

Artists capturing dry stone walls

By DSWAA Secretary Andrew Miller



A painting by senior Afalyca member, Cecilia Mira, depicting a Tebe Tebe (traditional East Timor Dance). Note the dry stone wall which forms the background to the Tebe Tebe

The Dry Stone Walls Association (DSWAA) of Australia has developed a wonderful library of images of walls in many landscapes, both in Australia and in other countries. We have become accustomed to photographs as the medium for recording the walls, often with spectacular results.

Photographs are one of the essential tools through which the DSWAA shares the important heritage and cultural value of the walls.

The *Flag Stone* has presented many of these photographs and we are indebted to our members and friends for capturing walls in many different lights – walls standing as powerful symbols in the landscape and other images capturing walling workshops, field trips and the functionality of dry-stone walls.

Recently I have enjoyed the walls presented not in photographs, but interpreted via an artist's brush! I have two stories to share, one from East Timor and the other relates to a painting in the *Australian Impressionists in France* exhibition currently at the National Gallery of Victoria.

Let me start with the East Timor story. A couple of years ago I contributed an article to the *Flag Stone* on the use of dry-stone techniques in East Timor. Some of my more recent travel to East Timor has been associated with the development of a youth arts group in Ainaro, one of the 13 administrative districts in that country.

There is a very good youth arts group called Afalyca in Baucau (East Timor's second largest city). Following a very successful exhibition and sale of Afalyca lino prints in Ballarat last year, we were able to return the monies raised to Baucau, where arts training for a small group of young people from Ainaro was then provided. This training was highly successful and we look forward to the development of a youth arts group in Ainaro.

Whilst participating in the delivery of the training in Baucau I was able to purchase a very interesting painting by senior Afalyca member, Cecilia Mira, depicting a Tebe Tebe (traditional East Timor Dance). The painting has a number of interesting aspects including a dry-stone wall that forms the



'A cabbage garden', painted by Jane Sutherland in 1896 when she was 43. The fence line (dry-stone wall) directs the viewer's gaze to the far horizon

background to the Tebe Tebe. The Art Gallery of Ballarat recently displayed the painting for the 10th anniversary of the Ballarat-Ainaro friendship.

Many paintings in the *Australian Impressionists in France* exhibition caught my eye recently, but one in particular was an oil painting by Jane Sutherland. The painting, circa 1896, depicts a female worker in a cabbage garden with a dry-stone

wall and farm buildings in the background. Art critiques have suggested there are influences from E. Phillips Fox and French impressionist, Jean-Francois Millet in Sutherland's work.

So my recommendation is 'keep your eyes open for dry stone walls in art!' For me, it's almost as exciting as viewing a good dry-stone wall photograph!



Dry-stone walls, Atauro Island, East Timor

Up the Yarra River to Herring Island

By Charmian Brent, DSWAA Committee member



Stone House by Andy Goldsworthy, where he used materials such as Dunkeld sandstone to highlight the importance of the discovery and concealment of Herring Island

DSWAA members always look forward to the AGM because once the routine procedural matters have been attended to, there is always an interesting talk followed by an 'outing'. This year, Saturday, 29 July 2013 promised to go even one better as the AGM was held in the historic Mission to Seafarers Victoria (MTSV) building in Flinders Street, Melbourne, followed by speaker and DSWAA member Bruce Munday, who talked about he and his wife Kristin's experiences when he was researching his book, *Those dry-stone walls*.

The day coincided with a Melbourne Open Day event so there were already queues of folks outside the MTSV building when a fair number of members arrived – all adding to the air of expectation.

The MTSV has operated in the Port of Melbourne since 1857, caring for the welfare of the seafaring community. As many as 60 000 seafarers are temporary visitors to this port each year and MTSV provides free transport to and from the port and other priority destinations. It also provides telephone and Internet services for seafarers to contact their families, as well as recreational facilities.

