

The 'Village des Bories': dry-stone constructions in Haute-Provence, France

By DSWAA Secretary Andrew Miller



'Village des Bories' near Gordes, east of Avignon, France

Borie... a French word for a small dwelling, built in dry-stone technique. I'm sure some of you will have come across a *borie*, which are not uncommon in the rural areas of a number of European countries. But a whole village of *bories*! That's what this story is about.

In September–October last year we had the privilege of enjoying a couple of months in France. Karin participated in the International Careers Advisors Conference in Montpellier, following which we travelled some roads through southern France, up through the east, towards Dijon and back to Paris. Our route, mostly unplanned, meandered through some of the small villages with stunning views and the marvellous medieval centres for which Provence is famous.

As we neared Gordes (east of Avignon) the marvellous rural landscape had many walls and buildings in dry-stone construction. We noticed signage to '*Village des Bories*' and

followed it. After a short distance we rounded a bend and a gap in the olive groves allowed for a wonderful vista of a grouping of buildings, all constructed in dry stone.

The village consists of individual dry stone *bories* together with others huddled together, all with dry-stone roofs (using the corbel-arch technique). The village, probably no more than two hundred metres by one hundred metres, had a wonderful sense of architectural harmony.

Some of the buildings were grouped around a threshing area, others incorporated stock pens (for goats, sheep or pigs). There were also stables, barns, lofts, storehouses, bread ovens, a wine cistern and silkworm rearing house.

Internally, the spaces are rustic, sometimes equipped with benches (which may have served as beds), alcoves and chimneys. Some of the *bories* were furnished with equipment used in the daily life of inhabitants of the village.



The pigsty, the sheep pen and the barn



Passageway through the village



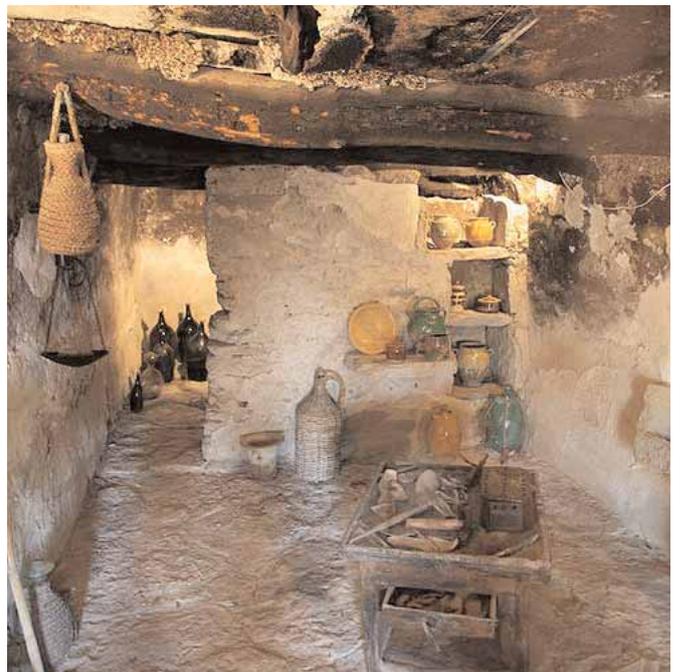
Coping on a dry-stone wall on the village boundary

The origin of the bories in the village (sometimes referred to as ‘Gallic Huts’) is believed to date back to the time of the Ligurians who lived in the region several centuries ago. The *Village des Bories* was restored in the early 1970s and now looks as it did when the last inhabitants abandoned it at the

beginning of the nineteenth century. The *Village des Bories* is set up as a rural museum and is classified as a historic monument and was awarded the Great Medal for Restoration by the Academy of Architecture in 1977. Well worth a visit!



Andrew Miller with his French guide



Interior of borie with basic furnishings and items from daily life

DSWAA Christmas gathering

By Charmian Brent, DSWAA Committee member

On a very pleasant Sunday afternoon in mid-December, the DSWAA Committee and various other DSWAA members arrived at Denton Hall, Allan Willingham's fascinating home in North Fitzroy for our traditional pre-Christmas gathering. To begin with, Allan gave a memorable detailed history of Denton Hall from its former life as a ballroom to a rich tycoon's mansion to its later life as a garment factory or sweatshop. The remarkable amount of information that Allan has unearthed about his surroundings created the perfect atmosphere for our meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting in March were circulated and approved. It was noted that the *Flag Stone*, the DSWAA's newsletter is now archived at the National Library in Canberra and is available online.

