

New South Wales has a busy 2011

By Jim Vandore, Convenor DSWAA (NSW)

As I sit here swigging the last of the New Year Champagne, I am reflecting on the fact that New South Wales (NSW) has enjoyed being mostly on the front foot in the year just passed, creating a number of events for those interested in dry stone walls. We admit though, that there is still a very long way to go, particularly in providing some 'action' for our NSW cousins in both southern and northern NSW.

The events we created were in two separate categories. The first was the traditional visit to celebrate some of Australia's treasure trove of existing dry stone walls. Following in the style of our 'parent' group in Victoria, we recognise that this type of event should be rounded out with a quality coffee stop at a minimum – or better still a nice lunch in a hatted restaurant.

The second event is what we have called a 'workshop' to provide hands-on wall-building experience to amateurs. Attendees at our workshops have typically been people who have always wanted to have the confidence to build a wall with the piles of rock on their property.

Everywhere we created an event we've found that there are lots of people who want to be involved. The local newspaper editors have been invaluable in getting the word out to the community.

As we have previously reported, our first event was a demo of 'walling-in-action' at the annual Tocal Agricultural College Field Days (north-west of Newcastle) in late April. We met literally hundreds of people (both young and old) and were satisfied with what was achieved. However we decided that it was important to us that our efforts over three days created a permanent feature for the college and this is still under consideration for the future.

In July, our next event was a visit to celebrate some historic walls in the Hornsby Shire (northern Sydney), particularly the walls in one corner of the grounds of Abbotsleigh School, with a number of classic archways on display.

In September, we made a breakthrough in that we discovered Simon Badway, a senior Sydney IT man in his day job, but a weekend enthusiast for building dry stone walls at his property (and others) in the Southern Highlands of NSW, about an hour or so south of Sydney. With the indispensable participation by professional landscaper Wayne Fox and the assistance of two local wallers, a couple of well-attended workshops were held and an impressive wall has emerged – complete with projecting flat throughstones that serve as a stile to cross over the wall and others that can be used as seats!



Dry stone archway at Abbotsleigh School in the Hornsby shire, north of Sydney



A dry stone walling demonstration at Tocal Agricultural College Field Days near Maitland, NSW

Simon Badway recalls the events on his property in his own words:

A project comprising of 120 m wall was initiated in February 2011 on my weekender property. The stone forecast to complete the project was roughly one tonne per meter: 800 mm base x 600 mm top x 1.2 m height. So, 120 tonnes of stone was needed. Stone to be used was red basalt. A quarter was sourced onsite, while the rest needed to be sourced from neighbouring properties, that is, a pile of stone four storeys high!

By June, I had reached out to the DSWAA to understand its scope/interest in the project. After discussions with Jim Vandore, two workshops were organised in both September and December 2011. Each workshop hosted approximately 20 eager enthusiasts who either had a project they wanted to begin themselves or were keen to try some techniques in a different type of landscaping exercise. I provided morning tea/lunch/afternoon tea/camping facilities.

What we learned is that two waller instructors per 20 learners can lay 20 linear meters in a day to the dimensions above. (First pass, that is, rough laid without plugging holes/capping/finishing.)

That's with three breaks in an eight-hour day. Learners went through the basic principles for:

- gauging height/base/top ratios
- foundation preparations
- profiles and settings up
- face rock and angles
- gravity and strength

Around these principles there are many techniques and skills still to learn, however students were on their way.

It was very important to me that the attendees were there to enjoy and learn, and any wall that was built was a bonus. Having two workshops and completing 40 m of first-pass laid stone is quite an accomplishment and naturally I was elated.

Second and third pass are being done by subsequently plugging holes and capping.

Finally, in late October, we made an excursion to Kiama (on the south coast about 20 mins south of Wollongong).

This is an area renowned for its amazing network of walls, many attributed to Thomas Newing who arrived in the district from Kent in England in 1857. He was reputed to be able to build 20 metres of wall daily! We were fortunate to have two of Thomas's grandsons present on our tour.

So, what's on in NSW in 2012?

Starting in the north, the following is planned, although there is considerable legwork still to be done.

A visit to some of the historic walls in the Armidale/Uralla area

The prospect of more workshop-type walling at Tocal Agricultural College in May

A demonstration at the Garden Festival on the Central Coast in September

A visit to inspect and celebrate some of the convict-built Great North Road in the lower Hunter (probably straying into the vineyard area for one of those nice lunches!)