So, when we were all ensconced within the MTSV building, our DSWAA President Jim Holdsworth steered us effortlessly through the AGM and soon we were being held in thrall by Bruce Munday with his fascinating tales about the origins of South Australia's walls and the characters he encountered along the way when investigating them.



Bruce Munday's interesting talk was illustrated by his wife, Kristin's photographs

Sadly, the talk was brought to an abrupt halt because our motor launch up the river, *Rebecca*, awaited us. Time and tide and all that stuff! Let's hope we can hear the rest of Bruce's talk at our next meeting.

It was a fine day, albeit slightly windy, but fresh out on the *Yarra* as we looked at the familiar sights from a not-so-familiar point of view. Some of the city's skyscrapers are particularly awe-inspiring from a river perspective.

Arriving at Herring Island was an enchanting experience as the wattle trees were in full bloom, adding a splash of bright colour to a winter's day and lighting up this patch of bush right in the heart of the city. We explored the environmental sculptures along a walking trail that loops around the island. Two very striking sculptures were designed and constructed by the UK's Andy Goldsworthy, of international fame: for *Cairn* he used Castlemaine slate and it is a monument to growth; for *Stone House* he used materials such as Dunkeld sandstone to highlight the importance of the discovery and concealment of the island.

We also looked at *Steerage* by Jill Peck, representing a large boat that is used as a metaphor for journeys, water and knowledge; *Tanderrum* (coming together) by Ellen Jose, representing the coming together of the Kulin nation; *Scaled Stem* by Robert Bridgewater, using Monterey cypress to link nature and culture; and *Falling Fence* constructed by John Gollings with Samantha Spicer using cypress pine timber.

The good ship *Rebecca* returned us all safely to where we needed to be and it is safe to say that 'a good time was had by all!' Many thanks to the organisers of the trip.



DSWAA members prepare to board the motor launch Rebecca



The city's skyscrapers are particularly awe-inspiring from a river perspective



All snugly aboard the motor launch Rebecca on our way up the Yarra



DSWAA members arriving at Herring Island



Wattles in bloom brightened a winter's day on Herring Island



Above: Scaled Stem by Robert Bridgewater; centre and bottom left is Andy Goldsworthy's Cairn; centre right is Tanderrum (coming together) by Ellen Jose; bottom right Falling Fence constructed by John Gollings with Samantha Spicer





Above: DSWAA members leaving Herring Island. Below: Mission to Seafarers Victoria building in Flinders Street – a fine example of Arts and Crafts style



Steerage by Jill Peck, representing a large boat that is used as a metaphor for journeys, water and knowledge. Below: nautical weathervane at MTSV



Camperdown invites you...

The Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum Restoration Group is holding an event on Sunday, 13 October 2013 to which all DSWAA members and their friends are invited. This will be the second in a series of events designed to raise funds to restore the botanic gardens and revitalise the arboretum in Camperdown.

The specific aim of this event is to acknowledge the talent and skill of waller Alistair Tune and celebrate his achievement as part of the winning team at Britain's Chelsea Flower Show

this year. It is also to highlight the contribution that dry-stone structures make to our landscape and gardens.

DSWAA president Jim Holdsworth will be a guest speaker at this event and support from DSWAA members would be much appreciated.

As you will see from the flyer below, the event will take place at the Theatre Royal, Camperdown between 2.00–4.00 pm and the tickets will cost \$15.00. Make sure you don't miss this fascinating afternoon !

THE ROAD TO CHELSEA

Theatre Royal, Camperdown
Sunday 13 October 2013
2 pm to 4 pm
Tickets \$15

Tickets available at the Corangamite Shire office in Camperdown or at the door. Enquiries to Janet O'Hehir on 0427 629 557.

This event is presented by the Camperdown Botanic Gardens and Arboretum restoration group and the Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia, and supported by Corangamite Shire and the Victorian Government's Building Stronger Communities project.






the Dry Stone Walls
 association of Australia inc.

Join us in celebrating the work of Camperdown's rock star Alistair Tune – waller, artist in stone and member of the winning Australian team at London's Chelsea flower show.

