

Bessiebelle, Tyrendarra – old and even older

By DSWAA President, Jim Holdsworth



The main race at the Bessiebelle Sheepwash showing the beautiful restoration work done by Alistair Tune

'I'll send you the draft itinerary, Jim,' says Tim Hubbard on the 'phone, and soon, there in my Inbox is a couple of pages describing the two field trips that he and Roger have mapped out for the DSWAA's May outing to Western Victoria.

It's an itinerary that includes visits to places of indigenous heritage, remnants of grazing history, places of geologic interest and examples of dry stone walling and other mysteries in the area north of Port Fairy.

Once the weekend is announced to members, the booking sheet quickly fills up and, on the evening of Friday, 12 May, people gather at Tim Hubbard's and Roger Borrell's beautifully restored and furnished home in Port Fairy for welcome drinks and a briefing on the weekend's activities.

'There's Danny Spooner', a voice says, 'I hope he's brought his squeezebox'.

'And over there is Allan Willingham; we're bound to get some local history stories from him over the weekend.'

'Ian McConnell is here too, he'll have a few yarns about life on the land.'

Tim and Roger have laid on a spread that everyone enjoys; local produce including cheeses, olives, eel pate, and wines.

The briefing notes are comprehensive, with full details of the places we're going to visit over the coming days.



The smaller of the two remaining traditional pastoral sheepwashes



Above left: a holding yard, and above right: a perfectly crafted dry stone wall end



'Fresh and Salty', the Kurtonitj sculpture that is valuable to the Gunditjmara people as it pays tribute to the traditional Aboriginal dry-stone work

Saturday morning is brisk and clear and the coffee addicts turn up a little late outside the Caledonian Inn in Bank Street to join the rest of us. We sort out the car convoy protocols and head off up the Hamilton road then turn west and onto gravel roads. We soon come to a gate which Tim unlocks and we drive across wooded country past rugged lava flows to arrive at the extraordinary Bessiebelle Sheepwash.

The DSWAA visited this amazing dry-stone complex in 2007 and observed that the walls of the main race were in some disrepair. Through the hard work of the local indigenous owners of the area, funds were obtained and, under the guidance and hard work of Alistair Tune, the walls of the race were repaired in 2011.

We inspect two sheepwashes, and Tim tells us that we are looking at probably the largest and most sophisticated surviving example of a traditional pastoral property sheepwash in Victoria. They are of landscape and archaeological significance as a cultural landscape that has been modified to meet the requirements of sheep management.

We follow more local tracks until we come to a long and high wall of beautiful construction which crosses our path and serves as an introduction to an open plain in the middle of which sits 'Fresh and Salty', a recent stone sculpture designed by Dr Carmel Wallace and Vicki Couzens, the stones forming a spiral twisting up a rocky outcrop. As Damien Bell, the chairman of the Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation said about this work, 'The sculpture is valuable to the Gunditjmara as it pays tribute to the traditional Aboriginal dry-stone work from our heritage and also provided the opportunity for the skills associated with the stonework to be learnt by our people'.

We drive into the nearby Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area and walk to the visitor information centre. Its curving walls resemble a grass fishtrap. Inside, and out of a sharp shower of rain, Roger hands out our packed lunches as Tim introduces Denis Rose, one of the traditional owners. Denis tells us about the lifestyles of the original occupants of the area, in particular their skills in aquaculture that we can see in terms of stone fish and eel traps, weirs and channels, woven grass traps and funnels. Nearby are two reconstructed stone shelters, typical of many in the area and which are still being discovered. 'How old are they?'. 'We don't really know', says Denis.

We're amazed to learn of the variety of dry stone structures built by these original inhabitants, and we're reminded of the book by Gib Wettenhall: *The People of Budj Bim*, which tells



A close-up of the stone work showing how tightly together the stones are placed



Darlot Creek formed part of an early Indigenous aquaculture venture



An eel trap - woven grass baskets were set in the gaps to trap the eels



Circular stone dwellings were where the settled eel-farming community lived



The remains of Rowbottom's homestead north of Tyrendarra. The attempt at settlement began in 1877 and lasted until just before the First World War



The DSWAA Annual Dinner at 'Rock Salt' was a great success



Old acquaintances were renewed and new friendships forged



Dennis Rose spoke at length about the move afoot to get the whole Tyrendarra/Lake Condah area declared a World Heritage Site



Danny Spooner, accompanied by his squeezebox, kept us entertained with many a fine melodious tune



Standing stones, Tarrone North Road, Tarrone. Mystery surrounds the purpose of these stones – they may have been fence supports to keep livestock from the swamp



A whole host of potential new DSWAA members rushing towards us as we inspected the stone gateposts to their paddock (below) on Faulkners Road North, Tarrone



the story of Aboriginal history in the Lake Condah and Mount Eccles (Budj Bim) area over thousands of years.

