

No walls without wallers by Jim Holdsworth



Greetings

The Flag Stone has been published since 2004 when our first editor, Wendy Bitans, produced a commendable six-page issue. Those early copies still provide interesting reading and they throw a light on a small group of people, mostly from western Victoria, who formulated the path forward for an Association that has matured and grown in the intervening 14 years.



I have written before of the Strategy that we formulated last year and which members endorsed at our 2017 Annual General Meeting. That Strategy sets the direction for the Association as it continues to grow and embraces a wider suite of goals and objectives.

As the Association has changed and expanded, so too has *The Flag Stone*. It now plays a vital and complementary role to our website as an enduring record of our events and activities and as a vehicle to bring stories from across Australia and around the world to our attention.

Delving into this issue you will see a strong thread linking the various articles. Your Committee decided that *The Flag Stone* should devote an issue to the dry stone waller; the person who, with or without assistance, creates the physical entities that are the *raison d'etre* of the DSWAA.

Whether hardy wallers like Bill Harlock or world-renowned artists like Andy Goldsworthy, the articles and photos tell of commitment, hard work in often difficult conditions, immense skills and passion, but mostly of the satisfaction of using a natural material to produce something enduring, and functional or artistic. Appreciation and respect for the craftspeople, whose efforts have given Australia its rich heritage of dry stone walls, is surely why we are members of the Association and why your Committee continues to pursue our Vision.

Focusing on one aspect of dry stone walling will be an occasional theme for future issues of *The Flag Stone*. [Our Editor](#) would welcome ideas for themes that could be adopted for future issues. I know Bruce would be very pleased to hear from you. Of course, your feedback, comments and suggestions are always welcome at any time, on any aspect of the Association. And don't forget to keep a regular eye on our [website](#) for news about walling courses, events and other items of interest.

Jim

This issue

- 2 Ian (Wally) Carline
- 4 George Gunn
- 6 Bill Harlock
- 7 Walling rabbits out
- 8 Levi Meakins
- 9 Old SA wallers
- 11 Andy Goldsworthy
- 13 Johnny Clasper
- 15 Walling rabbits in and out

Ian (Wally) Carline - modern day waller



Ian (Wally) Carline has been walling since he left school in Derbyshire as a 14 year old, eventually bringing his skills to Australia. I had heard about Wally long before I met him, his walls in South Australia widely admired for their skill and workmanship. He has since taken these skills to Tasmania where he continues to make his mark. It seems time to get Wally's story.

before I met him, his walls in South Australia widely admired for their skill and workmanship. He has since taken these skills to Tasmania where he continues to make his mark. It seems time to get Wally's story.

As a lad I worked for Arthur Chritchlow, a farmer at Wheston in Derbyshire. He had me doing general farm work which included gapping dry stone walls – that is, repairing damaged walls, particularly where sheep were getting through. In those days the skill was passed down informally from one generation to the next, but I had no idea that walling would one day become my trade. I would like to think that old Arthur would be proud of the walls that I have built since those early days.

‘As I became more proficient in walling and other farmers saw what I could do I was soon asked to build significant sections of wall, some two and three hundred metres long. This led me to work for Brian Coles in Biggin who employed wallers to undertake large contracts. Brian was a good man to work for – always fair. By then I was 18 years old and could put up about 60 metres of wall in a week, depending on where we were working and if the stone was on site. The walls were usually about 1300 to 1400 mm high and either limestone or gritstone. In due course I was putting up between two and four kilometres of wall per year.

‘For an ordinary dry stone wall I only ever used a club hammer, but for a garden wall where the copings needed dressing I would use a bolster or chisel. Tooling takes up a lot of time for little result, but it depends on the job.

‘Of course the walling was pretty much confined to spring through to autumn. Winter was a different story. If it came long periods of snow we would be laid off for a few weeks and go round the farms to help out with milking, foddering and cleaning out the cow sheds until the weather came good again. Dry stone walling in England can be very wet so you need the gear to work in: waterproofs, gum boots and decent gloves. There were times when I covered the stone with a tarpaulin if snow was forecast, uncovering it the next day to start work again. What a contrast to Australia where its sun hat and shorts!

‘In the summer months we travelled from job to job living in a caravan. On one occasion an official of the Peak Park Planning Board called and told us we had to move on which put us in a bit of a predicament, as we could hardly take the stone wall with us. Then I remembered a friend of ours, a Dr Butterworth, who was also a big friend of the Duke of Devonshire. The Duke promptly got in touch with PPPB and told them: “leave this man alone, he is a heritage tradesman; has lived in the area all his life; get off this man’s back”. That was the end of that fiasco.

‘I normally worked on my own but sometimes with my son Dean who I taught from an early age. He is still walling back in the UK. I recall rebuilding a section of an old Roman wall in Peak Forest and in that area Dean came across a bronze Celtic brooch. The inscription was a heart at the top with a vine climbing around it and droplets of blood coming from the heart. Experiences like that are a reminder that the history is important and that any repairs must be to the highest standard. [Cont ...]



