



The Flag Stone

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Patron: Sir James Gobbo ABN 31 721 856 687 Newsletter Editor: Charmian Brent

Field trip to Port Fairy and northern environs

by Charmian Brent from Tim Hubbard's tour notes

The DSWAA 3–4 March field trip to Port Fairy began with meetings held at the Caledonian Hotel where the Association's normal business was attended to before President Jim Holdsworth introduced Jo Grant from Regional Arts Victoria, Vicki Couzens, an Aboriginal tribal elder, and Carmel Wallace, who together are embarking on an arts project 'Wet Country/Dry country/Our country' in the Port Fairy area, which will include some dry stone construction (see p. 12). Jim also introduced Tim Hubbard, a local architectural historian, who together with Roger Borrell organised the whole wonderful weekend and provided us all with fantastically informative tour notes, from which this account is drawn.

Port Fairy was settled by sealers and whalers as early as the 1830s and was proclaimed a borough in 1856. It is famous for its historic buildings and is the heart of Moyne Shire, home to some spectacular examples of dry stone walling. Indeed, a dry stone wall marks almost the entire western boundary from the ocean to beyond Bam stone quarries. We looked at the rabbit proof fence at Goose Lagoon and at an interesting gateway in Fingerboard Road on our way to the highlight of our tour, the Bessiebelle sheep wash. Bessiebelle houses probably the largest and most sophisticated surviving example of a traditional pastoral property sheep wash in Victoria. The network of races, yards and folds were necessary for washing thousands of sheep over a short period of time.

Apparently convict labour was brought from Tasmania to build the sheep wash, a process thought necessary to lighten the weight of the bales of wool that were shipped straight from Port Fairy to Britain where higher prices were gained for cleaner wool. The dry stone walls and races appear to evolve from the rocky terrain and have a strong organic affinity with the prevailing harsh landscape; a



The rabbit-proof fence at Goose Lagoon



A wall built in the 1950s in Fingerboard Lane



The vast expanse of runs, yards and races at the Bessiebelle sheep wash

Some websites you may like to visit

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

www.stonefoundation.org

www.dswac.ca

high level of skill and craftsmanship is evident in their construction. Damein Bell, Chairman of the Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation that manages Bessiebelle, impressed upon us how seriously he takes the responsibility of the custodianship of both the Aboriginal permanent stone house sites and the European dry stone structures at Bessiebelle.

Next we inspected beautifully constructed new walls at Malcolm Shepherd's property in Byaduk before proceeding to the Harmann's Valley lookout to survey Mount Napier and the volcanic lava flows that emanated from it. An interesting deep culvert at Ripponhurst had DSWAA members risking life and



Top: a new wall at Malcolm Shepherd's property at Byaduk; second: an old wall, circa 1850s at Byaduk; third: Mount Napier and the Harmann Valley lava flows, including kilometres of dry stone walls; above: the deep culvert at Ripponhurst.

limb to clamber up and down in their investigation of the site before returning to Port Fairy via walls at Ryan's corner and The Reedy. We all spent the evening having a great meal at FADS, where Tim Hubbard again held us all in thrall with his wonderful in-depth knowledge of the area. Many thanks, Tim.



Tim Hubbard (right) talking with John Ardlie, the wall builder of Cherry Plum Cottage



Tim Hubbard addresses the group for the last time at the Mount Rouse lookout



The Mt Elephant dry stone wall lookout on the Hamilton Highway at Derrinallum – Andrew Miller took this shot on his way home to Ballarat

The next morning the group set off again via the Ardlie's Cherry Plum Cottage in Albert Road and a road embankment at Stonefield Lane on the way to 'Acacia' the Burger homestead complex at Peshurst now occupied by the Stuart family (see p. 3). The Mount Rouse Lookout was the final breathtaking stop in our fascinating journey before we enjoyed the scrumptious home cooking at the Celtic Café in Mortlake from where we all went our separate ways.

The historic Burger and Albert properties at Gnadenthal near Penshurst

by Robert Wuchatsch

On Sunday 4 March 2007, the DSWAA visited Acacia, the Burger farm near Penshurst. This farm, which also includes the former Albert property, was established during the early 1850s by Wendish settlers from Germany.

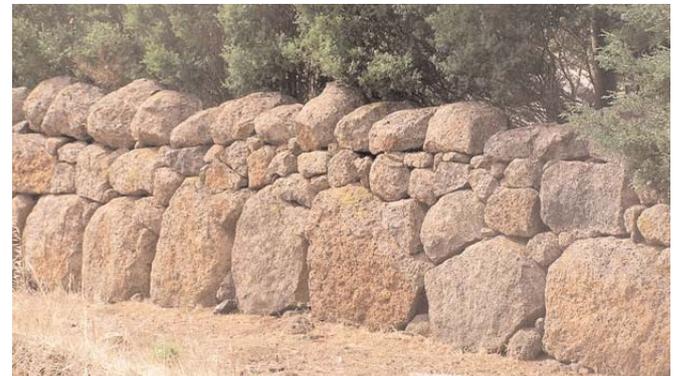
The Wends are a Slavic race which has lived in eastern Germany for about 1500 years. An ethnic minority with their own language, their homeland is Lusatia, located today in Brandenburg and Saxony. The majority of Wends are Lutheran, but there are significant numbers of Catholics. For further information, see the Wendish Heritage Society Australia website www.wendishheritage.org.au

Peter Burger, Andreas Albert and other Wendish families founded Gnadenthal (Valley of Grace) on 624 acres in 1853. The Burger and Albert farms were originally 156 acres, divided by a 104 acre strip of land owned by other settlers. Today, all this land (416 acres) is owned by the Burger family, except for two acres which was excised many years ago for the Gnadenthal Cemetery.

