

Walls unite

by Peter Jones, DSWAA member and member of Little River Historical Society



Little River

We all heard bad riddles behind the shelter shed. I heard worse from my Uncle Doug – a conjurer of parlour tricks and words. ‘Why is an elephant?’, he asked. Answer: ‘The higher the fewer.’ Could this principle explain the distribution of dry stone walls in Victoria? It could in parts. We rarely find a dry stone wall in Victoria at more than 350 m above sea level – the height of the You Yangs. Conversely, there are few at less than 25 m above sea level – the lowest sites for walls at the Princes Freeway end of Little River. Our highest are by Toynes Road at the foot of the You Yangs.

Among the seven wonders of Little River is the Rees orchard stone wall on the southern bank, visible from the Princes Freeway. Its top is gently cambered from end to end like an old Soviet submarine minus the conning tower. Ron Rees, third generation market gardener, tells how around 1870 his grandfather John Rees built the freestanding wall – 3–4 m high by 50 m long by 1.5 m thick – to protect his peach,



Elsewhere on the Rees property even larger stones were used



The Rees orchard dry stone wall

apricot and pear trees from the fierce westerly gales across the open plains. It also cleared his paddocks of basalt obstacles. Near the top of the wall there are stones of 140 kg or more – the equivalent weight of more than 30 bricks. Would a ramp or block and tackle have been used? Ron says, ‘It bears a lot of thinking how you would lift stones to that height. In those times, farmers were shorter, stockier, were brought up to hard work and developed strong muscular backs. Grandfather was one of those. They could carry 140 kg capacity grain bags full to the brim. Health and Safety regulations today prohibit the lifting of more than 27 kg – seven bricks. Of Welsh descent, John Rees and his two brothers migrated from Bristol to Geelong in 1849. In 1851, after gold was discovered at a sheep station called ‘Clunes’, the Victorian gold rush started. John was 26 then and the three brothers thrived by carting foodstuffs by bullock wagon from Geelong to the Ballarat goldfields. Soon after arrival in Australia, they moved to



The freestanding Rees orchard wall is 3–4 m high by 1.5 m thick by 50 m long



The 500 m wall was built in 1987–88 when Jack Rees was 70

Argyle Street, Little River. By the late 1860s, when easy gold had evaporated and prospectors became nomadic wallers, it was a good time for a boom in dry stone walling in Little River and for John, then in his 40s, it was a good time to take on his heavy wall. John died in 1917 at the age of 92. To a family who depended on produce, the orchard wall was pure gold.

Wonder of wonders. Step along, past and turn right at the end of the big wall and *voila!* the Little River cuts its way anticlockwise to infinity and 100 m to its right bank a vast length of further wall with big stones continues from 'the sub' – 2.5 m high at the start, and lower as it unfurls its 500 m, echoing the curve of the river. That is twice the width of St Peter's Square at the Vatican. Four ancient Greek amphitheatres the size of Epidaurus could fit side by side. Fit for a fest. Way in the distance it curls down to the river bank. 'Oh, the other wall, the one that follows on?' said Ron. 'My older brother Jack Rees built that around 1987–88 when he was 70 – 'gave him a hernia but he lived to 87.' The rich river bank rock outcrop was accessible by tractor. The 1973 floods gave Jack the idea and market gardens behind were reformed flush with the top of the wall

Another 'wonder' contender would be the advantageous living together of two organisms immediately north of the railway station on You Yangs Road – the lichen-covered wall with its Mickey Mouse look-alike riddle. These days people send photos of such unreal outward appearances to new age magazines where Elvis Presley's face or a two-headed camel's silhouette seen in the clouds are called 'simulchra.' On You Yangs Road the medium for our vision is the notorious erect prickly pear (*Opuntia stricta*) that grows immediately behind, along and over the wall. Prickly Mickey appears to be scaling the capping stones to reach the road beyond.

One day we will count the millions of dry stones, once jemmied from their secret beds, stockpiled among the sheep and transformed into a wobbly pattern across the landscape, like casts of giant earthworms searching for a gap in an invisible worm-proof fence. If you Google the aerial view of the 20 km (the equivalent distance from the GPO to Tullamarine) of Little River dry stone walls and you see their flaccid grid draped across gently undulating pastures on the town outskirts and across subdivided pastures of the past in the town centre.



The long wall is constructed of big stones and is 2.5 m high at the start

There are three sorts of Little River dry stone walls – the GGs, the TTs and the MMs. The MMs – the Mad Maxes – are famous and have been seen by millions. Thirty years ago these unknown walls were captured on kilometers of celluloid for a film shot in Little River – *Mad Max I*, starring Mel Gibson, in 1978. This walled landscape is eerily unchanged since Max was put in the can – a film with a sci-fi storyline set in a surreal future time – the year 2010. A year of bleak pastures, collapsed economies, spent fuel – with the walls still there – and they are – almost all of them. There was of course, the dry stone wall episode. When shooting on any location the *Mad Max* film crew never gave notice, sought permission, or approached police or owners. They simply shot. One farmer along the Little River–Ripley Road was not impressed. The *Mad Max* mob had struck it lucky third try. After two unsuccessful attempts to roll their '50 mph flat chat' red Chev hardtop for the cameras, the stuntman struck the jackpot – but the farmer's wall was demolished.