A visit to celebrate some of the existing walls in the Southern Highlands (complete with another nice lunch!)

At least three workshops at three separate properties in the Southern Highlands, commencing in late February

The prospect of a 'Highland Games' of walling also in the Southern Highlands, in the Spring of 2012, subject to finding suitable sponsors.

An event in the 'deep south' of NSW where we have a number of enthusiasts.

Altogether, a lot of things to organise, all reliant on the very willing co-operation of so many wonderful walling enthusiasts!



The wall grows apace at Simon Badway's Wingello property in NSW



The finished wall at Wingello



Jim Vandore will be overseas in April, checking out some walls like the one above in his birth country of Bonnie Scotland

Dry stone walling in West Penwith, Cornwall, UK

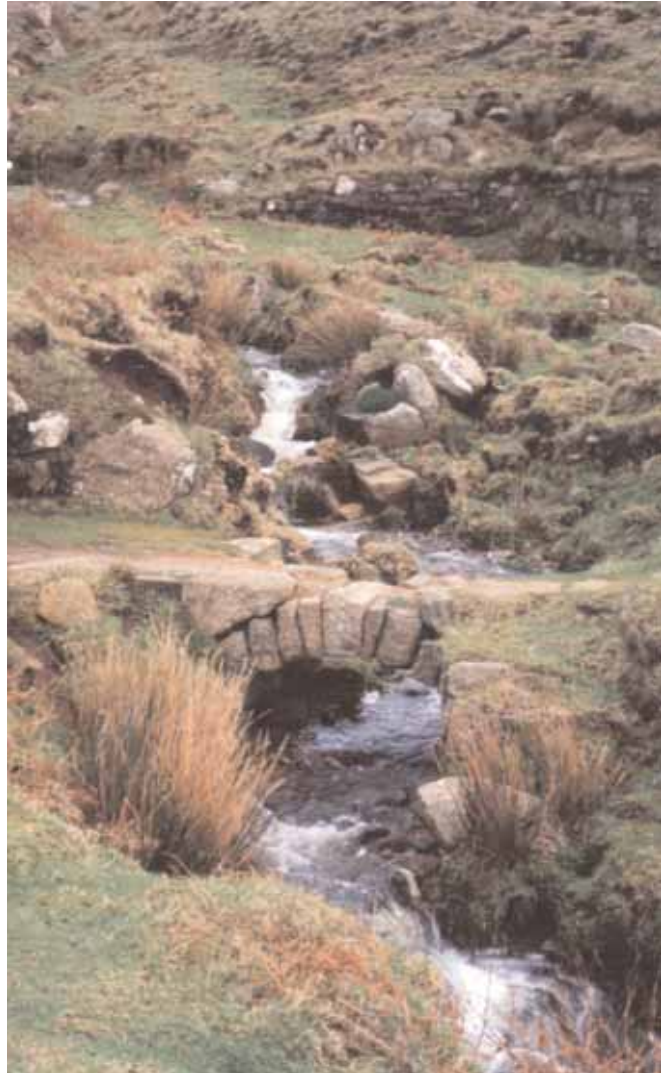
By John Hosking

The area of West Penwith, the far south-west tip of the British Isles, contains a wealth of monuments, ritual structures and dwellings covering a period from 500 BC to the present day. Most of the field patterns and many of the dry stone walls containing them date from the Iron Age.

The oldest settlements are typified by the small Iron Age conurbations of Chysauster and Carn Euny. Chysauster dates back to 500 BC and was occupied for a period of about 900 years. The houses were round, dry stone structures which would have had conical thatched roofs. The community was surprisingly sophisticated with similar structures for domesticated animals and underground drainage channels, which were stone capped.

Carn Euny is of a similar age and has a fine example of a Fogou, an underground structure built as a stone-lined and capped trench usually with a corbelled chamber the size of a small room. It is not certain as to the purpose of these structures, but they may have been bolt-holes at times of attack, storage chambers, or served some ritualistic function.

Whatever their purpose, they are impressive structures incorporating sophisticated dry stone techniques and some massive granite cap-stones.



The small footbridge of found stone probably dates to the Iron Age

Around the general area of St Just and Pendeen are many surviving examples of Iron Age and later dry stone walling. In less bleak areas of Cornwall these walls are populated by wild flowers and shrubs and are locally termed hedges rather than walls. In this area, however, little vegetation survives and the building technique can be clearly seen.

One of the most interesting structures which we came upon by chance is a small footbridge over a stream very close to the coastal outfall. It is constructed entirely of found stone. Its age is uncertain but it is probably also of Iron Age vintage.

