

A message from our President

Welcome to our second Newsletter. Even in these early days of its existence, it is evident that this Association has wonderful potential. All current and future members can play a role in realising that potential. There is a wide variety of topics and issues for us to discuss and act upon, and many opportunities for members to get enjoyment, comradeship and pleasure out of being part of the Association.

We are most fortunate to have a Committee made up of people from diverse backgrounds; people with experience, knowledge and passion who can be instrumental in furthering the aims and goals of the Association.

The Committee is actively looking into how the Association can be useful to its many stakeholders and how it can be an enjoyable and stimulating outlet for its members.

Our meetings are the heart of the active presence of the Association and you will read in this Newsletter about the program of forthcoming meetings and site visits which generally occur every two months. Meetings are often held at locations where we can view and learn about the history of dry stone walls or where the growing skills and craft of walling is on display.

The challenge of awakening landowners to the cultural and landscape value of walls and to their responsibility as custodians of this valuable part of our early European history is an important task for the Association.

There are other aspects of dry stone walls, both in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia and overseas, that will be of interest to us in the future, and we are already establishing contacts with groups and individuals in far-flung places.

Of course, any voluntary organisation relies on its members as well as its office bearers to make it a success. I encourage you to offer your ideas and thoughts about any aspect of dry stone walls, topics the Association should look into or news of walls and walling, and to enjoy being a member of DSWAA.

I welcome recent new members to the Association and look forward to seeing everyone at our October meeting."

Jim

Jim Holdsworth



Gathering Stones

Jim has recently returned from Europe where meetings with practitioners and administrators of dry stone walls in both England and France reinforced his contention that 'Victoria has an enviable stock of walls but a poor record of recognition and celebration.' He plans to give us a talk on his trip in 2005. An accomplished photographer and presenter this occasion is a must for your diary!

The exhibition *A Stone Upon A Stone* was recently on display at the newly refurbished Walter Burley Griffin Incinerator Arts Complex in Moonee Ponds. It was well attended by locals many of whom commented in the Visitors' Book of fond memories of links with dry stone walls from their childhood. It now moves to the Colac Performing Arts Centre from 27th Sept - 22nd Oct. 12.00 noon - 9.00 p.m Thurs - Mon Details: Glen Hirst 52 320504

Feel like a trip to the Greek Islands now that the hustle and bustle of the Olympic Games are over? The 9th International Dry Stone Walling Congress will be held in Lesvos Greece **Oct 28th to 31st**.
www.aegean.gr/culturaltec/chmlab/conferences/xerolithic

Cheers *Raelene*

NEXT MEETING October 9th. Vote Postal and spend polling day at our next exciting event. The day begins at 'Huntly' formerly the McGarvie property, now owned and lovingly cared for by Brian and June Barling. **Address:** 2700 Princes Hwy Pomborneit on corner of Hawks Nest Rd
Times: 11-00 a.m-1.00 p.m **Lunch** 1.00-2.00 p.m (bring your own) then from 2.00-4.00 p.m join us at the **DSWAA Meeting** at the Pomborneit Hall Pomborneit North located next to the fire station and across road from Pombomart. **Cost:** Full and Associate Members **\$5.00** Non Members **\$10.00** (payable to the DSWAA on the day)

Calendar of Meeting Dates for 2005		
Month	Date	Location
February	12 th	t.b.a
April	9 th	Camperdown
June	11 th	Scienceworks (AGM)
August	14 th	Walhalla
October	8 th	t.b.a

See further details Issue No.3

June 19th Annual General Meeting at Scienceworks

In many ways the cold, wet, windy weather of this Melbourne winter day provided a fitting backdrop to the inaugural Annual General Meeting. The craft of dry stone walling as most of us know it came from the colder, wetter countries of the northern hemisphere.

Historically, this meeting marks a significant page in the story of Australia's walls. During the past three decades there has been an increasing interest in and focus on Australia's walls (in particular, those of the eastern states) and a developing sense of urgency about the need to protect and preserve remaining walls as a significant part of our cultural heritage. Those involved in the earlier stages of this awareness are currently documenting the events and processes that culminated in the meeting of June 19th, but for now, a brief report of a most interesting and successful day.

