

The DSWAA visit to Oatlands in Tasmania

by Charmian Brent

Founded in the mid-1820s, Oatlands began life primarily as a military establishment and a key component of Tasmania's convict system. It was one of four military posts along the main road linking the north and the south and most of its 87 still-intact Georgian sandstone buildings were erected in the first half of the nineteenth century. Brewing and milling were important industries and a number of related buildings can still be seen, including the restored Callington Mill (built to the same plan as a mill in Nottingham, UK), where surrounding walls have been rebuilt by Eleanor Bjorksten and her team of female wallers.



Early sandstone buildings in the main street of Oatlands

In October, the 18 members of the DSWAA who travelled to Oatlands had left Victoria in temperatures above 30 degrees, but by the time we met for dinner at the Kentish Hotel there was already a nip in the air (the winds blow straight up from Antarctica). After dinner, we all filed out into a marquee at the back of the hotel for the evening's entertainment provided by Rod Quantock, who was excellent and, at times, hilariously funny.

Next day, a gale was blowing outside, but we sallied forth to the Community Centre in some old stables, which fortunately were heated. Many interested locals turned up to the meeting, including the mayor and some councillors, together with lots of enthusiastic young blokes who repair walls in northern Tasmania. Our President Jim Holdsworth spoke, outlining



The DSWAA meeting at Oatlands Community Centre

the aims of the DSWAA and he suggested that a branch in Tasmania might be the way to go, since there is a mass of stone-built structures (walls, houses, barns, watermills, windmills, farms, churches, bridges) from 150 years or so ago that are falling into disrepair through lack of public interest. The meeting went well, with the Mayor of the Southern Midlands Shire, Tony Bisdee, speaking encouragingly, so that we felt a real bond had been formed with our Tasmanian members and that the future of the DSWAA there held much promise. We had a great lunch and then set off on a tour of the district to look at dry stone walls, both old and new.

Initially, we went out to a property, Weedington, where convict-built walls have been repaired and added to by a self-taught woman waller, Maria Weeding, who is a descendant of the original inhabitants. She has done a wonderful job using selected stones running in courses, the biggest stones at the bottom and the smallest ones at the top. Because some of the stones are far too big for one person to manhandle, she used a front-end loader; and the wall runs perfectly for many metres. The second original wall at the side of the property has had a stone stile incorporated when it was repaired (see *The Flag Stone* Issue No. 6).



Maria Weeding's new wall blends in perfectly with walls that have been standing for more than 150 years

Some websites you may like to visit

www.rbg Syd.gov.au; www.pierreseche.net

www.stonefoundation.org

www.dswac.ca

We discovered that most of the wall-building these days at Oatlands is done by women, who show a great deal of craft and imagination in the way they adapt the traditional triangular frame and patterns to achieve pleasing effects in some quite hostile locations, where those Roaring Forties winds threaten to blow you right out of existence. We looked at Katherine's wall, for example, which once fenced a pig paddock. However, a former owner who borrowed some money, built a house on the block and had the dry stone wall rendered in concrete and covered in rough cast – but only round the front garden on the street side. A large gum tree had pushed part of the wall over, so DSWAA members helped demolish it further, prior to it being repaired (see p. 11).

Next we visited the Midlands Health Centre, where George Gunn, on holiday from Scotland and an accredited Master Craftsman/Examiner/Trainer in the art of dry stone walling with 23 years experience, had offered to build a dry stone seat, ably assisted by Gerhard Steiniger, a dry stone waller from South Australia. We were all amazed to see the number of stones needed to construct even a smallish dry stone structure.



All these stones, just to build a seat!

Then on to Wardour Castle, where Claire Pearce's first wall had been built at a dry stone workshop. Since then, she has built a beautiful curving wall (no frames used), very upright and capped with large field stones, which incorporates an outdoor 'room'. At Linnet Hill, Shirley Fish had built several walls for a cottage garden and for the school farm. Her work, when new, sits on the existing ground surface with no trench dug for the bottom stones. Most notable at this property were the prevailing westerly winds! Along Oatlands laneways we observed walls falling into disrepair – victims of new development.



Claire Pearce's curved wall, built without a frame, standing perfectly straight



Manning the DSWAA display at the Oatlands Festival; Eleanor and Barry Bjorksten, our hosts for the weekend, are on the right

At Folko Kooper's former house, an old wall had been repaired at the driveway entrance and a new one built running the length of the property, while at Ilkie's place an old wall defines three sides of an early subdivision. The remains of other walls nearby and the cluster of buildings with them (house, shearing shed, machinery shed, etc.) constitute a complete mini-farm inside the town boundary.