Guest speakers will highlight some of the unique stone structures in the South West, from traditional farm walls to modern sculpture – and plans for a Gullfoyle rockery in a regional botanic garden.




Western Australia: History in stone

By Bruce Munday, DSWAA Committee Member, SA

Some time ago I was contacted by the redoubtable Hugh Edwards, journalist, adventurer and diver from Western Australia. Hugh was largely responsible for the discovery in 1963 of the wreck of the *Batavia* – the flagship of the Dutch East India Company, that foundered on a reef in the Abrolhos Islands in 1629.

Flag Stone No. 18 carried an intriguing account of the *Batavia* saga – the wreck, the mutiny and the ensuing carnage, along with reference to the various dry-stone structures left by those earliest, if reluctant, European inhabitants of Australia.

The salvage operation of the wreck in the 1970s brought up many tonnes of cut stone originally intended for a portico at the Dutch headquarters in Batavia (now Jakarta). This portico was subsequently assembled as first intended, albeit in an unintended time and place. Several people have commented that they have seen this portico in the Western Australian Maritime Museum at Fremantle, an observation that puzzled me, having read elsewhere that it stands in the Geraldton museum. Like a good journalist, I returned to my primary source, Hugh Edwards, to establish the facts. As ever, Hugh had a fascinating story to tell:

The original portico weighed 37 tons in total and stood 7 metres high. When we ran the 1963 expedition and requested government support, I was promised £2000, but in the end received only £250 (\$500) and that months after the event. I had to run the expedition from my own battered cheque book on a journalist's salary. The saving grace was a donation from the Geraldton Town Council who provided £250, equal measure to the Government, on the condition that they received a fair share of relics raised.

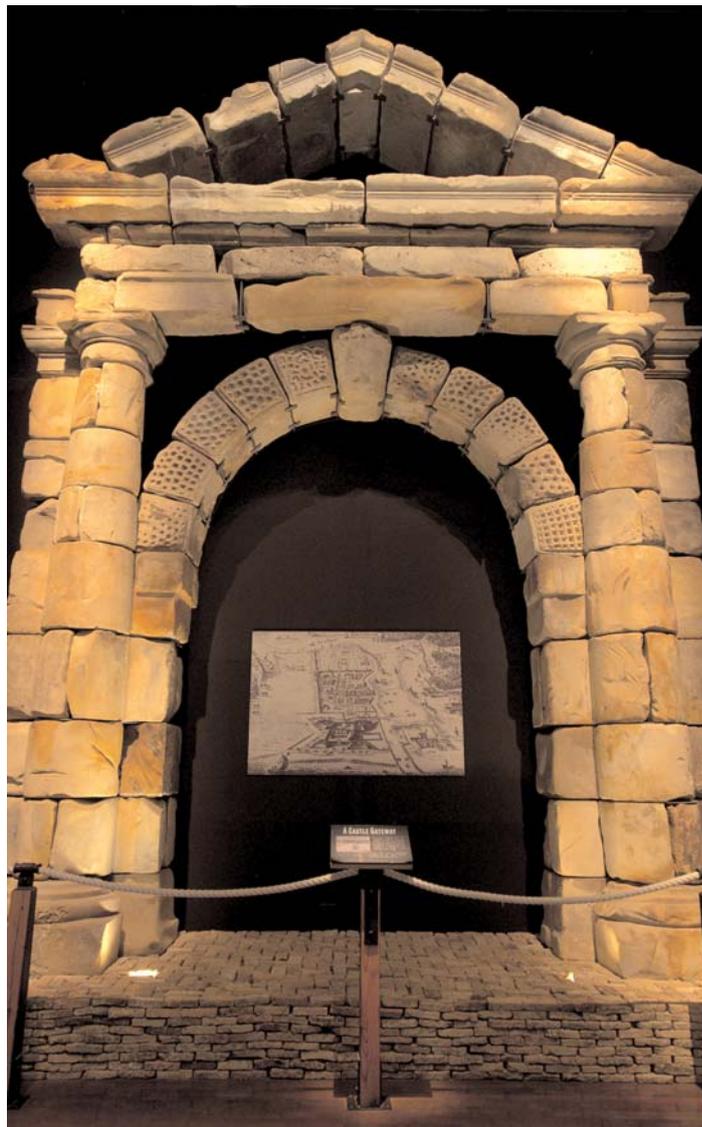
Initially everything went to the museum at Fremantle. But in the 1990s the Geraldton Council requested the relics, which had been promised 30 years earlier. These included the considerable array of material raised by the newly established Marine Archaeology Department in the 1970s, the star piece being the portico.

