

## Aged care for dry stone walls – Bruce Munday (editor)



*Andrew Garner goes to school*

It's amazing that we are all two years older than when COVID first arrived on our shores. It feels more like twenty. The January 2020 edition of The Flag Stone appeared as the east coast of Australia (as well as Kangaroo Island and southern Yorke Peninsula) emerged from the worst bushfires we have experienced. Now much of the country is recovering from devastating floods.



These events inevitably impact historic dry stone walls, perhaps from trees falling across or floating over them, heavy machinery pushing in access tracks or recovering landholders in clean up mode.

Many of these rural dry stone walls were probably more of heritage value than functional. Several pieces in this edition underline just how important heritage is, raising the question: What should be done to damaged walls and ruins?

An argument could be made that the heritage value of dry stone walls and structures is not at all impaired by fire or flood – perhaps even enhanced as the damage is part of its rich history. So back to the question: Should these walls be repaired where possible, and if so to what standard and by whom?

My thoughts on this were prompted by an interesting Letter to the Editor (page 18). This in turn reminded me of an article in a Stone Trust Newsletter (Autumn 2020), commenting on a volunteer restoration project for historic dry stone walls in Rhode Island (USA). That project was led by a DSWA(UK) certified waller and instructor working with up to ten volunteers. Some interesting dilemmas emerged: The early wallers were not all master craftsmen, might have been in a hurry, or were perhaps not concerned with how long the wall should endure. The team came across traced faces and poorly placed foundation stones and ran out of building stone as the restored wall was more tightly built and hearted.

Ultimately their guiding principles came from the Rhode Island ordinance on historic walls: 'Relocation or partial relocation of a historic stone wall shall reuse to the greatest extent feasible existing materials, features, and elements that characterise the wall ... shall replace in kind those materials, features and elements that are necessary to be removed, in order to protect the historic integrity of the wall.'

State governments in Australia require similar treatment of heritage listed walls, but what of the many walls lacking iconic status. These contribute to the intangible cultural heritage, so how do we protect them?

**This issue**  
**Waller at work**  
**Heritage doesn't hurt**  
**Trades in focus**  
**Why keep old stuff**  
**Project in West Bank**  
**Once there was a city**  
**Drawn to stones**  
**Forest maze**  
**High and low**  
**Letters**

## Waller at work – Andrew Garner (DSWAA committee)



In late 2008, early 2009, *Sticks & Stones* were approached to build a dry stone wall for a local school. Not just any wall however, it was envisaged to replace the existing fence along the entire street front, some seventy metres in length!

Furthermore, it had to be robust enough to withstand the attentions of active children and low enough to give motorists a view of students leaving the school grounds.

With timeline and costs agreed to, work began.

A local source of stone was found, in this case a Triassic sandstone, complete with the occasional plant fossil.

We dismantled the existing fence by section, as the dsw build advanced. Having first located any underground assets (Dial B4 You Dig!), we excavated foundation trenches and partially filled with aggregate *[below]*.



The trench was wider than the wall base to accommodate the large foundation stones, with the aggregate an ideal bedding material.

With batter frames set, we indicated the line of the wall and base width with string-lines. We then dug foundations in by hand with stones set length into the wall centre, flat as possible and projecting some 50-100 mm wider than the wall width *[below]*.



With building stone collected and delivered to site, the jumbled mass was spread evenly to both sides of the trench and then sorted by size, purpose (e.g., base course, wall ends, through-stones, etc)

Building commenced in earnest in January, whilst students were on holiday, so as to minimise disruption. The downside to this is that drystone walling in summer can be brutal (even in Tassie!), with one memorable day reaching 42°C. 'Stop Work' was declared, with metal tools too hot to handle, and a sharp sting in the author's calf revealing itself as a burst vein with bruising appearing days later.

## Waller at work (cont.)

With cooler conditions, walling continued with the lower courses below though stone height ('first lift') seeing the wall emerging from ground level.



String lines keep the stones in each face of the wall within the desired taper or "batter" as defined by the frames set at each end of a section. The strings also can be set for particular heights/levels such as through stone height (mid-way), wall top and cope height.

Once through-stones are added, the wall gains in height with upper courses being added, referred to as "second lift". For this wall, the throughs were kept flush with the wall face, to avoid potential injury and discourage climbing.

Once full height was reached and top levelled, the wall was ready for topping with vertical cope-stones.



Typically these had to be sourced separately from the general build stone and for formal settings needed dressing with hammer and chisel for a neat finish.



These larger stones span the width of the wall top, binding the two sides together and pinning it down with its extra weight.

For this wall, we used an alternating high/low pattern of cope-stones, often referred to as 'Cock and Hen' pattern.

Setting the final cope is always a good moment and signifies the completion of a job!



For those with keen eyes, you may notice a bed of mortar under the cope-stones. This is not typical for dry stone walls but given the school context and public street frontage it was considered a prudent move.

Some 14 years later, the wall is still looking good and should well outlast its makers!