Some of us climb aboard several four-wheel drives for a bouncy trip into the scrub to visit the former Rowbottom's homestead, now a just remnant stone chimney and some aging fruit trees, but hopefully the site of some dry stone walls. Tim's army of eager researchers spreads out across the rugged and overgrown landscape around the homestead site, but no wall is found.

Dinner at Rocksalt in Port Fairy is a fine affair, enlivened by a talk by Denis Rose and some songs by Danny Spooner. 'That's Danny Spooner', a voice says, 'I'm glad he brought his squeezebox'.

Sunday morning is brisk and clear and the coffee addicts turn up a little later than yesterday outside the Caledonian Inn in Bank Street as we again head up the Hamilton Road, turning off along North Tarrone Road which follows a low ridge with views of rock-strewn lava flows dissecting former swamps in the valleys on either side.

We stop to view a row of standing stones marching across the open landscape. Speculation is rife; are these of Aboriginal origin, built by farmers, placed by surveyors, the work of aliens? There's dozens of them, set about 10 metres apart; in one place following what might have been the edge of a low lake, in another place possibly marking a property boundary. At one spot, the herd of resident cows can't or won't enlighten us.



Byaduk Caves are part of a lava flow from Mount Napier that solidified. The caves were formed by molten lava continuing to flow beneath. The caves contain wrinkles, stalactites and stalagmites, columns andropy lava. Bentwing bats spend winter in some of the caves in a state of torpor – their body temperature matching that of their surroundings

The geology of volcanoes and underground lava tubes is our next stop. The caves at Byaduk aren't as well-known or promoted as a tourist attraction in the manner of those at Undara in north Queensland, but they deserve to be. Here, falling away from the grassy plains below Mount Napier are sinkholes where the surface has collapsed into the open spaces of tunnels once occupied by flowing lava. It's heaven for speleologists to go underground and follow these lava tubes, but we stand on the rims of a couple of sinkholes and come to understand the genesis of the stones that have led to the eras of history and human intervention in the landscape hereabouts.

Hermann's lookout on the Hamilton–Macarthur Road provides us with a view towards the low cone of Mt Napier with, in the foreground, Harmann's valley and its winding lava flows and rocky tumuli.

We enjoy another packed lunch in the small settlement of Byaduk beneath a row of autumned trees.

Here, the group splits as the weekend's activities draw to a close. Some of us move on into the township of Peshurst to look at the walls dotted around this well-laid out town set under the shoulder of Mount Rouse. Others drive to the foot of Mount Napier and tackle the climb to its annular summit and get views down into its former caldera and out across the flat landscape, interrupted only by the Grampians to the north and the distinctive shapes of several of Victoria's extinct volcanoes in other directions.

To simply say we've had a memorable weekend is an understatement. To simply say 'Thanks' to Tim and Roger is an inadequate response to their skills in organising a wonderful and well-rounded event.



Dry-stone walls from the 1860s are constructed on the Reserve's irregular boundaries



Post and rail dry-stone wall, Mount Napier Road-Bills Lane



DSWAA members enjoying a Sunday morning out together on the Mount Napier Road



The view from Harman's Lookout on the Port Fairy–Hamilton Road, Byaduk North, with Mount Napier in the distance. Stone walls feature to the right of the photo



A wonderful intact length of very old wall near Mt Napier Road and Bills Lane



*Walls at Penshurst – a town of wide formal streets centred on **permanant** spring*



At the summit of Mount Napier – a fine vantage point

SA: Learning from the master

By Bruce Munday, DSWAA Committe Member, SA

George Melrose took up land at Mount Pleasant in the Adelaide Hills in 1843. His property, Rosebank, stretched over about 70,000 acres and ran 70,000 sheep. Melrose saw many miles of dry-stone fencing built on Rosebank and fully recognised the craft for what it was, once commenting that 'not one man in a hundred can build a good stone wall'.

Recently the DSWAA supported a dry-stone walling workshop at Rosebank, teaching participants how to build a wall from scratch and also how to repair a damaged wall.

Starting on an old section of paddock wall that had almost completely tumbled down, a dozen of us systematically moved the rubble aside and began rebuilding on the cleared site.

Master waller, Ian (Wally) Carline, set up batter frames and showed us the basic principles: laying stones lengthwise into the wall so that the two skins are tied together; no running joints; and tightly packing the hearting so that no stone can wobble.