A Parliamentary Inquiry acted as umpire in the dispute, and Geraldton was awarded the portico and a range of other material. However Geoff Kimpton, who had done a sterling job for the museum with the *Batavia* timbers, carved out an identical model of the portico blocks from foam material.

The result now is that the original portico stands in the Geraldton museum, and the one in Fremantle is a replica. But Geoff did such a fantastically good job that you could hardly tell the difference.

So, the stone walls on the Abrolhos Islands are the oldest dry-stone walls in Australia, indeed the oldest built structures. But the portico in the Geraldton museum must surely be the first planned structure, even though it was never planned for Australia and had to wait about 330 years for construction.

And the moral to this story? Beware of faux stone.



A model of the portico intended for the Dutch headquarters in Batavia (now Jakarta), the stone blocks for which were carried on board the Batavia – the flagship of the Dutch East India Company, that foundered on a reef in the Abrolhos Islands off Western Australia in 1629



Peter Fitzsimons, author of Batavia, in Webbye Hayes' 1629 shelter on West Wallabi Island (one of the Abrolhos group)

President's Message



Jim Holdsworth

Greetings

The pages of this impressive newsletter carry stories that have some connection with dry stone walls. Sometimes these stories have a rather tenuous relationship to the craft; others are very focused.

The photographs of dry stone walls in their landscape contexts prove that walls are often very photogenic, and this is a major factor in their appeal. The *Flag Stone* is a visually engaging publication because of this.

I have written before of the diversity of places that are the subjects of *Flag Stone* articles, from every corner of the globe as well as from right across Australia. Often, when reading stories of travels in Nepal, Japan, Iceland or other places, I'm envious of the locations that our contributors have reported from and their encounters with dry stone walls in exotic settings.

More than once have I reflected on the link that our interest in dry stone walls has with places near and far. More than once has this link been driven home when a friend, newly back from a trip, says to me something along these lines; 'Jim, we were in Patagonia and I thought of you'. Concerned that their travels must have reached a low point of boredom, my question, 'How come?' is answered with, 'We saw some dry stone walls!'

Last month we were in north Sumatra (as a story in this issue relates) and it was my turn to be in a foreign land enjoying the added interest of looking at and learning the story behind some fine examples of very old dry stone walling. It's inevitable that, while one's travelling companions are looking at the other historic or cultural features of a destination, those of us caught by the 'DSW bug' turn our attention and camera to those stones; looking intently at their size, their shape, the details of construction and the overall aesthetic impact of the stonemason's skill. It's a satisfying experience, particularly when one contemplates the social or historic circumstances that led to that wall being built and the people and imperatives behind its construction.

We are fortunate that we have the capacity, through this newsletter, to learn of the common thread that dry stone walls represent across times, nations and peoples.

The DSWAA has links to several kindred organisations and an increasing number of DSW aficionados around the world.

We are part of a global specialist community and what we do in this country about preserving the best examples of walls and advocating for their recognition and celebration is an obligation that goes beyond our shores.

Our ninth Annual General Meeting in July heralded a new year of activities for the DSWAA. Your Committee has a range of projects and actions to discuss at its next meeting

and to implement as we continue to pursue our Vision.

There is much we can do but, like all voluntary groups, we are limited by the time capacity of the Committee and some keen members.

The coming year holds prospects of more workshops, of more outings and field trips to new destinations, as well as exploring research projects and developing a more interactive website.

