

## A message from our President

Hello! As 2005 dawns, we can look forward to a year of growth, consolidation and greater identity for the Association. There is a buzz in the air and it almost feels as if the Association's time has come!

Several members of your Committee have been active advocates for Dry Stone Walls in one way or another for many years, and their enthusiasm and effort have borne results. It is now heartening to see the level of interest in Walls among the public, governments and property owners beginning to really take off. This is a situation the Association must capitalise upon.

The formal establishment in 2004 provides a nationally-based focus for everyone who has an interest in Dry Stone Walls. I'm confident that the Association will grow as a strong advocate and catalyst for the many aspects of the past and future roles of Dry Stone Walls in the development, character and culture of this country.

Your Committee will work in many complementary directions during the year, pursuing one or other of six main areas of activity. The Committee recently agreed upon "**Six Goals for '06**". They are:

1. Enhancing owner awareness and commitment to the preservation of Dry Stone Walls
2. Enhancing government awareness and commitment to the preservation of Dry Stone Walls
3. Raising the image and profile of the Association and the craft of walling,
4. Conducting stimulating events for Members and the interested public,
5. Obtaining adequate funds to enable the Association to be an effective entity, and
6. Expanding the membership base.

In this Newsletter you will see Who's Who in DSWAA, with their contact details. Please offer your ideas or your time by contacting one or other of these members and help the Association achieve its "Six Goals for '06."

Victoria is fortunate to have an especially varied wealth of dry stonewalls and built features, just waiting to be explored and enjoyed, and the Committee has arranged an interesting program of field trips and meetings over coming months. I look forward to seeing you during the year at these events.

*Jim*

**Jim Holdsworth**



## Gathering Stones...

Some of you will be aware that I recently returned from presenting a paper at the 9<sup>th</sup> International DSW Congress hosted by the University of the Aegean in Mytilini on the Greek Island of Lesbos known for its extensive olive growing agriculture. It was extremely interesting to hear what is happening across Europe and very heartening to know that we are part of a world wide family totally committed to the preservation of the dry stone craft. The 10<sup>th</sup> Congress will be held in 2006 in Spain. At the bi-annual assembly held on the Saturday evening some of the members suggested that Australia may like to host the 11<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2008. Something we may like to consider and aim for!

**Cheers Raelene**

### Calendar of Meeting Dates for 2005

Month	Date	Location
February	12 <sup>th</sup>	Herring Island
April	9 <sup>th</sup>	Camperdown
June	18 <sup>th</sup>	Scienceworks (AGM)
August	13 <sup>th</sup> &14 <sup>th</sup>	Walhalla
October	8 <sup>th</sup>	t.b.a

*See further details Issue No.4*

**Details of FEBRUARY and APRIL Field trips and Meetings**  
**Cost:** Full and Associate Members **\$5.00** Non Members **\$10.00**  
 ( payable to the DSWAA on the day) **BYO LUNCH 0418 523 900**

**FEB 12<sup>TH</sup> HERRING ISLAND MELB. Dry Stone Sculptures.**  
 Arrive Herring Island mooring **11.30 – 11.45**. Meet in the Rotunda on Herring Island at **12.10**. Herring Island is situated on the Yarra River, 3km upstream from the city opposite Como Park in South Yarra. **Access to the island is via watercraft only.** The Punt Service operates noon to 5pm. It departs from "Como Landing" which is located on the bank of the Yarra River on Alexandra Avenue (opposite Como Park) Melway Ref. 58, G2

**APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup> CAMPERDOWN Dry Stone Walls Gardens Tour**  
 Meet at **11.00** at first venue, 'Wuurong' property of John and Carolyn Menzies. From Melbourne 'Wuurong' is on the other side of Camperdown. Allow 1.5 hours from Geelong. Go into Camperdown, turn left at Leura St. (the Commercial Hotel is on the corner). Follow the road out of town – about 1km from the end of the restriction sign. At the top of the hill turn right at County Boundary Rd. After about .5 km. Turn right into cottage gateway. Property will be marked.