Sounds easy enough and even looks pretty easy when Wally does it. In practice it is quite a challenge, particularly after you have picked over your pile for all the 'good' stones. But awkward stones can be dressed up with the lump hammer, so to the tune of hammers on rock and rock on rock the band marched on. By the end of day one we could look back on two 12 metre walls about half finished.

That evening most of us stayed in the shearers quarters, cooking meals in the pizza oven and in camp ovens on the open fire. By 10pm we were solving most of the world's problems and by mid-night the last of the stayers had packed it in.

Next morning it was back to the wall. We finished one of the sections of wall just before lunch and everyone celebrated as the final coping stone went on.

Then off to a remarkable stone 'cross', built many years ago to provide shelter for deer. Standing a metre and a half high, four five-metre arms protect against weather from any quarter.

Unfortunately three of the arms were damaged by bulls some years ago. Our challenge was to restore one of these.

And challenge it was, the coping stones weighing up to 100 kg. Wally showed us how to rebuild the cheek end with hefty through stones and ties back into the wall.

This was a great learning experience, all the better for an interesting venue, great company (stone seems to bring out all the good in people!) and a first class instructor. We also attracted an itinerant audience of interested onlookers.

Several of us returned the following weekend to practise what we had learned and to finish off the paddock wall.

We will be running another similar workshop in October, continuing this project, and perhaps a more advanced course for those who have completed Stage 1.

The course was generously supported by the DSWAA who provided insurance cover, subsidised the participants' fees, and provided a year's free membership of DSWAA.



That was the easy part!



Getting down and dirty



Wally (right) and Steve adding copers to rebuild an arm of the cross



Happy wallers

President's Message



Jim Holdsworth

Greetings

Any voluntary organisation relies on two types of people; the Committee and active supporters, and the membership. These two groups depend on each other; the Committee would feel less motivated if there was a disinterested membership, and the members would wonder what the organisation stands for if the Committee did nothing.

I occasionally compare our Association with other voluntary organisations which have goals and purposes comparable to our own. An example is the Port Melbourne Historical & Preservation Society, of which I am a member. Being locally based and with a purview that is focused on a small but fascinating part of Melbourne with a rich history, the PMH&CS has a limited geographic area to cover. Its members come mostly from a close-knit community which has many stories to tell and a definable history to preserve and celebrate. Importantly, too, is the fact that in a fast-evolving part of the metropolitan area it is relatively easy for such a society to enlist and engage the local community in the various activities, whether fund-raising, public awareness campaigns, publicity or developing an effective liaison with local stakeholders and the local council.

This may be contrasted with our DSWAA. We have a national ambit, a wide-reaching Vision and a bailiwick that extends to tens of municipalities, potentially across every State and Territory. While it is no small task to implement our Vision across the continent, it rightly is an aspirational goal rather than one that can be achieved overnight.

In this context it is encouraging to see how our Committee has recently undertaken activities in three states; activities which, while appealing to very different constituents, serve to bring dry stone walls in front of new audiences.

The main story in this issue is about the field trip weekend to the volcanic plains of western Victoria in mid-April. While attended predominantly by members, this trip opened many eyes to the stories locked in stone about our indigenous predecessors, our explorers, our early settlers and the ingenuity of people who saw how volcanic stones can be used to make life on the land easier.

One week earlier, Committee member Simon Badway arranged another of his popular wall-building demonstrations at Brigadoon. Not the mythical Brigadoon of misty Scottish literature but Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands of NSW, a lovely town that changes its name each year when it hosts a highland gathering and a day of all things Scottish. The sight of Simon and a few mates, including Jim Vandore from Sydney, building a short section of wall among the stalls, bagpipes and cabers was a constant attraction for the thousands of people who attended. The DSWAA exhibit was favoured by a visit from the Hon. Pru Goward, Minister for

Family and Community Services and Minister for Women, and member for Goulburn in the NSW government, who watched proceedings with unfeigned enthusiasm.

In contrast to wall demonstrations in Brigadoon and guided field trips in western Victoria was the wall-building workshop conducted by Committee member Bruce Munday at Mount Pleasant in the Adelaide Hills of South Australia in early May. In Issue No. 15 of the *Flag Stone* we read of a group of amateurs who restored a damaged wall on a road side in that area under the engaging guidance of Port Pirie waller Ian Carline. Bruce organised a similar program for a dozen would-be wallers to learn the techniques from Ian at a two-day course, set in an area of many magnificent dry stone paddock walls, some of which are featured in Bruce's recent book about the history and spread of walls in his State.

