

THE FLAG STONE

Summer Edition

INSIDE

A Wallaby and a Wall

What Looks Good-When Craft Becomes Art

Dry Stone Tom: from snowflakes to tiger snakes

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Bruce Steps Down



Jim Holdsworth acknowledges Bruce Munday's exemplary contribution to The Flag Stone

A Conversation with Dry Stone Tom.



Thomas Garratt, AKA Dry Stone Tom, explains why he moved from Yorkshire to Sunbury

A Christmas Gift



Geoff Duggan tells us why he loves teaching

Craftmanship and Art



Master Waller and Author, Nick Aitken explores where craft and art merge

A Wallaby and a Wall



Bruce explains why he built a wall in the desert

The Aegean Sea to Dundee



David F Wilson describes what influenced his stonecraft

Stone Shards Stand Tall



Emma Dewhurst describes how stone shard fences in Cumbria are being restored

An Australian Boot Camp



Victoria Merriman from the US talks about her Australian walling boot camp

Convict Carvings



Dr Jennie Jackson interprets the enigmatic Ross Bridge Carvings

Standing Stones



The Dry Stone Tourist explores the mystery of the standing stones of Tarrone

Workshops & Field Trips



Upcoming Workshops and a Field Trip

Expressions of Interest



A call out to anyone interested in helping to map DS Walls in their area

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is indeed a pleasure to write my first President's Message for the first edition produced by our new, but interim, editor Ken Baker.



Elsewhere former President, Jim Holdsworth expresses the Committee's thanks for the long and distinguished service provided by the previous editor, Bruce Munday. I endorse his comments and add that we miss Bruce's wise contributions to Committee discussions.

Ken Baker's enthusiasm has invigorated us. The edition may have a fresh format but there is still a wide range of articles to interest the many diverse members of the Dry Stone Walls Association

A new column, "A Conversation with ..." will be interesting to follow.

The first person to be interviewed is Dry Stone Tom, a young English waller who spoke eloquently and usefully at the 2024 AGM.

The article by David F Wilson, an older Scottish waller will provide an interesting foil. Other wallers from New Hampshire USA, Cumbria UK, and SA & NSW Australia are represented.

I am looking forward to reading the article by Dr Jennie Jackson on the Ross Bridge, Tasmania. It is timely because she has just agreed to be the after-dinner speaker at the Tasmanian Midlands field trip on Sunday, 9th March 2025. Dinner will be at The Man O'Ross Hotel, 150 metres from the famous bridge. The field trip is a revival, but not a reprise, of two successful Tasmanian field trips in 2006 and 2016.

The conviviality of the recent field trip to Port Fairy, Tarrone and Penshurst was most rewarding. The diversity of the members: new and longstanding; young and old; hands-on and stand back-was rewarding, Andrew Miller repaired and modified a wall for an owner not necessarily in favour of heritage. Laurie Atkins explained, so far as is known, about the Tarrone Standing Stone and has an article in this edition. Madeline and Rick Sproal, young locals and new members, provided an insight across at least seven generations. It spurred the Committee to provide more field trips across Australia.

The next will be to Adelong, in association with the AGM in Wagga Wagga, scheduled for Saturday, 27th September 2025.

Do enjoy reading this refreshed edition of your journal, *The Flag Stone*.

Timothy Hubbard
President

A handwritten signature in dark blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'T' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

A CONVERSATION WITH....

DRY STONE TOM

FROM SNOWFLAKES TO TIGER SNAKES

We asked Thomas Garratt, better known as Dry Stone Tom to his YouTube fans, why he swapped walling in the snow and rain of Yorkshire for the heat, flies and snakes of Australia

INTERVIEW_ KEN BAKER

PHOTOS_ T. GARRATT



How long have you been in Australia and why did you swap walling in Yorkshire for that of Australia?

I have been here since February 2023. I love travelling and have always wanted to move abroad to a warmer climate. I thought I'd end up somewhere in Europe but when the opportunity came up to move here I jumped at it.

How long have you been walling?

Ever since I can remember. My grandad used to take me out walling on my mother's land and surrounding farms. I continued on and off throughout my teens and early twenties, mainly repairing sections of wall as favours, or for some extra money. As a professional I've spent around nine years doing it full time in between traveling.

What advice would you give to anyone who wanted to take up drystone walling as a job ?

Find a good Waller to learn from, or at least take a dry stone walling course to start out. Watch how other people do things and never be afraid to ask questions. There are some really good books and information on the internet so spend time studying the techniques. Any experience you get helps. It takes years to learn this skill properly. Also, look after your body, it takes time to get used to such a physical job.

What do you find most enjoyable about working with stone?

I enjoy how versatile it is, and also seeing how different people interpret the same stone.

Do you have a favourite project?

In England my favourite project was actually repairing and extending one of my grandad's walls. It was nothing fancy but it was very special to me. In Australia, it would be the walls me and the guys at Kyneton Dry Stone Walling Centre have just finished near Lauriston reservoir. There is about 90 metres in total and they have many features that I've not seen often in Australia.

Are there any major differences in the way walling is done here compared to the UK?

It's definitely different using the basalt here. Where I'm from the stone was far more regular and softer. The basalt was a steep learning curve for me when I arrived as it's almost a completely different skill. Also, the tools are completely different as you need a lot of tungsten carbide chisels to build a strong, tight wall within a reasonable timeframe.