**NEXT NEWSLETTER ARTICLES WELCOMED. DEADLINE:**  
**April 16<sup>th</sup> Send to Secretary [dswaa@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dswaa@optusnet.com.au)**

## Field trip to 'Huntly' Pomborneit October 8<sup>th</sup> 2004

Last October members of the DSWAA and other local identities gathered for a field day at 'Huntly' the property owned by Brian and June Barling. Located on the Princes Highway at Pomborneit in south west Victoria, on the western edge of the Stony Rises. 'Huntly' has one of the most wonderful assemblies of dry stone walls and dry stone structures in Australia.

The property was originally the home of Dave McGarvie, dairy farmer and part time dry stone waller. Dave started his dry stone wall construction in the early 1900's, continuing his career through to the late 1960's.

The day was made more special by the attendance of Meg and John McNab. Meg, daughter of Dave McGarvie, spent her early years at 'Huntly' and provided us with anecdotes of the McGarvie family life.

The field day commenced with an inspection of the 'Huntly' garden wall which circuits the front garden of the homestead. This magnificent wall was one of the last walls completed by Dave in the 1960's. The wall is constructed from 'worked' field stone and formed an interesting contrast to the adjacent farm walls.

We moved on to the former dairy where Meg enthralled us with her vivid memories of life in a farming and walling family. The dairy holding yard is enclosed by a 1.5 metre high wall with unusual curved corner to facilitate movement of the cattle into the milking area. Huge 'flagstones' lifted from areas where the lava flowed thinly over the land' formed the paving in the holding yard.



The dry stone walled pig sty was located a short distance away on a small knoll. We returned to the homestead via a range of other unique dry stone structures including tank stands, stock loading ramps and outbuildings.



*'Special thanks to June and Brian Barling for their hospitality and for sharing their walls with the DSWAA.'*

**Andrew Miller**

## From Across the World Heart of Stone

There is something very positive, very self-determined about a rock. It knows what it wants and what it's about. When you pick it up in your hands, it has surprising weight. It has this undeniable tendency to want to get down or be put down. Being so earnestly attracted to the earth is a very attractive quality. Everything is affected by gravity for sure, but stones just seem to gravitate to it. A glass slips out of your hand and it falls and breaks and you get the sense that this was not supposed to happen. Pick a stone up and drop it, as long as you move your feet, it seems somehow part of some well devised plan. Stones love to be heavy. They were meant for it. Place them one upon another and their sheer weight locks them into position. In fact, the only thing that holds rocks up for any length of time are other rocks. Stones work together well. Stones get along. And stones get along surprisingly well in a dry stone wall.

Working with stones building a dry stone wall, requires that you know what you want to do. You don't lift a huge rock onto a part of a wall you are building, without being fairly certain it is going to fit there. Stones require forethought and planning. You have to be sure you want to move them. They are not stubborn so much as cautious of us. They are not sure we have thought long enough about where they should ultimately be positioned, for the next hundred years or so. After all, before we move them, they most likely will have been sitting, pretty much where they were for some thousands of years. It is good to tune into the restrained weightiness which stones particularly, possess. Restraint is a good thing to learn from stones. Without peace and restraint there is only straining. We probably experience most strains and stresses, because we are not discerning the kind of things stones can tell us. Eventually, we should be able to learn how to exchange time and effort for a sense of purpose, perspective and peace.

It is ironic that something so hard and heavy as a rock can produce in us such joy and light-heartedness. For a material with so much gravity and reticence, it is remarkable how well it allows itself to be put into formations that uplift the soul and free the imagination. Perhaps stones are soft on the inside. Perhaps secretly they like us, and know what we need. Maybe beneath their harsh exterior of silence and coldness there is an optimistic enamoured heart of stone.