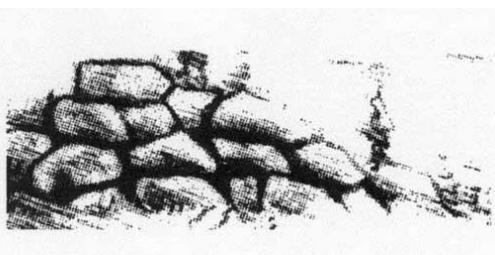
Do these disparate pursuits extend the reach of the DSWAA and promote community awareness of dry stone walls? Of course they do. Moreover, they engage our membership and draw more people into the group of Australians who are becoming conscious of the heritage, the history, the culture and the skill that a knowledge of dry stone walls carries with it.

It is marvellous that, with Simon Badway and Bruce Munday as members of our Committee, the reach of the DSWAA beyond its Victorian beginnings is taking hold in its own way in each of their States. This is something that I am very pleased about, as it warrants the national identity that our name includes. For the future of dry-stone walls in Australia, this has to be a good thing.

**Best wishes,
Jim Holdsworth**



The Hon. Pru Goward at Bundanoon, NSW, with Ken McDonald (left) and DSWAA Committee member Simon Badway (right)



Gathering Stones...



Dry-stone wall at Castlerigg, Cumbria, UK

Photo courtesy of the English Heritage Photo Library



Deakin University Project, Lake Bolac Eel Festival



Deakin University Project, Warrnambool Art Gallery

Cotswolds dry-stone walling competition receives Royal attention

Cotswolds Rural Skills



16 April 2013 – Extract from *Cotswolds Rural Skills*

HRH The Princess Royal drops in on the Board's 2012 Dry-stone Walling Competition (right)

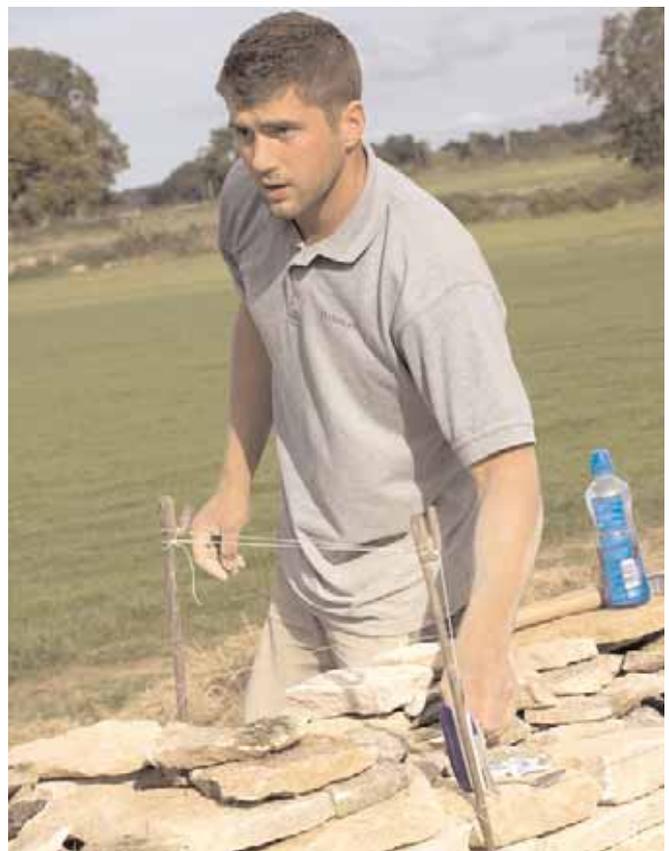
The Cotswolds Dry-stone Walling Competition was graced by Royalty last year when HRH The Princess Royal presented the prizes at the awards ceremony of the Board's annual event which celebrates the skill of dry-stone walling in the Cotswolds.

The competition took place on Sunday, 7 May at HRH's Gatcombe Park estate, near Minchinhampton, Gloucestershire. On what turned out to be dry and sunny day a total of 14 people took part in the competition with skill levels ranging from Beginners to Professionals. By the end of the day a total of 32 m of previously damaged dry-stone wall had been rebuilt.

Local bragging rights were at stake in the professional class as local wallers, Alistair Bidmead and John Byrne fought it out for the top prize, along with Devonshire entrant Stephen Pethick. In what turned out to be a very close contest Alistair emerged victorious with a score of 76/100, taking home the coveted winners trophy as well as the £120 prize money. Competition was also fierce in the Amateur class with seven wallers battling it out for a place on the podium. The honours on this occasion went to five times winner, Andy Deller from Deller from Oxfordshire with a very respectable score of 66/100. Richard Saunders (Oxfordshire) and Arthur & Robin Witchell (Glos) were winners in the Novice and Beginner Pairs Classes, respectively.