What is the community of Wallers like in Australia compared to the UK?

It's a lot smaller and I don't think people work with each other as much. In the UK you could work with someone new every day. We are fortunate to have so many Wallers back home but I hope we can get a big community here one day. I have connected with a few people here and they have been extremely friendly.

Dry Stone Tom's Youtube address

[WWW.youtube.com/@DryStoneTom](https://www.youtube.com/@DryStoneTom)



"The basalt was a steep learning curve for me when I arrived as it's almost a completely different skill".

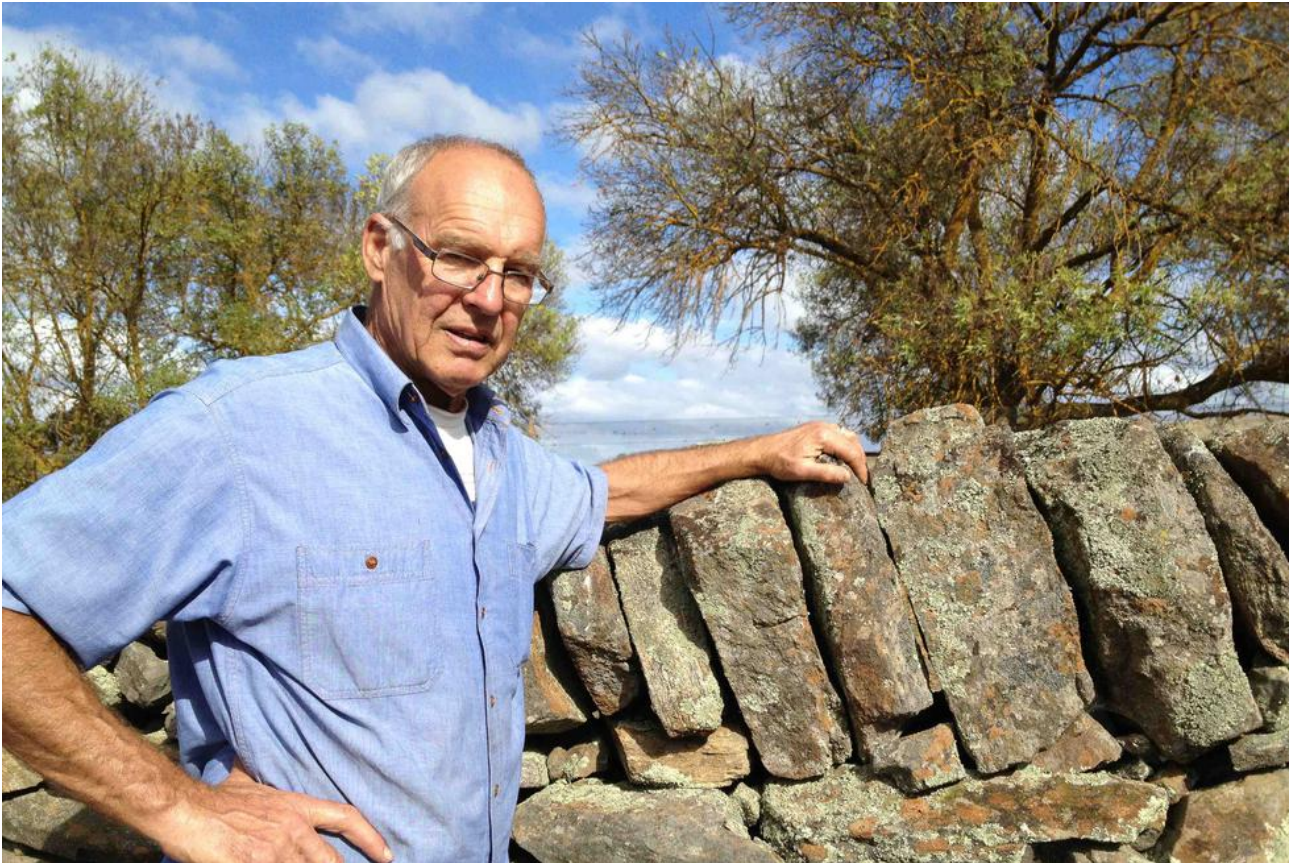


Thomas showing his son a basalt wall he was working on in Mount Macedon, Victoria.

BRUCE STEPS DOWN

A thank you to a dedicated and exemplary editor

by Jim Holdsworth



This issue looks quite different to the *Flag Stone* you've become used to. The change of style and layout is the work of interim editor, Ken Baker. Bruce has stepped down from the role after ten years and 33 issues!

Bruce sourced articles from around Australia and across the globe and, through his contacts, gained a wide readership among the walling community in many countries. Within its pages one would find much of interest on the many topics relating to the craft, the history, quirkiness and the intrigue of dry stone walls and structures.

During that time *The Flag Stone* became entrenched as a journal of record and knowledge and an impressive representation of what this Association stands for.

On behalf of the members of our Committee who worked with Bruce, the wider membership and everyone who opened the pages of *The Flag Stone* over the last decade; "Bruce, a heartfelt Thank You".