The meeting was generously hosted by Scienceworks Museum in Spotswood, an inner Western Suburb of Melbourne. With Acting Convenor Andrew Miller in the chair, a brief summary of previous meetings brought newcomers up to date, office bearers and committee members for the coming year were elected and business dealt with.

After a brief half hour for lunch in the Cafeteria, we joined waller Alistair Tune at the wall he constructed in the grounds of the Museum during last year's Rare Trades Exhibition. It is a tribute to Alistair's excellence as a tradesman and his enthusiasm for and knowledge of his craft that some 30 people braved the biting wind and intermittent rain to hear his comments and ply him with questions.



Following Alistair's talk we moved to the very warm comfortable and well equipped auditorium joined by some (20 or more enthusiasts) for a presentation by Architect and

historian, Alan Willingham, with the intriguing title of 'Dykes, Snooks, Austins, Manifolds and the Great Rabbit Wall of Purrumbete. Alan's talk, supported by a fascinating selection of slides, covered a wide-ranging sweep of facts, anecdotes and reminiscences about homes, walls and people of Victoria's western district farmlands.

At the close of the formal proceedings many people stayed to comment, ask questions, buy copies of "If These Walls Could Talk" and a few new members signed up. As the Museum was about to close, those who were still keen to chat moved on to the Williamstown RSL. All in all, a memorable day!

August 7th Field Trip in the City of Whittlesea

What is it about walls and wet weather? August 7th dawned bright and sunny (if somewhat windy) and remained that way through a productive meeting at Ziebell's Farmhouse in Whittlesea. However by the time we set off on a tour of some of the wonderful walls in the area, the weather had deteriorated to a typical Melbourne winter's day – burst of sunshine interspersed with drizzling rain and decreasing temperature!

Ziebell's Farmhouse is one of the few remaining original stone buildings in Whittlesea. Now serving as a small, museum for local history it is surrounded by a well preserved dry stone wall built, as was the cottage, by the early settlers in the area who brought energy and skills from their native Germany to establish a thriving farming community in the area they called Westgarthtown.

The meeting was followed by a bus tour which was organised by staff member Renee Steain as part of the City of Whittlesea's Annual Heritage Program. This activity built on a longstanding relationship Raelene commenced in 1999 during her research and development of the touring exhibition *A Stone Upon A Stone*. Local identity Bruce Batten led the tour. Bruce's encyclopaedic knowledge of local history, his breezy style (and corny jokes!) ensured an entertaining and informative afternoon and his very valuable contacts throughout the local community gave us access to the best walls in the area found on private properties not usually open to the public.

Before boarding the bus we made a quick detour on foot to a nearby churchyard where we were able to see clearly just how stony Whittlesea is, and, at the rear of the church, how one of the original walls forms a visually and hopefully materially impregnable barrier between the past and the present. Our first stop was at the home of Andrew and Tina at Wollert, an enthusiastic young couple taking enormous care to preserve and restore the stonework, dry and otherwise on their historic property Mason's Homestead.



Following a delicious... (and warm) refreshment stop at the Wollert Community Centre waited on by the indomitable Bruce's wife daughters and family friends we moved on to Fenwick the

home of the McLean brothers. What wonderful, walls ...miles of them. We barely noticed the ankle deep mud and steady rain with the excitement of seeing such beautiful examples of the craft and listening to Marshall McLean's fascinating commentary on his family's history.

We were left with increased knowledge, awareness, memories and photos of another excellent and stimulating excursion. Bruce was left with a very muddy bus and our strict instructions to dig up better jokes for us next time!!

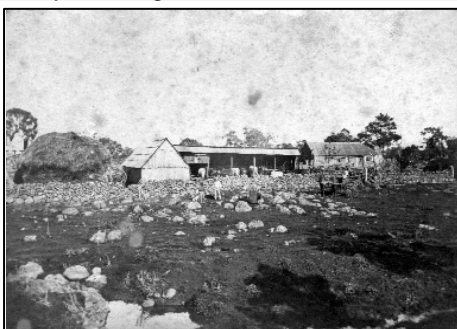
Anne Mulholland

Dry Stone Walls in the City of Whittlesea

My family moved onto land at Thomastown in March 1850 and we're still there today, over 150 years later. The land was stony then and still is, although for the most part the stone is now submerged by modern suburbia. Apart from small pockets of exposed stone on land around the Westgarthtown Lutheran Church and Cemetery and some of the remaining old farmhouses, stone is rarely seen there today, unless people try to excavate footings for buildings, dig postholes or plant trees. Then the thin veneer of soil spread by the developers is quickly cast aside and out come the curses, and in respect of the footings, the wallets. As residential blocks at Epping North go up for sale over the next few years, you won't see a stone in the advertising photos, if past experience is anything to go by. The estates will all be nicely surfaced with soil, like icing on a cake.