The Cotswolds Conservation Board runs dry-stone walling and hedgelaying competitions each year to celebrate these traditional skills and promote their use in the Cotswolds. Both competitions are free to enter, with lunch and refreshments provided for all competitors. Both competitions have a range of classes, from beginners pairs through to professional and cash prizes are awarded for finishing in the top three of each class. This year's dry-stone walling competition will be held on Sunday, 6 October at the National Trust's Sherborne estate, near Northleach, Gloucestershire. Further details, including a downloadable registration form are available from the competition pages of this website. www.cotswoldsruralskills.org.uk

Ed: this is just to give members an idea of how our newsletter shapes up against its overseas counterparts (no royals for us!)



The Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland

the traditional craft of stone construction



Ken Curran has invited you to the event 'Stones & Stories' on The Dry Stone Wall Association of Ireland



Time: 14–15 June 2013
Location: Cloughjordan, Roscrea
Organised by Ken Curran

Event description: The Tipperary 'Gathering of Stones'

In addition to the main event, 'The Gathering of Stones', a day of talks and tours will take place in Cloughjordan, County Tipperary, Ireland between the 14–15 June 2013.

Those travelling to the Gathering of Stones and registered for that event are offered the talks and tour free of charge. Accommodation in Django's Hostel will be provided and the tour will have a free lunch.

People are invited to arrive on the eve of 14 June for an evening of 'craic agus ceoil' (music and fun) in the pub. The

morning of 15 June will involve talks from Sean Adcock at 10.30 am, followed by a presentation from Nick Adcock at 11.30 am.

Sean is a DSWAUK master Dry Stone Waller and Secretary of the North Wales Branch of the DWA. He has prolifically produced books and papers on the craft of dry stone walling and standards in the profession over the years. Sean is the editor of Stonechat magazine amongst many other contributions to the world of dry stone building.

Nick is a Scottish Master Dry Stone Waller and is credited with the idea for a DWAI event which ultimately led to the 'Gathering of Stones'.

Both talks will last between 40 minutes and one hour. These talks will take place in the newly opened Thomas McDonagh Heritage Centre, Main Street, Cloughjordan.

On the afternoon of 15 June there will be a tour to the neighbouring town of Roscrea and the wonderful Damier House and Monaincha.

The tour will depart from Main Street, Cloughjordan (outside the Thomas McDonagh Centre) at 2.00 pm. A free lunch is included in the tour.

For a further supplement (tba), if booked in advance, there is the option of a banquet on the night of 15 June in the beautiful Cloughjordan House.

For further information contact: Ken on 0872689419 or rockencurran@gmail.com

DSWAA Annual General Meeting

Members and their friends are invited to attend the DSWAA's 2013 **Annual General Meeting**. It will be held on Saturday, 27 July in Melbourne, commencing at 11.00 am.

A program is being finalised but, in the tradition of our AGMs, it will be an enjoyable and entertaining event. You are warmly encouraged to join your Committee at this special annual gathering.

As well as the formal proceedings, the AGM will include a talk by Committee member Bruce Munday on the writing of his recent book: *Those dry-stone walls; stories from South Australia's stone age*, which promises to be most informative. Signed copies of Bruce's wonderfully illustrated book will be on sale at a member's discount price (with some proceeds going to the DSWAA).

The AGM will also include a tour, possibly by chartered boat, to Herring Island in the Yarra River at South Yarra, to view the sculptures on the island, including two by world-renowned British dry stone waller Andy Goldsworthy.

The AGM will include a light lunch. A small charge will be made to help defray expenses.

Mark the date in your diary now. A notice will be sent to members shortly with full details.



An Andy Goldsworthy sculpture on Herring Island, Melbourne

New members

By Sue Jones, DSWAA Membership

The DSWAA welcomes nine new members so far this year:

Cameron Algie, Hawthorn, Vic

Jane Boot, Beaufort, Vic

Bev Farley, Camperdown, NSW

Andrew FitzSimons, Wattamolla, NSW

Bob Hart & family, Manly, NSW

Pamela Jellie, Camperdown, Vic

Marianne O'Connor, Chiltern, Vic

Joan Powling, Ivanhoe, Vic

Richard Senior, Bermagui, NSW



A friendly koala spotted on the way into Bessiebelle Sheepwash

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 September 2013 issue is
20 August 2013
All material to: chabrent@bigpond.net.au

Some websites you may like to visit

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

Who's Who in the DSWAA

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New members

Please complete (or photocopy) and post to:
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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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