One of Bruce's many projects. A Bridge at Aldinga Arts Eco Village (2023)

A CHRISTMAS GIFT

A Story of Stone Walls & Inspiration

Master Waller, Geoff Duggan reflects on why he loves teaching

By Geoff Duggan

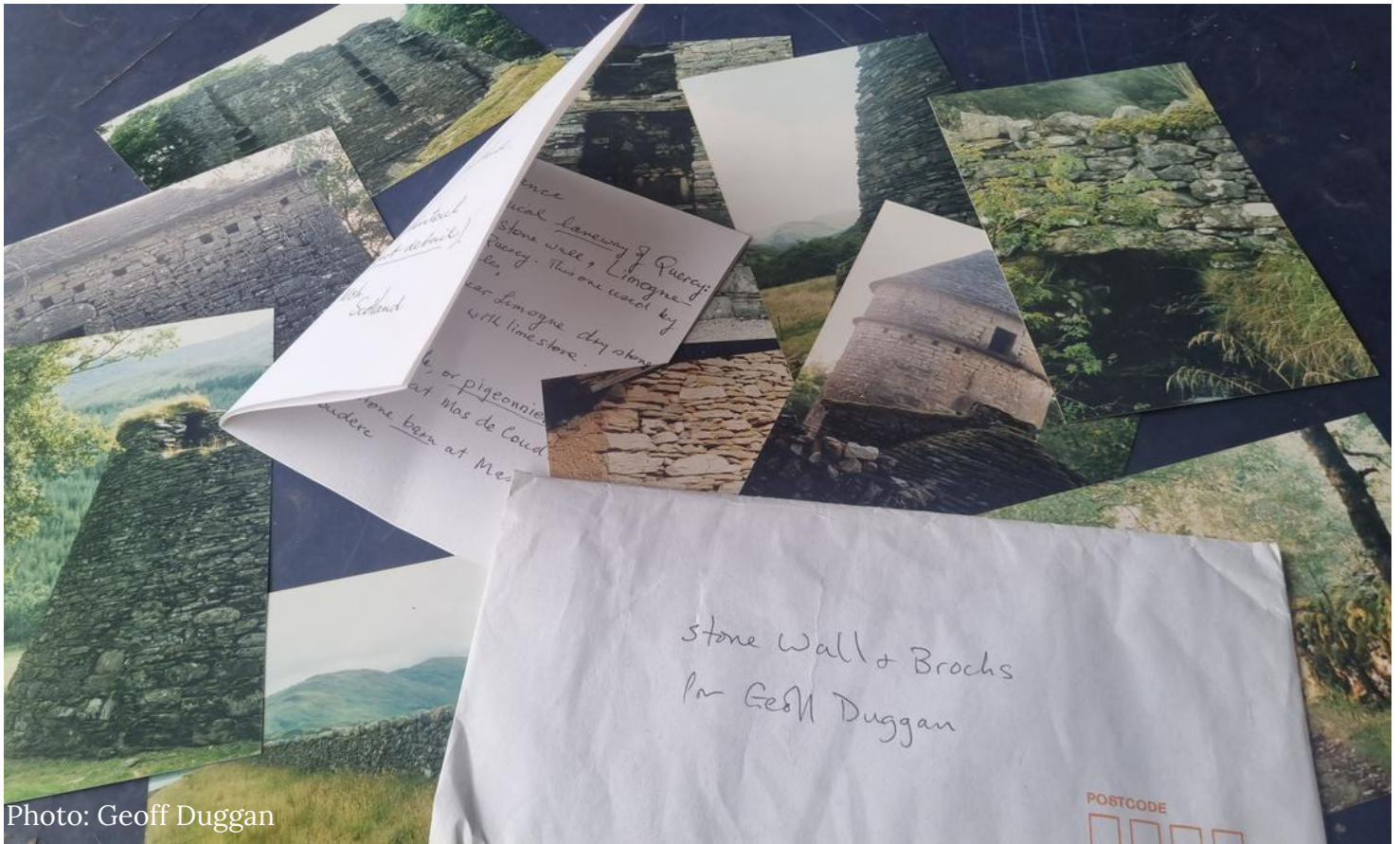


Photo: Geoff Duggan

Why do I love teaching! During the wrap up after my weekend dry stone walling workshops, I put it to the group "If you see any dry stone walls in your travels, let me know."

Just before Christmas, I received an unexpected and touching message. It was from Elizabeth Walter from Bungendore with what turned out to be a be a very moving story for me. Her message recounted finding some photographs of stone walls and wondered if I would be interested in them. I returned her call, and she related the story behind the photographs she shared with her late husband John.

John had attended one of my dry stone walling workshops back in 2002 at The Australian Botanic Garden, Mount Annan.

He had been so inspired by the class that he spent the following years photographing stone walls he came across during their travels.

John and Elizabeth had spent time orienteering around Europe, and wherever they went, John's fascination with dry stone walls captured his attention.

This would lead them on some memorable, exhausting and out of the way walks to some obscure walls John had researched.

Sadly, John passed away in 2019, but Elizabeth held on to his memories and passion for stone walls. Over the years, as she sorted through his belongings, she came across an envelope.