Various possible field trips for 2014 were discussed including a visit to South Australia in April, and a tour of the Adelong gold mine and walls of interest around Holbrook in southern NSW in October. Then of course, mid-year there will be the AGM which is always accompanied by a talk and lunch or dinner.

All this business was conducted in an extremely jovial atmosphere fuelled by quantities of Aperol, a delightful Italian aperitif supplied by Allan, together with lots of delicious food.

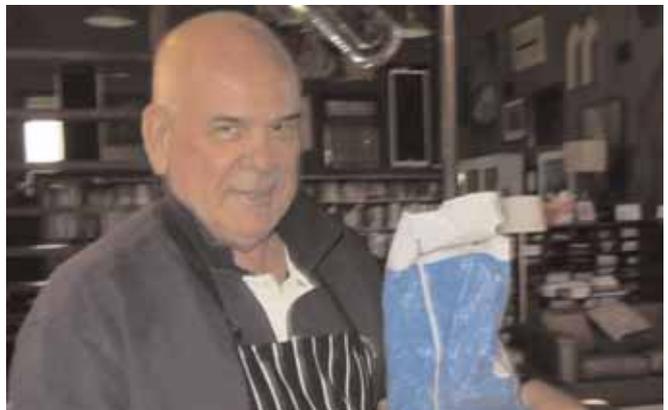
A highlight of the afternoon was when Allan disappeared to return with a mysterious blue and white plastic bag that he declared had not been opened since the early 1970s, when he had brought it back from Scotland. It turned out that the bag contained various samples of Scottish rocks of the type that had been used to build properties in the Western District of Victoria in the 1800s, the latter being the subject of Allan's Masters degree.

Later on we were pleased to welcome Lyn Allison and her partner Peter Mills. Lyn is the DSWAA's new patron (see pp. 11–12).

The evening barbecue of superior snags and more wine and salad sent us all home feeling very warm and fuzzy about the DSWAA and its future promise of camaraderie



DSWAA members get into the mood



Allan with his mysterious blue and white plastic bag



The samples of Scottish rock: note the bluestone at the front



The eclectic space at Denton Hall that Allan calls home



Allan's garden is the perfect spot for a very civilised barbecue

A garden fit for the Queen

By Alistair Tune, waller and landscape artist



Fleming's Nurseries presented this garden for the 2013 Chelsea Flower Show – designed by Phillip Johnson, it is a beautiful oasis that revives the soul

Like many who read this newsletter, my first hands-on experience of dry stone walling came about through a workshop at Glenormiston College, in Victoria and, like many, it was out of curiosity, a means to find out how these walls go together. It began as a hobby and was never my intention to make a career out of it, but fast forward 18 years and this 'hobby' has led me to be part of Australian gardening history. May of last year saw the Phillip Johnson-designed garden take out the 'best show garden' at the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show in the UK. An Australian first and I, a mere stone waller from country Victoria, was privileged to be part of it.

A kind word from fellow waller and good friend David Long had gained me a spot on the 16-person team, and my primary role was to help David in the construction of a dry-stone retaining wall. We also had the help of Scottish dyker Callum Gray, who had assisted David in the stone selection and pre-construction of the wall up in Scotland. The total length of wall built was 9 m, and consisted of a series of curved walls that joined to retain a garden bed, constructed from sandstone and capped with the well-known York stone. An interesting fact that I was unaware of until reaching London, was that the sandstone we were using was sourced from the same quarry as the stone used to restore Camperdown's Robert Burns statue. Being a Camperdown local, to travel to the other side of the world and use a stone that had a connection to my home town was a sentimental touch.