*Sticks & Stones* is a collaboration between Andrew Garner and James Boxhall, who since 2004 have worked to retain, promote and practise the traditional skills of dry stone walling, hedge laying and split post & rail fencing. They have worked on both private and public commissions, conducted workshops for Adult Ed and Green Corps, exhibited at numerous historical and garden festivals, and conducted radio and magazine interviews. Andrew is a Level 1 Certified waller

## Heritage doesn't hurt – Stuart Read (DSWAA Secretary)



*Laferelle's, or the 'Spiky Bridge', south of Swansea (Tas) and formerly part of the Tasman Highway, dates to c.1843. Built by a convict road gang from dolerite field stones (with no mortar on the buttress) and vertical parapet stones, perhaps to help withstand harsh winds.. The bridge is significant for its builders, and as part of public infrastructure.*

### **A** positive for owners<sup>1</sup>

Listing on a statutory heritage register means your place or object is recognised as having particular significance to the people of your state, country, or the world. That is, it has been identified by the community as an important place that enriches our understanding of the history of that state, Australia, or the world. That's something to be immensely proud of.

Dry stone structures in places such as Sceilig Mhichil (Skellig Michael) off the south-west tip of Ireland, the ruins of Great Zimbabwe in southern Africa and the cultural landscape of Maymand in central Iran are UNESCO listed as sites of outstanding universal value<sup>2</sup>. Australian wonders such as Baiame's Ngunnhu or the Brewarrina fish traps in the Barwon River (NSW) and Budj Bim national heritage landscape in the volcanic plains of Western Victoria<sup>3</sup> are based on dry stone wall-making, for harvesting food or making shelter.

State heritage lists are often building-centric, and landscapes, or elements such as dry stone structures, walls and terracing can be overlooked and lack listing, or recognition. Often what was listed reflects survey and surveyor biases of 10 to 20 years ago. However, commu-

nity thinking on what comprises 'heritage' has evolved, to a broader concept touching on traditions, memories and intangible cultural values, as much as 'bricks and mortar', or stone. Listings have a way to go to catch up.

Not being 'heritage listed' doesn't mean a dry stone structure doesn't have heritage value. It may just mean no one has focused on it before, or to a degree to do something about it: recording it, comparing it to 'like' types of place elsewhere, researching its maker, its history, etc.

Many people misunderstand heritage listings, thinking them overly restrictive on 'freedom'. They fear they 'won't be able to do anything, change anything' to a listed item, but that's not so.

First up, there are two kinds of 'listing' – statutory (i.e. linked to a law, or statute) and non-statutory (i.e. for community information, only). Examples of non-statutory heritage 'listings' are National Trust of Australia 'classifications', Register of the National Estate listings (now defunct), Institute of Architects Register of 20<sup>th</sup> century Architecture, Institution of Engineers' awards, plaques, etc. These are useful community information only: they in no way require 'approvals' or restrict you necessarily, in any way.

## Heritage doesn't hurt (cont.)

Nor is it true that if a place is 'statutorily' heritage listed, you cannot change it. Heritage authorities approve reasonable, sometimes dramatic changes on most days. What statutory listing requires is just that more up-front thought needs to go into decisions about change; that is, weighing up all options first. That might seem cumbersome to an owner impatient to 'get on with it', but it might be critical to retaining the very values which attracted them to it in the first instance. It might also impact its resale value (as 'intact'). Far better to get it right, first-time around.

Approvals are often dealt with under state planning laws, and interactions between heritage and planning laws and regulations come into play. This can be perplexing for owners but heritage agencies can offer free advice on what, how, when, to help ease confusion.

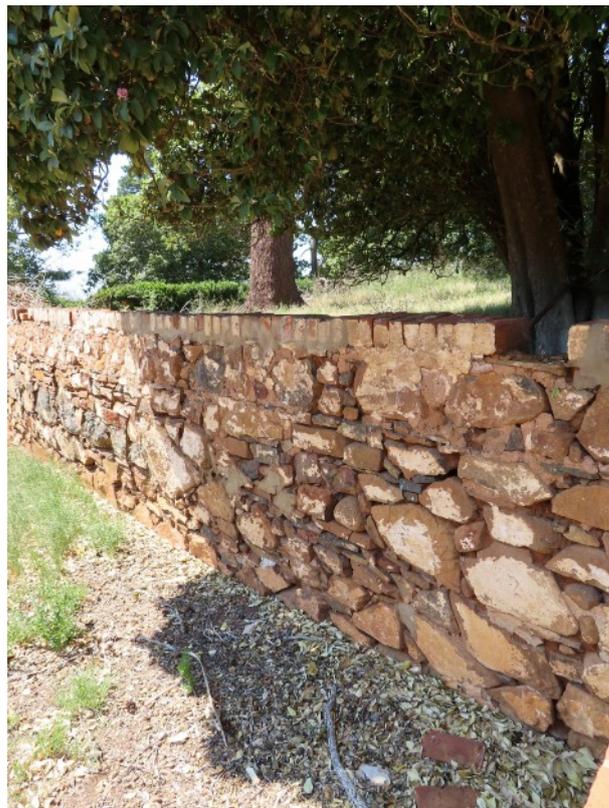
### Advantages of heritage listing

There is growing evidence to support the view that statutory heritage listing has a positive impact on property values, and real estate adverts are starting to reflect this.

The main reason people buy heritage places is because they like them. And for many reasons: it may be because of their character, or well-established gardens. They may have wonderful landscape settings or pose a challenge of renovation.