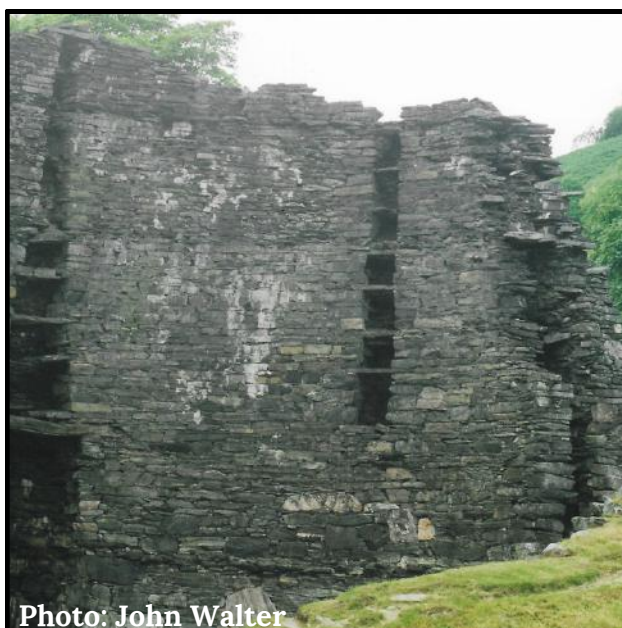
Written on the envelope was the words “for Geoff Duggan”. Inside, she found photographs of stone walls and notes from John’s travels, a reminder of his admiration for the craft of dry stone walling.

Elizabeth recalled how John had been so inspired by that workshop, it seemed only fitting that she would try to track me down to find a home for John’s photographs. In her search, with limited mobility, her son had gifted her a lunch at the garden. Although, she learned I had moved on nearly ten years ago.

However, fate had a hand in connecting us. Kerry, an old colleague at the garden’s gift shop, was kind enough to give her my phone number, and said he won’t mind if you call him. So, just before Christmas, Elizabeth sent me John’s envelope.

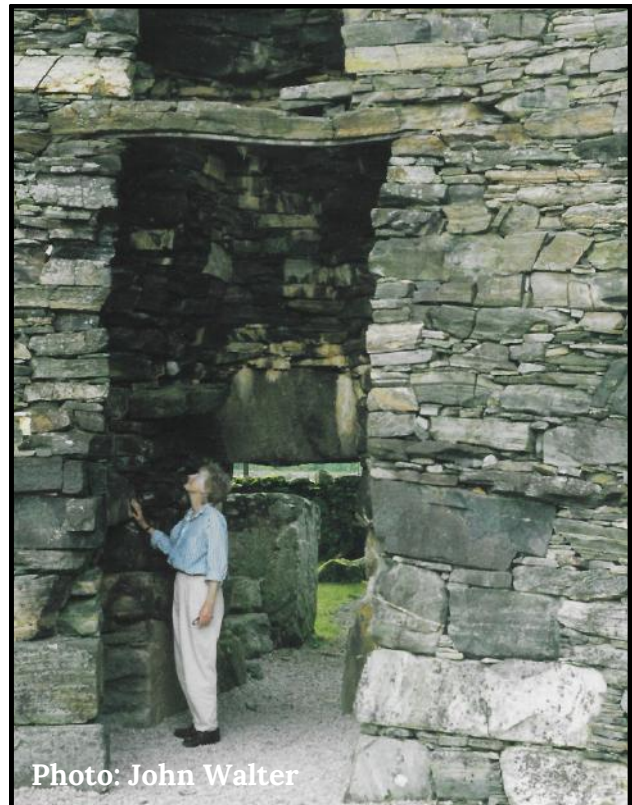
As I opened the photos and notes, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. Here, in these images, was a piece of John’s journey—a journey that had begun with a single workshop and had carried him around Europe, leaving behind a trail of memories and inspiration.

Broch Glenelg, Scotland



THE FLAG STONE, ISSUE NUMBER 61 <8>

“and in the quiet beauty of his photographs, I felt the continuation of that inspiration—a gift passed on from teacher to student and student to teacher, from one stone wall to the next”.



Broch to show scale

In some ways, the photos were the perfect Christmas gift: a reminder of the impact we can have on others, and how a shared passion can last long after a person is gone.

John’s fascination with stone walls had transcended time and distance, connecting us in a way I could never have imagined when he first attended that workshop.

And in the quiet beauty of his photographs, I felt the continuation of that inspiration—a gift passed on from teacher to student and student to teacher, from one stone wall to the next.

Thank you, John and Elizabeth,
Geoff Duggan
Master Craftsman DSWA of GB



A WALLABY AND A WALL

Bruce Munday explains why he built a dry stone wall at the entrance to the remote Arkaroola Sanctuary

by Bruce Munday



Photo: Bruce Munday

Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary is a special part of Australia, not just South Australia. I reported on this in *The Flag Stone* #55 (Sept 2022), describing the Lady Buxton dry stone wall located on the remote northern edge of this remote piece of landscape.

As a sequel to this exploration, Doug Sprigg (whose family owns Arkaroola) suggested I might like to build a small complementary dry stone wall at the entrance to the Sanctuary.

Doug was not deterred by my amateur status, asserting that the Lady Buxton wall was almost certainly built by another amateur.

So in September 2024, firstly with mate Dave Harrison and then Gil Calaby, I rearranged some Arkaroola field stone into an eight metre by 1.5m double skin wall.

There is no shortage of stone on Arkaroola – limestone, siltstone, dolomite, conglomerate, phyllite, granite and even tillite are everywhere. But it is not all good building stone.

The bright red conglomerate might have produced a beautiful effect, particularly in sunlight, but it was mostly too crumbly,



whereas the whitish sandstone was too dispersed. Mostly we used a slatey schist.