A website now leads you scene by scene along the dry stone backdrops. Mel Gibson stands by the bluestone Rothwell Bridge. Last October, 2,000 fervent fans swamped the town when the Little River Historical Society hosted the BACK2THEMAX (there may be one or two souvenir stubby holders left) 30-year reunion. The tale was told that in 1978 when a friend asked the film maker, 'What's new?' he answered, 'Oh, I'm making a film at a place called Little River.' 'Who's the star?' 'Oh...I don't know his name. Some young nobody for what will be a forgettable film.'

Mad Max buffs sieve the 1970s footage and revisit the whizz west from Werribee on the Bulban Road – north boundary of Little River. For an instant the road for them is the yellow brick road. They become Dorothy with her companions. The You Yangs become the Crystal City of Oz. But *Mad Max* makers improved on the Wizard of Oz – not with walls found in Munchkin Land – packed with gleaming flush struck cement, newly painted and monotone grey, but with local dry stone walls – with gaps you could poke a fist through and worn down like the teeth of a 140-year-old hack – walls depleted by looters with week-end trailers, left unrepaired after collapses and unmethodically rebuilt at weekends through the depression by rabbitier amateurs – the price of proximity to multiplying Melbourne. You don't have to be Superman to leap these 'with a single bound.'



The area of Little River where the Mad Max movie was made

The close proximity to multiplying Melbourne hides the most elusive element of Little River. Can a most famous aspect be a best kept secret – low keyness. Drive-byers pass the general store, ‘Where’s the town centre?’ they ask. Drive-throughers stumble past the Mechanics Institute Hall, ‘Where are the shops?’ they ask. Drive-in-and-outers miss the lot and ask, ‘Where’s the pub?’ The 1969 Geelong Road fire and 1985 You Yangs fire decimated and fragmented the commercial heart of the town. All that remains of the old are the Little River Motors 1970s pub/motel and the Mechanics Institute/Free Library – screened from one another across a town with no main street. A new B & B in the old Hotel building is resplendent. The fires erased the heart of Little River but not its soul.

As we start the twenty first century ‘low keyness’ is a threatened species. In Little River the species survives. Who can name another town less than 50 k from the Melbourne GPO with no white concrete pavements out in front for the white plastic chairs, no café macchiato as the first shot of the morning and no welcome mat for the credit card fix. You pay less for your petrol with cash. One rude through-driver said, ‘It’s not so much a hamlet as an egglet.’ But those of Little River know that it was some chicken that laid this egg.

Walls type number two makes horse sense – the GGs. Close to the town centre and north of the railway station are a range of DYO renovated walls from the 1950s, when Little



A garden wall in what is left of Little River’s centre



A tree bole in the area used for the Touring Trophy races is protected by stones



This straight was part of the fastest circuit on public roads in the 1950s

River population peaked at 350 households. It then dropped by 45 per cent and now numbers are a record 450. Along You Yangs and Edgars Roads frontages to properties of a few acres are defined by personalised stone walls with nips, tucks, tweaks and dolly-ups. Some are dry, some cemented; some sizeably capped, some miniaturely capped; some entries simple, some triumphal; some uncoursed, some coursed and the uniting feature? Horses – race horses, kids’ horses, polo horses. And the stone walls? It’s courses for horses!

The third sort of walls at Little River are the TTs – the Touring Trophies – those walls, substantially along Rothwell and Old Melbourne Roads – the 3.2 miles of public road used as the Touring Trophies motor cycle circuit in the 1950s. Famed as the fastest circuit on public roads, there were fast full-bore bends, an acute hairpin. The fastest competitors passed 100 mph along the hair-raising downhill straight. Some say the walls along this route can be identified by the tiny tell-tale fragments of chrome and tyre rubber from Harleys, Indias and Nortons embedded in their cavities. Occasional hay bales were the walls’ only protection.

In the TT heartland, at 33A Rothwell Road, the Jones’s recently retained the services of an accredited dry stone waller, David Long, to repair the aftermath of a fallen 30-m sugar gum opposite the Anglican Church. In addition, David redefined the farm gate entry 50 m north on Rothwell Road, with bold, flush solid-angled ends – the quoins.