**John  
Shaw-Rimmington**

**Dry Stone Walls Association of Canada**

## Dry stone Fences and Commercial Farming

*'As a boy I used to hunt rabbits under the walls. The rabbit burrowed under them, and so did we. We'd dig well in, and of course a bit of the wall would collapse, then the farmer would come roaring down the paddock and we'd go for our lives'*

"The Walls In the West" from "Alan Marshall Talking" Longman Cheshire, 1978"

Victoria has more dry stone walls than any other state in the country and those in western Victoria comprise the greatest network of walls in terms of number, variety, length, height and overall size. Few could pass through the district without appreciating their impact on the built and natural landscape.

Traditionally, dry stone walls have been, and continue to be, integral to the business of farming. The immigrants, realizing the fertility of the volcanic plains, set about clearing the land of surface stone in order that they could introduce stock and grow crops. Building stone fences was a sensible and practical way to utilize an inexpensive and abundant material at a time when skilled labour was relatively plentiful and inexpensive.

Today, the dry stone fences of south west Victoria are still performing the same functions for which they were built over 100 years ago. They provide boundaries between public and private land, subdivide properties, separate sheep from cattle, stock from crops and enclose and protect the homesteads and gardens. The stone fences also provide protection from the elements for humans, crops and stock.

However there have been enormous changes in the operation of a commercial farm since the stone walls of south west Victoria were built in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have seen gradual changes in land use from grazing to cropping and particularly the increased importance of dairying and more intensive agricultural enterprises. More recently, concerns have been raised about incursion of forest plantation into valuable agricultural land. Technological advances and the greater mechanization of agriculture, has made many tasks easier and quicker but has also necessitated large investment and changes to the internal layout of the farm thus putting walls at risk.

Through amalgamation and rationalisation of properties, family farms have got bigger and, along with the decline and ageing of the rural workforce and rising wages, we have seen a gradual reform on farms. The reality is that farming has become a complex business operation requiring multiple skills, careful business planning and sound management. Sustainable agriculture requires farmers to manage natural, human and financial resources in such a way that they and future generations enjoy prosperity. A good farm manager now needs to manage employees, stock, pasture, equipment and finances. But even successful farming can be a risky business as it is still dependent on the vagaries of the weather and international commodity prices.

Most of the enduring stone fences in south west Victoria were built after the gold rushes in 1860s and '70s when many labourers came back from the diggings without a fortune. This coincided with the Land Acts of 1862, resulting in large holdings being divided up for closer settlement which needed to be fenced in a more permanent way. Stone fences were a sign of tenure, security and investment in the future.

I spoke to seven farmers in south west Victoria in order to provide a snapshot of the challenges facing commercial farmers who want to maintain and utilise their dry stone fences while integrating them in modern farm management practices.

Laurie Lamont farms on very stony sheep country at Dundonnell north of Darlington. His family have been there since 1866 and they began building stone walls soon after. As well as extensive fencing they have also built enormous 'cairns' of stone as a way of utilizing stone cleared from the paddocks which also provide shelter for sheep.

*'Most of stone fences had to be rebuilt after the rabbit plague of the 1950s -'70s. The worst damage was caused by rabbiters who were paid for catching the rabbits. They'd pull out the bottom stone to get the rabbit and then the whole wall would come down. Ferrets too caused untold damage to the fences some of them had to be completely demolished and rebuilt. I mend the walls myself but after the rabbit plague we employed a waller called Breen from Camperdown.'*

Niel Black is the fourth generation farmer on a large commercial dairy enterprise at Mount Noorat near Terang. In 1840 his great grandfather, also Niel Black, took up the Glenormiston run which then included Mount Noorat. We know that some of the walls on the farm were rebuilt after the rabbit plague as in 1880 Niel Black wrote to his eldest son who was studying in England that he had pulled down old fences that harboured rabbits and built rabbit proof stone walls with foundations sunk 15 inches (43 cms) underground. Today's Niel Black who enjoys the benefits of his ancestors progressive farming, recognizes some positives and some negatives in having stone fences on the farm.