Fortunately we found some nice stone for headers, spreaders and throughs. Generally, the building stone was hard and brittle, much of it split from largish boulders.

The site is about 200m past the entrance to the sanctuary, set back a regulation 14m from the road's edge. Arkaroola management intend fixing to the wall an iron motif of a yellow-footed rock wallaby, a marsupial species they have brought back from near extinction.

The whole pro bono project will be finished with simple landscaping using stone left over from the build.



About half way with Dave Harrison

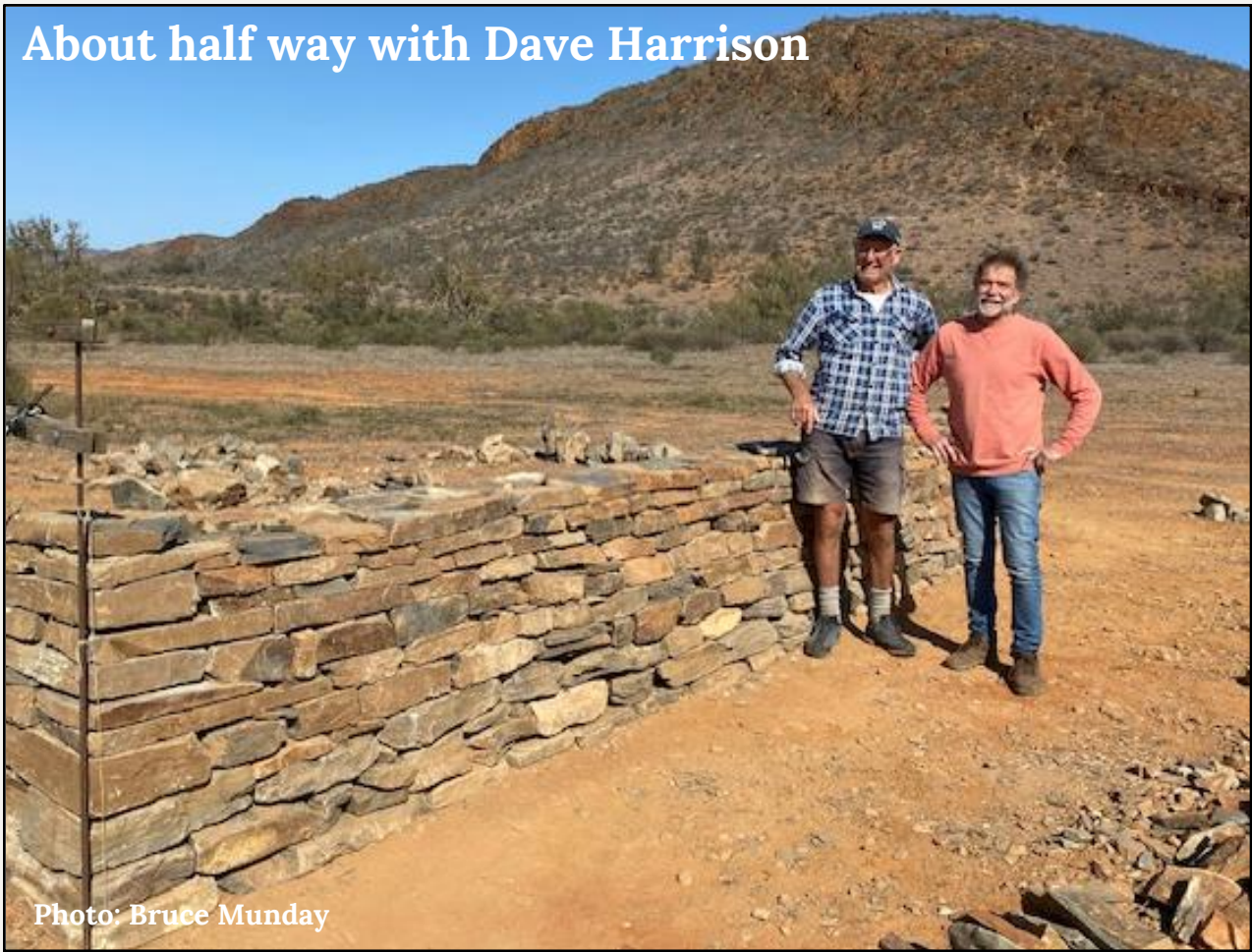


Photo: Bruce Munday

Some 'rearranged field stone' ready for wallaby motif and landscaping



Photo: Bruce Munday

WHAT LOOKS GOOD

when craft becomes art

By Nick Aitken - Master Waller DSWA UK

According to Vitruvius, the first century Roman architect and engineer, structures should have three qualities.

They should serve a purpose; they should be strong and they should be attractive. Any rough wall takes care of the first two points. The third point demands more skill and attention to detail, and is especially impressive if the stone is really gnarly.

Sometimes a wall just looks 'right'. It will stop you in your tracks. Your eyes trace the outline of individual stones, and groups of stones. You imagine how they were fitted together.

Many drystone walls in Japan, from castles to low garden retainers, have a graceful concave batter. This simple elegance is not common in the west. Its primary purpose is structural. It also pleases the eye and, therefore, becomes art. The curved face looks 'sweet'. Harold Leask calls this 'grace' when referring to Irish church buildings:

"Though adopted for practical reasons in the first instance, the batter seems to have been retained in later works as a grace, an architectural refinement, giving not only a sense of stability but aesthetic satisfaction."