The garden itself took many years of planning, consisted of nearly 300 tonnes of stone, more than 10,000 plants, ranging from tiny aquatic plants to giant bottle trees and many thousands of man hours. All constructed within 21 days and in an area the size of a tennis court. The result not only capturing the eyes of the gardening world but most notably HRH Queen Elizabeth II, who graced the finely constructed stone steps of our garden.



SA: stone walls stand brave in fire

By Bruce Munday, DSWAA Convenor, SA



Part of the northern front of the Eden Valley fire, stopped by a 150-year-old stone fence

The third week of January was hot in South Australia. Very hot, with five consecutive days in Adelaide over 40C. There was also a lot of lightning about as we worked up to this heat wave and predictably this triggered many fires across the State.

One of the most extensive fires was across the eastern Mt Lofty Ranges, taking in about 30,000 hectares roughly from Springton to Moculta, described at the time as Eden Valley. This is mainly grazing land, much of it quite rocky, and decorated with many miles of dry-stone fencing which dates back to the 1850s – about the time that shepherds deserted their posts for the gold and copper rushes.

The durability of stone walls in fire is obvious, but what of their capacity to actually stop the fire in its tracks? George Goyder, one of South Australia's first Surveyors Generals and certainly its most illustrious, was in no doubt. In 1866 he reported to the SA Parliament on the urgent need to fence the pastoral runs in Northern Districts, then in the grip of drought, arguing that this would improve the condition of both sheep and the land. He suggested five classes of fencing, but where stone was readily accessible he contended that 'stone walling ... is the best as it not only subdivides the land as required, but effectively stops all ordinary fire'. Eden Valley was no ordinary fire. But when Kristin and I went out there to help with the mopping up we saw many examples of

where the fire, mainly in grass, had indeed been stopped by a stone fence or at least held up allowing CFS crews to get ahead of the front and put in controls.

I saw a similar situation at a recent fire at Rockleigh, also in the eastern Mt Lofties. In some instances the fire had broken through a damaged section of the fence which makes the case for maintaining these structures in 'fire-proof' condition.

We know only too well that maintaining stone walls demands both time and skill in large amounts. But the benefits (both private and public) could be considerable. Perhaps support for this is something that insurers should consider, and perhaps also state governments that inevitably are expected to fork out assistance after large bushfires.

Right. Here the fire leapt a stone fence, noticeably where there was tree canopy and scrub, but was sufficiently held up to allow the fire crews to deal with the outbreak and prevent further spread



Victoria: a sturdy boundary

By Natalie Paynter, DSWAA member

Dry-stone walls across Victoria's Western District represent modification of the natural environment and are evident of a cultural landscape. These walls document social and cultural influences of immigrants and were reported to be of 'vital importance' to the 'material and mortal advancement' of the colony (Gordon 1867: preface). Fencing secured land, made good neighbours, made farm management easier through the protection of both crops and cattle (Paynter 2002: 15).

Pastoral runs were selected in the Western District at Pomborneit and the Stony Rises near Camperdown in the 1830s and 1840s. The Manifolds acquired their licence for the Purrumbete run in 1837, the adjacent run, was acquired by William Roadknight in 1846. The occupation of runs resulted in the fixing and settling of boundaries and they generally followed natural features such as creeks, rivers, lakes or a stony barrier. The boundary between Roadknight and the Manifold property was agreed on 28 January 1848, providing the squatters with a new sense of security (Manifold 1984: 81). The construction of dry stone walls was common in the area from the 1850s and resources for fencing materials proved easily procurable from the volcanic debris provided by the rugged Stony Rises. An 'Improvements' book was kept by the Manifolds and included records on the construction of dams and fencing. Entries began in 1856 and were discontinued in 1863. In 1858 the Improvement book listed construction of a stone wall with Mr Roadknight, stretching from Lake Corangamite to the gate on the Colac Road and continuing towards the Mount Pordon Hut (Manifold 1984: 134). The wall was constructed by Thomson & party. A plan of Roadknight's run from 1848 shows a rough sketch of the alignment of this boundary. A subsequent Parish Plan dated 1863 shows the surveyed wall now forming the boundary between the two pastoral runs.