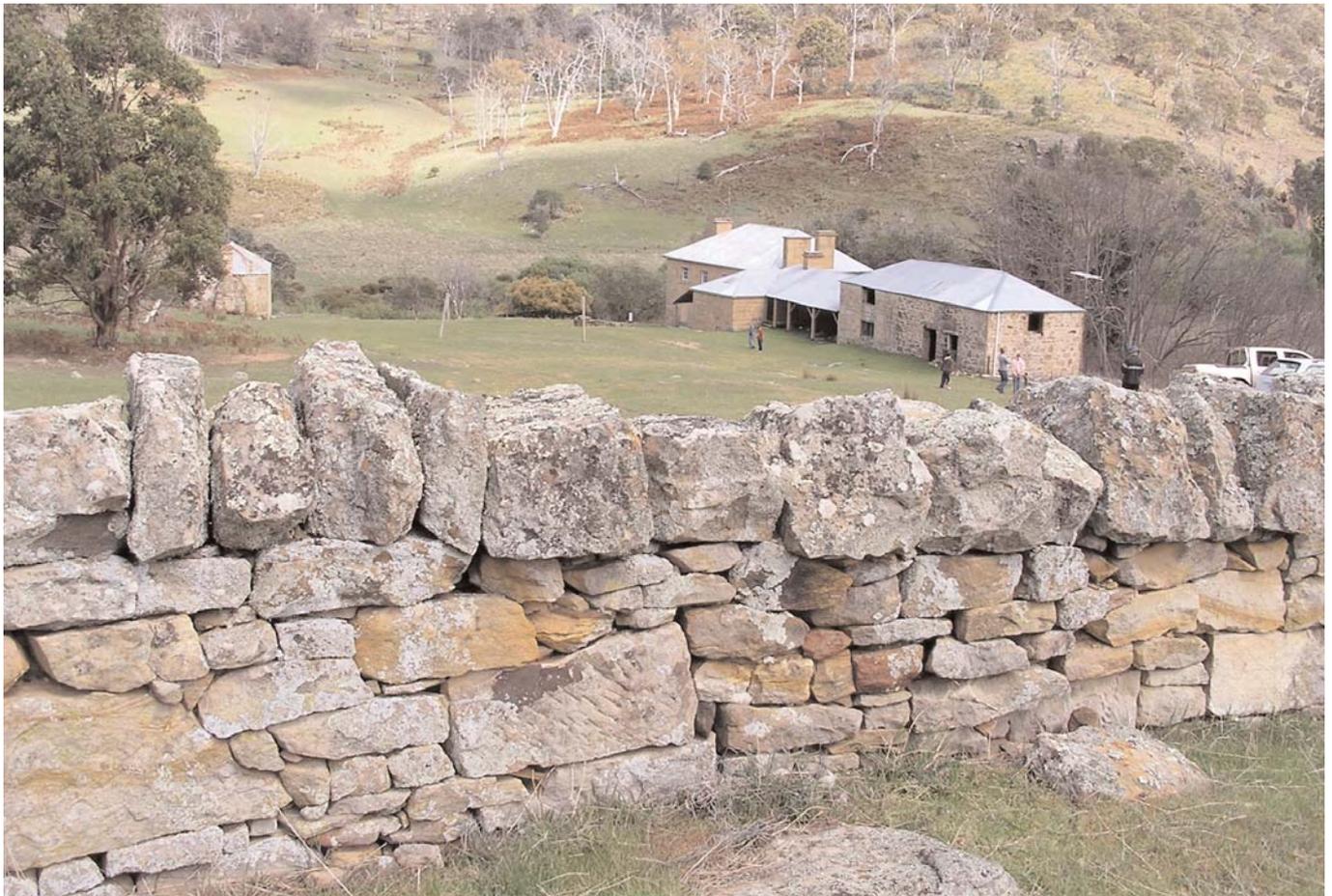
In the evening we set off in a convoy of seven cars for a couple of remote properties – one with a fabulous native garden of a couple of acres, walled around in a secluded valley all by itself, and then on to a sheep station where we were to have dinner in the shearing sheds and then participate in some bush dancing. Despite a slight mishap with the Bjorkstens' new white Honda, which had skidded on a bend, shot over an embankment and a fence, landed on its wheels and then tipped over sideways into a creek, we arrived at Tania's garden at



Morris dancers at the Oatlands Spring Festival

Andover in time for drinks. Fortunately, Eleanor and Barry weren't hurt, but their three-week old car was a bit of a mess (it was hauled out the next morning). Dinner in the shearing sheds at Fonthill was excellent, however, the smell of sheep was a bit overwhelming and because it was blowing a gale outside, going to the loo was out of the question! Some people kept warm by vigorous bush dancing, others huddled near the fire.

Sunday, the day of the Oatlands Spring Festival, was spent manning the DSWAA display at the Bjorksten's shop in the main street and telling the public at large about DSWAA activities. Early on Monday morning, members of the DSWAA Executive met with people from the Southern Midlands Council. Then, mid-morning the group set off for Bothwell



Sherwood, secluded in the Clyde Valley, with the bullpen wall in the foreground



The front view of Sherwood, showing the terraced garden and stone steps leading down to the river

and a remote property, Sherwood, a stately house hidden in the depths of the narrow Clyde Valley and abandoned for more than half a century. Built of freestone blocks in 1835, it is a two-storey Georgian building above a deep cellar. Attached to the house were stone stables, a coach house and barn, all in one unit. Hundreds of yards of graceful walls extend on either side of the house and the front door opens on to a terraced garden with wide steps that lead down to the river flat. Behind the house was a walled stockyard, where great boulders that must have taken half a dozen men to lift are blended with smaller stones; the whole capped with shaped flags. Sherwood has remained isolated and concealed by the folded hills for more than 170 years. Everyone agreed that it was a sight not to be missed.

No doubt Tasmania has many more such hidden treasures to lure DSWAA members back on another field trip.



The restored Callington Mill at Oatlands, with walls in the foreground rebuilt by Eleanor Bjorksten and her team of women wallers

President's Message



DSWAA President Jim Holdsworth.

Greetings!

A warm welcome to those of you who have recently joined the Association. The Committee hopes that you will enjoy an active involvement, not only in our field trips and the social side of our events, but by participating in the achievement of our objectives. In a nutshell, these are to stem the progressive loss of dry stone walls in Australia.