*'With some timely maintenance, they are long lasting, they are a barrier to grass fires, and provide protection from the wind. Most of all I find them aesthetically pleasing. If you're working in the paddocks day in day out it helps to look at structures which are beautiful and which give character to the agricultural landscape.'*

*'On the other hand the fences are inflexible and thus difficult to move. Hence they better suited to boundary fences rather than internal subdivision fences. However our boundary walls require almost constant repair due to roadside vehicle damage. It's more difficult to put in wider gateways to accommodate the larger herds that we milk now-a-days as well as for larger machinery. If built too high and too close to the road they also restrict vision and are thus a potential danger.'*

Niel does not have a formal care and maintenance regime for the walls in his farm but includes them in his capital works improvement plan.

*'Of course if there is a hole you mend it but otherwise you defer until there is a positive cash flow position. Spending money on walls has no short term return on the investment.'*

Gerald Moloney's farm is at Kolora, north of Terang. The stone fences on his property were built in the 1860s and '70s by Irish wallers including his two great grand fathers. Gerald does have a regime for maintaining the walls.

*'I repair any damage as soon as I can so that I keep them in good condition. I get a professional waller to repair the ends because if that isn't done properly then the whole wall becomes unstable and begins to fall down. We avoid putting in new gateways in old walls but this sometimes is necessary when amalgamation of properties and subdivision occurs.'*

Clive McEachern runs a large sheep and cattle operation on his property 'Wingiel' at Inverleigh, west of Geelong. He has a regular maintenance and mending routine which is carried out by employees. He has erected electric fencing to protect the walls from the cattle.

*'I have 18 miles ( 27 kilometres) of dry stone walls here and we try to keep them in good condition because if you don't they gradually deteriorate. If I see a loose or dislodged stone, I fix it. Beef cattle are particularly hard on the walls, they rub on the wall and if you don't check them they will eventually wreck it. We do our best to care for the walls and invite you and your Association to come and see them sometime.'*

Nicholas Cole is the sixth generation to farm on his property 'Western Cloven Hills' north of Camperdown. He runs sheep and beef cattle which he regards as a great threat to the walls. He has installed electric fencing to keep cattle off the walls.

*'I have no regular maintenance routine for the walls. Would love to see them in pristine condition but they are very costly to mend and maintain. I farm 3000 acres (1215 hectares) alone and have got lots of stone fencing and they're deteriorating slowly. We need a few consecutive good years to be able to afford the time and the money to spend on them. If there is serious damage I mend it myself but it's more like making a pile of stone and I hope like hell that it stays up.'*



John Pekin is a dairy farmer on the Darlington Road at Kolora. The massive, 2 metres high Consumption Dyke which is Site 6 on the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail is on his property. He has a routine of fixing the wall as soon as he notices a dislodged stone or missing copestone.

*'I try to keep the copestone in place as they provide stability to the wall. I also use electric fences to keep the cattle off the walls. Recently, we had a couple bulls who were fighting and went through a stone fence. It's a matter of getting on top and keeping on top of the mending and maintenance of the walls.'*

Brian and June Barling run a beef operation on their property 'Huntly' at Pomorneit between Colac and Camperdown. As well as farm fences, 'Huntly' has many examples of functional dry stone structures including a dairy, piggery, loading ramp, the base of a glasshouse and a beautiful garden wall built by a previous owner David McGarvie.

*'We both completed a dry stone workshop with David Long organized by Ruth Pollard at Glenormiston College. We try to work on a couple of walls each year, mainly the boundary walls. We replace and secure copestones and end stones as these stabilise the walls. Where possible we attempt to use the original authentic methods as some of our walls have remnants of timber slats and wire under the copestones. These devices were used as obstacles to the rabbits. We are constantly vigilant and at the moment the rabbits are under control. We find that the stone fences are very secure and keep our stock in.'*

I also spoke to Jeff Lawes, lecturer in Whole Farming Planning at the University of Melbourne, Glenormiston Campus. Jeff believes that most successful farm businesses regard their stone fences as a resource and asset rather than an immovable barrier to farm development and improvement.