Walls I built on Castleton Lane in Tideswell where I grew up

Wally Carline cont.

And so to Oz

'I came to Australia in 2009 when I met my wife, Val. I built a couple of walls at the house we lived in at Port Pirie and another across the road from the Sportsman's Tavern. A reporter from the ABC phoned to say they were at the Tavern admiring the wall and hoped they could do an interview. People noticed these and from then on it was all word of mouth. I've built or repaired numerous walls in South Australia but generally not the long walls I was doing in Derbyshire. I also restored a dry stone hut near Peterborough, featured in #33 of The Flag Stone.



Michael and Brodie Burford, at the front door

Eventually we moved to Stone Hut (wonderful name!) and restored a stone cottage with a dry stone wall out front (of course).

'In the midst of this I was asked to run weekend workshops for beginners who wanted to learn the basic skills. Some of these were under the banner of the DSWAA and gave people enough confidence to go home and take on a walling project. It has been encouraging to see so many people interested in the craft, but a weekend workshop certainly does not qualify them to take on paid work. You would have to do a lot more metre-age before you could go out and charge for your labour.



Walling workshop, Mt Pleasant SA; Wally in vest

'It was a challenge walling in South Australia in summer, particularly up north. I would start at the crack of dawn and still drink 4L of water before knocking off. So in 2015 we moved to Tasmania, firstly Oatlands and now Campbell Town. There I have built several sizeable walls for farmers and councils and run more workshops.



Nicholas Weeding's farm, Oatlands – product of several workshops

'Dry stone walling for me is not just financially rewarding – to stand back when you have finished a substantial length of wall and say "I did that" is really what it is about. It's not an easy job; you have to be quite fit because it involves a lot of heavy lifting, and you need patience. But when you are out in the countryside with the birds around you and hopefully the blue sky above and great scenery it's a joy to be there. Just recently I have repaired a wall in Ross cemetery – it doesn't get more peaceful than that.'



Wall for a farmer at Melton Mowbray

George Gunn – Scottish Dry Stone Walling Festival



Hi fellow wallers - I was invited to contribute an article for the *The Flag Stone* on the Scottish Dry Stone Walling Festival, Northstone Stonefest, and in particular about the team approach to wall repairs at Dunnet Head in the northern Scottish Highlands.

I first organised the Festival in 2016 as a community event, but not only as a link to our stone-building past. Walling should not just be about the 1800s or 3000BC. We aim to build tomorrow's heritage, today!

As well as building a fantastic circular dry stone seating area for the public as our first project, we had excellent guest speakers, as you will see on our [website](#) . We had delicious catering, displays and childrens' activities in our marquee and also get-togethers in the evenings.



George, second from right

The last day of the Festival, we always go to the nearby and beautiful Dunnet Head, the most northerly point on mainland Britain with its spectacular cliff-top lighthouse. [Cont ...]



George Gunn cont.

The Lighthouse Board perimeter wall, built in 1832, was unsightly with gaps, so we offered the RSPB to repair it. The lighthouse was built by the Stevenson family of engineers – in fact the father of the famous Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson. As you can see, it was a beautifully built wall from sandstone, quarried close by.

The only hitch was that it was built as a lime mortared wall. The gaps had been down for so long that the lime had mostly disappeared, so since the stones shapes lent themselves so well to dry stone building we went ahead.



Repairs underway; lighthouse in background

The first year we only got there at 4pm but because the wall is built of large sandstone blocks, we had a 3m by 1.6m high gap finished by 6pm. It was a bit rushed but looked good. There was of course time to wander around and take in the view of the Orkney Islands six miles across the notorious Pentland Firth sea passage, where you can see both the Atlantic and the North Sea.



Job done

In 2017 we took on a slightly bigger gap but the lack of filling meant that a lot more had to be brought in even after the first load. Good job it was dry and my truck made it right up the hill to the site! We worked from noon until 5pm without a break.

The sandstone blocks are very good to work with, the foundations so far have been in good condition, and the participants are experienced enough after the previous two days walling that they find the big stuff challenging but quick to build.

The motivation for local people to attend or for others to come north to the UK's only Dry Stone Festival can be either an established connection with stone or an urge to just go for that thing they've always wanted to try, but never had the opportunity to do.

There was a good mix of people at the festivals. From DSWA instructors and members, beginners looking to learn, to professional wallers. A great group of people of all ages – from 15 to 70 – and from all walks of life.

Everyone has a laugh and its great for everyone to be able to stand back and look at a magnificent seat project or a repair job in a scenic wall and say "We built that and it's there forever".