The Committee is currently working to develop and implement programs to achieve four key objectives:

- to increase the level of awareness, by owners of dry stone walls and by local governments, of the functional, cultural and historic value of walls
- to increase the level of awareness by these two groups that preservation and maintenance of walls is achievable and effective
- to train wall owners in the basics of wall maintenance
- to get more skilled and qualified wallers who can undertake maintenance and repair work, and provide basic training of wall owners.

To achieve these objectives, a range of complementary actions is necessary, and these are being implemented within the following 'portfolios':

Farmers and Wall Owners	(Kathy Woodward)
Training and Accreditation	(Josie Black, Geoff Duggan)
Marketing and Promotion	(Louise Manifold)
Government Liaison	(Jim Holdsworth)
A National Organisation	(Jim Holdsworth)
Meetings and Field Trips	(Raelene Marshall)
Funding and Budget	(Brad Purvis)
Archives and Records	(Anne Mulholland)
Membership	(Rob Wuchatsch)

I encourage you to become involved in the useful work of the Association. If you wish to do so, please contact the relevant co-ordinator via enquiries@dswaa.org.au

Within each of these portfolios, there is much work that can be done; and each co-ordinator is prioritising the many possible tasks into an achievable list. The work involves quite a lot of 'back-room' thinking and action, away from the formal committee environment. To accommodate the time needed for this homework, and to reduce the effort in organising them, we are reducing the number of combined field trips and general meetings this year to four. They will be held in March, June (the Annual General Meeting), August and October. Details of these events will be advised to you progressively.

In December, a deliberately-lit bushfire ravaged some 2,000 hectares of bush and pastoral land in the Stony Rises, north

of the Princes Highway between Camperdown and Colac. Not only is this area the richest in Australia for dry stone walls, it is also the home of several of our members. You can read my account of the fire's aftermath and its effect on dry stone walls elsewhere in this newsletter (p. 9).

I am pleased to report that, following the very successful General Meeting and weekend visit that were held in Oatlands, Tasmania in October, our member Eleanor Bjorksten has taken on the role of interim convener of the Tasmanian group. The group includes professional and amateur wallers, owners of walls and other people, from the Oatlands area and from the north of the State. Strong support for the DSWAA and its goals came from Southern Midlands Shire and from Heritage Tasmania.

The establishment and growth of the Association in Tasmania is most heartening, particularly as it can be instrumental in achieving those four key objectives. Plans are afoot for our master waller and Committee member Geoff Duggan to visit Oatlands in April to provide some formal training for wallers, under the Dry Stone Walling Association (UK) accreditation system.

I think you will agree that the Association is enjoying a vibrant time, as this issue of *The Flag Stone* brings you up to date with many of the interesting aspects of dry stone walls here and overseas.

Best wishes

Jim Holdsworth

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 issue is
12 April 2007

All material to:
chabrent@bigpond.net.au

The wonderful world of www!

by Raelene Marshall

Since we launched our DSWAA website www.dswaa.org.au in May 2006, it has become increasingly evident just what a powerful vehicle for communication it is. Not only for its capacity to spread the word and tell the world about 'us' and our 'doings', but also for its capacity to respond to general questions and provide details to queries, particularly from the general public who want to build walls on their properties or attend workshops. A good example of this was from an enquirer as far away as New Zealand, who emailed to say that he and his wife had: 'purchased some land in the winegrowing region of Marlborough and are in the process of building a French provincial cottage which we would like to surround with a dry stone wall. Can you put me onto either a website or publication which could describe to us how we may go about it? I have looked through most of the English sites which seem reluctant to teach unless you attend their courses, which of course is out of the question for us. Any clues?' He's promised us a field trip when it's complete.

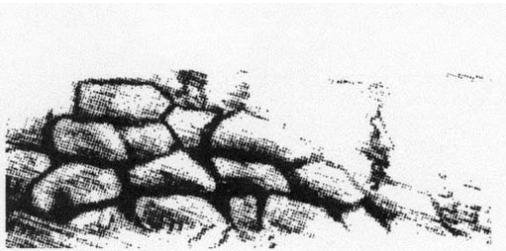
However, it is on the international stage that our site has really become recognised and we are now being seen as the Dry Stone Walls authority in Australia. This is evidenced by enquiries such as one from an author in the USA, 'writing a book on residential, outdoor stone work for Rockport Publishers and am looking for projects outside the US to profile', and another from the Commissaire Enquêteur Projet déviation Villeveyrac France seeking our assistance with regards to the preservation of a hut threatened by roadworks (it seems it happens everywhere!): 'The hut (cabane called also capitelle) out of dry stone known as "baraque du Campanier"...is put in danger by a project of deviation of secondary road (the RD2). This construction with the characteristic to d'avoir a lintel in clavé arc which are very rare in the department of l'Hérault and is being built out of water limestone (stones called locally "heads of goat", tested pulled up, or 'death's-heads'). You can see this hut on the site www.pierreseche.net in the www.pierreseche.net/index.htm page or www.pierreseche.net/destrprot.htm#campanier We have already announced to the persons in charge of this project: to see page www.pierreseche.net/destr.htm We would like that this building, very fragile, is taken into account during work. What would seem to be the case but we think that is very important that we insist. It is for this reason which we come to ask you to help us to manage to achieve this goal. This demonstration of sensitizing and solidarity could be used

as test and be re-used later for other actions of this type. Currently, the public enquiry concerning this deviation is launched (of November 13 to December 15, 2006)'. In this particular instance, Jim made contact with the Commissaire of the project and wrote a persuasive letter of support to the local council on our behalf, all of which also adds to our profile on the international stage.