Our agenda for 2013–14 is shaping up, but it could be bigger and better. If you would like to become actively involved in our projects – whether field trips, workshops, liaison or advocacy – please contact me. Your contribution will be most welcome, wherever you live.

If you have ideas for activities that we could initiate, please let me or our Secretary know.

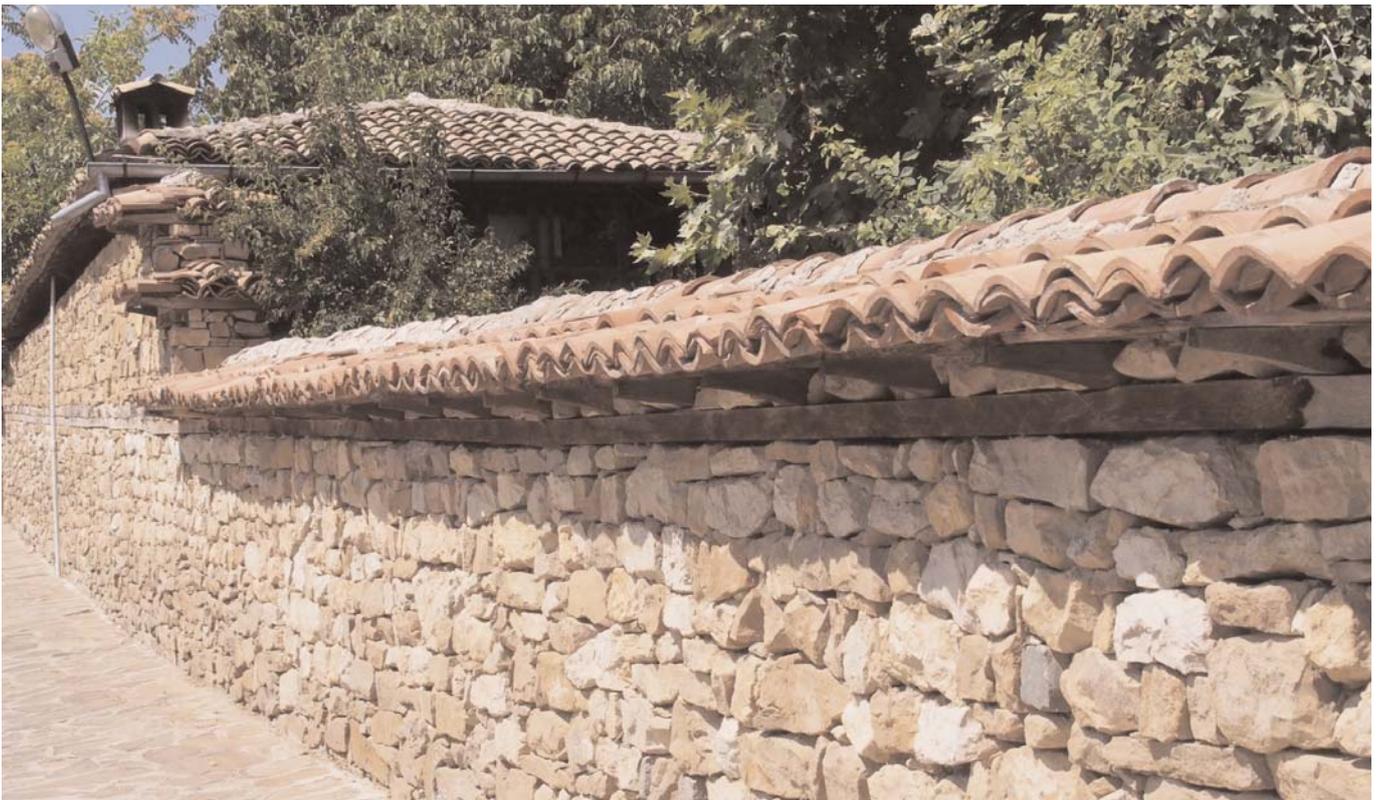
As we move into a new year for the DSWAA, I want to express my thanks to our office bearers and committee members for their contributions and enthusiasm during the past 12 months. Walling workshops and other activities in both South Australia and New South Wales have led to a jump in membership in those states, and this is most pleasing. I look forward to seeing you at a DSWAA event soon.