Fieldwork from 2002, included formal sampling and recording and shows the southern section of this wall to have an average height and width of 1500 mm and 700 mm respectively. Compared to other walls across the district, this wall is certainly wide and creates a solid barrier, marking land. Interestingly, it has no coping stones present and appears to be rather crude in its construction, which may be indicative of unskilled labour. The northern most section of this wall can still be seen clearly on Google Earth today, making its path towards Lake Corangamite. This wall is significant for its historic associations to early pastoralist families and the population of early Victorian rural landscapes. It is also a rare example of a tangible and remnant run boundary, part of early mapping and surveying in Victoria. This boundary wall forms part of a complex of dry-stone walls creating a cultural landscape across the Western District.

References

Gordon, P.R 1867. *Fencing as a means of Improving our Pasture Lands and its advantages to the stock-owners and the colony*. William Maddock, Sydney.



Pomborneit Parish Plan dated 1863 showing the north-east alignment of the joint wall between William Roadknight and J&T Manifold's pastoral runs



Showing the northern extent of the joint wall between William Roadknight and J&T Manifold's pastoral runs Google Earth, 2014

Manifold, W.G. 1984. *The Wished-For-Land: The Migration and Settlement of the Manifolds of Western Victoria*. Neptune Press P/L, Camperdown.

Paynter, N. 2002. 'Good Fences Make Good Neighbours'. Honours Thesis, La Trobe University, Archaeology Department.

Editor's Note

Natalie Paynter's Honours thesis collected qualitative and quantitative data of dry-stone walls across two study areas, one at Pomborneit and the other at Kolora in Victoria's Western District. She undertook a small survey with local landholders across these areas. She noted the spacial distribution of walls and attempted to indicate through the analysis of historic maps if they could be attributed to either pastoral runs or to the selector period. She also made a record of dimensions and function, and tried to note if any cultural association of the wallers could be evident by analysing construction techniques and stylistic variations.

SA: October walling workshop led by 'Wally' Carline



President's Message



Jim Holdsworth

Greetings

Once again, south-east Australia is enduring a summer of many bushfires, with loss of life and property. When reporting on a bushfire, the television media tend to focus on dramatic scenes of burning houses and blackened streets with rows of houses reduced to nothing more than twisted roofing iron, melted furniture and burnt motor vehicles.

However, if you look deeper into the locations and impacts of the fires that we have had over recent months you will see that many are in rural areas where grass fires spread across paddocks and pastures and engulf livestock, sheds, fences and other farm infrastructure.

The images from TV news helicopters show the extent of damage that a fire can do where the only fuel is dried grass. These images took my mind back to the fires in the Stony Rises between Colac and Camperdown in south-west Victoria in December 2006, and to the beneficial role that dry stone walls can play in stopping or slowing the spread of a grass fire.



This image was taken on the side of the Princes Highway, in front of DSWAA member June Barling's property. An arsonist had lit several fires in the long, tinder-dry roadside grass. The effectiveness of the property's boundary wall in stopping the spread of the fire is very clear. Had this boundary been a post-and-wire fence that small fire could have spread considerably and caused much greater damage.

At our December meeting, the DSWAA Committee discussed many topics, including our growing archive of books, brochures, CDs, newspaper clippings and other printed material, and how it can be made available to members. The other day, digging into the archive (currently a large storage box in my study!), these piqued my interest:

Fences for Town and Country, by John Stacpoole. This paperback is a comprehensive survey of the myriad types of fences found across Australia. It starts with the challenging question: 'What is a fence?'. However, in more than 250 pages, fences built of stone rate less than one page, and the dry-stone technique is not mentioned. I think Mr Stacpoole needs to get out more. And when he gets back he should write a revised edition!

Finding Heritage, a pilot CD of dry stone walls in the Northern Rivers area of NSW, produced by Karyn Rendall and Denise Burch in 2004. I wonder if they produced a full version, as a note states that they: 'aim to source funding to produce a documentary which will highlight the many dry-stone walls throughout Australia and reveal some of the fascinating stories from behind the walls'. The DSWAA's knowledge of dry-stone walls in that part of the country is very sparse. This is something we hope to remedy with a research project which we also discussed at our Committee meeting.