*'While farmers spend considerable human and financial resources on maintaining and mending stone fences I cannot imagine any commercial farmer building a new stone fence. New stone walls are more likely to be built as amenities in urban or urban fringe locations.'*

Fortunately, I found no evidence that stone walls have been deliberately bulldozed on farms in the region as they have been in some places in Britain and Ireland. As existing fences can be costly to dismantle and cart away there is the tendency to either mend them or ignore them until they fall down and then erect an electric fence. We know that farmers can be tempted to sell stone from derelict walls to garden suppliers and landscape gardeners. Unfortunately, not all farmers see themselves as custodians so education and some financial incentives are critical to ensure a future for stone fences on farms. That is why, almost half of the 18 recommendations of the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Heritage Project published in 1995 as 'If These Walls Could Talk', relate directly to walls on farms.

**Josie Black OAM**

## **From Across the World Rock Fences of the Texas Hill Country**

*The stones are being gathered ...the building has begun. With a little help from the world wide web the DSWAA is beginning to attract attention on an international stage. The following article on 'Rock Fences of the Texas Hill Country' was sent to our Secretary by its author Laura Knott of the Historic Preservation Programme, School of Architecture, University of Texas after viewing the A Stone Upon A Stone website and seeking a copy of the Corangamite Arts publication 'If These Walls Could Talk'*

*Laura's article illustrates, in a most interesting manner the spread of the dry stone craft to newly settled areas of the world, the universal problems of contemporary location and preservation of walls and the commonality of the creative solutions to such problems. Of added interest to our Victorian Members will be the German immigrant influence not unlike that in Melbourne's Westgarthtown.*

**The first of three instalments is presented here. Issues 4 and 5 will cover the Methodology of the research and a discussion of its findings.**

The historic rock fences of the Texas Hill Country (Figure 1) are an important component of the rural landscape of the area, yet a lack of understanding of how much they contribute to its character is threatening their very existence as a historic resource. Economic pressures in this agricultural region of Texas have led to either the removal of fences for sale by the ton, reuse of the rocks for other projects, or simple lack of maintenance, leading to collapse and loss of integrity.

**Single-walled sandstone  
rock fence. Blanco  
County, 2004.**



Popularly known as "German fences," they are attributed to the

Europeans who immigrated to this area in the nineteenth century from the region now known as Germany. Cultural geographer, Terry Jordan-Bychkov, was the first to study and document these fences in Texas. He noted that they are not typical of the source regions of German immigrants, but instead strongly resemble the "Bluegrass" rock fence. This type of fence is found in many parts of the Upland South, especially in Kentucky, Tennessee, and Missouri—immigrants from those states made up a large percentage of the nineteenth-century immigrant population of the Hill Country. Similarly-built rock fences are also found in New England and Great Britain. The Hill Country attracted a small number of immigrants from both areas, who found the high, dry rangelands ideal for raising sheep.

In order to pursue the issue raised by Jordan-Bychkov in more detail, I chose Blanco County, located on the eastern edge of the Texas Hill Country, as my case-study area.

In the nineteenth century, Blanco County contained a concentrated German settlement area in its southern third, while the rest of the county was home to primarily Anglo-American immigrants from the American South. Because rock fences are found in both areas, this presented a good opportunity to make comparisons between fences found in each to see how they differed, if at all.

### **Natural History**

Blanco County is located close to the centre of the Texas Hill Country, in the eastern half of the Edwards Plateau ecological zone, on the southern edge of the Great Western Plains. Its surface geology is made up primarily of limestone and dolomite, formed when a shallow inland sea covered much of central North America. Water erosion over time has formed a rough and hilly topography called "hardscrabble," where rainfall is scarce and unpredictable, and vegetation more xeric than further east.