I grew up surrounded by bluestone. Our house is built of stone, so too the stables, milking shed and dairy. The fencing was mostly stone, some remnant sections of which still survive on the remaining two acres we now occupy, the other 90 acres having been sold for subdivision during the late 1960s. The paths, yards, drains and roads were all paved or pitched with stone, including a circular stone horse path around which draught horses walked to operate the chaff cutter. Of stone too were the base for our haystack and the fords over the Edgar's Creek. Stone occupied much of our front garden and several paddocks, which could only be used for grazing. Fortunately other paddocks were suitable for cultivation, having a reasonable soil covering, although even these annually yielded up previously hidden stones to the plough.

According to William Westgarth, when the Germans first arrived at Thomastown in 1850, there was an amusing 'scramble as to allotments' where 'each tried, in most cases, to get trees, stones, and rocks in preference to clear ground, as if so much additional wealth'. However the Germans knew what they were doing and managed in most cases not only to purchase land but also to acquire most of the necessary building materials at the same time. But it was not only the Germans who quickly mastered our rocky landscape – the English, Scottish and Irish immigrants who settled nearby at Epping, Wollert, Woodstock and Yan Yean also proved as adept.– and many of their nineteenth century buildings, structures and walls also remain to



remind us of their presence

Some stone buildings, structures and walls must have existed prior to the 1850s but if so, little evidence remains. From then on, however, farmhouses, stables, milking sheds, dairies and boundary and internal fences were all rapidly constructed, stone being the favoured material. Here, as elsewhere, the 'type of fencing adopted reflected the nature of the countryside and the materials most readily at hand'. At Craigieburn Dr Thomas Wilson, who purchased land there in 1853 and established his farm Summer Hill, had by 1870 constructed a large bluestone house, numerous stone sheds and more than 32 kilometres of dry stonewalls. In 1870 the *Leader* stated that Dr Wilson considered 'stonewalls, where the stone is available, the very cheapest form of fencing and the best.' Dr Wilson's first walls, built in the 'good times' or gold rush period, cost 44 shillings a chain for building alone, whereas the last few kilometres, built shortly before he was interviewed, cost only 26 shillings per chain, inclusive of raising and carting the stone as well as building.

Notwithstanding Wilson's clear preference for stone, considerable debate existed among progressive farmers in Victoria regarding the relative merits of stone, timber or wire and also between 'dead' fences and 'live' fences or hedges of hawthorn, whitethorn, gorse or boxthorn. Hedges provided shelter for stock, but were said to be difficult to grow and maintain, took up valuable space and soured the ground underneath. An 1873 article in the *Australasian* concluded by stating: '*In the abstract, stone walls may be considered model fences for a country that is subject to bush-fires, and were stone everywhere obtainable we would feel no hesitation in declaring in favour of its application to such purposes. Breaches are easily repaired, for the material is always there. The first cost is greater than of wood, when the latter is at hand, but for permanence and durability stone has no peer; moreover it takes nothing from the soil; the grass at the foot of the wall is as sweet and nutritious as that in any other portion of the field.*'¹

A weakness of stonewalls, however, was that unless they were built high enough and virtually without taper, they were not well suited to sheep farming. This was not a problem in this area initially, but during the 1870s sheep raising here increased. In 1867 the *Leader* had noted: '*A well-built stone wall is a capital fence, and where stone can be raised close at hand it need not be a dear one; but walls made of bluestone boulders have already proved to be no fence against the common sheep of the country, for they run up and over them as easily as over a bank of earth.*'



As most of Epping, Wollert and Woodstock's walls were built of irregular shaped field stones and taper considerably, most required the subsequent addition of top wires to ensure their effectiveness. Top wires

were also added when inadequate stone was available to complete a wall to sufficient height.