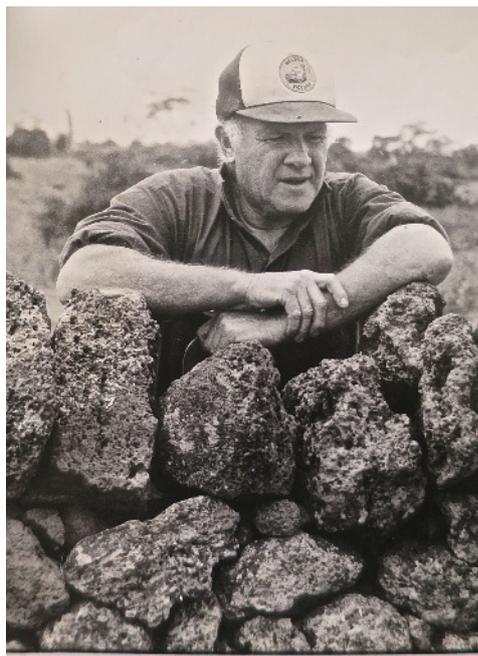
George Gunn, 63, lives in the far north of the Scottish Highlands. With an early interest in local castles and stonework, at 29 he trained under a Master Craftsman followed by 14 years experience on mainly agricultural walls.

In 1997 he passed DSWA Master Craftsman's tests. Hard work, but he wanted to pass on his skills so he applied for and passed the DSWA Certification Scheme Examiners Test and DSWA Instructor Basic and Advanced courses. There he met his friend Geoff Duggan, DSWA Master Craftsman and Examiner from Sydney.

George is active in community stonework projects in Scotland and abroad, encouraging community spirit through stonework, promoting the craft, and training wallers, as well as being a day to day working waller. In 2006 George visited Oatlands in Tasmania where he built a dry stone bench as part of the Spring Festival.



Bill Harlock – Stony Rises waller *by Bruce Munday*



Travellers with barely a fleeting interest in dry stone walls invariably comment on the wonderful walled landscape of the Stony Rises in Victoria's Western District. Many who speculate on their origin seem to think it was convicts, perhaps an image of men in chains smashing rocks. In fact they were first built mainly around the 1850s when the shepherds left for the goldfields, and then following the Lands Acts when large holdings were broken up for closer settlement. In due course many walls were built or rebuilt to control the rabbit invasion, or in some instances simply to clear the land.

Many of those 19th century wallers were highly valued tradesmen who had brought their skills from the UK to the colony, skills handed down through families. The tradition continued with Bill Harlock who grew up on a farm at Pomborneit North, surrounded by dry stone walls and wallers. Bill learned walling from his grandfather who was self-taught, but of whom he said: 'you wouldn't call him a proper waller'.

Interviewed for the Corangamite Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project, Bill commented that the early wallers used few tools – perhaps three hammers weighing one, two and five kilograms. 'You'd break your stone as little as possible. It's hard enough to build with them without breaking them.'

Farmers would cart the stone to the site on a dray that could be backed up to the wall. 'Some of those stones weighed 120 or 130 pounds and they were to be placed above head height, so there was no way you could lift them [from the ground]. On the smaller walls they'd

have [leather] aprons and they used to load onto their thighs and they'd straighten their knees and then lift.

'They didn't do it all year around. They didn't stone wall in cold weather or you'd just bust your hands. Their fingers would eventually crack up ... these stones here are fairly bad because they've got dirt in them and dirt gets into the pores of your skin.'

Wallers would often go shearing in the off-season, the lanolin helping repair their hands. It also gave the farmer time to bring more stone to the walling site.



Harlock family establishing tradition on Stony Rises

As with his father and grandfather, Bill's walling legacy lives on. For several years he ran dry stone walling workshops through the Glenormiston College near Camperdown. It was there that he encountered Alistair Tune who had enrolled in an Advanced Certificate in Horticulture course after leaving school.

Alistair recalls that he really had no particular interest in dry stone walls at that time, but discovered through the course that he had 'a bit of an eye for it'. Bill also recognised a natural talent in Alistair and encouraged him to help with wall repairs he had contracts for in the district.

Bill did mainly wall repairs and realignments, but also built some walls from scratch. As he phased into retirement Bill would oversee Alistair's work, sitting in his ute and pointing with his walking stick to the stone, perhaps 15 m away, that should be picked up next.

'I learned a lot from Bill. He had a great sense of history and what dry stone walls tell us of our past. He was also very patient and understood that building a good stone wall takes time.'

Working with Bill gave Alistair experience and confidence to a point where he too has run numerous workshops and earned a reputation as one of Victoria's most skilled dry stone wallers.

Walling out rabbits *by Bruce Munday*

The rabbit plague inflicted on the Western District of Victoria in the second half of the nineteenth century tested the ingenuity of all landholders. Shooting, poisoning, trapping and warren destruction were futile as countless rabbits kept pouring in from unmanaged land – particularly government land. Issue number 38 of *The Flag Stone* described the herculean efforts of landholders in and around the Stony Rises as they built or adapted miles of stone walls to protect their land from the furry vermin.

