a receipt book.

Euan suggested that there could be a button on the website that would take you to PayPal to pay the outstanding balance, this could be organised. Gift vouchers were discussed.

Dave Purvis – The North East Civic Trust in Appleby there is a request for trainers, but it would require an overnight stay with travel on top of their wage. Discussion followed. Brian W has e mailed them but there has been no feedback. Dave P to follow up



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Brian W has also been to Bedale where there is interest at Thorpe Perrow. This to be followed up.

Anna Bryer mentioned Kennel Hall Farm project in Killinghall, a new training centre being built for the training of reformed drug and alcohol addicted young people. Anna to make enquiries.

As a follow on to the above Brian Wood mentioned other contacts that have been made in the past with the Princes Trust and the probation services for reformed young people that have not been successful. A discussion followed as to our options and experiences into where and who we could train.

Clifford Bailey – Has offered 3 days training one to one for anyone who would like some extra training, he has already given some training but the offer is still open for any member of the Guild.

### Honorary Membership

JP asked the assembly if we could agree to grant honorary membership to Brian Wood, Michael Booth and Clifford Bailey for all their hard work they have put into keeping the Guild alive and ticking. Thanks were given to all three for everything they have done to improve the Guild and all the work that this has involved. All assembled agreed to this and a round of applause was given. All three accepted with thanks.

Thanks to Molly P and S Simpson for providing the refreshments.

Meeting was closed at 4.13pm  
Refreshments followed.