Walls were built either by contracted wallers or the farmers themselves. Dr Wilson's walls were erected by contractors, as were Peter and James Brisbane's at their newly acquired farm Epping Park in 1876. The *Australasian* reported that at Epping Park: 'Stone-wall fencing, shed building, and other similar works are now being busily carried on with the view of putting the farm into proper shape for the use [shorthorn cattle raising] to which it is now being turned.'

On Cr Stephen Morgan's Sambourne Farm at Epping, stonewalls were still being constructed in 1891 when he was interviewed by a *Leader* reporter. His home farm was said to have been: 'divided into seven paddocks, post, rail and wire and stone walls being used for the purpose. The latter is a favourite fence in the district, stones being plentiful. The cost of erecting a wall 4 feet in height is about 25s. per chain, a man well used to the work being capable of building about one chain per day.'

Wire fences or stonewalls with top wires were the bane of the Findon Harriers, whose riders regularly criss-crossed the City of Whittlesea's countryside from May to September each year hunting hares and foxes. In 1877 Brookside reported in the *Australasian* on a Findon Harriers meet he attended at Craigieburn. He wrote:

'After going up hill and down dale for a mile, we came to a stream some 10ft wide, over which the hounds swim. We are saved from jumping it, as they recross again some 300 yards lower down ... Another mile or so, and we approach the boundary wall between Mr. Miller's and Dr. Wilson's estates. "Ware wire!" is the cry, and we see that the wall is capped with a strong wire. We gallop to the left and we are fortunate enough to find a place where the cap has dipped to a level with the wall ... after galloping over some stony ground we get on terms with them as they cross their third wall; then a short check occurs through the hare doubling, which allows the rear guard of the field to join us ... Slow hunting ensues, three stone walls are jumped, over one of which Tommy falls and throws his rider, who lands on his head, much to the detriment of his hat. A fresh hare then jumps up before the hounds, and they are allowed to pursue it. Our run is then over several of the walls already jumped, and across more of Dr. Wilson's land, and then into fresh country. The pack sails on without a check, and crosses wall after wall, at a pace as quick as when it is hunting kangaroos, and fast enough to please the most fastidious huntsman. After 20 minutes we enter a green lane, with a capped wall on either side; down

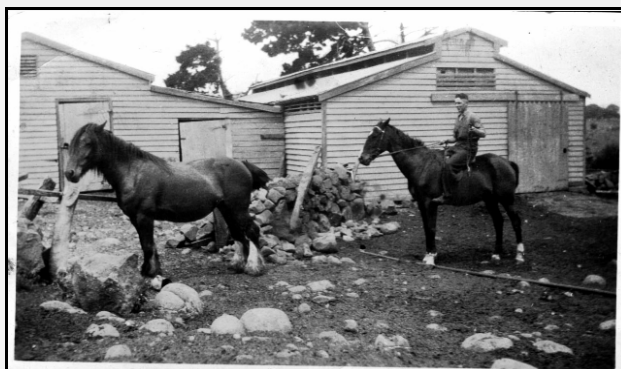


this lane the pack regularly races for half a mile, with its game in view ...'

Fortunately, Findon Harriers hunt reports appeared regularly in the newspapers, right through to the 1930s. Stonewalls were so much an everyday

part of the landscape around here that few people apart from agricultural reporters and hunt club correspondents ever bothered to mention them.

In 1895 the Findon Harriers' *Australasian* correspondent was named The Gentleman in Black. He wrote 'The throw-off was in Lynch-park, west of Epping, where the ground is rather too stony to be pleasant going, and the fences are mostly stone walls.'