The attached correspondence between two prominent landholders in the district, James Robertson and Peter Manifold, describes the walls they were building and the frustration of trying to obtain skilled wallers: ‘... those working for us not being first class altho [sic] the best we can get.’ *

Altho
Aug. 27th 1877.

Peter Manifold Esq.
Stony Rise

Dear Sir,

I only receive your letter of the 19th with inquiry about my stone wall. —

The walls are at least three built some years ago to keep out Rabbits — some 4 ft. 4 in. without the coping which was not less than 8 in. and projected 4 in. to either side. The wall was

* MS 15466, Manifold family papers, 1839-1988, Australian Manuscripts Collection, State Library Victoria

3 ft. at the bottom 14 in. at the top and the foundations were not raised but a chain was cut in either side 15 or more and 15 deep filled with small spalls.

We would however advise setting the foundation in line of the wall. —

The cost was about 35/- a chain exclusive of the chain but the stone with no hand to be carried a considerable distance in some cases three quarters of a mile, being so close with you should considerably lessen the expense.

We have great difficulty in getting good stone wallers these working for us not being first class, altho the best we can get. I shall be glad to see yourself or Mr. Pralson here if you would like to take a ride round and look at my stone wall. —

Yours truly
James Robertson.

Levi Meakins *by Bruce Munday*



Levi Meakins (1851–1923), the son of a master waller by the same name from Northants (UK), started his working life as a nine-year-old on his father's bullock team. He can fairly claim credit for much of the wonderful walling in the eastern Mount Lofty Ranges (SA) from Mount Pleasant through Keyneton to Moculta, working with another man and a couple of boys. Commencing as a teenager, he worked almost full-time

building walls for pastoralists Joseph Keynes, A.B. Murray and George Melrose until 1882 when he left to work as a boundary rider for Melrose at Rosebank. Meakins eventually became overseer at Rosebank until 1914 when the position passed to his son Jimmie.

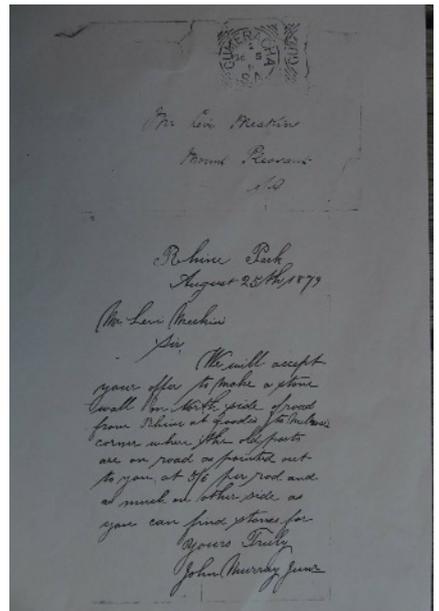
From his journal it is clear that Joseph Keynes knew very well what made a good post-and-rail fence, with or without wire, and gave his fencers strict specifications for all components and site preparation. At first he knew much less about stone walls, but from the mid-1860s he began to appreciate what appeared to be quality.

In February 1869 Keynes notes: 'I rode ... to the stone fencers. They have begun at the south end of the line of Section No. 790 and they have done nearly half a mile. Their work is very strong and good; Mr Melrose says it stands well.'

By August that year Keynes was right into dry stone fencing, drawing up plans for almost ten miles along his boundary with Abraham Shannon: 'From NW corner of 700 to NE corner of 700 did 60 chains. Thence to corner peg 702, 703, 707, 708 dist. 1 mile 40 chains. From thence to etc, etc ...' He was also fencing his boundaries with Melrose at Rosebank and with Murray at Rhine Park, referring at various times to stone fencers James Lydeamore ('he is doing his work well but very slow'), Friedrich Matschoss (working for Shannon), Charles Newman and Levi Meakins.

Newman did a lot of stone fencing for Keynes, commencing with a quarter-mile trial in June 1870. As a rule Keynes was underwhelmed by Newman's walling work, comparing it unfavourably with Meakins'. Newman's work steadily deteriorated, and in May 1871 his team left him. Thereafter, with a different team, Newman's work apparently improved, despite the tragedy of his four-year-old son, killed when thrown from a dray.

By 1872 Keynes was employing three teams of stone wallers under Newman, Levi Meakins and William Stephens. Keynes was immediately impressed by Meakins, then twenty-one years old, comparing him with Stephens: 'they are both making good work, but I think Levi Meakins is the best work.' And later comparing techniques, he noted:



'Newman ... is breaking the stone now and filling the middle of the wall with small loose stones. I spoke to the other stone wallers about it and they say it will not stand so well as packing the stones in the regular way.'