We all know to avoid running joints, primarily

Kanazawa Castle, Japan. A corner and stone face with lots of visual interest.





Photo Nick Aitken

This dyke in the Scottish Highlands is more than 150 years old. The remarkably smooth face is formed with split boulders. Some small face stones have slipped with time.

because it suggests structural weakness.

These joints are also visually disturbing. Mark Pilipski tells us:

“ given two similar stone walls the one that exhibits the inclusion of some very large stones and more horizontal lines will appear more attractive than the one that has a uniform texture and more vertical lines.”

Even a novice can recognise beautiful work. At a competition in Kentucky, we had a special prize for ‘the wall you would like to take home’. A lady with no walling experience was asked to pick the section of wall she found most attractive. She walked the line of competitors several times over the day, and selected one who was also well up on the judge's score sheet. A waller with good technical skills won a prize for artistry.

Drystone work must be balanced, symmetrical, level, plumb, and structurally sound, in various combinations. Consider the aesthetics too.

A few extra seconds with each stone can make a big difference to the final appearance. This usually means little more than squaring off one side, to make it fit closer to a neighbour, or chipping the top edge to make it correspond to the batter of the wall.

Walls have a personality. The Welsh term for a stone wall, *clawdd cerrig*, is included in the proverb *Yn ddigywilydd fel clawdd cerrig*. This has been translated to - ‘as impudent as a stone wall’. The National Library of Wales confirmed *ddigywilydd* can also mean ‘shameless’ or without ‘embarrassment’. I prefer that translation and like to think of a wall standing patiently, loyally performing its allocated task.

Build carefully. Make the wall proud.



FROM THE AEGEAN SEA TO DUNDEE

David F Wilson describes how dry-stone walls on the Aegean Coast in Turkey influenced his stonework

Part 1 - The Wave Wall

Words and photography by David F Wilson



It started with the most innocuous of phone calls: “Are you interested in a new project? It’s at Edinburgh Airport, a roundabout or something?”

Of course, I was. Little did I know then what that initial conversation would lead to. Having arranged to meet the client onsite, it was only when he walked me around “the roundabout” that the scale of the opportunity became apparent.

Edinburgh Airport Interchange is the main vehicular access point to the airport, the busiest in Scotland, handling upwards of 14 million passengers annually.

Sitting amid the A8 arterial route into and out of Edinburgh, the Interchange comprises two large roundabouts split by a flyover, with associated areas alongside various slip roads. This was to be my canvas!

It’s an abiding memory that, as we walked and chatted between all the different areas of the Interchange, I had two competing

thoughts duelling in my mind: the excitement of being offered such an opportunity, greatly tempered by a feeling of near panic, was I up to the task?

How I got myself into the position for such an opportunity is a different story.

Skipping out of high school at the first opportunity, I had only one ambition: not to work in an office. With that goal in mind, I headed off into further education, pursuing the only thing that vaguely interested me, art. While attending Art College in Dundee, the city was undergoing a period of post-industrial regeneration. As part of that, a pilot scheme was initiated where public art became a major component of any redevelopment project.

Blackness Industrial Estate had seen better days. It was an area I walked through daily going to and from art school. It seemed that almost every other week, a new artwork appeared: a mural on a gable end, terracotta infill panels on an old bus depot, or metalwork railings around the local school. These inspired me.

After completing my graduate degree in Fine Art Drawing and Painting, I joined the first cohort of seven students in the Post Graduate Course in Public Art. The first of its kind in the UK.

Even though I wasn’t the most diligent of students, after nearly eight years, I finally had to leave the cushy cocoon of academia.

“The dry-stone walls at Oludinez in Turkey have had a lasting influence in my approach to stoneworking”.

I entered the real world in 1987 clutching my master’s degree.

Within two weeks of graduating, I won my first public commission: a fence mural around a temporary visitor centre for Captain Scott’s ship, HMS Discovery. On the success of that project, stone entered my story with my second commission: a wall for a new garden extension at Meadowside St. Paul’s Church in Dundee city centre.

Fortuitously, between being given the brief, which suggested mosaic panels or brick detailing for the wall, I went on holiday to Oludeniz in Turkey.

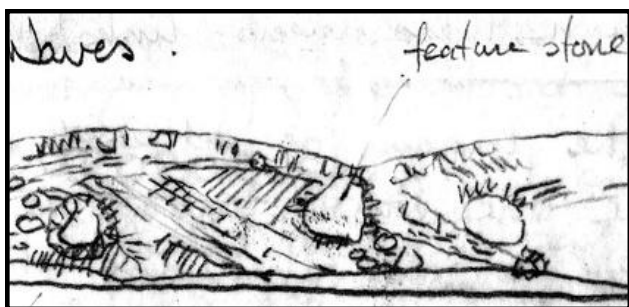
At the time, it was a small, sleepy, undeveloped settlement on the Aegean coast. Every day, we drove down a steep coastal road to bake ourselves on its famous sandy beach, a pastime we indulged in back then but wouldn’t recommend today!

Along the way, we passed a series of dry-stone walls lining the main road. These walls were unlike anything I had ever seen in Scotland.