To conclude, what's happened to our dry stone walls since then? Well, some survive magnificently, the best of which can be seen at Fenwick Stud, Yan Yean, which has over ten kilometres of walls. There are also some other wonderful walls. But many of our walls have been lost entirely through road widening and suburban development; most damaged by uncaring rabbiters; and many others pilfered to within a stone or two of their very existence by amateur gardeners and professional landscapers during the 1970s and 1980s. Through this unfortunate theft, both legal and illegal, conscious and unconscious, much of our priceless and irreplaceable heritage has been stolen in broad daylight before our very eyes. We cannot and must not let this continue. How many kilometres we had in the City of Whittlesea and how many we still have now are both unknowns requiring further research. An immediate challenge lies before us with the imminent residential developments north of Epping. The City of Whittlesea has a good record so far as heritage preservation is concerned, going back over ten years when it commissioned and adopted the City's 1991 Heritage Study, and some of our stonewalls are now protected under the City's planning scheme. Much greater efforts are required, however, both within the City of Whittlesea and elsewhere in Victoria, to identify and record all our heritage walls and devise more innovative solutions to the problem of their essential preservation.

Rob Wuchatsch

Member's Profile: Geoff Duggan

Dry stone walls are built without mortar and rely solely on the forces of gravity and friction for their strength. Where once these structures were used as a means of survival, for shelter to contain livestock, because of their many benefits, they are now being used in gardens as retaining and feature walls and indeed more contemporaneously as sculptural artworks in public open spaces.

I recently returned from the UK after completing my goal of achieving Master Craftsman qualifications in the Craft of Dry Stone walling. 1991 was the first time I had a go at building a Dry Stone Wall "correctly" under the guidance of Nathan Perkins in Victoria. After a weekend I was hooked. My foray in the craft began seriously in 1995 when I was awarded the Horticultural Scholarship through the Friends of the Royal Botanic Gardens to study the craft with the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain. My aim was to achieve recognized qualifications and pass my acquired skills on to others while developing garden beds and retaining walls at Mount Annan Botanic Garden.

I have developed a real passion for my craft and have returned to Britain twice since 1995 to train alongside some of the best craftsmen in the world. During my training I have built walls, special features and various structures in many regional styles and using a wide variety of stone types. As a result of this training I have undergone a series of progressive, practical tests leading to the *Master Craftsman Certificate* in dry stone walling. Along with this qualification I also undertook Examiner Training and Advanced Instructor Training with the Association and I am now able to examine others in Australia.

Over the course of the last 8 years, I have played a key role in highlighting the significance of historic Dry Stone Walls in the Sydney and Mt Annan Gardens and other areas within NSW. I have completed a manual on the construction of Walls in the Kiama region and also assisted in the development of the 'A Stone upon a Stone' exhibition curated by Raelene Marshall. My work has attracted much media attention for the gardens through print, radio and television. I regularly conduct training courses in the craft and have helped over 700 people acquire some basic skills of their own developing over 750metres of Dry Stone Wall while raising revenue for the Gardens at the same time

Although there has been a recent revival in the craft in Australia, unfortunately, in many cases quality work that respects and adheres to the skills of the traditional craft is rarely being produced. To emphasise this point, a correctly constructed dry stone wall should, with very little maintenance have a life span well over one hundred years, yet wall collapse and structural failure in this country in periods less than five years is common.

I find it a great pity and very unfortunate that many clients are being exploited by some 'stone workers'

posing as 'dry stone wallers' who are making a living building walls with no training and very little understanding of the skills and principles involved in the development of a craft passed down over the centuries.

Even more unfortunate, is that their clients are often being hoodwinked by contractors, into spending many tens of thousands of dollars on walls that look good on the surface but are constructed by people ignorant of the inherent structural principles and decade-long lifespan of this timeless craft. In addition, access to and assistance from an independent body with a register of qualified Wallers who can provide good quality work is also lacking in Australia

Our recently formed Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia has nominated me as the NSW committee representative. I am keen to help play a role in the establishment of a similar craftsman certification scheme to that run through the British Dry Stone Walls Association. The anticipated outcome of this will be the establishment of a register of trained and qualified wallers in Australia, which can be referenced by people wishing to commission dry stone construction and be assured that those they employ can deliver 'recognised' quality of the work.

Internationally recognised basic and advanced training leading to qualifications will be available for people interested in the craft. This training is based on traditional techniques and principles developed over many hundreds of years. I am also keen to develop a trainee scheme in the craft for the young which would feed directly into the landscaping industry.

As a Master Craftsman my wish is to push the boundaries of my craft to new limits. I am particularly interested in expanding the use of dry stone walling as a sculptural medium and have already put together some concepts and also keen to work with other sculptors in developing ideas.