Peter and Agnes Burger and several children arrived in Adelaide aboard the *Helene* in December 1851. After a few months at Rosenthal, they moved to Victoria, living at Portland until purchasing their land at Gnadenthal in late 1853. Soon after, Peter and his sons built wattle and daub buildings, one of which served as their first home and still survives. In 1864, Peter built a new bluestone house nearby. Over the years he and his family also constructed numerous drystone walls on their farm.

Andreas Albert arrived in Adelaide aboard the *Alfred* in December 1848. Shortly after arrival, he married a fellow Wendish passenger, Agneta Heinze. After three years at Rosenthal, they travelled overland by bullock dray with Peter Burger and other Wends to Portland, where after 18 months they moved to Gnadenthal.

In a letter to his father in Germany, Andreas later wrote 'I have had a new large and solid house built...and the surrounding buildings also cost me much money'. It was the ruins of this old house and outbuildings, along with the surrounding drystone walls and orchard, that members of the DSWAA were also privileged to see that day, following their visit to Burger's old cottage.



Above: gatepost and wall at abandoned homestead on 'Acacia'. Top right: early settlers' furniture; second: garden walls at 'Acacia'; third: a high wall that surrounded the pen for the cartborses; right: beautiful stonework on the walls of the now ruined Albert house

President's Message



DSWAA President Jim Holdsworth.

Greetings!

You may not be aware of our Secretary's longstanding professional and artistic interest in dry stone walls, an involvement that she admits to having been, in past years, quite coy about revealing when in open company!

This propensity for curious yet fascinating pursuits runs also to her brother, Ian Gonsal. Ian is an airline pilot whose love of flying led him, a couple of years ago, to acquire a Nanching, a single-engined former Chinese training plane.

Let me tell you about how these siblings' interests intersected – with me in the middle.

Ian, who lives in Perth, was to fly the Nanching to Melbourne for the Avalon air show in March. He made an offer to take a passenger for a flight to see and photograph dry stone walls. Not the sort of offer that comes along too often, and certainly one that should be boldly embraced!

On a calm and fine morning, I shook hands with Ian at Grovedale airport near Geelong. As he pointed out the plane sitting quietly on the airfield, I was only momentarily unnerved; Ian's relaxed and assured manner, and the obvious competence and love of flying that he exuded, soon had me climbing aboard. We locked our flight plan into his on-board computer. I had the same route marked on a photocopy of the VicRoads Country Directory of Victoria, which I clutched tightly in one hand, with my camera in the other. Our path was to take us over the Stony Rises, on to Noorat and Kolora, then to Derinallum and east to the Barunah Plains and finally the Dreeite area east of Lake Corangamite. We were to be up for about 90 minutes.

We cruised west over Colac at a height of about 2,500 feet, and as we neared each area of interest we dropped down to about 500 feet. Pushing back the canopy and exposing myself to 200 km/hr winds, I pointed the camera at some of Australia's best dry stone walls. The country looked sad, afflicted by drought and, in parts, browned by bushfire.

As a pilot, Ian was a master at banking the Nanching over those interesting groups of walls, and circling so that some good photos resulted. The main benefit of photographing walls from above was the ability to capture the networks of walls across the landscape, and to see them as groups of structures marking out road boundaries, properties, paddocks and yards.

The flight proved that there is real capacity to survey walls from the air, but only to locate walls and identify their length, not to draw any conclusions as to condition, height or type of construction. The speed of the plane across the ground (and the obvious inability to stop!), the restricted view from the

plane and the relatively cramped cockpit all serve to limit one's ability to record any information by pen onto maps or notepads, thus restricting collection of information to what can be captured, often opportunistically, with a camera.

There are few images which portray the wonderful contribution that dry stone walls make to our landscape as well as when seen from above. There should be more because this rare vantage point presents these important structures in a way that cannot be fully appreciated from the ground.

As an Association, I would like to see the DSWAA pursue more opportunities to use aerial photography to reveal the significance of dry stone walls in the rural landscape. I'm convinced that images from above will help to reinforce in the consciousness of landowners and our decision-makers the importance of dry stone walls in the making of the Australian landscape and revealing the pattern of rural settlement, as well as telling the story of contemporary land use and today's farming practices. Ian Gonsal, and his wonderful Nanching aircraft, have opened new horizons.

Regards! Jim



What is it about stones?

by Raelene Marshall

Since the formation of the DSWAA in 2002 I have often wondered why it is that so many of us from very different walks of life have such affinity with dry stone walls and the walling craft. Why have we all become so committed to supporting and fostering the Association's aims and objectives? Just what is it about a pile of neatly ordered 'stones' that draws us to want to ensure their survival for future generations?

And so the questions keep surfacing. Why indeed do many of us bother to gather and collect stones? What is it about 'stone' and its use that for some can become so addictive: as a craft, as an art, as a hobby, as a career, as something to which we so generously give the precious gift of 'our time'? Is it simply an innate connection to land and landscape? Or are there some far deeper human archetypal and allegorical qualities of 'stone' that in some way represent our own need to be remembered to make and leave our own mark for future generations?