There was no formal coursing; the stones were laid in a higgledy-piggledy, chaotic manner, going every which way.

Large stones were placed as striking features and framed with lines of smaller, perpendicular stones.

David’s rough sketch of the Oludinez walls



The walls at Oludinez that were the original inspiration for David’s work

Sadly, I only have a few poor-quality pictures of them. Before giving a public presentation, wanting to reference them, I had a brainwave: I’d get better pictures from Google Street View! But I couldn’t find them.

The area has undergone significant development since our visit, and the walls have either been replaced or more worryingly, were so poorly built that they collapsed long ago.

However, they’ve had a lasting influence on me and my approach to stoneworking. I’ve always aimed to carry on that sense of fun, confidence, and joy in the material.

Picasso once said, “Good artists copy; great artists steal!” That’s exactly what I did when I sat down to design the wall for the garden extension.

Known as the Mariners’ Church, I sketched out a stone wall with higgledy-piggledy coursing and feature stones. I called it the Wave Wall, waves being symbolic of life’s ups and downs.

The clients loved my idea and gave me the go-ahead.

Coming up with the idea was one thing; building it was another...

Simple, I thought, I’d go through the Yellow Pages (for younger readers, think of it as a paper version of Google) and hire a stonemason.

The first one I employed never showed up; it was always “tomorrow” or “definitely next week.” With an open building site in the city center and nothing materialising, questions started being asked.

Relying on others wasn’t working, I was way out of my comfort zone.

Returning to the Yellow Pages, I hired a second stonemason. By this time, I was working part-time at a local supermarket. I would brief the mason in the morning on how the coursing should go this way, then that way, and another way. After work, I’d return to check the results.

At first, hurrah! A wall was finally starting to appear. But as the work progressed, the coursing slowly reverted to bog-standard horizontal walling.

Day after day, I asked him to take it down and try again. Eventually, it became clear he just wasn’t getting it.

Frustrated, I had no choice but to let him go.

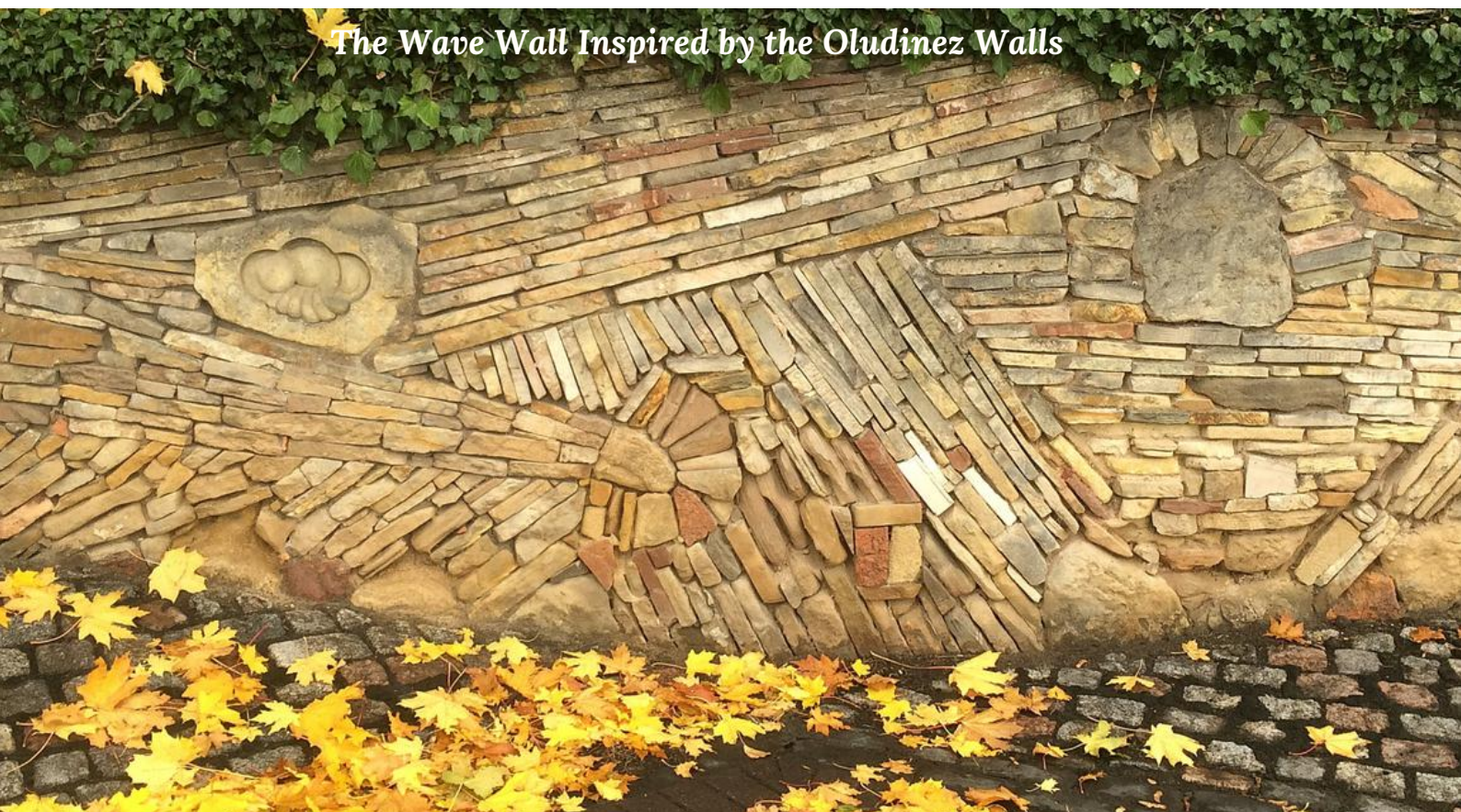
That’s when I made the rather naïve decision: “F*** it, I’ll build it myself. After all, how hard can it be?”