The natural landscape around Little River showing the rich river bank from which the boulders were taken to construct the solid walls

And why does David's wall look better than that of the amateur rabbit? I'll leave you with the words of that mother of the Australian native landscape style – Edna Walling – legendary Mooroolbark landscape designer of the 1930s, whom I visited and corresponded with in her twilight years. She wrote in, *Cottage and Garden in Australia*, –

Some very old stone walls are so well built that they become an actual part of the landscape. The irregular colouring of the stone, and the ruggedness fit into the surroundings so harmoniously. It is an art – not a difficult one, but one that demands a love of stone, an appreciation of the traditions of stone wall building and a refusal of any temptation to circumvent these traditions by any cheap artifice that may seem a good idea at the time. Perhaps too little is made of stone in the country.

POSTSCRIPT. Some ask, 'Where did the stones for Little River walls come from?' On a map of Victoria, find Ballarat, and 50 km east find Trentham. Draw a 10 km line due north of each – one line from Ballarat, one from Trentham. You are now at Bald Hills and Spring Hill where, from 5,000 to two million years ago, the single volcano of Bald Hills and multiple vents of Spring Hill exuded the lava flows that migrated south-east and cut the course of the Little River and formed its surrounding basalt plains. The basalt of the plains was used for walls. The granite of the You Yangs was not – they were formed not by volcanoes but by solidification of molten underground magma some



David Long's reconstructed wall on Peter Jones' property in Rothwell Road, opposite the church

500 million years ago. The resulting granite was huge, hard and rough – not favoured for dry stone construction.

POST POSTSCRIPT

On Saturday, 14 March 2009, Peter Jones and the Little River Historical Society hosted a wonderful DSWAA field trip to this area, with lunch provided in the Mechanics Institute Hall and introductory talks by President Les Sanderson and Peter Jones. It was a great day, enjoyed by all, so many thanks are due to Peter Jones and all who contributed to its success.



The weather tried not to cooperate but members of the DSWAA are made of sterner stuff and always view what they have come to see – rain or no rain



Little River is set against the dramatic brooding background of the You Yangs

President's Message



Jim Holdsworth

Greetings!

Have you visited the DSWAA's web site recently? It's worth a look!

The web site was launched at our Inaugural Dinner in May 2006 and, since that time, it has served us well. But it is time to lift the profile and the effectiveness of the web site as the 'front door' to the DSWAA and your Committee has resolved to upgrade www.dswaa.org.au by undertaking a comprehensive review of the whole site and what it aims to achieve.

The web site generates a variety of contacts from people who have searched the net, whether they are looking for dry stone wallers to build or repair a wall, or wanting advice about their own walls, or seeking information about walls that they have seen somewhere in Australia. We are contacted via the web site by practising wallers overseas enquiring about the prospects of work in Australia, and we receive feedback about the marvelous photos of dry stone walls that are in the Photo Gallery. No doubt there are many people who view the web site but don't make contact with us.

Some of the new features that we hope to include in the web site areas follows.

Activities and meetings

At the moment, forthcoming meetings, field trips and other events are advised only to members and a limited number of professional contacts. A new page will provide regularly updated information for members and the public alike about upcoming events and will be a ready source of information about the latest activities and news. We're confident that this will increase attendance at events and help raise both funds and awareness of the DSWAA.

News from the Committee

When I look at the topics that are discussed at our Committee meetings and the projects and activities occurring among members and groups in the States where we are active, I am surprised at the breadth of issues we deal with. It shows the diversity of topics that affect dry stone walls in Australia and the challenges we face to meet our DSWAA's goals. I'm sure that more members, and the wider public, would appreciate being kept informed on a frequent basis about what your Committee is up to. Information like this will help us meet our objectives and bring more people into active contact with us.

Back issues of the *Flag Stone*

A much-appreciated benefit on membership of the DSWAA is receiving our excellent publication and reading stories from

far and wide about dry stone walls and related topics as well as about recent meetings and field trips. I am very impressed with the variety of the articles and the quality of the publication. Committee member Charmian Brent does a magnificent job as Editor and on that basis alone the *Flag Stone* deserves a much wider readership. To enable the general public to read all copies except the current issue will give our newsletter the profile it deserves and will awaken many more people to our activities and the stories about dry stone walls in general.

Directory of Practising Wallers

There are many people looking for skilled wallers. There are many people who build or maintain dry stone walls as their specialty or as part of their landscaping business. An on-line and readily accessible Directory will bring these people together. Inclusion in the Directory will be free for professional members of the DSWAA and it will be an open resource for members of the public.

But web sites don't look after themselves.

Would you like to help set up our web site Mark Two or help keep it lively and current?

Associations only prosper if members pitch in. I'd be most pleased to hear from you if you are able to be part of the new and more effective DSWAA website, particularly if you have relevant skills or experience in setting up or managing simple websites. Please get in touch with me or our Secretary via the contact details on the back page.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of the *Flag Stone*.

Best wishes to you.