A heritage-listed property brings other advantages:

- Gives owners access to the free professional heritage advisory services provided by many local councils.
  - Gives owners eligibility for local, state, or national heritage grants, to assist in conservation or repair works, studies, or management plans.
  - In some states (e.g. South Australia), listing gives owners access to building upgrade finance.
  - In some states (e.g. NSW), listing brings a heritage land revaluation, lowering land tax and rates payable, presenting savings to owners.
  - Listing can enable owners to enter into heritage agreements, which can attract land tax, stamp duty and local rate concessions.
  - Can mean any damage to dry-stone walls or structures is repaired by certified, experienced wallers, ensuring appropriate standard of work.
  - Listing enhances applications where the building or site might be eligible for funding.
- Provides certainty for owners, neighbours and intending buyers. This is important when people are looking for a particular environment in which to live and work. It explains why certain suburbs, towns, villages, and rural properties are sought after.
  - Requires the local council to consider the effect of proposed development in the area around heritage items or conservation areas.
  - Confirms a heritage status that is a source of pride for many people. This status can be very useful for commercial operators in their advertising, or 'brand' distinction.
  - The heritage assessment process leading to listing often unearths new information on the history, maker, or style of the item.
  - Through flexibility clauses in local statutory plans, owners of heritage items can request councils to agree to land use changes, site coverage and car parking bonuses unavailable to non-heritage owners.



*Terrace retaining wall at the farmhouse of Cambria estate, north of Swansea. Sadly suffering from tree roots, drought and intermittent maintenance. Cambria is significant as a major early colonial agricultural estate, using assigned convict labour, and an elaborate gardenesque style rural garden.*

# Heritage doesn't hurt (cont.) T

## Debunking myths about heritage listing

It can be easy to point the finger at heritage listing when problems arise, but benefits can far outweigh any perceived negatives.

- Listing places no legal restriction on the sale or leasing of properties.
- Heritage buildings and sites are best cared for when they are lived in and loved. This means they must be useable. Houses may need new bathrooms and kitchens; commercial buildings may need new services and fire protection.
- Listing does not exclude changes or additions or new buildings or structures, provided they do not detract from the heritage significance of items. This is consistent with what most owners want and with advice from real estate agents that well looked after heritage properties are easiest to sell and bring the highest prices.
- Listing does not exclude adaptive reuse of a heritage item for another use. I can vouch that Heritage NSW approves adaptive reuse of items on most working days.
- Other than normal maintenance it is not expected that owners take any special care of a heritage

property. Only in situations where an owner is deliberately allowing a property to deteriorate might legal action be pursued.

- Maintenance of heritage items and gardens does not require formal approval.
- State heritage listing can carry requirements for minimum standards of maintenance – these are in essence sensible maintenance that any responsible owner has a self-interest in doing.
- As with all private property, heritage listing does not allow the public the right to visit your property without your express permission.

Notes:

1. this article draws liberally on 'Heritage listing: a positive for owners' at [Benefits of listing | Heritage NSW](#) and 'Information for owners of listed properties' at [Information for owners of listed properties | Heritage NSW](#) – also, check out the Heritage websites of your State Government and Local Council.
2. To search the world heritage list, see [UNESCO World Heritage Centre - World Heritage List](#)
3. To search the national heritage list, see [Australia's National Heritage List - DAWE](#)

## Trades in Focus – Dry Stone Walling by Ali de Backer

**D**ry stone walling is an ancient craft and artisan trade that utilises local stone to create permanent stone walls. The work involves careful selection of suitable stone of different shapes and sizes which is carefully laid by hand, without a mortar bond, to create a strong and lasting structure.



Before



After

The *National Trust of South Australia* completed works in 2019 to the dry stone retaining wall of the creek bank at Stangate House in Aldgate. Contractors for the work were JRM Stonework who employ wallers certified by the *Dry Stone Walling Association (UK)*. These affiliations underscore the high quality workmanship and attention to detail they provide, and will ensure the remedial work at Stangate House will last for generations to come.

The *Trust* is committed to promoting artisan trades in their conservation works as part of their asset management activities. This commitment extends to including learning programs with the ***Australian Artisan Trades Academy***. The AATA helps to preserve existing heritage skills and rebuild expertise in traditional trades which is crucial to conservation, restoration and adaptation projects.

Look out for AATA events in 2022. **Enquiries Now Open:** [register@artisanacademy.org.au](mailto:register@artisanacademy.org.au). Finalised dates will be advised to those registered, and advertised through *Heritage Living* magazine and online.

## Why keep this old stuff – Bruce Munday



*Unmistakably Yorkshire Dales – how can we tell?*



In 2017 Kristin and I spent a month cycling around (or should I say up and down) Cumbria, Yorkshire and the Peak District of Derbyshire – our dry stone walls safari.

Sarah, our initial host, picked us up from Manchester and as we drove into the Lake District the walls became more frequent until soon they were everywhere. I showed my amazement, Sarah her bemusement, so I asked her what first struck her when she visited Australia: ‘The wide roads’!

The ubiquitous dry stone walls of those three counties are an intimate part of their intangible cultural heritage. It was why Kristin and I went there, and yet they were not built for the purpose of entertaining tourists. It just happens that tourists like them because they are beautiful and make a big statement about the culture of the region. They are intriguing, posing questions, hinting at answers – connecting the traveller to the people and the places they visit.