In 1943, Abraham Maslow produced a paper entitled, *A Theory of Human Motivation*, which he subsequently extended to include his observations of man's innate curiosity. Maslow proposed that as 'humans' basic needs are met they seek to satisfy successively higher needs that occupy a set hierarchy. Known as 'Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs' they are often depicted as a pyramid consisting of five levels. It is a theory in psychology in which the four lower levels are grouped together as deficiency needs which are associated with our physiological needs (survival: shelter: companionship: esteem) while the top level is termed growth needs (self-actualisation) and associated with our psychological needs and wellbeing. In thinking about how to approach this article, it suddenly occurred to me that 'stone' and 'stones' have played and still play an important role in each of these first four levels. (survival: stone tools, stone bridges, etc.; shelter: stone houses, stone walls; companionship: stone games; esteem: precious-stone jewellery).

And so another question surfaced. Can and do the subliminal and inherent 'qualities of stone' also play a role in Maslow's fifth level – our human growth needs? That is as a metaphor for understanding 'creativity, acceptance of others, morality, problem solving, spontaneity and spirituality'?¹

Stones: solid, sturdy, strong, permanent, smooth, rough, reliable, precious. Memories of the past and mirrors to the future. Carl Jung the world-famous psychologist and one of

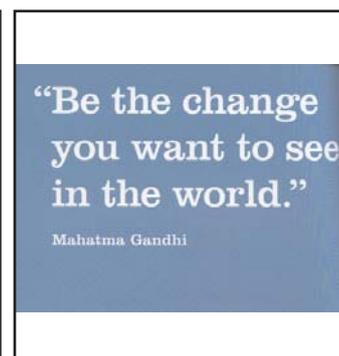
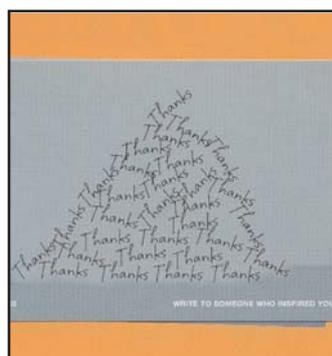
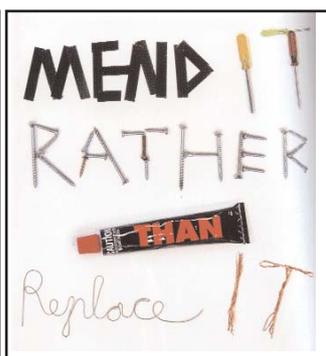
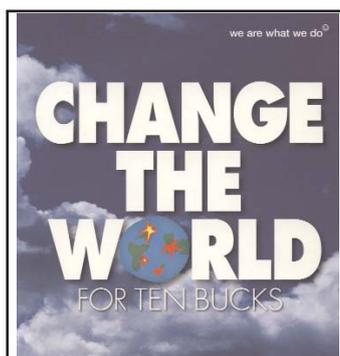
the foremost thinkers, scientists and visionaries of the twentieth century refers to 'stone' for its qualities of 'completeness and lasting' and cites fascinating examples in *Man and His Symbols* of cultures such as the Hindus who pass stones from fathers to sons in the belief that they contain magical powers. In the chapter, The Process of Individuation, Jung speaks of people gathering and collecting stones and makes analogies with stone as a symbol of 'the self' within the human psyche as is often represented in dreams, art and mediaeval mythology.²

Milestone, cornerstone, gallstone, tombstone! Indeed our language is littered with words that incorporate the word 'stone' as their base. We speak of the 'stone-age', of people with 'hearts-of-stone', as being 'stone-faced' and 'stone-broke'. We have stones in our gardens, stones in our pockets, stones on our coffee tables and rocks in our head! Our scones turn out hard as a rock! We skim 'stones' over water 'set things in stone' and 'stone the crows'!

Folklore introduces our children to the power and use of 'stone' through story and ancient games. The third little pig built his house of stone, Harry Potter went in search of the Sorcerer's Stone, there's the hilarious exploits of the Flintstones and games such as Hopscotch, Scissors-Paper-Rock and Five Stones have been long-time children's perennials and favourites.

The well-known American Art Critic Lucy Lippard in her book, *Overlay, Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory* recounts a year of living on an isolated farm in southern England where she initially went to escape from art and a life of criticism, organising and activism. However, whilst hiking on Dartmoor, she accidentally tripped over a stone which turned out to be but one of a row of standing stones. As is often the case with human destiny, that unexpected happenstance precipitated for her an 'unexplained connection' that led her 'right back to art and a fascination with these ancient sites' and a year-long journey to explore 'the sensuous dialectic between nature and culture.'

In *Overlay* Lippard draws parallels between the megaliths, labyrinths and other elements of pre-history and merges mythology, criticism, archaeology and activism. In doing so, she 'creates new perspectives and a new vision of art's function in our age.' She describes 'stone' as 'invulnerable and irreducible and something which became the image and symbol of being' and says, 'as human beings, they touch us because they suggest immortality and because they have so



patently survived. Virtually every culture we know has attributed to pebbles and stones, rocks and boulders, magical powers of intense energy, luck, fertility and healing. In virtually every early culture, the entire world was sexualised, divided into male and female, incorporating the entire life force into all reality. Earth and stone are two forms of the same material, symbolising the same forces. Both are the sources of the world as we know it. The alchemical *petra genetrix*, or generative stone, is an incarnation of *prima materia*: the beginning, the bedrock, the old European great goddess who was both earth and sky unmated mother: sole creator of everything.³