Jim Holdsworth

'The Association's vision is for dry stone walls to be widely recognised for their unique place in the culture and economy of Australia and for the legacy they represent; that this recognition is manifested by appropriate statutory protection and landowner and community respect and celebration; and that the craft of dry stone walling grows as a modern reinforcement of the contribution that dry stone walls have made to the culture of early settlement in Australia.'

TASMANIA: gabions or the real thing

by Eleanor Bjorksten, DSWAA Convenor in Tasmania

Pretentious or practical: gabions at the Ross Female Factory site

I have not yet done any research or writing about the gabions at the Ross Female Factory historic site. However, these photos (three top photos on right) might produce comments and interest. Personally I find these walls shocking – they are feeble imitations of old dry stone walls. Brad Williams, the Southern Midlands Heritage officer (who Jim met once when visiting Tasmania) approves of them on the basis that they are easy to construct, cheaper than a traditional wall, are less susceptible to vandalism and do not deceive anyone into thinking they are old walls.

Just compare them with examples of genuine dry stone walls (below and page 7) found elsewhere in Tasmania and I'm sure that you will agree that gabions are a travesty of walling and should be eschewed by anyone genuinely interested in preserving Tasmania's rich heritage.

Meander school wall

Andrew Garner and fellow DSWAA member James Boxhall have built a recent wall for the local primary school at Meander, in northern Tasmania. The wall was commissioned by the principal Mr Graeme Pennicott to replace an ageing picket fence that forms the roadside boundary at the front of the school.

The total length when complete will be 70 m and is built from locally sourced sandstone. Although the stone is quite varied in colour and texture, it has blended together nicely, even so far as to match the school's own colour scheme!

The wall has been built to be kid-friendly, being only 1 m in height, allowing good visibility and also minimizing bruises should the more adventurous ones decide to climb on top! The cope stones have been mortared on for added security and for those with an eye for detail they have been arranged in a 'cock and hen' pattern!

The worst part of building it was during the January heatwave, with temperatures exceeding 40 C degrees! Hammer, chisels and even the stones became literally too hot to touch without gloves on!

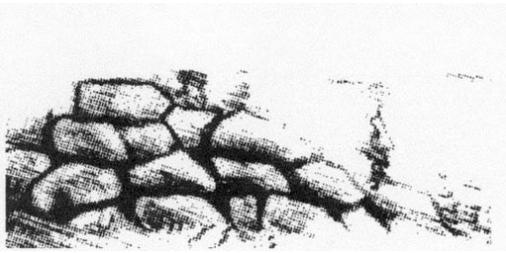
It is envisioned that the students will incorporate some time capsules into the next section to be built and will also be given some 'hands-on' experience as part of their studies in November.



DSWAA members Andrew Garner and James Boxhall are in the process of building this 70 m wall at Meander school in northern Tasmania



The cope stones on the Meander school wall are arranged in what is described as 'cock and hen' pattern



Gathering Stones...

Visit of DSWA Chairman from the UK

Richard Love (Chairman of the British Dry Stone Walling Association) and his wife Kate were in Melbourne in early March, so city-based members of the DSWAA met up with them for a chat about our mutual obsessions – dry stone walls. Jim Holdsworth chose both the venue (a bistro in Collins Street) and the wine (a very palatable Yarra Valley Rose) and once again proved his unerring good judgement. The conversation ranged far and wide – from the Australians talking about their field trips interstate and DSWAA's goals for the future, to hearing about latest developments and projects in the UK from the Loves. They are both widely travelled and attend all the stone-related conferences and seminars around the world – Raelene had met a colleague of Richard's a couple of years ago when she attended a symposium in Majorca, and Jim had visited him at the DSWA headquarters in Cumbria when he was last in the UK.



Left to right: Kate Love, Raelene Marshall (Vice-President DSWAA), Richard Love (Chairman DSWA, UK), Charmian Brent (DSWAA Committee Member) and Jim Holdsworth (President) DSWAA

Some attractive informal walling seen on the Tasmanian east coast

Tasmania has the world's largest areas of dolerite, with many distinctive mountains and cliffs formed from this rock type. The central plateau and the south-east portions of the island are mostly dolerite and the districts where these walls are located are littered with vast quantities of the stone on and just below the surface – frustrating for farming but ideal country for walling!



This wall, is at the award-winning Freycinet winery and vineyards south of Bicheno
Photo: Ian. D. Baker



At Swansea, the historic cemetery is contained on two sides by an old and more formally crafted example of the art. The graves there date from the 1830s.
Photo: Ian. D. Baker

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2009

Arrangements for the DSAWAA Annual General Meeting are progressing well. Full details will be confirmed during May via a Bulletin and on our website, www.dswaa.org.au In the meantime, please mark your calendars: Saturday 13 June 2009 Lunch at Portico's, 203 Dana Street, Ballarat, followed by AGM and speaker. Look forward to your support at this meeting.