J. B. Priestley, a Yorkshireman, wrote that dry stone walls were part of the essence of northern England. ‘When I see them, I know I am home again ... no landscape looks quite right to me without them’, he wrote in *English Journey* (1934). Priestley was writing not about any particular wall, however noteworthy, but about the atmos-

phere, the ambience, the craft and the customs. It is why we watch *All Creatures Great and Small* yet again; it’s not just a story about a vet.

UNESCO listing is pretty much the gold standard for heritage value. It states that ‘Heritage is our legacy from the past, what we live with today, and what we pass on to future generations. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.’

It is perhaps ironic that tourism, or at least mass tourism, is often accused of blighting or even destroying the very thing it admires. Think Venice, Barcelona, Byron. Little wonder that sometimes when we discover a little gem we prefer to keep it quiet. And yet without at least modest tourism or government subsidy much tangible heritage – the castles, the stately homes and gardens, even listed towns – would no longer be viable. Then what hope the lesser attractions that form the backdrop, collectively pumping up the intangible heritage.

In the UK and Ireland dry stone walls and structures are so familiar that there is danger of complacency. It might seem sufficient to preserve and maintain just the best of them; after all who really cares what stone or style was used in the build. But that would be to neglect the intangible which is the aggregation of many elements to which it is much harder to assign an overall value.

## Why keep this old stuff *(cont.)*



*Unmistakably  
Stony Rises –  
how can we  
tell?*

Here in Oz we value our dry stone walls not so much because of their prevalence as for their scarcity. Sure, there are regions characterised by dry stone walls – the Stony Rises; eastern Mt Lofty Ranges – but they are the exception. Aboriginal fish traps too are notable partly for their uniqueness. The threat then is that we consider the other occasional dry stone walls and buildings, some in a ruinous state, as irrelevant or inconvenient anachronisms unless they stand behind an interpretive sign. These dry stone ruins remind us that the efforts of early settlers were often truly heroic if sometimes shameful. Unlike stone ruins in many countries, these are not the ruins of war or civil unrest. Rather, ruins of dreams. But they are part of an intangible cultural heritage.

Take the Stony Rises. The array of dry stone walls, many still in fine condition, signal the values and the priorities of the early European settlers. The fertile soil of the great lava plain invited them to gather up the stone and turn it to something useful: building material. Particularly by the late 1850s when shepherds left for the gold fields and then the government broke up the squattocracies, there arose a need for fences. Where supply exceeded demand, they built consumption walls. Given the abundant material, it then needed only the skill and this was available primarily from the 'mother country': particularly Scotland, but also Ireland and the northern counties to recreate the landscapes of home. Burdened by nostalgia they also brought with them other guests such as blackbirds and starlings, thistles and gorse. And of course, rabbits. The Rabbit Wall (among others) built for the Manifolds is a dramatic symbol of just how devastating this pest had been and would become.

The different styles of wall built from essentially the same stone talk of the diverse backgrounds of the wallers and their employers. That they have been (mostly) well maintained for 170 years says much about the quality of the build and the culture of the region.



*The great Rabbit Wall*

It is not just the iconic walls but the character of the region that stands out as different from others and attracts visitors. This is very much a case where the heritage value of the region is literally the sum of its parts and yet it's these lesser parts that are usually most at threat from neglect or development or both.

## A project in the West Bank – *Richard Tuffnel*



*Battir*

In August 2019 I received a request to undertake a project on behalf of UNESCO at the World Heritage Site (WHS) of Battir in the West Bank.

Battir is a Palestinian village renowned for its terraced hillside blessed with seven very reliable springs. These have been used for irrigation and general use since at least the iron age. Because Battir receives approximately 600 mm of rain a year, it is an oasis of green with desert not far away. The village also produces a particular form of small aubergine found nowhere else and for which it is renowned.

The trip opened with a one day workshop with the representatives for the local groups – engineers, architects, NGOs and UNESCO. I travelled there with Antonia Theodosiou, an architect friend with extensive connections to, and knowledge of, Mediterranean preservation bodies and dry stone. My duties here were to describe how dry stone functions in a terraced landscape and the efforts being undertaken in Europe and elsewhere to restore dry stone working environments.

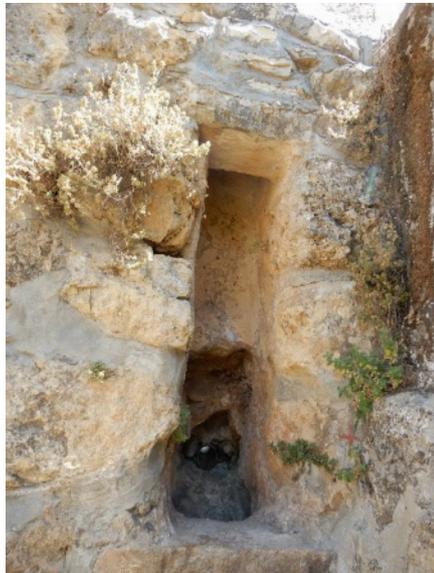
The workshops were followed by a field trip into the surrounding area, basically to see what was there and to learn something of the local traditions in dry stone. It did not take long to see how the problems of the last seventy years had caused serious degradation of what was otherwise a fine traditional terraced environment.