Because of the arid climate, the population before the mid nineteenth century consisted primarily of nomadic Native American hunter-gatherer tribes. During that time, the region was managed as a grassland savannah by grazing bison, antelope, and white-tailed deer as well as frequent natural and human-induced fires. Beginning in the 1840s, this rich prairie landscape attracted European and American immigrants who believed that it would support cotton and other agricultural crops. However, within a generation the land had been transformed from a grassland prairie to a brushland from the impact of settlement. The soils, depleted by farming and trampled by livestock, became thin and rocky, the underlying strata rising up to the surface as a ready supply of fence building material to enclose fields and pasture located on the remaining river valley soils.

### **Cultural History**

Immigrants from Germany began to settle in Blanco County between 1850 and 1860. When they first arrived in the Hill Country, they needed quick solutions for survival and, instead of building their traditional farm structures, adopted the single room or dog-trot cabin, the double-crib barn, and southern "zig-zag" fencing from their American neighbours. Log houses with their chimneys on the gable ends instead of in the centre, as was characteristic of traditional German houses, were much more appropriate for the Texas environment.

After only a few years, however, Germans began to use stone for almost all buildings and for fencing. Even though the technique used to build their rock fences can be tied to a British tradition, rock construction was a tangible expression of the desire by the German immigrants to install themselves permanently in one place and express this commitment in their built environment. Miles of rock fences were built by German farming families, including men, women, children, and crews made up of young German men who boarded with these families.

Other immigrants to Blanco County came from the Upland South, with the highest percentage from Tennessee. Originally, much of the Upland South had been settled by pioneers emigrating from south-eastern Pennsylvania—over the generations they moved to the south and west and, by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, into Texas. These farmers tended to take advantage of open range ranching more often than their German neighbours, but they were known to build fences of wood, stone, and other materials around their cultivated fields, setting an example that their German neighbours enthusiastically adopted and turned into their own.

Most written information regarding historic rock fences in Blanco County came from farm records or family histories, which are rich resources which begin to sketch a picture of what life may have been like in nineteenth-century Blanco County. For example, it was once quite common in Blanco County to erect rock fences around cemeteries. They were also used to enclose farmland, as in the Sandy Community of northwest Blanco County. Many of its settlers came from the southern United States to claim Texas homestead grants. In the Sandy area, they built log dog-trot houses, cleared the land, and enclosed it with either split rail or native rock fences to protect their crops. Some of the rock fences that are still standing in the area today were built by these settlers.

Other fences in the Sandy Community were built by workers employed by James Redford who immigrated to the area from Scotland, via Ontario, Canada. *The Redford Diaries* related the details of day-to-day farm life, including rock fence construction:

1878:

- November 28: "Hard frost began hauling rocks for fence across the Creek."
- December 21: "Hard frost. Coleman began building rock fence."
- June 18: "Munro began building Rock fence at Shanty."
- July 2: "Munro finished rock fence at Shanty."

1879:

- January 9: "Youngs started building Rock fence on North line."
- January 17: "Youngs finished 200 yds Rock fence."
- April 8: "Coleman finished 818 [yds] Rock fence."

Redford and his wife moved to Canada sometime prior to 1855, the year when their oldest child was born in Ontario. Redford went bankrupt in Canada and came to Blanco County to take advantage of inexpensive Texas land and start over, bringing his wall-building habits with him to Texas. Rock fence-building was an important skill for a farmer, but, in the right hands, could also be as intuitive a process as making art.