The Road Less Travelled, the work of author M. Scott Peck has had a profound effect on the lives of millions of readers and has become both a part of the popular culture and a spiritual and inspirational guidebook for a generation. However, probably less well-known is his book *In Search of Stones*, the story of the search for meaning in his own life. Again the result of a ‘happenstance’, a three-week holiday planned through the countryside of Wales, England, and Scotland became an obsession for Scott Peck and his wife Lily when they happened across an ancient megalith on the first day then purposely decided to look for and began to make symbolic connections with the ancient stones. As the chapters unfold, their ‘search for stones’ becomes a search for meaning and mystery and ultimately an unveiling of the pilgrimage of life itself. As Scott Peck introduces each of his chapters such as Reason, Romance, Addiction, Holiness, Changing, Art, Religion, Ageing, Parenthood, Money and more, he takes the reader on an introspective journey that ‘connects’ these ancient monuments with the breadth of physical and emotional facets of our human existence. Megalithic standing stones such as Long Meg and Her Daughters provide fertile ground for him to reflect on the state of his own family and the struggle some of his children experience as a result of his fame and fortune, and the megalithic stone carvings (Art), cause him to begin to really understand why Lily needs to paint her face with makeup each day!⁴

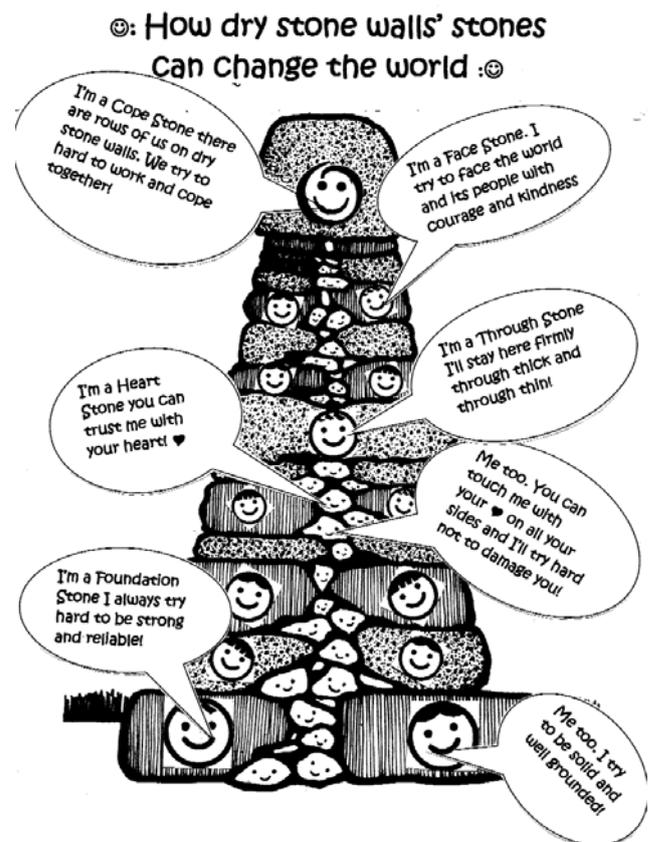
Another happenstance which prompted the conclusion of this article was the unexpected arrival in my mailbox last week of a little book entitled, *We Are What We Do: Change the World for Ten Bucks*. Some of you may have also received it. In it are ‘50 actions to change the world and make you feel great’, published in Australia but based on a UK Community Links Charity model, it is about a new kind of movement – a movement with attitude. They are ‘not trying to raise money but are trying to show the power of a simple shift in attitudes and day-to-day behaviour.’ In reading it I couldn’t help but wonder if that’s not what we at the DSWAA are trying to do in our efforts to save the dry stone walls for future generations.⁵

And so the questions kept surfacing.

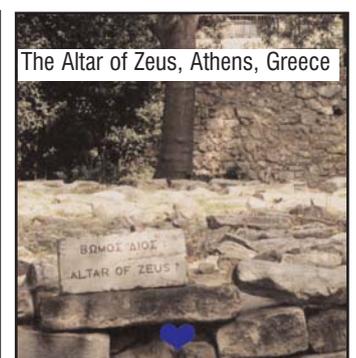
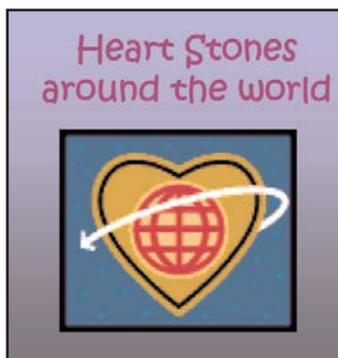
As the urbanisation of our culture sees the earth rapidly being buried beneath metal and plastic, perhaps like Jung,

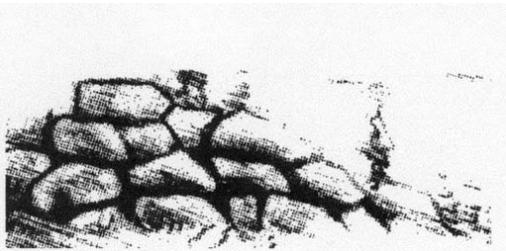
Lippard and Scott Peck, it is those who are in touch with ‘stone’ the most mythic of materials who have the potential to use its illusive qualities as a metaphor for creating new ways of understanding ‘the world’ and ‘our world’. Just as the ancient stones can tell us stories about the past, maybe so can we too, as artists, gardeners, wallers, stonemasons, architects, builders and sculptors, historians and geologists and DSWAA activists, through our actions and behaviour, make a quiet contribution to the notion and movement, *We Are What We Do*.