In 1878 Meakins was also contracted to help build the iconic stone walls along the Sedan Hill road and most likely the quite remarkable wall along the eastern boundary of Weroona, once part of Keyneton Station.

We might never know just how many miles of stone wall across the eastern ranges we should attribute to Levi Meakins, but we can be quite confident in crediting him with the best of them.

Levi is buried at Mt Pleasant along with Jimmie, wife Wealthy, and youngest son William who drowned in a farm dam on Rosebank. There is a paddock at Rosebank named 'Meakins'.



Some of the legacy of Levi Meakins

Early Walling in South Australia *by Bruce Munday*



Cut Hill, built 1868 by Jabez Grimble; 7 m high on 45° sloping ground using stone cut from the hill behind.

Dry stone walls in rural South Australia date from the earliest days of settlement. These were built with what was then available, generally to protect gardens from domestic livestock or to confine ration stock. Fences on a grander scale became necessary in the 1850s when many of the shepherds left their posts for the Victorian goldfields. This was exacerbated by the three-year drought of the 1860s, pastoralists becoming more protective of pastures and water from neighbours' livestock.

In South Australia there was a strong imperative to build with stone. For one thing, in many areas there was plenty of it, which was just as well as there was relatively little timber for post'n rail fences. Resistance to fire and termites were other imperatives. Fences were invariably built from field stone, quarry stone reserved for buildings.

Good dry stone walling was a respected craft, prompting George Melrose who established Rosebank Station (Mount Pleasant) to write: 'There is not one man in a hundred that can build a proper stone wall'. Nonetheless, not a lot is known about the identity of these wallers – after all, they were mostly just building fences.



Rosebank garden, c. 1890

We can discern a very clear Irish influence in the mid-North of the state. Many walls were built in the Galloway style, rarely seen outside of Ireland, where the smaller stones were laid on the lower courses by children, larger stones placed on top by adults. This area, with towns such as Clare, Auburn and Jamestown had large populations of working class Irish looking for a new life after the devastating famine. Perhaps the most mentioned waller was Patrick O'Grady on Bundaleer Station and later on Canowie Station. He is remembered in a hand-written note from one Joe Gerke as 'a little old man with long ringlets who always wore a green ribbon in his coat'.



Galloway dyke, Campbell Range

On the west coast of Eyre Peninsula, from Lake Hamilton to Elliston, folklore suggests that many of the limestone walls were built by Chinese brought in by pioneer settler Price Maurice on account of their capacity for hard work in trying conditions. That capacity would certainly have been tested, but whether they built dry stone walls is hard to establish. Records show that all properties had skilled tradesmen such as blacksmiths, carpenters and

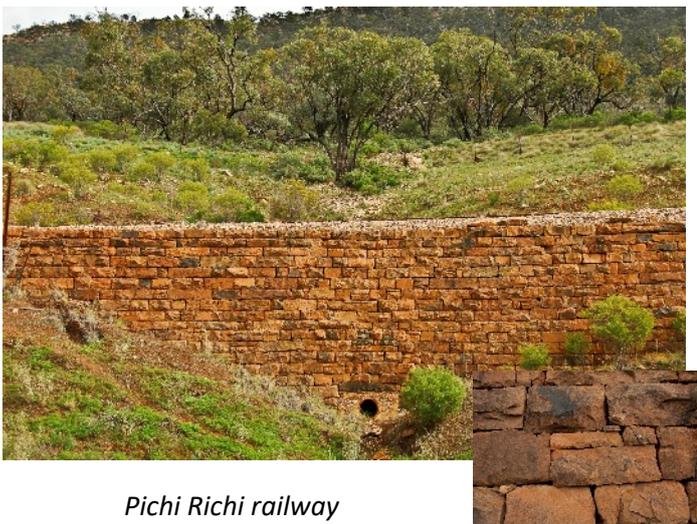
South Australia cont.

masons, but there are few records of skilled wallers. A rare instance is a reference to George Mahar, born in Ireland in 1844, who is reputed to have built about six kilometres of walls on Chickerloo Station, along with sheep yards and outbuildings, not to mention many kilometres of walls still standing on other properties in the Sheringa district.



Aerial view of old walled stock route, Eyre Peninsula

The irrefutable industry of the Chinese earned them undeserved praise in some quarters for the wonderful abutment on the Pichi Richi railway track from Quorn to Port Augusta. There is actually very good evidence that this was built by skilled Welsh and Cornish stone masons supported by some 150-200 indentured Chinese labourers who helped quarry the stone.