Blanco County farmer John Cox talked described the philosophy of fence-building as it was taught to him by his own father

*"Papa put words together as he put rocks together in making fences. He had an eye for rocks. A feel, I should say, because he was nearly blind. I remember a day that he was building fence and I was learning. 'Rocks must fit as close as words,' he said as he put a rock in place to see if it would be content. It was a trick he had learned from nature and he had the patience to do it right. He never put a stone where it didn't want to stay. 'Work with nature, not against it,' he said, 'if you want a fence to stand.'"*

**Sandstone ledgerrock fence constructed on James Redford ranch. Blanco County, 2004**



### ***Building Walls...with Al***

Bags packed, hammer in hand, I survey the hills to the east of Camperdown and begin the annual pilgrimage to their lofty peaks. Destination, "Meekri", property of Robert and Louise Manifold. The hills, Wirdgil. The first trip was in 2001 and they have continued ever since, the result of each trip slightly differing from the one before.

Straight walls, curved walls, retaining walls, gateways, follies and as I write yet another single wall is being built. Many months in total working with the basalt, which in my opinion is some of the best stone I've worked with. It's amazing that within only several kilometres the characteristics of the stone changes so much. The stone to the north at Leslie Manor being round and heavy, whereas to the east at Pomborneit is rough and brittle.

Robert has provided me with an ample amount of this quality stone, which over the years has been transformed from a pile of rubble into walls of all shapes and sizes. The first project which I completed in 2001, was a low (approx 90cm high), formal wall surrounding a parking area, which was a challenge because of its straight sides, eight ends, same number of corners and its unusual bluestone capping.

Next I moved to the property entrance where a curving gateway was constructed, then back to the house to build a single wall defining the vegetable garden. A curving retaining wall and steps have been built in front of the stables, with a matching freestanding wall recently completed. Last year two unusual walls or "follies" where built. They rise out of the ground to a height of about 1.2m then disappear back into the ground. Another day complete, I descend down the hill, past the pile of stone, wondering what the next challenge might be?

**Alistair Tune**

## Dry Stone Walls of North Eastern New South Wales

Similar to the stories behind many of the Dry Stone Walls in Australia this one must also start with a volcano. In this region it is the eruption of Mount Warning some twenty million years ago. As a result of its activity a fertile and rocky area of soil was laid down over a wide area which subsequently supported the 'Big Scrub', a large sub-tropical rainforest.

In the 1840's the cedar cutters arrived and the Big Scrub was opened up to meet the demand for this much sought after timber. Following behind the sawyers were the farmers who saw the fertile soil being ideal for dairy farming and other small crop pursuits and this finally led to the demise of the rain forest. Only one percent of the original vegetation now remains in small isolated pockets. The combined needs for fencing and removing the excessive quantities of rock from the fields led, as in other areas, to the construction of stone walls.



Most of the wall building in this area was probably carried out by the farmers themselves or by contractors who had picked up the skills along the way. Many of the walls that currently remain around Lennox Head for example were built by three generations of the Henderson family. The first wall was built probably in the late 1800's by John Austin Henderson and the last ones in the 1920's and 30's by Joe Henderson on his soldier settlement block.

It is believed that Edward Henderson who built many walls utilised the assistance of Indian farm labourers to collect the rock that he placed. Probably these labourers then developed the skills to undertake the whole job because in nearby Tintenbar one farm owner had a large amount of wall building carried out by Indian contractors. We also have some walls in the region that were built by Italian immigrants.

There are, however, some great examples of walls that were obviously built by skilled craftsmen. They are distinguished from other walls in the area by their more even faces and uniform capping.

One such wall in the Pierces Creek area runs for about a kilometre and remains in reasonable condition. This wall, and several nearby, was probably built by a Fred Richmond who was a migrant from Yorkshire and known to have worked in the district around the 1920's.

There are a great number of walls in the region covered by Lismore, Byron and Ballina Shires but it is difficult to assess the number as many have now been hidden by Lantana, Camphor laurel, Macadamia orchards and regrowth rainforest and they are not always along existing road easements. Because of the terrain and vegetation even landowners do not always realise they exist on their property. I visited one excellent wall recently that was previously unknown to the owners but was found by a bush regenerator who happened to be undertaking weed eradication work on the property.