I remember many years ago a good friend saying to me, ‘People are how they act, not what they say’, a sentence that even today still resonates loudly in my ears. The publishers of this little book are inviting comments or suggestions...perhaps this could be ours from the DSWAA...just a thought!⁶



1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow's_hierarchy_of_needs.
2. Jung, Carl G. *Man and His Symbols*. First published by Aldus Books 1964; England. Penguin Books, 1990.
3. Lippard, Lucy R. *Overlay - Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*. United States: Pantheon Books, 1983.
4. Scott Peck, M.D., M. *In Search of Stones*. New York: Hyperion, 1995.
5. *We Are What We Do: Change the World for Ten Bucks*. Australia: Pilotlight Hardy Grant, 2005.
6. www.wearewhatwedo.org.au





Gathering Stones...

Heritage Victoria: Cultural Landscapes of the Volcanic Plains Forum

On the day/evening of 30 March, dry stone walls and the DSWAA were well represented at Heritage Victoria's Cultural Landscapes forum held at Glenormiston College South West Institute of TAFE near Camperdown. One of the key facilitators was Dr Tim Hubbard whose breadth of knowledge, enthusiasm and planning made our March Port Fairy Field Trip such a wonderful and rich experience.

In the morning session Lucinda Petersen who is currently providing planning expertise to the City of Warrnambool and supervising the Warrnambool Heritage Gap Study introduced the audience to the plight and issues surrounding the preservation of dry stone walls. As part of the afternoon session DSWAA Committee members Raelene Marshall and Josie Black were asked to speak to the gathered audience about their displays in the foyer.

Josie's talk was entitled, 'The Art of Place', which was about Corangamite Arts that has, for the past 20 years, initiated and coordinated a number of community cultural development projects which have linked art to the natural and built landscape and to the environment. One of these was the Corangamite Arts, Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project (1991-95) which involved and continues to involve farmers and the community generally in the study, appreciation and conservation of the dry stone walls. The published report, *If These Walls Could Talk* is now in its sixth print run and continues to sell steadily. In 1997 Corangamite Arts established the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Heritage Trail, a now very well visited self-drive tour that comprises of ten interpreted sections of significant dry stone walls in the Corangamite Shire."

Raelene was asked by the facilitators to speak about how her federal government-funded exhibition 'A Stone Upon A Stone' came about and how it influenced the formation of the DSWAA. She took the audience on a journey that started at the City of Keilor almost 20 years ago in the days prior to Heritage Advisors in Council when a file about the William Taylor 'Overnewton Gatehouse' landed on her desk. The decision she made that day would change the direction of her professional and personal life for many years to come, for it was during the process of developing the Gatehouse and site that she discovered dry stone walls. A subsequent Australia Council funded period of living and working in the English Lake District reinforced the important contribution to the cultural landscape of the dry stone craft brought here by the early settlers. This newly gained awareness ultimately led to the idea to develop an exhibition with the short-term aim of tell the dry stone story and the longer-term aim of raising issues about the plight and importance of Australia's dry stone walls.

The highlight however for the DSWAA was the evening presentation by our President Jim Holdsworth. Jim entertained the dinner guests to a stimulating, thought provoking and visually appealing Power Point presentation about dry stone walls and their plight together with some background of the Melton Dry Stone Walls study. In his talk Jim proposed some innovative ideas which arose out of the day's proceedings as to how dry stone walls might be saved whilst still respecting the rights and practical needs of their current day custodians. The DSWAA and our

aims and activities featured prominently in Jim's talk and by the end of the night, sober or not, not one person would have left the dining room ignorant about our existence!

DSWAA Greeting cards

Why not save yourself a visit to the Newsagent and promote the DSWAA? We have 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

Stone boats

Here is the remains of what Tom Love of Epping thinks was a sled for hauling stones from paddocks for wall construction. The iron ring at the fork of the branch was presumably used



to attach the sled to a horse. Tom also discerned marks, on the longer of the branches, of what he thinks is evidence of original cross planking. It would be good to ask members (and our international website audience whenever that's possible) whether they have seen anything like it.

David Moloney

Stone boats – low-tech devices for moving rocks

'While rearranging our garden we were faced with the problem of moving heavy rocks – and I recalled reading about and seeing pictures or sketches of stone boats.' (Blog from US web) So it would seem that stone boats are still in use today, albeit tractor-hauled instead of horse-drawn. Certainly Tom Love's relic from the past is worth keeping as an essential tool in the construction of dry stone walls on his property. Any other information on stone boats from readers would be warmly welcomed.



Another Italian connection: dry stone walls in Sicily

by Josie Black, OAM

In the September 2006 issue of the Flag Stone we enjoyed two excellent articles exploring the dry stone walls built by Italians and Italian speaking Swiss in Yandoit and surroundings.

Historians and travel writers say the history of Sicily is not written in books but in stone. Stone palaces, villas, huts, churches, roads, civic halls, piazzas, tombs and humble dwellings. Sicilian-American author Theresa Maggio has even written a book called *The Stone Boudoir*. As well as conventional masonry using mortared limestone, bluestone, marble, granite, etc., dry stone building technology is evident throughout the Italian peninsula, including Sicily, where I was born.

Generally, the best dry stone walls that I saw in Sicily have been built around new country villas on the outskirts of towns or rebuilt where the walls have been neglected during the years of poverty and mass migration. But there are old derelict walls, beautifully restored walls and ancient walls found on archeological sites.