**Best wishes,
Jim Holdsworth**

'The Association's vision is that dry stone walls and dry stone structures are widely accepted for their unique place in the history, culture and economy of the nation and for the legacy they represent, that governments and the wider community recognise the importance of significant dry stone structures built by indigenous peoples, European explorers, early settlers and modern craftspeople as valued artifacts of our national identity, that this acceptance and recognition is manifested by appropriate statutory protection and landowner and community respect and celebration, and that the craft of dry stone walling grows as a modern reinforcement of the contribution that dry stone walls and structures have made to the culture of Australia.'



Gathering Stones...



A warm-looking beautiful wall in Belgradochic, Bulgaria

Photo courtesy of Charles Evans

Samosir Island

By Jim Holdsworth, DSWAA President



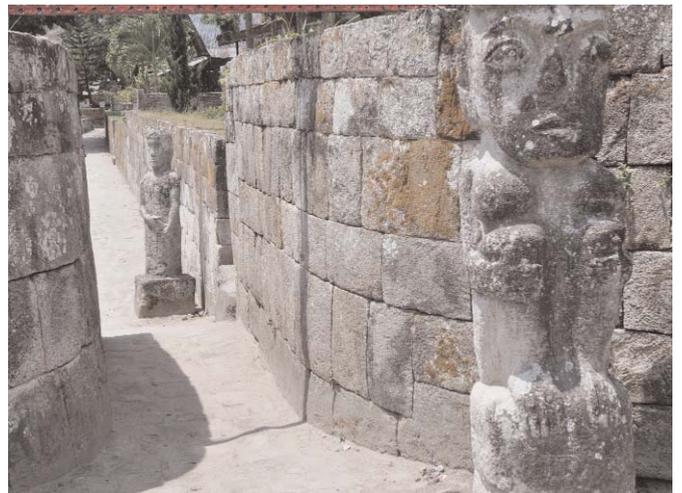
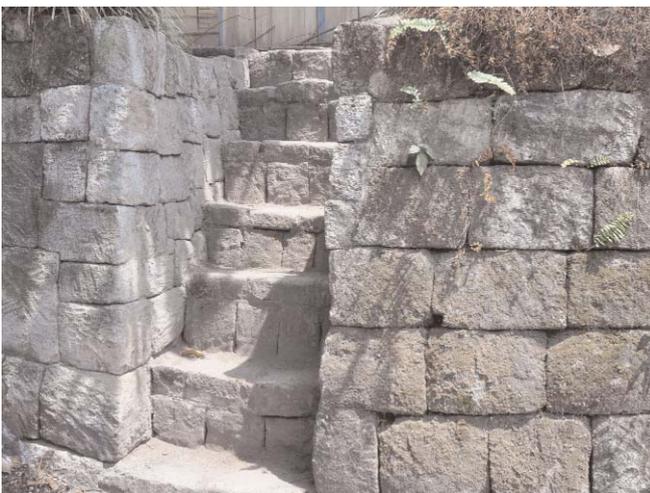
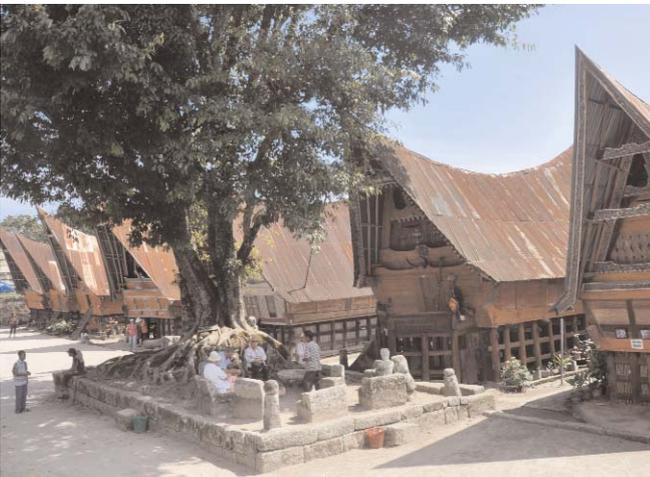
Samosir Island is big. It is nearly as big as Singapore, and it lies in the middle of the vast Lake Toba in northern Sumatra, a region dominated by extinct and dormant volcanoes. Lake Toba was created by a massive volcanic eruption estimated to have been between 30,000 and 75,000 years ago. While nearby volcanoes hiss and rumble, this very extensive caldera and the picturesque countryside surrounding Lake Toba are the geologically benign home to the amiable Batak people. The area includes abundant waters and verdant soils which produce a wide variety of food and has allowed the evolution of strong familial traditions. Today, fields of corn, rice, taro and cocoa are dotted with multilevel shrines topped by crosses; a surprising feature of a landscape in the world's largest Muslim country.