Pichi Richi railway

Some of the best insights into 19th century wallers in South Australia can be gleaned from the journal of Joseph Keynes, pastoralist from Dorset who established Keynton Station in the eastern Mt Lofty Ranges in 1839. Keynes employed several teams of wallers, generally two adults and two children, who would go out on a Monday

morning, returning on the Saturday evening. Camping in old shepherds' huts with rations and pasture for horses, the team would earn 4/6 a rod (i.e. 18 shillings per chain) and could build about a chain a day depending on accessibility of stone (fetched by the children on a sled), terrain and height of wall. At this rate a mile of dry stone wall would take three months. Today with a hydraulic post rammer and high tensile wire a mile of stock fence could be erected by one person comfortably in a week (given the posts).



Remains of old sled for fetching field stone

As I sit in my air-conditioned office penning this piece, the forecast temperature is 41C. I'm reminded of an entry in Keynes' journal, January 1878: 'Rode out to the stone wallers – the stones were so hot they could not handle them'.

Near Robe in the south east of the State are some beautiful limestone walls built by Levi Cooper (1838–1927), a stone mason from Devon. Cooper has been described as taciturn, perhaps on account of having 'wooded and lost Maggie Park', who at age 17 married Adam Lindsay Gordon. The story goes that Cooper every evening visited the Caledonian Inn where Maggie had worked, there to dwell in memory of his shattered romance. He remained faithful to Maggie, a lamenting bachelor to the end.



Andy Goldsworthy & Steve Allen: Walls, Wallers and Art

By Raelene Marshall



In late 1995, as part of an Australia Council Professional Development grant I was privileged to spend time working in the Grizedale Forest Sculpture Park nestled in the heart of the English Lake District between lakes Windermere and Coniston.

Dry stone walls are everywhere. The varied character and stunningly scenic colour palette of the landscape is influenced by its underlying geology, glaciation and human activity. Wallers there will say that a stone is not always a stone. Indeed, those familiar with wall building know that 'rock-wise', Cumbria is something of a melting pot where granite, slate and limestone can all be found.

Home to an intricate patterning of dry stone walls and described at the Societe Pierre Seche Conference in Ambleside in 2010 as a place you can 'hold in your hands', once visited its sheer beauty will never leave your heart. Tall walls, blotched with lichens run like skipping stones atop the fells; clinging roadside mazes snake past farm holdings weaving their mysterious way to the feet of the mountains.

The Scottish artist and sculptor Andy Goldsworthy is by far the most famous artist whose works played a significant role in the early development of Grizedale and should you dare 'Google' 'The Wall that went for a Walk' you'll have 384,000 results from which to choose. Such was the notoriety of this, now storm damaged dry stone sculpture, that it managed to launch Andy as one of the most successful contemporary artists of our time.

Built in 1990, 'The Wall that went for a Walk' is a beautiful, yet simple, structure. Joining an ancient agrarian wall,

it snakes in a gentle series of connecting serpentine forms that weave in, out and among the trees. Today Andy travels the world making both permanent and ephemeral art in landscapes, galleries and other sculpture parks such as Storm King in New York and here in Australia on Herring Island on Melbourne's Yarra River and Adelaide's Botanic Gardens (below).



Way back, in the pre ease of internet access days, my reason for wanting to visit Grizedale was to see and experience this wall I had heard and read so much about.

Still a working forest, in Grizedale the chosen site is integral to the work and forms an extension to the forest, a place to work with nature's materials, to activate neutral areas and give them new life. A springboard for visitors to experience the forest through new eyes.

'The Wall that went for a Walk' does not disappoint. However, to this day my feelings and reaction to this piece still manage to haunt. Where in this structure does the ancient agrarian wall end and the sculpture begin? Just who is the artist? Andy who designed it, Steve Allen the principal waller, or both? At what point does an artisan craft become a piece of art? Why does fame favour the artist and does it matter? [Cont.]

Andy Goldsworthy cont.

These thoughts stayed with me for the duration of my time in England's north and were amplified when on a freezing cold day in January 1996 I visited Redmire farm just south of Penrith to see Steve and a walling colleague faithfully interpreting one of Andy's sculptural sheepfold designs. The wind blew, the fells were covered in snow, the ground was muddy, puddles were solid with icicles, the stones were wet and slippery and yet the fame of the work would belong to Andy.



Sheepfold proposal from Andy Goldsworthy Sheepfold book

This scene was a far cry from my earlier visit to the area with Andy, Steve Chettle (the Public Arts Officer for Cumbria County Council) and two agricultural professionals from the nearby Newton Rigg College. On this blue-sky October autumn day, we had met with the farmer to discuss the then imminent Cumbria 1996 U.K. year of Visual Arts Award and the role that both Andy and the proposed 100 sheepfolds across the county would play.

Despite its popularity as a tourist destination sheep farming has been the mainstay of the Cumbrian economy for centuries. Sheepfolds are small gathering areas made of dry stone walls that farmers down the centuries have used to corral sheep and pen them together.

Whilst the earliest folds date back hundreds of years, modern farming practices mean they are now seldom used, however, their impact on the rural landscape has survived and many remain in situ, albeit in a ruined state.