I was born in Vizzini, eastern Sicily in the province of Catania, the city that sits at the base Mt Etna, Europe's most active volcano. Vizzini was once a thriving city but after more than a century of mass migration to the USA, Argentina and Australia there are now fewer than 5000 inhabitants. Most of those who came to Australia before the Second World War settled in rural areas turning their hand to agriculture, mainly horticulture. In the 1920s and 1930s, a large group of my 'paesani' (townspeople) settled at Werribee, Victoria where a great number of them worked as tenant farmers on Werribee Park, then Corpus Christi Catholic Seminary. However, most post-Second World War immigrants from Vizzini settled in cities, particularly Melbourne, and contributed their traditional skills of working with stone to the burgeoning construction industry.



Sicily from the train en route Catania-Vizzini

The Aeolian Islands off the north-east coast of Sicily were all volcanoes at one time but now only the islands of Vulcano and Stromboli are still active. As well as several active volcanoes, the Sicilian landscape has been twisted and contorted by regular earthquakes of varying intensity which have played a large part in destroying whole cities and towns, let alone fragile dry stone walls. The most recent major earthquake devastated western Sicily in 1968. Throughout the island it's not uncommon to see crumbled towns of stone that are not worth rebuilding.

As elsewhere, modernisation and mechanisation are a more common threat to dry stone walls – motor cars, buses and farm machinery all needing to access narrow roads and tracks originally meant for carts pulled by donkeys and mules. In some

hilly locations, government has persuaded and paid farmers to relinquish a strip of farmland in order to widen the roads, and if this required stone walls to be demolished, then so be it.

On my first visit to my birthplace in 1975 and in several trips back since then I was surprised and delighted to find dry stone walls on the outskirts of the town surrounding orchards and olive groves. Unlike the familiar walls of south-west Victoria, they are not as large or as technically accomplished and generally are modest low walls performing their traditional function of separating public and private land, sheep and goats from the orchard or the vegetable garden and not built as boundaries to properties.



Left, Vizzini outskirts 'Cunzeria'; right, rubble dwelling now used as a barn

On a bus trip through the barren and stony Ibleian Mountains that rise between Vizzini and the east coast city of Syracuse (the birthplace of Archimedes) I saw bleached and barren fields carefully marked off by dry stone walls. Unlike the rest of Sicily, I saw no evidence of agriculture in those blistered stone-ringed fields littered with stones, thistles and dry grass.

Piazza America almost in the dead centre of Sicily is best known as the town from which tourists journey to the Casale to visit the recently excavated 4th century Roman villa noted for its extravagant and exquisite mosaics. However, for me the highlight of my visit was to find in the town centre a war memorial built of dry stone.



Piazza America War Memorial

In the 1950s, archaeological excavations at Capo Graziano on the Aeolian island of Filicudi revealed six oval stone huts dating from the Bronze Age. All that remains today is the surrounding dry stone wall of each hut, which once supported a thatched roof. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, these ancient dwellings closely resemble sketches made by archeologist Peter Coultts (1985) of the stone huts built by the Gunditjmarra people at

Lake Condah in south-west Victoria. More recently, bushfires at Tyrrendarra in February 2006 revealed evidence of whole villages of similar large oval stone walls.

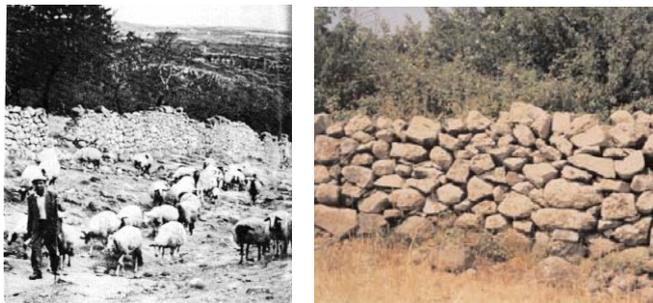
The main building of the village of Capo Graziano is a large oval hut surrounded by smaller oval huts of only one room. A big granary has also been excavated shaped like a truncated cone, and built most carefully of rubble and volcanic mud. In the Catania district at Biancavilla is a necropolis of oval graves surrounded by little unmortared stone walls.



Rural scene in Sicily – The Golden Honeycomb, Vincent Cronin

On the south coast of Italy, near the ancient Greek town of Camarina, is the village of Branco Grande which was fortified with a dry stone wall enclosing a series of oval huts. In Lentini only 31 km from my birthplace, are Iron Age buildings with floors much lower than the ground outside and paved with stone or gravel covered with a layer of clay, then a low dry stone retaining wall around them.

Near Agrigento with the Greek Temple of Concordia as the backdrop there are remnants of dry stone walls which once served to contain flocks of sheep and goats. Nearby were also dry stone huts which would house the shepherds and goatherds who were usually young boys. Also on the south coast east of Agrigento, at Porto Empidole, are grain stores built of dry stone.



Left, a shepherd and his flock above Agrigento, the temple of Concordia in the distance
Right, Vizizini outskirts

In Palermo, the capital of Sicily, under the Palazzo Normani (Norman Palace) are the remains of 5th century Punic walls constructed of blocks of sandy-orange stone still fitting perfectly together without mortar. And of course throughout Sicily there are beautifully crafted and enduring Greek and Roman amphitheatres built of huge stone blocks knitted together without mortar, which have endured for centuries.

In Sicily there is no evidence of ‘Nuraghi’, the unmortared short towers used as fortresses and refuges of Sardinia, however, there are numerous modest dwellings built of dry stone rubble which in more recent times have been rendered and sometimes cemented.

Robert Hughes the Australian art historian and critic has written, ‘Australia is full of beautiful landscapes but they are all natural. The Italians make landscape by the way culture and nature interpenetrate and influence one another’.