Contributions for *The Flag Stone* invited

Pictures of unusual walls/damaged walls
Dry stone wall-related literature
Any item of interest to members of DSWAA
News from overseas
Deadline for the September 2009 issue is 14 August 2009

All material to: chabrent@bigpond.net.au

SOUTH AUSTRALIA: stone on stone

By Mark Thomson, Advanced Research Director, article first published in *Craft South, SA*



Should you drive out past the top end of the Barossa Valley towards the Murray River, through Nuriootpa, Springton, or Eden Valley towards little towns like Sedan or Cambrai, you'll find the landscape changes quite dramatically as you head east.

The rolling red gum-covered Hans Heysen landscape gives way to stony bare hills overlooking the immense ancient flood plain of the Murray. Often the only feature of these hills will be the wavering line of a dry stone wall running along its side or down a precipitous gully. These walls, built without mortar or any binding other than friction and gravity, are often mistakenly considered to be 'convict walls'.

In truth they are the products of the art of the dry stone waller, an occupation which all but vanished (in Australia at least) with the introduction of barbed wire.

Ian Carline is one of the very few skilled dry stone wallers working in Australia. Much of his more than 40 years experience in walling was gained as a young man in the village of Tideswell in Derbyshire, an area in which the prevailing farm fencing is still dry stone wall. The British Isles has a rich history of this type of walling, with many regional variations and styles. Ireland alone has an almost unbelievable 250,000 miles of stone walls*. There is even a series of national competitions for walling.

Many of the dry stone walls seen around South Australia in the Eastern Barossa, Mid North and the Strathalbyn area were built from the 1870s onwards as boundary fences for large properties and to help clear the paddocks of stones thus allowing grass for stock or more rarely, to plant crops.

The fact that the majority of these walls are still standing after more than a century without the benefit of mortar or

cement to bind them is a tribute to the consummate skill and patience of their original builders. However, the occasional fallen tree or car crash does knock over a section of wall.

It was just such a section of wall near Eden Valley in the Eastern Barossa region that provides an opportunity to see Ian at work.

Ian, who with wife and partner Val lives in Port Pirie, travelled down to meet some other aficionados of the dry stone wall and to give a sort of impromptu workshop in wall building. A short section of recently knocked-over wall (the result of a large gum tree limb falling during a storm) was located beforehand. The farmer who owned the property was contacted in regard to giving permission to rebuild the wall section (about 1.2 m high, three metres long and 600 mm thick) and he happily assented.

We turned up on a warmish morning and under Ian's instruction we donned our leather gloves and ripped out the collapsed wall, that is, pulled all the rocks away from the wall and laid them out on the ground so that their size and shape was clear. Ian set up string lines between the two ends of the existing wall to act as guides for the newly placed rocks. When building a wall from scratch, Ian would place a series of steel A-framed profiles where the wall was planned to run. These slope-sided outlines of the wall give a consistent angle or 'banter' to the wall in addition to providing an angle that directs the weight of the wall into its centre, thus minimising toppling or collapse.



The ground was scraped back to provide a stable base and Ian selected a variety of larger foundation stones that he laid flat on the ground, ensuring that they did not rock or move, laying them so that they were tight to each other and running parallel to the ground.

The 2.5 m long wall was then built up on both sides with roughly larger stones getting smaller as the height increased. The two sides of the wall were built at the same time and stones would be laid on their natural beds ie more or less as horizontally as possible.

Where possible the outside face of the wall had a better looking stone but not at the cost of the integrity of the wall ie that it was loosely placed. Ian worked at great speed, selecting each rock carefully and placing it so that it sat nested well into the space. This sometimes required turning over the stone or



trying out different locations for it but he never put a stone back on the ground after selecting it. This must be part of the economy of effort that comes from practice. Efficient and good looking stone walling must also require a certain ability to think in three dimensions – what is required to fill that negative space? What would lock in there?

As the wall started to build up in height the interior of the wall was filled with ‘chatter’ or rubble which added to stability (this is a job that Val, a newcomer to walling, does when they are working together). Occasionally rocks were ‘pinned’, that is, smaller wedge-shaped rocks were laid in or hammered in to add stability. Many of these small decisions are critical and can easily result in later problems if not done properly. Ian frequently pushed down on stones to check that they were not rocking or prone to slip.

Ian also kept an eye for ‘running joints’, places where too many stones had been placed on top of each other to form a weak vertical joint. In the same way that normal brickwork requires interlocking bricks, a stone would be placed across the top of any joint to make it strong. This a constant, rapid design process as hundreds of little placement decisions go to



make up a consistent, pleasingly ordered whole that has the look of a ‘good wall’.

As the wall gathered height, at least every metre ‘through stones’ would be added – long flat stones that connected both sides of the wall and added further stability.

When the wall reach about a metre high the coping stones were added. These large vertically oriented stones span the full width of the wall and help tie the top of the wall together.