A later example dating to about the 12th century is the now roofless and overgrown Madron Chapel. The chapel, again of dry stone construction, was built close to Madron Well, an interesting juxtaposition of pagan and Christian sacred places. Madron Chapel has an altar stone, which on the day we visited had a jar of wildflowers placed on it. Madron Well is a pagan sacred place, which still has strips of material and little offerings tied to the surrounding bushes.

Both faiths live on!



Above and below: Carn Euny!



President's Message



Jim Holdsworth

Greetings!

Until recently, the DSWAA enjoyed the patronage of Sir James Gobbo, who willingly accepted the Committee's invitation to be its first Patron. Soon after his acceptance of this role, Sir James and Lady Shirley attended a wonderful field day in the Swiss-Italian area of central Victoria in August 2006, which was reported extensively in Issue No. 8 of the *Flag Stone*. This was a particularly apt venue, given Sir James's strong Italian heritage.

This unique area between Daylesford and Castlemaine was first settled by Italians in the 1850s. The valleys and farms retain a distinctive European flavour, which is derived from the aging stone buildings, the lines of dry stone walls and the culture that emanates from the soil, the people and the heritage of this small corner of Victoria.

Sir James attended and spoke at our 2007 AGM at the National Wool Museum in Geelong.

The reason that we asked Sir James to be our Patron was the initiative and personal contribution he made to the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISSI) in Melbourne. Sir James realised the benefit to Australia of assisting skilled tradespeople and artisans to travel overseas to learn more of the traditional crafts or trades that they were pursuing as a career.

ISSI has a fine record of enhancing our knowledge base in many diverse and traditional skills and there was a natural 'fit' for Sir James to be our inaugural Patron.

The DSWAA has some synergy with ISSI as our Vision is, in part, to ensure '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'.

The occasional classes in dry stone walling that ISSI conducts are a clear manifestation of their commitment to this increasingly popular craft.

Sir James Gobbo, AC, CVO, KStJ, QC was a judge of the Supreme Court of Victoria from 1978 to 1994 and was Governor of Victoria from 1995 to 1997.

Due to pressures of other commitments, including his role as a cultural ambassador to Italy and the travel that it involves, Sir James relinquished his role as our Patron during 2011.

The DSWAA Committee recognises with gratitude the part that Sir James Gobbo has played in promoting and supporting skills and crafts that were part of Australia's early development and which are valuable today.

We hope to be able to announce the successor to Sir James Gobbo soon.

Several years ago, DSWAA members Raelene Marshall and David Moloney, and myself, undertook a study of dry stone walls in the Shire of Melton, a mostly rural municipality on Melbourne's western outskirts which is dealing with the pressures of urbanisation. The study was, in effect, the first comprehensive survey of all the dry stone structures in a local government area that we, as a study team, were aware of, whether in Australia or overseas.

Since the fieldwork and report were completed, the Shire has reviewed the study and adopted many of its recommendations. I applaud the tireless work of the Shire's Heritage Advisor, Sara Jane Peters and several of her colleagues, in bringing the study to the point where the Shire is now in the process of seeking approval from the Department of Planning and Community Development for an Amendment to the Melton Planning Scheme to protect many of the surveyed walls. A total of 144 of the more than 300 walls that were recorded are to be included within a Heritage Overlay to the Planning Scheme. Significant Landscape Overlays are proposed to be placed over the Mount Kororoit and Mount Cottrell precincts, where these two long-extinct volcanoes have provided the stone for clusters of walls.

Importantly, two new Policies are to be introduced into the Planning Scheme; one on heritage and one on dry stone walls as well as a 'guidelines' document which provides management and planning guidelines for owners, developers and permit applicants.

From the start of the study in 2004 to today it has been a very long process, but the Melton Dry Stone Walls Study and its Planning Scheme controls are the only ones of their kind in this country and, if they eventually achieve formal inclusion, will represent the only amendment like this to have ever been attempted in Victoria.

For the DSWAA, the adoption by a council of a study of this type is significant and, hopefully, will encourage other local governments to do likewise and thereby contribute to the identification and preservation of the best dry stone walls in Australia.

As the range of activities arranged by the DSWAA Committee and convenors continues to grow, I look forward to seeing you and your friends attending one such event and admiring a dry stone wall somewhere soon.