The Cumbria year of Visual Arts Sheepfold project commenced in January 1996. Although the building programme suffered a setback during the foot and mouth period, it continued until its official conclusion in April 2003, having achieved some forty six folds in total.

At the outset Steve Chettle pointed out it was about more than pure artwork with an objective to re-establish structures which would otherwise deteriorate and disappear.

Throughout its life the project saw some new works and the restoration of many sheepfolds, pinfolds and washfolds. Each in their own way benefited from Andy's creative skills and practical farming background and I was lucky to see at first-hand how he worked with the farmer, took an idea, explored a theme from a number of angles always taking into account the practical and real end use for the completed work.

The Sheepfold project began with two circular folds on Redmire farm, between Penrith and Keswick, 1.5 miles along the road toward Mungrisdale and Caldbeck. Over the duration of the entire project, Andy concentrated on derelict folds in various states of disrepair, transforming some into environmental sculptures and in the process repairing some and adding sculptural pieces inside others. Whilst not all had an art theme, the project was nevertheless art with a practical outcome that not only provided work for many wallers but also propelled waller Steve Allen into the public eye and on his way to fame.



Sheepfold structure, Redmire Farm

Along with a cast of almost exclusively Cumbrian wallers, Steve Allen subsequently became the lead Sheepfold project waller and worked on all but two of the folds. His walling history dates back to 1988 walling full-time nine hours a day, six days a week, every week of the year. Although many wallers specialise in the kind of rock typically found in their home county, Steve is a Cumbrian, a waller who says 'there's slate where I live. Two miles that way is limestone. Ten miles this way it's all sandstone, and ten miles the other way it's nothing but granite. I don't differentiate. Today they all make fine walls.'

When needed, Steve travels the world with Andy and due to his fine craftsmanship interpretation of Andy's designs, may well be the best-known wall builder in the world. He's earned his own right to fame, which still leaves us with the unresolved question. Is his work art or craft? Who is the artist and does it really matter?

Johnny Clasper - off the wall



From time to time The Flag Stone mentions modern-day dry stone wallers doing amazing things with stone: Sunny Wieler in Ireland (#34), Michael Grab in Canada (#35) and Chuck Eblacker in New York (#36) as examples. Another to catch our attention was [Johnny Clasper](#), a 'reformed brickie' who creates breathtaking stuff in Yorkshire. Clearly, stone is a universal medium not just for building but also for art. But as Raelene Marshall asks: Is it really art or is it craft?

Johnny's stonework is inspired more by nature than by straight lines. He creates and crafts beautiful works of art in his projects, with shapes that seem to capture movement frozen in time. Johnny tells how this came about.

'Born and raised in Harrogate, the dales and surrounds have always intrigued and inspired me. I was a student at Rossett high school, where I still hold the high jump record (not to sure how long I can hang on to that).

'Before becoming obsessed with stone, I started off as a brickie. In fact from an early age my weekends were spent working with my father (a builder) as a labourer on building sites. I quickly got promoted from broom and wheel barrow to trowel and hammer. Something happened when I was handed that rusty old trowel and heavy split handled lump hammer in my hands, a magic feeling inside. "With these tools I can build (a feeling I still get today when I pick up certain tools). A short while after I saved up and bought myself some decent tools. I was one proud 16 year old lad!"

'I put myself into college to study brick work "At last something I really wanted to learn and really enjoyed doing".

'I became top of the class and earned the student of the year award 1997. "College taught me all about the modern ways of building while my time at work I learned many traditional techniques of laying stone, at the time I was always drawn to stone... so many ways to lay it as opposed to bricks."

'The next 5 years or so I worked on many stone houses, extensions and barn conversions before going self-employed. Years passed doing the same things, that is until I started to read up and practise dry stone walling.

'This changed everything, without the mortar separating the stone, I became more in-tune and aware of the stone, studying the grain, natural shape and textures, different results and finishes were possible, everything was now falling into place or was it?

'it was always my dream and goal to build something that hadn't been done before, but everything seemed to have already been done by someone. I had thoughts of somehow bringing stone to life but how? 'A wall will always be a wall or will it?'

'The rest, as they say, is history. I now follow my natural instincts, and allow my creative side to provide my inspirations.'

Johnny Clasper cont.



"The Crimple Valley Oracle" created for the 2014 Great Yorkshire Show



Clockwise from top left: Ammonite; Stargate (with visit from Merlin); Lift off

Walls to keep rabbits in and out

Dry stone walls are a dominant landscape feature of the Yorkshire Dales. Together they are the largest man made feature, a survey in 1988 recording over 8000 km. Some of these dry stone walls have been allowed to fall into disrepair as farms amalgamate, or even removed altogether to make larger fields, but most are maintained as an essential part of farming systems.