Unfortunately we only have a fraction of the original walls left as many have succumbed in the past to the portable rock crushers once used to provide road building material and the stones from many near the coast are now protecting beach front cottages from the hazard of dune erosion. Hopefully the large scale loss of walls has been arrested but as we do not know the location of very many we will never know what property owners may decide to do if they get in the way of developments on their property.

None of the three local Councils covering the region have policies in place to ensure protection although I notice Ballina Shire Council is making an effort to protect walls when property subdivision is being considered. Only Lismore council has a wall on its Heritage List and this was a voluntary listing. Ballina Council, which has at least one wall on Council owned land, demonstrated a considerable degree of foresight and recently sent some of their staff to a training program run locally by Geoff Duggan. On the other hand this same Council recently utilised a wall to retain earth when it became necessary to widen the road verge to accommodate a bus shelter. Following a protest from the local heritage group they eventually removed some of the fill and restored the original appearance of most of the wall.

The visit of the 'A Stone Upon a Stone' exhibition to the region recently has certainly contributed to an increased awareness among policy makers and Council staff and I feel this will see a greater value placed on walls when future development threatens. This is very important now as like most coastal regions demand for residential land is increasing rapidly and properties that contain walls are currently being targeted for development.

Just to conclude on a note of optimism its worth passing on that a couple of recent rural properties have made a feature of 'pioneer walls' when advertised for sale. So I guess that while they are seen as adding value many will probably survive.

**Malcolm Milner** (Facilitator of the A Stone Upon A Stone Exhibition in Ballina NSW and active Member of the Lennox Head Heritage Committee)

## Unexpected Surprises

I have been searching for a smaller farm having sold Conarco at Leslie Manor via Lismore. The new property is to be no more than a one hour drive door to door from Melbourne. This limitation has taken us to a surprisingly diverse range of properties many of which are on the edge or fringe of Melbourne.

To my astonishment many of the farms have dry stone walls some of which are intact, many in need of repair and ranging in age from ancient to modern, This observation was particularly true at Bolinda (south of Romsey) and south of Gisborne.

The Bolinda farm has a most interesting display of dry stone walls. They are all modern, and in my opinion, comprise the best collection of walls I have ever seen from ancient to contemporary.

The walls are of wide construction and possibly higher than most dry stone walls. The stones are in many instances flat lying and this in turn gives a layering effect to the walls. There is a proliferation of large base stones, some of huge dimensions and weight, as well as interesting face stones, through stones and cope stones.

The owner of the farm has had an interest in dry walling for several years, and as a young assistant has built many of the recent additions gaining his knowledge from on the job experience. I suspect a front-end loader has been extensively employed in the construction of the walls.

These walls merit a visit as part of a future field visit to the district. A photograph showing the slabby nature of the stones and the layering effect is attached.



**John Collier**

### Some websites you may like to visit

[www.astoneuponastone.com](http://www.astoneuponastone.com); [www.dswa.org.uk](http://www.dswa.org.uk)  
[www.rbg Syd.gov.au](http://www.rbg Syd.gov.au); [www.pierreseche.net](http://www.pierreseche.net)  
[www.iboyweb.com/drystonewall/index.html](http://www.iboyweb.com/drystonewall/index.html)

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P 5 & 6	Laura Knott
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**New Members:** please complete (or photocopy) and EITHER e-mail to [rob.wuchatsch@austrade.gov.au](mailto:rob.wuchatsch@austrade.gov.au) OR post to DSWAA Membership C/o Rob Wuchatsch P.O Box 189 World Trade Centre 3005

**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.

(\* Please indicate payment method below)

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<b>Entry Fee (one off) \$2.00 +</b>	
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<b>Friends and Associates</b> (non-voting rights)	\$10.00

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