Regards to you all
Jim Holdsworth

Stay tuned for March–April tour details

Some websites you may like to visit

www.budjbim.com/tours.html

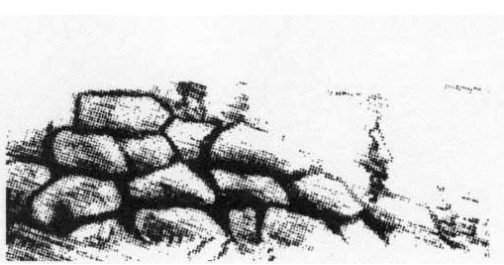
www.astoneuponastone.com

www.rbgsyd.gov.au

www.pierreseche.net

www.stonefoundation.org

www.dswac.ca



Gathering Stones...



Decorative small expanse of dry stone wall in Northern Ireland 2011

Photo courtesy of Ian Baker



Stone creek bed under threat in SA

From Pam Smith, DSWAA Convenor, SA

‘A stone-laid creek is worth preserving for it’s a piece of cultural heritage,’ said the National Trust’s Marcus Beresford, who is also a member of the Friends of Brown Hill Creek in South Australia.

Unley Council is of the opinion that the creek bed is, ‘of insufficient heritage value to be considered a State heritage place.’ The creek has been nominated for heritage listing in an attempt to save it from any future development. The matter is still under council discussion.

Left: Brown Hill creek bed

Photo courtesy of the Eastern Courier Messenger

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 May 2012 issue is

14 April 2012

All material to: chabrent@bigpond.net.au

Building a dry stone wall

By Fiona Clinton, Communications/Fellowship Adviser, International Specialised Skills Institute

With very few tools and some string, a good waller can build a construction that will last for many lifetimes.

It is apparent from chatting to David Long and his colleague Alistair Tune that you need to be able to look at a stone and know straightaway whether it's the one you want. Whether it's going to fit the space where you're working. You need the same sort of skill in dry stone walling that you need to do a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. 'That skill doesn't come in a hurry. It is a real hand-eye coordination thing,' David said.

David and Alistair are master wallers. David has more than 30 years experience and Alistair has been working full-time as a dry stone waller for more than 10 years. David has completed many notable commissions including the forecourt of the Eureka Tower in Melbourne, and a private commission on the Mornington Peninsula resulting in the largest free-standing dry stone construction in Australia.

'...One aspect of the project was the construction of a dry stone wall to a height of more than four-and-a-half metres,' David says.

David also won a Fellowship with the International Specialised Skills Institute (ISSI). As a 2001 Master Builders Association of Victoria Fellowship recipient, he travelled to Europe, the UK and the USA to study dry stone work.

While overseas David focused on design and construction techniques, particularly of walls more than 1–2 metres in height; different types of stone and their selection; and how these are applied when restoring historical works and constructing new walls, in both commercial and domestic environments.

David says that what he learnt overseas on the fellowship enabled him to tackle the project on the Mornington Peninsula, 'To enable construction of the wall, I initially sought the assistance of a master craftsman and his team from Edinburgh, Scotland'.

David won the inaugural Lorne Sculpture exhibition in 2007 and his entry in last year's Lorne Sculpture exhibition was very ingenious. The entry, called 'Man-u-factured' highlighted the tipping point of man's influence on the environment:

'There was a circular dome that represented the earth's surface. There was a rock in the centre representing the tipping point – the balance of the environment. Man has turned his back on the planet and has put pressure on the environment. All of the stone and materials were sustainably sourced from nearby,' He says.

David and Alistair run beginner and advanced workshops through the ISSI to pass on their skills. Whether you're an archaeologist or an office worker, David says that your background is not important as everyone can enjoy learning more about dry stone walling. If you have some spatial awareness and are willing to put the time in, then you can really excel. Even if you aren't in the landscaping arena, you can still learn to create something:

'From weekend warriors to architects, we get the whole gamut of people who come along and everyone takes something away from it. It's a team thing, too, so you don't work on your own. You stand back at the end of the day and see what you've achieved. People get a sense of fulfilment out of it,' he says.

Dry stone walls are constructed of stone pieced together in such a way that the stones lock in against each other to provide a solid wall without the need for mortar.



David Long's 2011 Lorne Sculpture entry

Photo courtesy of David Long



Eureka Tower forecourt created by David Long

Photo courtesy of Kevan Way



Mornington Peninsula wall created by David Long

Photo courtesy of Carolynne Bourne

'The wall forms a matrix: each time you put a stone with a stone, that stone bites and binds and holds the wall together. When the stones aren't in contact properly, that's when you get movement,' David says.