Our presence on the A Stone Upon A Stone website www.astoneuponastone.com also continues to provide a valuable resource and acts as a cross-reference for the gathering and passing on of 'dry stone' information to the DSWAA and its members. Most recently, was advice of a week-long Stone Symposium that will take place in late September on the island of Mallorca in Spain. The event will have a truly international character, as well as a particular focus on dry stone masonry, workshops and a full day of presentations from people as far away as Scotland, England, France, Finland, India, Japan, Australia and, of course, Spain. The first International Stonemason 'Olympic' Games will also be held and qualified stonemasons and stonecutters are invited to compete in a number of contests of skill related to the craft of stonework. These will include dry stone walling; stone-cutting; stone-balancing; other events involving physical acts associated with masonry practice; and something anyone can participate in, bolaroca, a variation of the traditional European game known variously as: bocce in Italy, bowls in England, petanque in France and petanca in Spain (and a little like Canadian curling) but with stone balls. Details can be found on www.stonefoundation.org and www.conselldemallorca.net/directe/multimedia/index.php?lang=en

Of interest also was the email advising of the Fondation Hellénique www.fondation-hellenique.fr Paysages Hybrides Exhibition at the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris by Nella Golanda and Aspasia Kouzoupi, Greek artists whom I met at the 9th International Dry Stone Walling Congress on the Greek island of Mytilini in 2004. The works were built to reinstate a disused quarry (see below). Nella is one of Greece's foremost and well-known artists. She was commissioned and funded by the quarry owner himself and she and Aspasia, her daughter, worked with, and trained, the quarry workers to interpret and construct their design. For her work in the Dionysos Quarries, Nella was awarded the Rosa Barba First European Landscape Prize in Barcelona in 1999. The paper they delivered was one of the most interesting and visually appealing at the Congress.





Gathering Stones...

Dreaming of a White Christmas in New Zealand

Andrew Miller wrote the following to all DSWAA members as his Christmas message: 'A wall severely graffitied with white paint (?) in New Zealand? No, thank goodness, no! Have you picked that it is an unusual New Zealand lichen? You can imagine my excitement when in New Zealand recently, I sat beside it for a while and marvelled! Isn't it wonderful? Happy Christmas dry stone wall enthusiasts!

The 'DSWAA Committee and Working Group' Kris Kringle

On Sunday 10 December, those were able to attend got together at Cafe Companis at the rear of Ballarat Fine Art Gallery for an informal Christmas break-up. For a bit of fun, everyone was asked to bring a stone-related gift. The rules were simple. It wasn't allowed to be bought. It wasn't to be a chore. It was to be simple and wrapped in plain paper (preferably brown). The 'geologist' was allowed to bring a diamond. The 'doctor' was not allowed to bring a gallstone. The 'miller' was not allowed to bring a millstone, but our President was given special dispensation and allowed to bring a milestone! The day duly arrived, each gift was numbered and those present selected a corresponding number from a passed-around box. Amid much frivolity, the gifts were unwrapped and your Committee and Working Group's 'sobriety challenge' was to guess and write down who brought what.

The gifts were both fascinating and revealing – our 'cook' brought some rock cakes, our 'engineer' brought a beautifully tooled bluestone block, our 'Australia-wide traveller' brought aboriginal painted stones from Northern Australia, our 'farmers' brought a mini-sculpture of stones from the drought-dry bed of Lake Gnotuk, our 'sculptor' brought a mini-dry stone wall and some children's games, our 'school teacher' brought a rock decorated as a face and our 'architect' brought a dry stone wall word puzzle that created much animated discussion.

There was to be a prize for the 'most correct' so the rules were clear – no cheating. However, let it be placed here on record, that among the qualities of some of your hardworking Committee and Working Group is a fine-tuned expertise in the dubious art of subterfuge! The Kris Kringle rules will certainly have to be revised and monitored more closely this year, so anyone who is prepared to be the 2007 Kris Kringle monitor, please be in touch!

Greeting cards

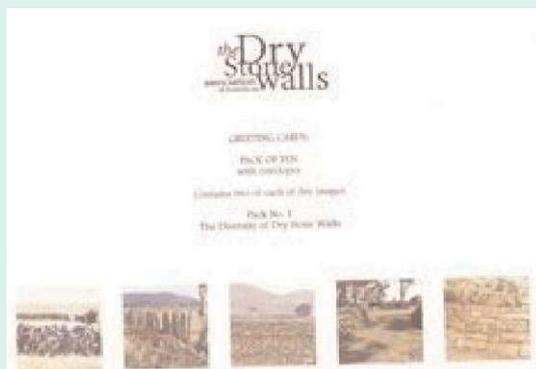
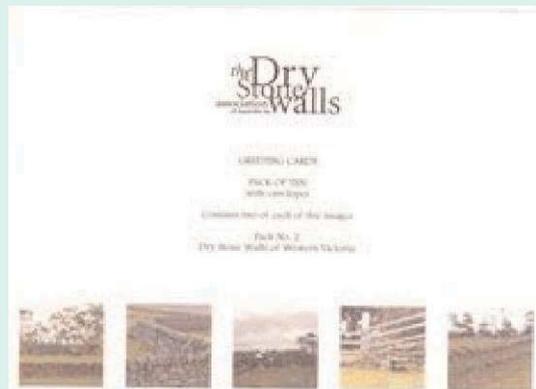
The DSWAA has a range of greeting cards for sale. They feature images of dry stone walls, and are blank inside, making them ideal for any purpose. They come in packs of 10 (two of each of five images) with envelopes. Two different packs are available: Pack 1: 'The Diversity of Dry Stone Walls', and Pack 2: 'Dry Stone Walls of Western Victoria'. Packs cost \$25 (p & p) or member's discount of \$22 (p & p). Cards can be ordered by sending your details and a cheque payable to DSWAA to: DSWAA Greeting Cards, 145 Clark Street, Port Melbourne 3207



Andrew Miller's lichen-covered wall in New Zealand



A friend of newsletter editor, Charmian Brent, knowing of her 'strange' interests, sent this picture of dry stone walls in a vineyard in Dalmatia.