Much of the general area around Battir, the site of the assessment and training, is tired and in poor condition. Well meaning NGOs have often failed to improve matters. The image below shows one of the ancient water channels capped to prevent blockage by leaves and other debris. Instead of using shaped stone for the purpose, an American group has covered it over with concrete.



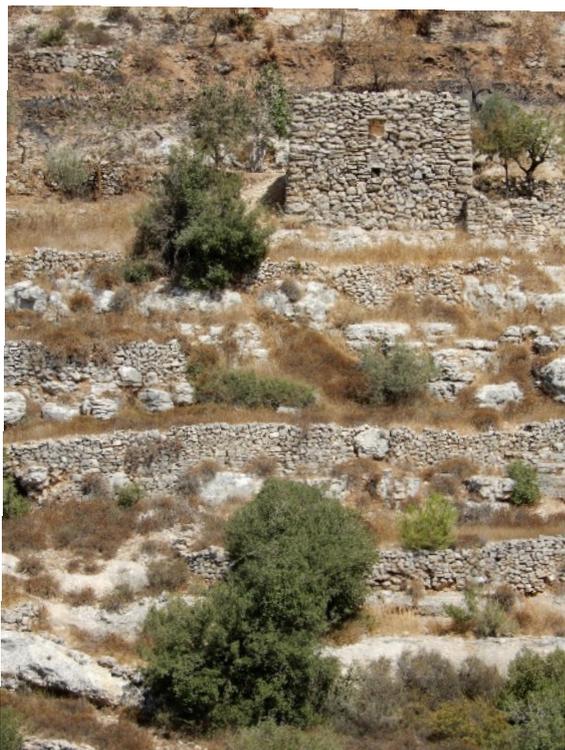
## West Bank (cont.)

That this was allowed to happen was the fault of the well meaning but unskilled and unempathetic volunteers. Even after many decades of effort to teach and educate, the lack of deep knowledge about dry stone is still causing problems in many regions.



This photograph illustrates what was one of the many springs at Battir. The Israelis diverted traffic that completely dried up a spring that had been protected by cut stone blocks since Roman times. An attempt to preserve the spring from further damage used highly visible and inappropriate mortar.

To appropriate land, the Israelis grub up the ancient olive trees. If the land is not utilized immediately, pine trees are planted which have no commercial use. This is known locally as “colonisation by conifer”. It ‘holds’ the land until a settlement is built. Below are terraces in reasonable order, showing the local trees – almonds and apricots interspersed with olives.



To return to the key element, dry stone, as with any ancient landscape there are ancillary features. Above is a traditional form of tower known as a ‘montar’. It combines the functions of storage, shelter and look-out point. Most are semi ruinous. Other forms of storage and shelter comprise chambers built into the walls. They vary in shape and size; this one is large enough to accommodate a number of men and their tools sheltering from the summer sun.



The training itself involved two sets of participants – masons, as dry stone wallers are known there, and a similar number of professionals employed by UNESCO such as engineers and architects. There is no need to describe the course – a routine combination of explanation and practice - but several conclusions were drawn from the process. The existing skill levels were very poor, barely above general labouring. The older men listened to what was said but wouldn’t alter their methods. When asked why they continued to fill by merely tipping stone into the wall from a bucket, they replied that the core would naturally settle as the wall was built.

## West Bank (cont.)



Our report at the end made a number of points. Firstly, a small localized area should be the focus of concentrated renewal. Secondly, to achieve this, a substantial grant must be applied for, for two purposes. To train from scratch a significant number of young wallers, and then to pay them. Because Battir is a “World Heritage Site, obtaining finance is likely to be a great deal easier than in other countries. A number of countries are already discreetly aiding the project.

To understand how tricky it was to operate here, and the difficulties locals face, follow this link. <https://www.972mag.com/settlers-battir-illegal-outpost/>. It is not easy to read.

*Richard Tufnell has been a regular and generous contributor to The Flag Stone. The following is adapted from a piece he wrote for the Waller & Dyker in November 2020. Describing a project in the village of Battir, Richard strenuously makes the point that ‘this is a personal view, and I have no axe to wield and nor am I implying criticism of any individual, group or faith. I describe objectively what I was shown and what I saw.’*



*The Association’s vision is that dry stone walls and dry stone structures (dsw&dss) are widely accepted for their unique place in the history, and culture of the nation and for the legacy they represent.*

*Our goals are:*

- To inform and educate the nation about the cultural significance of dry stone walls and structures (dsw&dss) in Australia and their associations and meanings for past, present and future generations.*
- To document dsw&dss and draw on historical records in order to encourage appreciation, conservation, maintenance, repair and interpretation of those of cultural significance.*
- To establish disciplines and certification systems that can contribute to the care and construction of dsw&dss.*
- To assist in ensuring that new construction, demolition, intrusions and other changes do not adversely affect the cultural significance of dsw&dss and that modern uses of them are compatible.*
- To respect Indigenous heritage places and cultural values, and, in particular, to assist in the conservation of those associated with dsw&dss.*

## Once there was a city – Dix Molanus (DSWAA member)



On a camping holiday in Argentina, back in 2010, we stumbled upon the Santa Maria Valley in the north-western sector of the [Tucumán](#) province. I say ‘stumbled upon’ because we really had little idea of what to expect, other than the remains of a village that pre-dated Spanish invasion. What we found was the sacred city of the Quilmes, an extraordinary array of stone structures, both dry and mud-mortared.