New DSWAA member: Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation

Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation has joined the DSWAA. Winda Mara is an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation located in Heywood, Victoria.

Winda Mara manages seven properties along the Mt Eccles/Tyrendarra lava flow in partnership with the Gunditjmarra traditional owners. All of the properties feature the traditional constructed aquaculture system and permanent stone house sites that covers 80 sq km, as well as extensive dry stone wall structures and the iconic Bessibelle Sheepwash (see pp. 1–2).

The Gunditjmarra heritage values were recognised by the Australian Government through the declaration of the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape in 2004.

The Indigenous Land Corporation has successfully acquired four properties along the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape that have been leased to Winda Mara.

Winda Mara Chairman, Damein Bell said that, ‘It was time for Winda Mara to become a DSWAA member as we look after our Aboriginal cultural heritage and European dry stone heritage’.

Many traditional Gunditjmarra people that built and looked after the aquaculture system were also involved in the construction of the dry stone walls when European settlers arrived in the early to mid-1800s.

Winda Mara has started working with DSWAA and Heritage Victoria to identify training requirements so that Aboriginal people can assist with the conservation of the dry stone sites.

It has been suggested that through the various property titles and arrangements, Gunditjmarra people now own the most dry stone walls in Australia if not the world. Winda Mara Chairman, Damein Bell said, ‘That’s an interesting turnaround given the history of Aboriginal land dispossession in Victoria’.

He went on to say, ‘The recent visit to the Bessibelle Sheepwash at the Lake Gorrie property by DSWAA members really demonstrated to me the personal admiration that people have for dry stone sites. Winda Mara community members are looking forward to working closely with the DSWAA in conserving the dry stone sites on our properties and sharing the story with the broader public through the Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project’s Sustainable Tourism Plan’.



Matty and Allen showing how the Gunditjmarra traditional permanent stone huts looked, with remnant dry stone structures in the background

Saving a wall, Oatlands, Tasmania

by Eleanor Bjorksten

DSWAA member Andrew Garner helped a Green Corps team working in the Southern Midlands Municipal area to restore and save an old dry stone wall. Andrew's involvement included running a workshop and supervising work.

The dry stone walling workshop was run on Wednesday 11 April with a theory session in the morning followed by practical experience working on a wall in Mill Lane, Oatlands. The theory session began with a CD of photos giving examples of dry stone walls, some pictures of walls under construction, and provided much inspiration from seeing the possibilities of using different types of stone.

Construction notes prepared by Andrew accompanied the session and were supplemented by notes and drawings on a whiteboard.

Members of the public were invited to attend this workshop and people came from Ulverstone, Devonport, Scottsdale and Hobart making an attendance of about 20 participants, including Sally Dakis from ABC radio, who interviewed several people. The following hands-on session was pretty congested but good fun. A new wall was demolished so that it could be rebuilt nearby. The absence of through-stones was noted. Many old walls in Oatlands do not have through-stones and this lack of solidity may be the cause of their deterioration.

The next two days were spent with the Green Corps working on an old dry stone wall along Tunnack Road. This wall was under threat of removal until the owner was approached by a member of the local historical society and, convinced of its importance, consented to allow the Southern Midlands Council assist in its restoration. The Southern Midlands Council in its turn had been convinced by the executive members of the DSWAA of the cultural importance of dry stone walls. Here was the first opportunity to be pro-active and three weeks of the Green Corps' time was allocated for the purpose of working on the wall.

One unexpected outcome of this activity was the realisation that if Geoff Duggan visits Tasmania to accredit wallers, the Tunnack Road wall will be perfect for this purpose – it is sandstone (so much easier to use than the dolerite of the Deloraine area), has sections which need rebuilding and has good working space on both sides. Andrew thinks Geoff's two-day workshop on how to build a wall could happen near Deloraine and the accreditation session in Oatlands – the reverse of what was originally planned.



The Mill Lane site, Oatlands



The Tunnack Road, Oatlands site before work began



Here is the chaos of having 10 people working on a small section of wall



Smoko at the Tunnack Road site – showing the bits too awful to keep demolished and ready for reconstruction



The Green Corps team have completed 30 m of wall on the Tunnack Road site and will complete the job in May

Heritage controls for dry stone walls

by David Moloney

The Victorian Minister for Planning, the Hon. Justin Madden recently appointed an Advisory Committee to undertake a 'Review of Heritage Provisions in Planning Schemes'. In March, the Committee released a Consultation Paper which makes recommendations in relation to statutory controls to protect dry stone walls. Such a review is uncommon, and presents a rare opportunity to address the issue of dry stone walls in Victoria.

Acknowledging the significance of dry stone walls, the Advisory Committee has also recognised the difficulty of mapping them for Heritage Overlay (HO) controls. It has therefore proposed special controls for dry stone walls.

The following discussion represents the author's interpretations and personal views only. It is recommended that interested persons read the report itself. Go to www.dse.vic.gov.au/planning and the Heritage Provisions Review Consultation Paper is available there. Dry stone walls are specifically discussed at Section 2.9 of the Paper.

While written submissions closed on 30 April, the DSWAA will make a verbal presentation on 16 May, so any members' comments can be incorporated into that verbal submission. Comments can be addressed to Jim Holdsworth, whose contact details are on page 12.

The DSWAA has made a written submission to the Advisory Committee following inputs from seven members.