The French Garden at Recherche Bay, Tasmania

'Dans les pas de notre histoire des pierres seches' by Raelene Marshall

'Dry stone walls of French exploration at Recherche Bay, south-west Tasmania, where the first garden was built and vegetables planted. Early 1700s (1730s?) newly found and presently endangered by forestry clearing for Gunns Timber Mills and wood chipping, under threat right now – 7 June 2003. South of Southport, Tasmania. Any help and support appreciated'. These disturbing words were penned by Melva Truchanas in the comments book that travelled with the touring exhibition: *A Stone Upon A Stone*. She is the widow of Olegas Truchanas, the famous wilderness photographer whose work became synonymous with campaigns to protect Tasmania's natural heritage.

At a DSWAA meeting in 2003, it was resolved that I should follow up Melva's lead and offer DSWAA assistance with saving the French Garden walls. Telephone calls and supportive emails were exchanged over a period of months that enabled us to keep track of the growing campaign to try to save this important historical site from the clear-felling industry.

Too frequently, we fail to appreciate what is precious and dear to us until threatened by its loss. Such was the case of the Recherche Bay French Garden – seemingly simple rows of stones laid out side by side in an orderly pattern. However, these stones represent a remarkable story about an area that, had history taken a slightly different twist, could have influenced the language and lifestyle we experience today. Parlez-vous français?

In 1642 and 1644, Captain Abel Tasman had sailed around, and roughly charted, a continent he named 'New Holland', and also came to the area he named Van Diemen's Land. James Cook later changed the world's understanding of *Terra Australis Incognita* in 1770 with his exploration aboard the *Endeavour*, charting around 3,200 km of coastline. His voyage dramatically expanded the world's scientific understanding of the continent's unique flora and fauna and led to increased interest in Europe. Cook's notes were used by a French explorer, Comte de La Perouse, to navigate to this new world.

The late eighteenth century was a race between Britain and France to chart and explore new worlds. Speculation in Europe was rampant about *Terra Australis Incognita*, 'the unknown' southern land. It was the practice of European crews to plant gardens in destinations they visited, to provide sustenance for other maritime adventurers. However, the French were also under instructions to establish European plants for the benefit of Indigenous people—a 'gift from the French people to the natives of the new land.

La Perouse arrived in Botany Bay just days after the First Fleet, anchoring on 24 January 1788, and then sailed north with his two ships and disappeared without trace. Three years later an expedition led by Bruni d'Entrecasteaux left France, under orders from Louis XVI, to try to find La Perouse and also to complete charts of the southern land. The expedition set sail in two 350-ton frigates, the *Recherche* and the *Esperance*. Arriving in April 1792, the landing in this part of Van Diemen's Land was the result of an accident. Following a violent storm, the French vessels mistook what was later named Recherche Bay for Adventure Bay, a safe harbour observed by Tasman as a place to recuperate.¹

The following excerpts from the book, *Recherche Bay: a Short History*, by Bruce Poulson, published in 2004, give us an understanding of the importance of the Recherche Bay garden and its dry stones in the history of Australia's early discovery.

The 1792 garden...investigated by the Far South Historical Society and identified by Bob Graham and Helen Gee in

2003...had 'captured the public's imagination. 'Formed' in traditional symmetrical shape and measuring approximately 9 x 7 metres and divided into four sections, its inner and outer lines are edged by stones, some of which may have been quarried from a nearby outcrop. It contains what appear to be two plinths, which may have been used as platforms for barrels containing water from the nearby creek. The crops sown included cereal grains, chicory, mustard, endive, lentil, radish, cress, sorrel cabbage and potato. Trees were also planted, probably nearby.'

The French had several reasons to come here: they were on a search mission to find the whereabouts of their lost maritime hero La Perouse, they desperately needed fresh water and firewood, they had a large group of naturalists selected to study the flora, fauna, geology and, more importantly, the native society of the area and they also had the creme of naval officers capable of exploring and mapping unknown waterways and, as well, a select group of observatory staff anxious to improve compass science and navigational safety. They were led by rear-admiral Bruni d'Entrecasteaux on the *Recherche*, under the sub-captaincy of d'Hesmivy d'Ariveau, and Huon de Kermadec, captain of the *Esperance*.

Despite the idealism behind the expedition, they departed France under extraordinarily difficult circumstances: the French Revolution, arguably the biggest social upheaval in Europe to that date, was occurring. This was reflected in the socio-political tensions on board the two ships: the naval officers (and even cabin boys) were aristocratic and pro-royalist, but the citizen-scientists pro-republican.

They had intended to call at Adventure Bay, then the only known safe anchorage at the bottom of New Holland, but a pilot's error resulted serendipitously in their visit to the place they named after the *Recherche*. The two ships required repairs and some of their experimental small boats needed to be made more seaworthy. Their 1792 mooring location was Port du Nord, today known as Coal Pit Bight. They returned again in 1793, this time to Port du Sud's Baye des Roches, still known as Rocky Bay.