It was only in the 1880s that Christian missionaries converted the Batak people from their animist traditions, which included ritual beheadings and cannibalism of

people guilty of serious crimes, apparently still carried out until the 1820s.

In Ambarita, a small village on the eastern shore of Lake Toba, is Huta Siallagan, the preserved compound of one local king, or head-man, where visitors are introduced to the stories of life before westerners arrived. The compound is enclosed by a high stone wall with a narrow gateway guarded by stone soldiers. In the centre of the compound is a circle of ancient stone chairs where the village elders held court, overlooked by traditional houses with their upswept roofs.

While the stone is volcanic, the age of the walls and stone furniture is uncertain. What is certain, however, is that the area's fertility and the rich culture that stem from it are the result of a massive volcanic explosion millennia ago. The simple craftsmanship of the stonework complements the clever use of timber and bamboo in the construction of the houses, now roofed with corrugated iron instead of the traditional palm tree fronds.



New members

By Sue Jones, DSWAA Membership

The DSWAA is pleased to welcome the 13 new members who have joined the DSWAA since the May issue of the *Flag Stone*. These include 10 new members who participated in the recent South Australian walling workshop.

Paula Bartsch from Mount Pleasant, SA

Lyall Burton, Northcote, VIC

John Del Fabro, Aldgate, SA

Chris Payne, Mount Pleasant, SA

Natalie Paynter, Surrey Hills, VIC

Danny Pauley, Woodside, SA

David Swaney, Laguna, NSW

Marc Young, Crafers, SA,

and

Sue Briton Jones, Adam Plumridge, Nick Potenzy, Michael Round and Steve Sullivan, new South Australian members.

Contributions for
The Flag Stone
invited

Pictures of unusual walls/damaged walls
Dry stone wall-related literature
Any item of interest to members of DSWAA
News from overseas
Deadline for the February 2014 issue is
20 January 2014
All material to: chabrent@bigpond.net.au

Some websites you may like to visit

www.budjbim.com/tours.html
www.astoneuponastone.com
www.rbgzyd.gov.au
www.pierreseche.net
www.stonefoundation.org
www.dswac.ca

Who's Who in the DSWAA

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Vacant

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New members

Please complete (or photocopy) and post to:
DSWAA Membership, Secretary, PO Box 185, Ballarat,
Vic 3353

Payment: monies can be deposited in the DSWAA's bank account 013 274 4997 47356 at any ANZ Bank or send a cheque payable to: The Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia Inc. at the above address.

(*Please indicate payment method below.)

The Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia Inc.

No. A004473S. ABN 31 721 856 687

Application for Membership

Professional (voting rights) \$50.00
Individual (voting rights) \$30.00 (1 year) \$80 (3 years)
Corporate (voting rights) \$80.00
Family (voting rights) \$50.00
* Paying by: Cheque enc. • Bank deposit •

Name

Address

Telephone

Mobile

Email

Area of interest, for example, farmer, heritage, etc.

Contributors: photographs

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