The result was a pleasing repair job that was hard to spot from the original, all done in about two hours with about three or four people helping Ian, who still managed to do the majority of the work.

According to Ian, a pair of traditional wallers was expected to do about 7 or 8 m of wall a day, or ‘as far one of them could throw a sledge hammer’. Ian is an impressively fast builder although he uses some assistance such as a backhoe to move piles of rocks around, thus leaving the potentially back-breaking work to actually placing the rock.

Surprisingly there a few tools involved: a small hammer, string, A-frames, maybe a sledge hammer, a crowbar and a good pair of strong boots. He goes through leather gloves at a great rate.

Ian has taught his son the trade and regularly returns to England, where there is no shortage of demand for this most ancient of skills. The aesthetics of old stone walls creeps up on one; after a while you start to appreciate the harmonious rhythm of apparently random rocks placed by a hand that truly knows the utility of the found material.

When in Australia, Ian Carline is available for work and is also considering holding classes should enough interest be expressed. He can be contacted on 0410 882 031 or by email: val05@iprimus.com.au

The DSWAA has an interesting website at: www.dswaa.org.au

Though mainly Victorian-based, the DSWAA has a small but growing number of SA members that meet occasionally, go on field trips or look at building projects. If you’re interested contact Steve Bottrof on: jbottrof@bigpond.net.au
**From Irish Stone Walls, Patrick McAfee Published by the O’Brien Press, Dublin 1997, ISBN 0 826784786.*

Enclosure

By Raelene Marshall, Vice-President DSWAA



Andy Goldsworthy inspecting a remnant sheepfold at Redmire Farm, Mungrisedale with a view to reconstructing it as part of his Sheepfold project

In February this year, an unexpected parcel arrived on my doorstep. Andy Goldsworthy's most recent book *Enclosure* was a gift from a friend with whom I'd worked in the mid 1990s in the Grizedale Forest in Cumbria in England's Lake District. Located between the lakes of Coniston Water and Windermere, Grizedale is a haven for wildlife and home to the red and roe deer, badgers, squirrels, grouse and woodpeckers. Today it is a working forest the result of twentieth century regeneration by the Forestry Commission, who restored the oak, larch, spruce and pine woodlands.

In the 1960s, an innovative shift in thinking resulted in the opening of Grizedale to the recreating public. Today its evocative delights are the sculptures that since 1977 have been inspired by artists invited to create works that reflect their creative responses to the natural materials and the surroundings.

Relatively few Australians would know of Grizedale and even fewer would have visited Andy's sculptures in the forest, nor would they be aware that his now world famous dry stone wall sculpture, *Wall That Went For A Walk* was a springboard for a career that today results in 267,000 hit-sites on Google! Constructed in the early 1990s, this contemplative dry stone work defies the history of its ancient origin as it joins remnant agrarian walls and gently weaves a snakelike route among the larch trees.

Leafing through the pages of *Enclosure* has been a sheer delight; a trip down a memory lane to the six-month period in the mid-1990s when I was privileged enough to live in the majesty of the Cumbrian landscape, work at Grizedale and be involved with Andy and the County Arts Officer Steve Chettle during the early evolution of the Sheepfolds project.

In 1996, the Northern Arts Region had been nominated to host the UK year of Visual Arts and Andy was invited to propose a project for Cumbria, a region where the landscape palette and its terrain have been moulded for centuries by agriculture and, in particular, sheep-farming. Based on his