Generally these walls marked property boundaries and served as management tools for domestic livestock. However some walls were built for very specific purposes. For instance, deer park walls were normally higher and more massive than normal field walls but even walls built with smaller animals in mind can be impressive. On pages 6 we saw the lengths that landholder went to exclude rabbits in the Western District of Victoria. In England it was a very different story.

Rabbits were first introduced into England from Spain during the 12th century. Before that date there were no rabbits in Britain. They proved to be hardy and thrived (as we in Australia were to discover seven centuries later) and were the ancestors of the present wild population. In Norman and Medieval England the meat was a popular delicacy and rabbit fur was much in demand as a lining for the garments of the wealthy.



Rabbit warren, Woodhall

The 'farming' of rabbits reached its peak in the 17th and 18th centuries when their skins were widely used in the hatting industry. Artificial rabbit warrens where rabbits could be bred and easily caught were created throughout this period. This example may have a Medieval origin, but it is more likely to have been established during the middle of the 18th century by Thomas Metcalfe who owned Woodhall Park. It was used for the breeding of silver haired rabbits whose skins were in particular demand in the 18th and early 19th centuries. The fur then went out of fashion, but the rabbits continued to be raised for the purpose of coursing with dogs.

The high dry stone boundary wall (around 1.8 metres high) was built as much to keep breeding wild rabbits out as to keep the valuable silver haired rabbits in. It was constructed with vermin traps in its upper sections. Several walls run across the enclosure into which are built



pit traps or 'types' for capturing the rabbits. The warrener in charge of the site lived in a small house at one end of the enclosure rebuilt for that purpose in 1757.

The wall surrounding the Woodhall rabbit warren at Carperby is particularly distinctive. For most of its length it is

considerably higher than the neighbouring field walls and has curved rather than sharp, angled corners. Where the interior walls butt up against the boundary wall, the latter has been heightened to over 2.5 metres for a short distance on either side of the junction to prevent rabbits escaping from the warren.

Source: Dennison, E (2004) 'Woodhall Rabbit Warren, Carperby' in White, R F & Wilson, P R (eds) (2004) *Archaeology and Historic Landscapes of the Yorkshire Dales*. Yorkshire Archaeological Society Occasional Paper No 2 pp137-144

The back page

The Association's vision is that dry stone walls and dry stone structures are widely accepted for their unique place in the history, culture and economy of the nation and for the legacy they represent.

Our goals are:

- *That governments and the wider community recognise the significance of dry-stone structures built by indigenous peoples, European explorers, early settlers and modern craftspeople as valued artefacts of our national identity.*
- *That this acceptance is manifested by appropriate statutory protection and landowner and community respect and celebration.*
- *That the craft of dry-stone walling grows as a modern reinforcement of the contribution that dry stone walls and structures have made to the culture of Australia.*

These days one can learn just about any skill on youtube, from heart surgery to flushing gyprock. So it's hardly surprising to find several (dozen?) *How to Build a Dry Stone Wall* clips. Most are pretty boring, however I found this one to be particularly good: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mxrip_vr6wE

A couple of pros from Maryland (USA) take you through the basic steps from stripping out the old wall to building the new. In a well organised way they point out all the faults (structural and aesthetic) in the old wall and explain clearly why some walls 'look alright' to the unskilled eye, they can actually be dangerous.

They deal only with a retaining wall which is a pity, so missing out on throughs and copes.

#

A couple of other little videos that you might enjoy (if you have not already seen them on our [website](#)):

Floods in Ireland highlight the virtues of dry stone:

https://www.facebook.com/CaherBridgeGarden/videos/789152981103582/?hc_location=ufi

and

Cross fells shelter rebuild (only for the hardy)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aA7EY9BYrwl>

Thanks to Jon Moore who keeps spotting these gems.

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Membership

Annual membership fee

Corporate \$80; Professional \$50

Single \$30 (\$80 for 3 years)

Family \$50 (\$130 for 3 years)

Cheque: DSWAA Inc. and posted to DSWAA Membership, 87 Esplanade West, Port Melbourne 3207; or

Bank Deposit at any branch of the ANZ Bank or **EFT:** BSB 013 373, Ac. no. 4997 47356

Clearly indicate membership identity of payer

New members

Complete the online membership form on our [website](#): Alternatively email or post name, address, phone number/s, and area of interest (eg waller, farmer, heritage, etc) to the membership secretary (above).

Renewals

Annual fees are due May 31 after the first full year of membership. We send renewal notices prior to this.

Photos clockwise from top LH corner

P1 B Munday, J Holdsworth

2 V Carline

3 M Burford, V Carline (2), B Munday

4 & 5 G Gunn

6 Courtesy A Miller

8 Courtesy J Hewett (2), K Deiner

9 K Munday (2), Courtesy A McLachlan

10 B Munday (2), J Enright, K Munday

11 R Marshall, B Munday

12 R Marshall

14 & 15 J Clasper