Sculpture made by Geoff to accompany the A Stone Upon A Stone Touring Exhibition

Some websites you may like to visit

www.astoneuponastone.com; www.dswa.org.uk
www.rbqsyd.gov.au; www.pierreseche.net
www.jboyweb.com/drystonewall/index.html

Photographic Contributors

P 2	Peter Haffenden, Raelene Marshall
P 3 & 4	Rob Wuchatsch, Bruce Batten, John Borrack
P 5	David Liddicoat

Committee Members

President	Jim Holdsworth
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Treasurer	Brad Purvis
Committee Member	Alistair Tune
Committee Member (Newsletter) wbitans@hotmail.com	Wendy Bitans
Committee Member	Josie Black
Committee Member	John Collier
Committee Member (NSW)	Geoff Duggan

New Members: please complete the attached form (or photocopy) and EITHER e-mail raelene@net2000.com OR post to DSWAA Secretary Raelene Marshall 47 West Gateway Keilor East 3033

Payment: Monies can be deposited in the Association'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 to the above address.

The Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia inc no.A004473S Application for Membership	
Entry Fee (one off) \$2.00 +	
Professional (voting rights)	\$40.00
Individual (voting rights)	\$20.00
Corporate (voting rights)	\$80.00
Family (voting rights)	\$35.00
Friends and Associates (non-voting rights)	\$10.00
Paying by: Cheque enc. <input type="checkbox"/> Bank Deposit <input type="checkbox"/>	
Name	
Address	
Phone	
Mobile	
e-mail	
Area of Interest eg Farmer Heritage etc	



Building Walls ... with Geoff and Al

Save all your dry stone walling questions for October 9th Geoff Duggan Australia's only U.K. qualified Master Craftsman will travel from New South Wales to join us at our meeting at 'Huntly' 2700 Princes Highway Pomborneit

If you'd like to learn the craft yourself, Geoff conducts workshops at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Mt Annan. Courses for the remainder of 2004 are full. For further details on 2005 courses: Contact Geoff 02 46 347916 or e-mail Geoff.Duggan@rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au

A waller and a sculptor! Geoff has been invited to exhibit six of his miniature walls in an 'Artisan' Exhibition at the Domain in Sydney later this month. He will also be showing a dry stone 'Water Ball' as a feature at Sydney's Blooms and Garden Festival during the last week of September. Further enquiries: Contact Geoff as above.

Both Geoff and Victorian waller Alistair Tune will also be involved in restoration workshops in Melton Victoria in 2005-06 (dates yet to be determined.) These workshops will form part of the Shire of Melton's Pride of Place Project being facilitated by Jim Holdsworth, David Moloney and Raelene Marshall. Like to register your interest? Contact Alistair on 0407 832 227 al_tune@hotmail.com

The past few months have seen Al mainly undertaking repair works. Al reports that: "The term *trial and tribulation* may be a little harsh, but the winter months have certainly been a test of character and it is good to see a little spring sun, although tools have been laid to rest" He finds "these jobs a little easier to manage throughout the winter and much time has been spent in the Noorat/ Kolora area repairing gaps that have been created by wayward trees, vehicles and over friendly cattle."

July saw him "repairing a wall around the former Dreeite church (on the edge of Lake Corangamite, near Colac). Basalt, instead of random field stone, it was constructed of large blocks of hand cut stone from an old shearing shed, with much of the stone being carefully faced for window sills, doorways and the like." Whilst on this job, he encountered "one of the hazards of dry stone walling! The ever friendly tiger snake" and says that "Even though it was the middle of winter, they're never too far away. Much to my disgust!"

More recently Al has been "repairing part of the old Rabbit Wall which runs through the Stony Rises, near Camperdown. I'm filled with a great sense of pride each time I work on this wall. It is perhaps the best wall I have ever encountered, and makes me appreciate the efforts of the wallers before me. Being some 16 miles long I have a feeling it won't be the last time I work on it!"



Thank you to all who have contributed to these last two newsletters. We welcome feedback and contributions. In future issues we also hope to hear from farmers and historians. As this is our last edition before Christmas, have a safe and happy Festive Season and look forward to our Third Issue in early 2005.

Editor Wendy Bitans