The hydrographers and geographers led by Beautemps-Beaupre and Jovenicy led a flotilla of small boats to discover the Channel and the Derwent and they mapped the whole area. (Their maps were highly praised by later navigators including Flinders and, during the Revolutionary Wars, were confiscated and copied by the British Admiralty.)

The d'Entrecasteaux expedition's official gardener, Felix Lahaie, had been principal assistant gardener in the botany school at the Jardin du Roi in Paris. He was given 29 foolscap pages of instructions as well as a large supply of European plants and seeds. His first task was to test their viability in foreign soils and climes. He was also ordered to leave behind demonstration gardens containing 'useful' foodstuffs which might improve the diet of the 'savages' and maybe also reduce their hunting-gathering nomadic ways. A further purpose was to create a food supply for later mariners. This is why the whereabouts of Lahaie's first jardin was indicated on Beautemps-Beaupre's map of Port du Nord.

There were two formal gardens (possibly three because the two ships duplicated orders) planted by the French. As well, there are references in the official voyage journals to less formal plantations.

When the ships returned the following year, Labillardiere and Lahaie inspected the main 'botanic' garden and were disappointed to find that only a small number of cabbages, a few potatoes and some sorrel had survived the clay (though 'well dug'), lack of rainfall and, no doubt, browsing animals. Du Portail blamed the weeds and Labillardiere was critical of the choice of site. Others theorised that the garden had been

planted too late in the season. In his journal, Lahaie bemoaned the 'drought'.

One of the most revealing moments in both the history of Aborigines and the history of botany occurred during the inspection of this garden. Aborigines had accompanied Labillardiere, Lahaie and two marines from the lagoon to the Crescent Beach, using fire sticks to bum off brush as they went (as was part of their hunting practice). Fearing that the Aborigines might harm the garden, the botanists asked the marines to keep the Aborigines 'occupied on the beach' whilst they sneaked up to the site. But one insisted on coming and, to their surprise, gave them a perfectly accurate demonstration of the differences between 'his' plants and those of the French. The man who was to become the world's top botanist and the man who was to become head gardener for Empress Josephine were amazed at this object lesson from a 'savage'. So much for the claim by historian Windshuttle and others that the Aborigines had no close relationship with their land' Lahaie proceeded to demonstrate, however, how potatoes could be cooked on the fire and eaten. But he implies in his journal that he was still in a state of bewilderment and was unsure if his message had been received²

During the research and preparation of *A Stone Upon a Stone*, and from the 'comments' received while it was on tour, it became increasingly obvious that budget constraints and a lack of knowledge of the extent of dry stone walls in Tasmania had limited their representation in the exhibition. In addition, in relation to research about dry stone walls interstate, the heritage adviser from Heritage Tasmania was among the most enthusiastic and supportive respondents during the Australia-wide research we undertook before the Inaugural Dinner. So, the DSWAA's planned trip to Tasmania in October 2006 seemed like an ideal opportunity to meet with Heritage Tasmania and visit the French Garden at Coal Pit Bight in Recherche Bay.

In the lead-up to the trip, Jim Holdsworth and I had communicated with Pete Smith, Manager Heritage Tasmania, and Jim Mulcahy, Conservation Programs Coordinator, from the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC), 'a community group that conserves, enhances and protects Tasmania's natural environment by purchasing and managing private land.'³ Our trip with Jim Mulcahy and his brother Roger to the French Garden was planned for 13 October.

The day prior was a hot, blustery day in Tasmania marked by several bushfires. We had met with Pete Smith and James Puustinen from Heritage Tasmania, who had given us a map and the information they had on file about the French Garden site. The weather on the Friday morning was inclement to say the least, so we set out, unsure whether the visit would even be possible. Our arrival at the French Garden on Coal Pit Bight was to be by small boat and we were in for a two-hour windy drive from Hobart to the rendezvous.

DSWAA President, Jim Holdsworth has a rich knowledge of Tasmania, both from his British family history connections (his great-great-grandfather was fifth Commandant at the Port Arthur penal colony) and his bushwalking experiences. He also understands maps and directions, so with him navigating, we left Hobart via Sandy Bay, past Tarooma and Kingston, then on to Huonville, beside the Huon River, past rolling hills, farms, copses of silver birch, apple orchards and Huon Pine forests to arrive at Southport exactly on time.

Jim Mulcahy is 'ideal' for the position he holds with the TLC. The family were brought up in Tasmania and have an

empathy with the bush and the sea. He and Roger, a local doctor, had spent many summers fishing around that particular part of the coastline. This was the first visit to the French Garden site for all of us. So, map in hand, we donned life-jackets and set off from Catamaran, past a cluster of beautiful lichen-covered dolerite rocks, across the waters towards the French Garden at Coal Pit Bight.

The trip across took about 20 minutes under an overcast sky, however, the men's boating and weather-watching skills enabled us to navigate the floating seaweed and moor the boat safely. A short walk along the beach led us to the entrance to the site, where we set off inland through treed bushland to find the French Garden.



Although by dry stone wall construction standards, the French Garden wall is extremely modest, nothing could detract from the privileged feeling of being so close to the southernmost tip of Tasmania and treading in a place where such a simple and historically important dry stone structure was constructed more than 200 years ago. Today, thanks to the dedication of a group of concerned conservationists, the site is protected and, due to recent archaeological work, cleared and easy to locate.