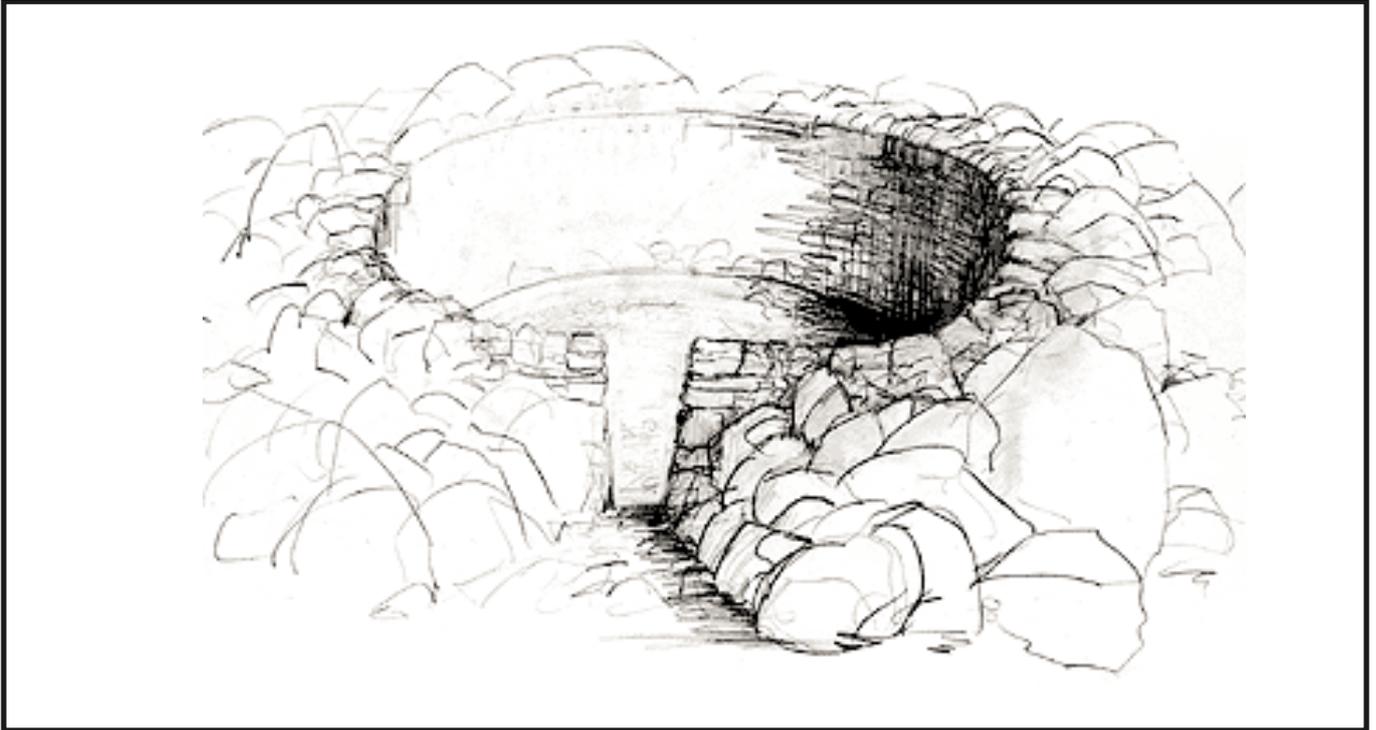
intuitions and sensitivity to the Cumbrian landscape, Andy's response was to propose '100 Sheepfolds for Cumbria', a commission planned to span the period from 1996–2000.

In agricultural terms 'enclosure' refers to an area of land surrounded by a hedge, fence or, more traditionally, a wall. Andy's concept was to repair or rebuild these ancient stone enclosures and to reconstruct them as containers for artworks that, where possible, could still be used as working folds. Although he is also well known for his ephemeral and more transient work, Sheepfolds was about a permanence, about bringing the past into the future, a project he hoped would survive until the next millennium.

How well I remember the first visit with Steve in Andy's four-wheel drive to Redmire Farm at Mungrisedale just south of Penrith. Prior to that meeting, Steve and I had spent some time with an old Ordnance Survey map researching the location of old folds near Haweswater, a picturesque and secluded valley devoid of settlements in the Lakeland fells. So, after opening and closing several gates and driving deeper and deeper onto the farm, I admit to seriously wondering about the merits of funding a public art work that seemed to me, as an Aussie, to be located as far away from its audience as was almost humanly possible.

As we neared the remnant fold we were greeted by the farmer-manager, a geographer and another staff member from Newton Rigg Agricultural College – the custodian of the farm. The geographer explained to me how the landscape had long ago been cleared by the monks and how since Neolithic times farmers in Britain had enclosed their sheep in walled structures, folds made in places wherever sheep husbandry was practised.

Mediaeval sheep farming featured both permanent units and other systems that were based on the summertime use of upland sites; small versions on common land of folds found on larger farms. A crucial feature of England's common land is that it is usually in private ownership but has rights of



Drawing reproduced courtesy of Adult and Cultural Services, Directorate, Cumbria County Council, UK

common over it. Its main features are that it is generally open, unfenced and remote – particularly in the upland areas.

It provides the existence of rights that entitle a person or people other than the owner to share in the profits or produce from the soil. Therefore to maintain good neighbourliness agreed rules were critical. However, needless to say, there were often difficulties and tensions between commoners each of whom had a concern to maximise the benefit for their flock. These tensions often lead for example to the dogging of a neighbour's sheep, an underhand practice to chase away another's sheep from the prime pastures.

The more recent past of the Cumbrian folds is rather sad. Once an essential part of hill-farming, these small walled constructions appeared in their hundreds on fells and local villages. There were three distinct varieties: sheepfolds for gathering sheep and keeping them together; washfolds for annual washing prior to clipping; and pinfolds built in villages as holding-pens for stray or stolen sheep. Modern-day farming, wire fences and chemical baths eventually meant farmers stopped the labour-intensive practice of going on to the fell to tend their sheep and so the little stone folds used for thousands of years have been abandoned and left to decay.

So it was within this rich agrarian context that I was to experience the making of public art that, rooted in history, would have both an aesthetic and practical outcome. To this day, I well recall the mutually sensitive and respectful dialogue between Andy and the farmer as they worked through Andy's conceptual ideas and the practical long-term use of the fold by the beautiful black faced, long fleeced Rough Fell lambs that grazed the Redmire land.