Walhalla – Valley of Gold. One of the two authors is John Aldersea, who led a DSWAA field trip to the historic goldfield in August 2005 and which was reported at length in Issue no. 5 of our newsletter (before it became the *Flag Stone*). *Walhalla – Valley of Gold* tells the remarkable story of the gold rush that spawned not only the town of Walhalla but several 'suburbs' dotted among the surrounding wooded hills. When gold ran out in 1905, the town died almost overnight. Stone walls remain in Walhalla, and almost lost in the forest are remnants of stone chimneys. Few people appreciate Walhalla's role in Victoria's rich gold heritage.

And of course, the pivotal publication *If These Walls Could Talk*, the report of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project. This extraordinary soft-cover A4 book was first published in 1995. The Project Director was the late Josie Black, and the Project Supervisor was Andrew Miller. In at least its fourth reprint, this book continues to sell well throughout south-west Victoria and we have visited a number of the sites on the dry stone walls trail in that area on various DSWAA field trips. One recommendation of the project was that: 'One of the above organisations (Arts Council, National Trust, historical society and landcare and conservation groups) initiate the formation of the Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia which would act as an interest group and an agent of quality control for the craft'.

I'm very pleased that the efforts of Josie and Andrew in managing that Project included the spark of foresightedness that led us to where the DSWAA is today. We, and dry-stone walls way beyond Corangamite, have those two people to thank.

**Best wishes,
Jim Holdsworth**



Gathering Stones...



Repairing the boundary walls of Lyme Hall in Derbyshire, UK, a National Trust project

Photos courtesy of Jimmy Mac

NSW: not quite dry stone, but stone none the less

By John Baker, DSWAA member NSW

John and Liz Baker have a country retreat, Old Graham, situated near Cowra in NSW. It is an old Cobb and Co inn built of granite in about 1877 in a Georgian style with wide verandahs. John attended a DSWAA Canberra weekend held about a year ago as he plans to build some dry-stone walls at Old Graham. However, for the stone enthusiast John and Liz already have several items of interest.

The nine standing stones were erected in mid-2013. John selected and picked up the stones in 2005 from a local granite quarry which had closed and had them moved to Old Graham. Last year with the assistance of Brian Doyle, a Crookwell stonemason, and Bill Hurley from Boorowa who has a Kato excavator, the stones were erected.

They are set on a ridge which provides an excellent foundation as the subsoil is of very solid rotted granite. They are set about 400 mm to 600 mm into the ground and are bedded into sockets of a very strong concrete mix, which was mixed on site.

It took us two days to erect the stones. The most difficult part was getting them to hang vertically in the steel chains we were using to lift them, as this was essential to getting them to sit upright in their sockets.

The labyrinth was constructed in early-2013. It is based on a medieval grass labyrinth at Alkborough in Lincolnshire in the UK, although the same pattern is also on the floor of Chartres Cathedral in France.

Initially, several alternative path widths were tried on a small scale, and once a width had been decided on, the labyrinth was marked out on the ground using road marking paint and lengths of builders line. Then granite rocks were collected from the surrounding hills on the Old Graham property and were laid out on the ground following the marked out pattern.

It took two people about five working days with a ute for transport to complete the job. The biggest problem was finding suitable rocks which would sit flat on the ground and which were the right size.

To celebrate his daughter's marriage in 2012 John designed an obelisk which a local brickie built for him using local granite. For stability the obelisk has a steel pipe up the centre which is set into a large concrete foundation.

The same brickie also built a stone bridge in 2011 across a dry creek. The bridge is white after it had been painted with Greek yoghurt to make the surface of the stone grow mould, etc. to look aged. Next to the bridge is a folly which was built in about 2005 by Brian Doyle using Sydney sandstone columns salvaged from a building job in the eastern suburbs.