What struck us first was the labyrinth of low walls and terraces. On the flats there are low (about one metre high) dry stone enclosures and passageways. Many of these were designed and built as a pair of single-skin walls about a metre apart with the space filled with pebbles and dirt. Apparently these were once the walls of dwellings, many sitting on flagstones that also supported

timber frames that carried the roof. There are also conventional free-standing walls apparently for animal enclosures. Looking at the whole settlement it is quite easy to identify streets and passageways.

On the slopes there were terraces cut into the hillside for irrigated agriculture, dry stone walls buttressing these against erosion. Dwellings and storages, also on the slopes, were again stone and generally double-walled, apparently for insulation in a harsh arid environment.



*In the absence of interpretive signs it was often difficult to differentiate between the remains of building walls and terraces. This was of no concern to the many llamas wandering the ruins.*

# Once a city (*cont.*)

## The history

Intrigued by these ruins I did some research – not easy as there were very few interpretive signs and no information booth. Inevitably it was Google to the rescue.#

Quilmes was a defensive settlement built during the period AD 1000 - 1480, and attributed to the so-called 'Santa María culture' groups (which is strange since it predates the Spanish invasion). It can be described as having three distinct parts: the village located at the bottom of the hill; the fortifications located on the southern and northern sides of the hill; and the structures built on a high plateau at the top of the mountain.

Not unlike Machu Pichu in Peru, this sacred city lay 'undiscovered' for a couple of hundred years and was not studied until 1897. Then, after about twenty years of sporadic research it sat 'untouched' until 1978 when the old city of the Quilmes was 'reconstructed' according to the dictates of the military regime then ruling Argentina. It argued that 'recovering the pre-Hispanic past and protecting its remains constitute a cultural action in the best sense of the word, an action which reinforces national identity'.

The reconstruction works consisted of rebuilding walls, fortifications, a large dam and some terraces. One house was roofed using the plans of archaeologist Juan Bautista Ambrosetti.



## Heritage

The reconstruction of the site has been severely criticised by researchers who have argued that it has diminished its scientific value, adding that 'the

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[https://www.academia.edu/39655301/Management\\_of\\_archaeological\\_sites\\_and\\_the\\_public\\_in\\_Argentina](https://www.academia.edu/39655301/Management_of_archaeological_sites_and_the_public_in_Argentina)

excavations and reconstruction were carried out by local peasants who had been working without any sort of guidance'. Ok, so who built the original walls!

Since then archaeologists (who have always agreed on the importance of the site and the need to carry out further studies) have been reluctant to accept it as a research project. This is because the site is presumed to have lost much of its genuine archaeological information through looting, unsystematic excavations, dodgy reconstruction works and later developments in the area.

In 1992 a private entrepreneur was awarded a ten-year concession to the ruins, and soon opened a five-star hotel. This drew a response from La Plata Museum that 'we cannot accept what happened to the Quilmes Ruins, where a swimming pool was built over the remains of a Santa María house, and a hotel over the Calchaquí dwellings, quite apart from the fact that the reconstruction was very badly carried out'. In partial defence it is worth noting that at least these developments used local stone and built in the vernacular style.

The lack of information boards is a serious problem. Dwelling sectors - which have had their walls rebuilt up to one metre high - are difficult for visitors to interpret with so little info. Evidently some visitors asked how these people could live in rooms without roofs! As routes are not clearly indicated, many people just walk over the walls thinking they are roads and unintentionally damage unprotected foundations.

The advocates for tourism at any cost claim, probably correctly, they have attracted visitors to a site that was almost abandoned. However, the concession to the site has not benefited site preservation, faithful restoration, research, or local indigenous groups. Is this a binary where only one side can win?

When we visited it appeared that the commercial enterprise had closed and management of the site had reverted to descendants of the ancient Quilmes.

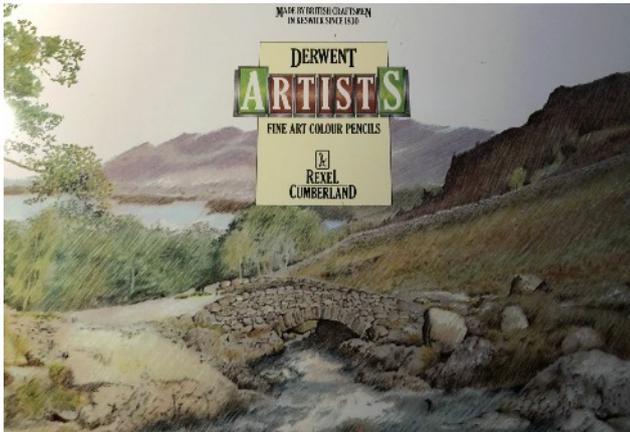


*Real deal or tourist bait?*

## Drawn to stones – Raelene Marshall (DSWAA committee)

My earliest introduction to the craft of dry stone walling occurred quite unexpectedly when, as a young child, I became the proud owner of a set of Derwent coloured pencils. Derwents were the schoolroom status symbol, the ultimate prize, a set of seventy-two.