Andy's use of natural and found materials to create drawings and sculptures in the landscape invites comparisons with postmodernists such as Robert Smithson and other American artists of the 1960s and 1970s Land Art Movement and, despite a period in 2001 when the devastating outbreak

of foot and mouth disease effectively closed the land, more than 40 of his sculptures had been completed by 2006. Among these are works of slate, balanced stones embedded in walls and a series of holding folds each containing a huge glacial boulder rolled down from the hillside nearby.

An initiative of Cumbria County Council, Northern Arts and the British Lottery, Sheepfolds was a major project that was organised in an extremely low-key manner. The facilitators sought the general blessing of the hill farmers who owned the land and individually canvassed them, on the fields, in their kitchens and in their barns. They went and found them all. 'In the rain, in the snow. Public art in any landscape, not least the landscape of Cumbria, was a sensitive issue,' said Steve Chettle, understandably wary of wrecking the spectacular landscape of the Lakes. They had to ensure they took in 'the particular qualities of Cumbria.'

Andy worked closely with the expert help of local dry-stone wallers such as Steve Allen and Joe Smith, and in some places such as Mungrisedale they rebuilt folds that lay on the fell and others by drove-paths, rivers and in the centres of villages. They repaired folds from the stones left lying around and, where they had to start from scratch, they brought in local stone. In some, they placed an abstract piece of sculpture: a monumental stone or perhaps a cone made from carefully placed layers of stones. Each fold was a surprise, designed to contain a work that would be discovered by people when they looked inside.

When asked how visitors would be able to identify which folds are part of the project and which ones aren't, Andy response was that 'they probably won't, although some will be more apparent than others. I would like a sign but I would like it if they became marked on the Ordnance Survey map. After all I'm drawing on what I have seen. It may be the way a wall has taken on a particular quality over time; its relationship to a tree for instance that has grown stronger as a result. There is

an extremely interesting relationship between stone, tree and sheep in which the tree and the stone form an alliance. The stone often protects the tree from being eaten and in some places it's as if the tree has had to climb upon a rock out of the sheep's reach and to grow there in a way that makes powerful connections between the two.

It is no accident that I called the piece of land near where I live Stone Wood – I've always been aware of these two materials. Many of the proposals for Sheepfolds will pursue these ideas. At times the sheepfold will actually exclude the sheep and reverse the protection it once offered to the sheep by offering it to the tree. The project is already taking on its own energy and developing in directions which I never anticipated and as yet do not understand. I was more in control in the beginning than I am now. That's a very beautiful thing. I've generated this project which has taken on an energy that isn't satisfied with the ideas that I first came up with and it's demanding more all the time.'

...and that energy continues!

Dedicated to my friends Jacinta and Gary Bartlett, who long ago introduced me to the Grizedale Forest and the works of Andy Goldsworthy. They passed away in the Black Saturday bushfires on 7 February 2009. They indirectly played a significant role in the eventual formation of the DSWAA. References in this article came from the Andy Goldsworthy books: Sheepfolds and Enclosure.

Second series of DWSWAA Greeting Cards

The second series of DWAA Greeting Cards is now available for purchase. Each set contains 10 cards (two of each of five images) with envelopes. The cards are perfect for all occasions as they are blank inside.

The photos are all taken by DSWAA members and depict the variety and richness of dry stone walls across Australia.

A pack of 10 makes an excellent gift. Packs cost \$25.00 plus \$2.70 packing and postage. The DSWAA members' discount price is \$22.00 plus \$2.70 p & p. Packs can be ordered by sending a cheque for \$27.70 (or \$24.70) to DSWAA Greeting Cards, c/o 145 Clark Street, Port Melbourne, Vic. 3207.

Although some of the photos have appeared in previous issues of the *Flag Stone*, there are a few new ones that haven't been seen before that are of great merit. All photographers of pictures chosen for the new series received a free set of the Greeting Cards.

Some websites you may like to visit

www.astoneuponastone.com
 www.rbg Syd.gov.au
 www.pierreseche.net
 www.stonefoundation.org
 www.dswac.ca

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Please complete (or photocopy) and **either** post to OR email to: DSWAA Membership, c/o Sandra Fitzgerald at 2 Officer Court, Warrnambool, Vic. 3280 or fitzgeralds@westvic.com.au

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.

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

Contributors: photographs and illustrations

pages 1–4	Charmian Brent, Andrew Miller
page 5	Raelene Marshall
page 6	Eleanor Bjorksten, Andrew Garner, Ian D. Baker
page 7	Charmian Brent, Ian D. Baker
pages 8–9	Mark Thomson
page 10	Raelene Marshall
Page 11	Drawing courtesy of: Adult and Cultural Services Directorate, Cumbria County Council, UK