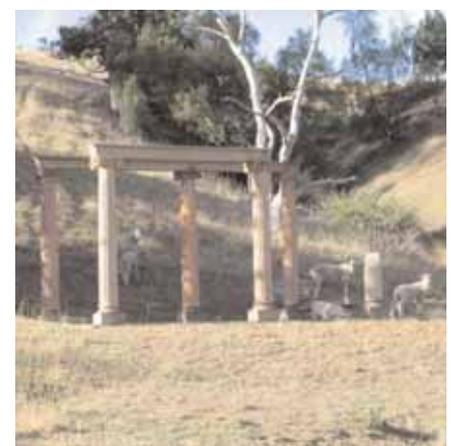
The standing stones



The labyrinth



The obelisk



The folly



The bridge

Tasmania: dry-stone walls associated with goldmining

By Andrew Garner, DSWAA member

Although nowhere near as famous as their Victorian and New South Wales counterparts, Tasmania has a surprising number of historical goldfields, some of which contain examples of drystone walls.

Most of the Tassie's gold workings are either on the 'wet and wild' west coast or the dry north-east of the State.

Most drystone structures are confined to fairly simple retaining walls, often to provide support for pack tracks and loading ramps traversing slopes, or to shore up ground next to adits or shafts.

The walls shown in the two photos opposite are part of extensive alluvial workings dating from 1880. Sluicing of the steep gully walls was aided by water gravity-fed via a hand-dug race of several kilometres length.

Historical activity at Mangana in the north-east of Tasmania was between the 1890s–1930s, although some modern reworking is set to commence in places. Recent mining impact assessments recommend preserving the best examples of drystone structures.



This example of retaining wall is adjacent to a hard rock mine (auriferous quartz vein in slates) at Mangana.

**Picture courtesy of Parry Kosoglou and Webb Mining P/L*



Example of moss-covered terraced retaining walls in regrowth rainforest,



This section of drystone retaining wall protects an earthen water race

Welcome to our new Patron

By DSWAA President Jim Holdsworth

At the December 2013 meeting of the DSWAA Committee, we confirmed the acceptance of our invitation to Ms Lyn Allison to be our new patron.

The proposal to invite Ms Allison to be our second patron was suggested by Committee member Allan Willingham who has known Lyn for many years. As it happens, I too have known Lyn for some time, and Allan's suggestion seemed both inspired and very logical.

Lyn is best known as a former leader of the Australian Democrats; having served as a Senate member for Victoria from 1996 to 2008. However, it is the breadth of Lyn's social and community values and commitments that make her an ideal patron for the DSWAA as we continue to develop a more national focus and hence a wider agenda. Lyn replaces our first patron Sir James Gobbo, who resigned a couple of years ago due to the pressure of other commitments.

The DSWAA Committee believes that having a patron raises the profile of the DSWAA as well as bringing another level of leadership and a fresh perspective to our deliberations and forward planning.

Several DSWAA Committee members have met with Lyn and described the DSWAA's background and the broad directions that we intend to pursue in coming years to implement our Vision. We were immediately impressed with the enthusiasm that Lyn showed and her interest in what we do and want to do.

I am sure that Lyn's experience in politics and community activism, her capacity for strategic thinking and her commitment to socially-beneficial projects will be an asset to the DSWAA.

In behalf of the DSWAA Committee and all our members, we bid Lyn a warm welcome! (See pic on page 12.)

New members

By Sue Jones, DSWAA Membership

The DSWAA is pleased to welcome the new members who have joined the DSWAA since the September 2013 issue of the *Flag Stone*, participants in the second walling workshop held in South Australia last October:

Ray and Owen Sanders, Blyth, SA

Bjorn Everts, Bruce Greenlees, Joe Keynes, Max McLaren, Anna Rigosi and Sue Secomb, who are all from South Australia.



DSWAA's new patron Lyn Allison

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 2014 issue is
20 April 2014
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

President

Jim Holdsworth
0417 648 218 jim@planningcollaborative.com.au

Vice-President

Vacant

Secretary

Andrew Miller enquiries@dsmaa.org.au
0408 139 553 aksdmiller@bigpond.com.au

Accountant

Brad Purvis brad@yarragroup.com.au

Treasurer

Vacant

Membership

Sue Jones sirius.associates@westnet.com.au

Editor Newsletter

Charmian Brent chabrent@bigpond.net.au

Website Co-ordinator

Simon Badway aubads@gmail.com

Committee Members

Bruce Munday bruce.m42@bigpond.com
Allan Willingham alberti@ozemail.com.au

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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