Legend has it, that in the early 1500s, a violent storm in the Borrowdale area of Cumberland uprooted several trees. Beneath these trees was a strange black material that left its mark on whatever it touched. This material turned out to be graphite, a core component of the modern-day pencil.



At that time shepherds began using it to mark their sheep and so the roots for a pencil industry began to take shape. The first pencil factory was founded by Banks, Son & Co in 1832. Several owner hands followed until the Cumberland Pencil Company purchased the factory in 1916. Twenty-two years later the Derwent brand of fine art pencils was introduced to artists around the world. Their logo, the nearby small dry stone arch packhorse bridge over Derwentwater, a lake on the edge of the town of Keswick.

Was it destiny or perhaps a serendipitous quirk of fate, that in the early 1990s my first journey across an arch bridge was over that very one. Home to one of the Lake District's most famous views looking north to Whinlatter and Skiddaw, 'Ashness' is both renowned and revered as an excellent example of a dry stone packhorse bridge.

Indeed, it was on that day that the power of a simple, practical and sculpturally delightful dry stone structure came alive. My companion driver was an art lecturer, historian and the head lichenologist for the whole area known as Cumbria. His familiarity, intimate knowledge and deep interpretation of their dry stone history, cultural heritage and landscape geography and geology of the area knew no bounds. The northern English are deeply connected to their land and soon the car became

a lecture theatre, the passenger seat but one in an 'auditorium', as I began to realise just how important it was to try raise the significance of and attempt to preserve the history and heritage of our own dry stone walls here in Australia.

Around that time, as the Manager of Arts and Culture for the City of Keilor in Victoria we had recently completed the development of the Overnewton Gatehouse site as a dedicated community arts precinct for the cultural pursuits of the diverse multicultural community. Built by early settlers, dry stone walls were and still are features of the area. The Gatehouse site, its associated privately owned Overnewton Castle pastoral estate together with Dodds' farm now managed by Parks Victoria and known as Brimbank Park, are no exception.

The seven year Gatehouse development process had been a rich experience that had brought together artists and volunteers from all walks of life. Our one common goal was to enrich the cultural life of the community. All that was about to really take off when the Kennett government began the move towards restructuring local government. Ultimately the fabric of local government as we knew it crumbled, out sourcing and compulsory competitive tendering took over, Keilor Council no longer existed and the Arts as a dedicated department would eventually be lost and buried somewhere in the back blocks of 'Welfare.'

However, strangely enough the timing proved right. The Australia Council's Professional Development Grant round that aimed to foster the skills of professionals in the field was open for submissions. A peer group assessed a competitive field, success was measured against the relevance of a submission and the community cultural benefit of the goals and projected outcomes. This was an opportunity to continue with the Aussie dry stone profile quest.

Fortunately there were some key aspects that contributed to the success of my submission. In the UK's Lake District, the Grizedale Forest Sculpture Park, home to Andy Goldsworthy's famous 'Taking a Wall for a Walk' was prepared to support my submission. At home I had been negotiating with Parks Victoria to develop a dry stone sculpture park at Brimbank Park and the landscaping of the Gatehouse site had included a dry stone sculpture built by artists Tim Jones and Nathan Perkins. At that time Nathan was the only UK certified dry stone waller in Australia so at least we had someone in the country who was qualified to pass on the construction tradition.

## Drawn to stones *(cont.)*

My six month rental home in the Lakes was an eleventh century fully renovated farm house in the Rusland Valley with views of walls snaking the fells as far as the eye could see. Its at-the-time strangers to me owners, John and Val Roberts, had planned to restore an old sailing boat and sail the Mediterranean for the whole British winter. However, the difficulty of ordering and procuring spare parts in a foreign language became problematic and much to my benefit they returned home earlier than expected.

Knowledgeable and crazy, these fell walking, bike riding friends have, over the years, generously shared with me their favourite off-track interesting and hard to find dry stone walls, structures and bridges. Today they live di-

rectly on the edge of a National Park in northern England so during Covid their area has also been their natural playground.

For each of us the arch bridges have held a special fascination and over the years many a conversation has focussed around the historical use, the how, what, why and intricacies of construction. Some images accompanying this article were taken during their Covid jaunts.

*Dry stone bridges are wonderful examples of highly skilled walling. The Flag Stone has often featured them: #42 Cumbria (old); #43 New Hampshire (old); #46 The Grampians (contemporary); #48 Canada (contemporary). We will never grow tired of them.*



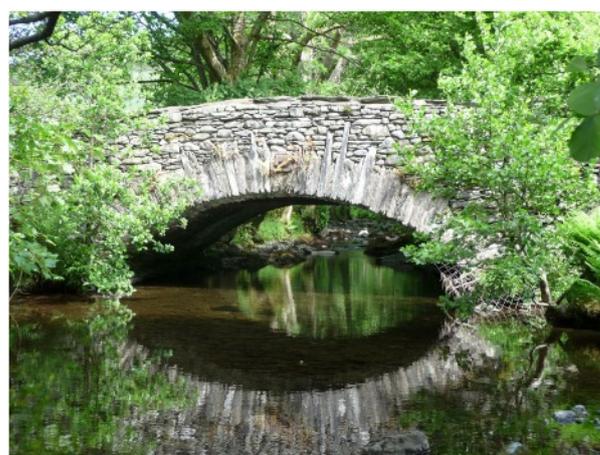
*Jubilee bridge near bottom of Hardknott Pass Ford*