The Advisory Committee Recommendation

The 'special provision' clause is referred to as the 'post box' clause by the committee, as it has for many years applied to early post boxes in urban areas. It would provide blanket coverage of dry stone walls subject to any conditions or limitations thought desirable. For example, the committee suggested that the controls might be made to apply only to walls earlier than a certain date.

Advantages

This is a simple strategy that would avoid the need to actually identify and map walls, which is a very difficult task. The provision offers the possibility of saving many significant walls that would otherwise be lost before mapping and introduction of traditional heritage controls could be completed.

Inclusion/exclusion guidelines other than age could be introduced to limit the number of walls to which the blanket controls would apply. For example, another threshold criterion might relate to the condition of a wall. This might be expressed as the percentage of a total wall that remains in near-original condition. Or it might exclude walls (or parts of walls) under a certain height.

This approach would do away with any expense incurred either by municipalities in introducing these controls, or by landowners in contributing to or contesting their introduction. The only costs incurred by either landowners or municipalities would arise in relation to an application for a permit to demolish the wall. It is likely that in the majority of cases, where demolition is not contested by the municipality or a third party, all that would be required of the landowner is a statement regarding the history of the wall as known by him or her, and photographs to determine its condition.

In consideration of the special nature of such a control, and in acknowledgement that it would save local government considerable costs in identification and heritage assessment of dry stone walls, there would be an argument that permit fees should also be waived.

Disadvantages

The control would be very difficult to enforce, in that there would be no record of the great majority of dry stone walls existing at the time of the introduction of the control. Many walls would be demolished without anyone knowing about it. It would thus represent only a partial improvement.

Because the usual mapping process does not apply landowners and council planners might not know of the existence of the controls on their land.

The introduction of the controls would not allow consideration by landowners, in consultation with local government, of the heritage values of the places over which statutory controls are proposed. The usual requirement for rigorous assessment of the heritage significance of a place proposed for permit controls under an HO would not apply.

Dry stone walls differ from post boxes in that they are extensive and on private land. It is possible that the controls might prove onerous or controversial.

Another option: Significant Landscape Overlay

Advantages

An alternative proposal proposed by some planners is to use Significant Landscape Overlays (SLOs) rather than Heritage Overlays. Like the post box provision, these would not require accurate mapping of each wall.

It would, however, require some professional justification of the heritage significance of walls proposed to be protected. This justification would then require approval by local council, and probably by a planning panel, for the amendment and controls to proceed. Development of a practical, cost-effective method for undertaking a general municipal survey of the landscape values and history of dry stone walls would ensure the identification of significant walls. The necessity for justification in an SLO would also add respect and status to any controls.

Disadvantages

An obstacle to this option is that SLOs presently do not have demolition controls, which means that walls could not be protected from demolition. There is considerable movement for this to be changed. An SLO might also be only marginally more effective in identifying walls within properties.

Other options?

The DSWAA appreciates that the protection of dry stone walls will require much more than a statutory/control regime. It requires continuing education in all levels of the community regarding the value of dry stone walls in Victoria's history. A voluntary approach, in which the DSWAA might lobby for funding to enable interested landowners to prepare heritage reports for their own walls, would be an excellent longer-term option.

The ideas of members regarding these or any other initiatives, and their views on options for the effective and fair statutory preservation of walls, is invited. Well-informed and practical grassroots approaches will no doubt be greatly valued by the Advisory Committee in its development of an effective and fair strategy.

Regional Arts Victoria Stone Wall Art Project

by Jo Grant

The RAV stone sculpture project is moving along with considerable momentum. Since briefing the DSWAA during the recent meeting and tour from Port Fairy we have secured a site for the project, presented the concept to significant community groups, and confirmed some funding support. The site chosen for the project is a property called Kurtonitj, located near Tyrendarra in the Shire of Glenelg. The property is owned by Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation, our partners in the project. We recently made a significant presentation to the Lake Condah Sustainable Development Project meeting, and managed to reach a diverse group of people interested in making a contribution to the project. We have worked on finalising an up-to-date budget for the project and have managed to secure almost half of the funds needed for the project. This doesn't include a significant in-kind contribution being offered by various groups in the region (such as the DSWAA – thank you to those who expressed interest). The project has the support of the Glenelg and Moyne Shires and various community groups, including Corangamite Arts, who are keen to follow our progress for their own future projects. The artists have completed the first designs of the sculpture and the next stage of development is under way to secure more funding and build community support. We intend to start making the sculpture in Nov./Dec. 2007 (TBC) after the launch of the statewide project in Melbourne in October. To read more about the overall project, go to: www.rav.net.au/erave1/about/viewNewsletter.asp?newsletterId=16 For more information on the above project, contact: Jo Grant, Regional Arts Development Officer, Regional Arts Victoria South West: jgrant@rav.net.au / 0448 500 608/5568 0500



Left to right: Carmel Wallace (Artist), Damein Bell (Winda Mara Aboriginal Corporation), Vicki Couzens (Artist) and Jo Grant (Regional Arts Victoria – South West)

DSWAA event and meeting calendar dates

Saturday June 16 Annual General Meeting to be held at the Geelong Wool Museum, 26 Moorabool Street, Geelong, Victoria. Tel. (03) 5227 0701.

Saturday 11 August proposed for a field trip to the Colac, Dreeite and Red Rock areas.

Weekend of 13–14 October proposed trip to South Australia. When finalised, full details of all events and activities will be sent out to members via DSWAA Bulletins.

Who's Who in the DSWAA

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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, Jim Holdsworth
pages 2 and 3	Andrew Miller, Jim Holdsworth Charmian Brent
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