From the base of the wall, the stones are pieced together like a jigsaw puzzle with both sides of the wall gradually leaning in together to create the strength of the wall. Larger, sturdier stones are used at the base with the smaller stones being used at the top. To help strengthen the wall and reduce the amount of space between the stones in the wall, smaller rocks and broken stone, known as 'hearting stone', make up the centre section of the wall, creating a solid structure that will last several lifetimes. Generally the wall is finished off with what is known as 'copestones', which are larger stones placed across the top of the wall to hold the wall together.

Alistair Tune took up the craft of dry stone walling after completing a short course in 1997. Following this, he worked extensively with local south-west stone waller, the late Bill Harlock, and has since completed structures working with master craftsmen in Scotland. He has more than 10 years experience working as a full-time dry stone waller and has worked at the Royal Sydney Botanical Gardens with Master Waller Geoff Duggan.

'Dry stone walls are made up of completely natural materials, which not only creates an attractive look and feel, but also attracts bird life, plant life such as mosses, and small wildlife such as frogs,' Alistair says.

The small pockets of space between the stone in a dry stone wall can provide miniature ecosystems for wildlife. These pockets also mean that over time the wall tends naturally to move with any movement of the earth below it, rather than cracking like other structures.

Alistair has worked to repair some of the dry stone walls in Victoria's Western District. He was featured in the previous issue of the *Flag Stone*, Issue No. 23, when the DSWAA conducted a field day to Camperdown and visited Alistair's 'Trispheres' water feature at 'Caringal', the former home of Tony Brown and Ruth Stewart. His 'Trispheres' are an exquisite example of dry stone art and they took Alistair almost a year to complete.

Alistair explained that guided by formwork, he painstakingly slotted hundreds and hundreds of triangular pieces of stone together until he achieved perfect spheres – sometimes having to almost start again when the 'orb' didn't quite come together properly. The plumbing was also very tricky indeed but the end result is a remarkable achievement, truly a work of art to be marvelled at and admired for decades to come.

The Flag Stone, Issue no. 23, p. 5.

A technique called 'corbelling' was used to create the striking 'Trispheres'. The technique of corbelling, where rows of corbels deeply keyed inside a wall support a projecting wall or parapet, has been used since neolithic times. But, the 'Trispheres' are different from most traditional examples of corbelling.

'For me it was about trying to work the stone into that particular shape. Corbelling is used more for dome shapes and conical shapes. I had free rein with this job and it was something that I dreamt up in my head,' said Alistair.

Both David and Alistair favour working in Victoria's Western District due to the quality of stone found in the area. No-one knows exactly how many kilometres of dry stone wall there are in Australia, but Victoria's Western District has many examples of these wonderful structures through large stretches of the landscape. The majority of these walls were built by immigrants who settled in the area and the walls remain as a demonstration of craftsmanship. The Western District walls are among the



Building a wall at the 2009 ISSI Institute workshop Photo courtesy of Nick Platt



The wall is nearly complete – two large copestones can be seen on the top. When copestones have been placed along the entire top of the wall then the wall is complete Photo courtesy of Nick Platt

thickest, strongest and most extensive examples of dry stone walling anywhere in Australia.

Passing on their skills is important to both David and Alistair, 'If you don't share it then the skill is gone again. That's what the ISSI is all about. Dry stone walling is hard work and there are only a handful of guys that I know who are doing it,' David says.

David says the workshops provide people with the opportunity to try dry stone walling and learn more about it. A section of wall is built in the one-day workshops and this gives a great sense of achievement for the participants, 'I like to get the feedback if people are really keen. People thank you at the end of the day'.

The workshops are out in the elements and, as construction of dry stone walls has not really changed over the years, participants are able to see what it's like working with stone out in the environment.

'That's what dry stone walling is about. It's not in an air-conditioned office – it's out in the real world!' David says.

To find out more about the next workshop please contact the ISSI on 03 9347 4583, email <info@issinstitute.org.au> or visit the ISSI website <www.issinstitute.org.au> and view the 'events' page.

Cornishmen built walls to last in the 1800s

By Eric Sartori, DSWAA member



Eric Sartori's Cornish ancestors built this wall c.1870 . The hill is a lava flow from Mt Franklin that covered a wide riverbed, now elevated above present ground level, this area was extensively worked for gold in the 1860s with 40 adits showing on the west side. Eric rebuilt this gateway some years ago.

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Please complete (or photocopy) and post to:
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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.

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