*High Sweden Bridge Ambleside Walk*



*Wrynose Bridge half way up the Pass*



*Low Mill bridge near Grasmere*

# Dry stone maze lost in a forest



Many readers will be familiar with [Atlas Obscura](#), self-described as ‘The Definitive Guide to the World’s Hidden Wonders’. It does indeed unlock a lot of relatively obscure places, structures and events. Needless to say most readers would probably prefer to leave most of them in obscurity. But as with travel to remote places, sometimes you come across a little gem.



*Mark Ellis shooting levels across the walls*

In the heart of Dalby Forest (North Yorkshire) there is emerging a huge [dry stone maze](#). When finished, it will be about 80 m across with walls standing 2 m high, consuming about 40,000 t of limestone.

The maze has been aligned with the sunrise on the Summer Solstice when from its centre the sun can be seen rising between two standing stones.

[Special stone features](#) traditionally found in field and garden walls across the North Yorkshire Moors and Dales such as: stone step stiles, squeeze stiles, smout holes, kissing gates, phantom gates and moon gates, will be incorporated within the walls of the maze to not only showcase the waller’s craft, but also to conspire, mislead, hinder, challenge and assist visitors of all ages along their journey to the goal – the centre of the maze.

The maze also aims to do something new: transform the ancient art of dry-stone walling into a modern attraction, repurposing practical agricultural innovations of previous millennia to entertain curious visitors of the 21st century.

The Dry Stone Wall Maze is a partnership project between waller Mark Ellis, Friends of Dalby Forest & Forestry England.

Commencing in 2014 it was forecast to be completed in 3 years. However the cyclical nature of government funding (not to mention COVID) has allowed the wallers to spend just three intensive months out of every twelve on construction, the deadline now blown out to 2024.

## Highs and lows – *Jim Holdsworth*



On the foreshore here at Port Melbourne are several examples of a particular twist on the dry stone wallers' skill. Massive basalt boulders have been carefully positioned to form rock groynes extending out into Hobsons Bay; their role to prevent erosion of beach sand due to currents and tidal movements. There is an undeniable art in the placement of these boulders to form relatively smooth sides and tops to the groynes.

Travel to north-eastern Victoria, climb 1500 metres up Staircase Spur (to an elevation of 1986 m) from the track along the Mountain Creek valley, cross the slowly rising slope of the Bogong High Plains and soon and you're on top of the State, gazing out from Victoria's highest peak, Mount Bogong. There to greet you is an impressive cairn, built up over decades by the placement of the stones lying nearby by weary hikers.

So, there's one for the trivia buffs: "What are the lowest and highest structures in Victoria and how are they constructed?" Dry stone. Of course!

If you wish to really excel on cairns, there is a nice article in *The Flag Stone* #38 (Feb 2017).

# Letters

Dear editor

Some readers might have visited our property in April 2021 as part of the DSWAA field trip. If so, you may have noticed an old slate slab boundary fence running down the hill across a flood plain. It is in quite a state of disrepair, but has historical interest having been there for perhaps 170 years.

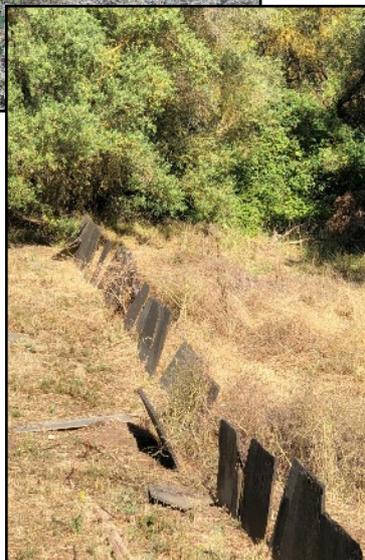
Our initial thought is to make good this as a boundary fence as it was initially intended. To achieve this, we would simply tilt upright those that are on a lean, then neatly fill gaps with old slabs, some of which we have, some we would pull from the nearby quarry.

Alternatively we could do minimal repairs (e.g. re-erect a couple of slabs that have fallen over; clear away the debris), leaving the wall in its present 'leaning' posture that reflects the life it has led.

This fence is an important element in a region where slate was once the dominant industry. Perhaps the worst that could happen would be for an apparently neglected fence to be vandalised or pillaged. No doubt there are readers with old walls who have confronted similar issues.

We believe it takes more than just a couple of heads to come to a good decision.

Tracey & Peter Bishop; Willunga SA



*Looking up ↑ and down → the hill. The latter shows the impact of flooding*

# Who's who in DSWAA

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**V Pres:** Vacant

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## Membership

**Annual membership fee**

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

Couple \$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

P 1-3	A Garner
P 4, 5	S Read
P 6	A de Backer
P 7, 8	B&K Munday
P 9-11	R Tufnell
P 12-13	D Molanus
P 14	R Marshall
P 15	R Marshall (top R), V Roberts
P 17	J Holdsworth
P 18	B&K Munday