On 8 February 2006, the ABC news announced that: 'The historic site of early French exploration of Australia at Recherche Bay in Tasmania's south is to be saved from logging. More than \$2 million has been raised to buy the land. The area, which hosted important scientific research and the first meeting between French explorers and Aborigines, was to be logged this year. However, due to donations from entrepreneur Dick Smith, conservationists and a newly announced State government contribution of almost \$400,000, a deal has been brokered to buy the land from the private owners'.⁽⁴⁾ The Recherche Bay garden was to be saved! The north-east peninsula of Recherche Bay and the French Garden area are now both safe from logging and protected for future generations, thanks to the generous support of philanthropist Dick Smith, the ongoing work of the TLC and to generous donations from hundreds of individuals who have contributed to the public fundraising campaign.

Dry stone walls and bushfires

by Jim Holdsworth

The bushfire that burnt some 3,200 hectares of the Stony Rises in December 2006 caused losses to native vegetation, pasture and some fences and sheds. Several DSWAA members were directly affected, whether living nearby, having property under threat, or in fighting the fire.

The fire took hold on Sunday 10 December and when news of the fire came through, Rob and Gaye Wuchatsch hastily departed the Committee's Christmas luncheon in Ballarat to get home.

Dry stone walls have a reputation as being effective as firebreaks for grass fires, and this was amply demonstrated when one fire, lit by an arsonist in the dry roadside grass on the Princes Highway in front of members June and Brian Barling's property, got only as far as their dry stone boundary wall. However, fighting the fire also demonstrated the difficulties that dry stone walls can pose for fire fighters.

This was evident when John Woodward, Rob Wuchatsch and I drove through the burnt area a couple of weeks after the fire was extinguished. The presence of dry stone walls had, in some places, restricted the movement of firefighters who, had they been faced with a typical post and wire fence, could cut their way through in order to gain access to the fire.

A more significant impact of the fire on dry stone walls was that the Country Fire Authority used bulldozers to clear a firebreak ahead of the fire, on both its southern and northern flanks as the fire spread in a north-westerly direction from its point of origin, also beside the Princes Highway. The 'dozer driver came upon several walls which crossed his desired path through farms and bushland. Understandably, the walls were pushed aside, along with trees, scrub and fences as the firebreak was constructed.

Local farmers needed to replace their burnt fences as quickly as possible and, while this was a relatively straightforward task, that of repairing the dry stone walls is more costly and complex. The heritage significance of the damaged walls is not known, but they are clearly of some age and local interest. The consensus seems to be a pragmatic one; retain the vehicular access that has been created through the walls for general use into the future, by constructing two wall ends, and filling the gap with gates. Even this has a cost, and the local community immediately set about seeking funds for the purpose.

The 2006 Stony Rises fire demonstrated both the advantages and the difficulties of dry stone walls in an area under bushfire conditions.



The bulldozed firebreak at a wall, showing the burnt area beyond the firebreak



Trees and a dry stone wall are pushed aside to form a firebreak

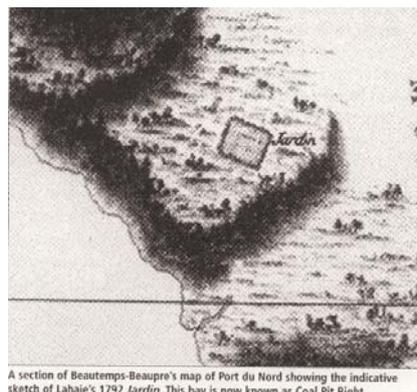


The Barling's front wall stops a grass fire in the roadside grass

References for The French Garden at Recherche Bay, pp. 7–8

1. <http://www.deh.gov.au/heritage/national/sites/recherche.html>
2. Poulson, B. *Recherche Bay: a Short History*, The Management Committee of the Southport Community Centre. Tasmania 2004
3. <http://www.tasland.org.au/>
4. <http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200602/s1565183.htm>

Right: early map of site. Far right: Jim and Roger Mulcahy



A section of Beautemps-Beaupre's map of Port du Nord showing the indicative sketch of Tahaié's 1792 Jardin. This bay is now known as Coal Pit Bight.



Dry stone fire pit

by Steve Cronin

After completing our house in northern Tasmania in rock in the past two years and also building 30 m of dry stone wall, I found I was still left with about 15 tonnes of rock (I originally purchased 70 tonnes to do the house and walls from our local limestone quarry).



House and dry stone wall

I had pretty well decided to turn the remainder of rock into a jetty in our natural swimming pool to use it up effectively and get rid of it.

Having become involved in the DSWAA, we were invited to Oatlands for the meeting in October 2006 and with my wife Marlene and two youngest children, Mark and Tristan, we spent a most enjoyable weekend there, attending the DSWAA meeting and helping to build a dry stone seat at the Oatlands Community Centre. Previously, Mark and Tristan were not that interested in the dry stone work but, after being tutored by George Gunn and all the other wallers, the boys got totally involved and thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

When we arrived home, we planned to make a dry stone fire pit with some of the better remaining stone. We drew up some plans, did some research on the internet for designs and off we went. It took Mark, Tristan and I six hours to complete the fire pit and the boys did an excellent job. We included some water pipe in the construction to allow for a hanger for a billy and frying pan (the one in the photo was



Dry stone fire pit with banging frying pan



Mark (right) and Tristan

made by a friend from a plough disc) and two 100 mm steel pipes on the fire level to provide additional air.

We love our fire pit and use it regularly. Recently, all leftover rock has been used in the natural pool as a jetty. The sauna in the background was my first attempt at rock work 20 years ago.



Natural swimming pool with jetty made from leftover stone

My future stone work might be to sit back and have a cold beer and look at the house and dry stone wall whilst relaxing around the fire pit – sounds fair don't you think?

Hopefully, the boys will take it up into the future – thanks to some enthusiasm from being tutored by a master dry stone waller from Scotland and a group of people dedicated to preserving an art that needs young people.

Anyway, Mark and Tristan now know that, given nothing but a heap of rock and a bit of thought and effort, they can make something functional and unique.

Steve Cronin
December 2006

Pig paddock wall repaired at Oatlands

by Eleanor Bjorksten

Kath Matthews' wall, thought to be one of the oldest in Oatlands, Tasmania, once fenced a pig paddock. However, a former owner, a Nurse Pennicott, was lent money by a relative who had won Tattersalls, so she bought the land and built a Victorian house on it. She then had the dry stone wall rendered in concrete and covered in rough cast – but only round the front garden on the street side.

A large gum tree had pushed part of the side wall over, so, during their October field trip, DSWAA members were encouraged to help demolish it further, prior to it being repaired.

The side pig-paddock wall has now been re-built and Kath was so pleased that she has joined the DSWAA. Another helper enjoyed the re-build so much that he joined as well!

Above left: the inside of Kath's front wall showing the really old part that surrounded the pig paddock
Above right: the outside of Kath's front wall showing how it has been rendered on the street side
Below: the repaired side wall, with its overhanging hawthorn hedge – a typical Tasmanian combination



2007 meetings and field trips

As members were advised in our Christmas message, at its November meeting the executive decided to streamline our administrative procedures to focus on fewer but more exciting and diverse field trips in 2007, and to put much of our energy into turning community ignorance into actions that will save our dry stone walls.

We will still retain the second Saturday of the month for our meetings (public holidays excepted).

The calendar of dates for 2007, therefore, is as follows:

3–4 March Port Fairy and surrounding areas, see details below

16 June AGM proposed venue Geelong Wool Museum

11 August Location not yet determined

13–14 October Proposed South Australia

3–4 March – Port Fairy and surrounding areas

This field trip is planned as a two-day event with a tour on each day. Members and friends may, however, opt to attend on one day only. The costs are \$5.00 for members and \$7.50 for non-members for each tour. Meals and accommodation are extra. As we will be pre-booking lunch and dinner for Saturday 3 October, please RSVP by 26 February to enquiries@dswaa.org.au or telephone Raelene on 0418 523 900.

Accommodation: to be arranged and paid for individually. This can be booked through the Visitor Centre Railway Place, Bank Street, Port Fairy 3284. Tel. (03) 5568 2682 or email vic@myportfairy.com
<http://www.myportfairy.com/accomm/>

Program Saturday 3 March

10.30 am Committee and Working Group Meeting (members and visitors welcome)

12.00–12.45 pm DSWAA General Meeting

1.00–1.45 pm Lunch

Morning meetings and lunch venue: The Caledonian Inn [Stump Hotel] 41 Bank Street, Port Fairy, Vic. Tel. 5568 1044 info@caledonianinn.com.au

2.00–6.00 pm Proposed tour (west of Port Fairy) visiting: 'Bessibelle' and the sheepwash (yet to be confirmed), the Condah Lake walls, Byaduk with its 'town' walls, North Byaduk and Harmann's Valley and return to Port Fairy via Macarthur and some bridges/culverts, which are massive dry stone constructions.

6.30 pm Meet for drinks (venue to be advised)

7.30 pm Evening meal (venue to be confirmed)

Guest speaker: Dr Timothy Hubbard. Tim is an architect and planner based in Port Fairy, a member of ICOMOS and, with Annabel Neylon, their firm Heritage Matters Pty Ltd provides heritage advice to the Shires of Moyne, Glenelg and Southern Grampians and the City of Warrnambool, all of which have significant dry stone walls. They are the authors of heritage studies for the municipalities of Southern Grampians, Glenelg and Warrnambool.

Program Sunday 4 March

9.30 am Meet for coffee in Port Fairy

10.15 am Tour starts, visiting walls in the Buckley Swamp area and then the Penshurst 'town' wall

1.15 pm Lunch (venue to be advised), head for home.

Repair brings members

by Rob Wuchatsch

Greg McKay repaired Bruce Fry's wall (Bruce has a farm at Pirron Yallock in the Stony Rises and had a B-double truck go through the wall back in May). Bruce received some insurance money and now Greg has fixed the wall. Greg writes: 'Please find attached before and after photos of the wall repair at Bruce Fry's farm as discussed. I have enjoyed the copies of *The Flag Stone* and would like to...become more involved with your association...My interest is in both the heritage and craft side of dry stone walling. I look forward to building a lot more walls and improving my skills and knowledge as I go.'



Who's Who in the DSWAA

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Vice-President

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Secretary

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moolaboola@dodo.com.au Cathy Woodward

New members

Please complete (or photocopy) and **either** email to OR post to DSWAA Membership c/o Rob Wuchatsch, 2020 Princes Highway, Pirron Yallock, Vic. 3249 Tel. 5235 4220

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. 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)	\$40.00
Individual (voting rights)	\$25.00
Corporate (voting rights)	\$80.00
Family (voting rights)	\$40.00

* Paying by: Cheque enc. • Bank deposit •

Name

Address

Telephone

Mobile

Email

Area of interest, for example, farmer, heritage, etc.

Contributors: photographs and illustrations

page 1	Charmian Brent, Andrew Miller
pages 2 and 3	Charmian Brent, Andrew Miller, Jim Holdsworth
page 5	Nella Golanda and Aspasia Kouzoupi
page 6	Andrew Miller
page 7	Jim Holdsworth
page 8	Jim Holdsworth
page 9	Jim Holdsworth
page 10	Steve Cronin
page 11	Eleanor Bjorksten
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