With zero experience and zero skills, I set about the task. Feeling rather pleased with myself, the wall finally started taking shape as I had imagined. Progress at last! My joy was short-lived.

One day, the landscape architect arrived on-site, spirit level in hand. Placing it against the wall, he revealed a fundamental flaw: as the wall rose in height, it was leaning outwards. I had no understanding of the basics or the requirement for the wall to be battered inwards. The project was quickly turning into a disaster.

I vividly remember standing there, the weight of the situation bearing down on me, and under the sharp gaze of his opprobrium, being on the verge of tears. I was done.

“I sketched out a stone wall with higgledy-piggledy coursing and feature stones. I called it the Wave Wall, waves being symbolic of life’s ups and downs”.





*“Now that’s what I call a f***ing dyke!”*

Feeling totally despondent as I arrived home later that day, I found that I had a missed call from the second mason, Willie Mills. Returning his call, I learned he had been passing the site daily, keeping an eye on me.

With the progress that I had made he could now better understand my vision, he offered to return to the site and asked me to work at his shoulder to finally complete the wall.

In total relief, I gladly accepted, he couldn’t return back to site quick enough for me.

From that point, everything went smoothly. The clients were delighted, and even the landscape architect was impressed.

For me, however, there was no feeling of achievement.

Relief, yes, that the pressure and stress was finally over but I had no sense that I had created something worthwhile. .

I resolved never again to take on such an undertaking

My opinion changed by pure chance. Sweeping up around the site on my last day, two guys walked around the corner.

I won’t cast aspersions, but they didn’t look like typical art lovers, and it was clear they’d enjoyed a “good” afternoon at one of the local refreshment spots.

One of them stopped, pointed to the wall, and said to his mate, “Now *that’s what I call a f***ing dyke!*”

A bit fruity as far as compliments go, but it proved to me that perhaps all was not lost and I had , in fact, created something of worth. And, if I ever write a book, that will be it’s title.

For the next year, I worked informally as a labourer for Willie. He passed on to me a strong work ethic and practical skills that have proven invaluable in complementing my creative side.



FROM THE AEGEAN SEA TO DUNDEE

Riding the 'Wave'-Dundee and Beyond

PART 2 - The Edinburgh Airport Exchange

Words and photography by David F Wilson

With my inauspicious introduction to stone walling behind me, the opportunity to design work for the Interchange came about because the client for the Wave Wall had moved on to work for Lothian & Edinburgh Enterprise Ltd.

He felt that, with my 'success' in Dundee, I was the man for his latest commission.

Contemplating what I could for the space, I recognised the Interchange is all about movement. I developed a scheme where the walls and coursing were always in flux, going in, out, up and down across the site.

“Where the the walls and coursing reached their highest sections at the inner apex, the coursing forms a herringbone pattern”.

The main Features are on the two roundabouts, which, on the plan, I designed a star-shaped layout built in two tiers. Where the the walls and coursing reached their highest sections at the inner apex the coursing forms a herringbone pattern.

My naive confidence restored through my experience with Willie, I once again found myself in front of a massive stone pile. The project included 450 metres of dry-stone walling. I was to collaborate with a mason recommended by the landscape architect.

I built the first section by myself over two weeks so that I was confident in my abilities and that would allow me to illustrate to my colleague when he finally joined me what the task at hand needed to look like.

After only a few weeks, it became obvious he wasn't enjoying himself.



Part of the dry-stone wall at the Edinburgh Airport Interchange



A close up view of a section of dry-stone wall at the Edinburgh Airport Interchange

He simply walked away one day, never to return. Perhaps it was the work or the relentless rain, 1992–1993 was one of the wettest winters on record. I again came under pressure from all sides; due to the Interchanges importance, we were on a tight schedule with no room for delays.

Placing an ad in the local paper brought a succession of incompetents and misfits, wasting time and further adding to my stress.

I was still meeting my daily targets, but I badly needed reliable help. Willie wasn't available, so I had to get creative.

I placed another ad, this time in *The Scotsman*, stating my needs but finishing with: "*Must be up to a challenge.*"

My saviour was Stuart Amos, the first applicant to turn up for an interview. His interest was piqued by the idea of a challenge. Taking one look at what had already been built, he declared, "I could do better than that!" That was good enough for me, I hired him on the spot.

True to his word, Stuart was good and fast. He focused on the simpler sections while I tackled the more taxing herringbone areas. This arrangement worked brilliantly, and the project progressed rapidly, making up for lost time.

Successfully completing the project on time and on budget filled me with an enormous sense of achievement.

I *had* been up to the task and I *could* solve the problems that came with such a mammoth undertaking, even while being completely knackered. Our first child, Katie, was born two days before I first stepped on-site. I'm sure new fathers out there will sympathise!

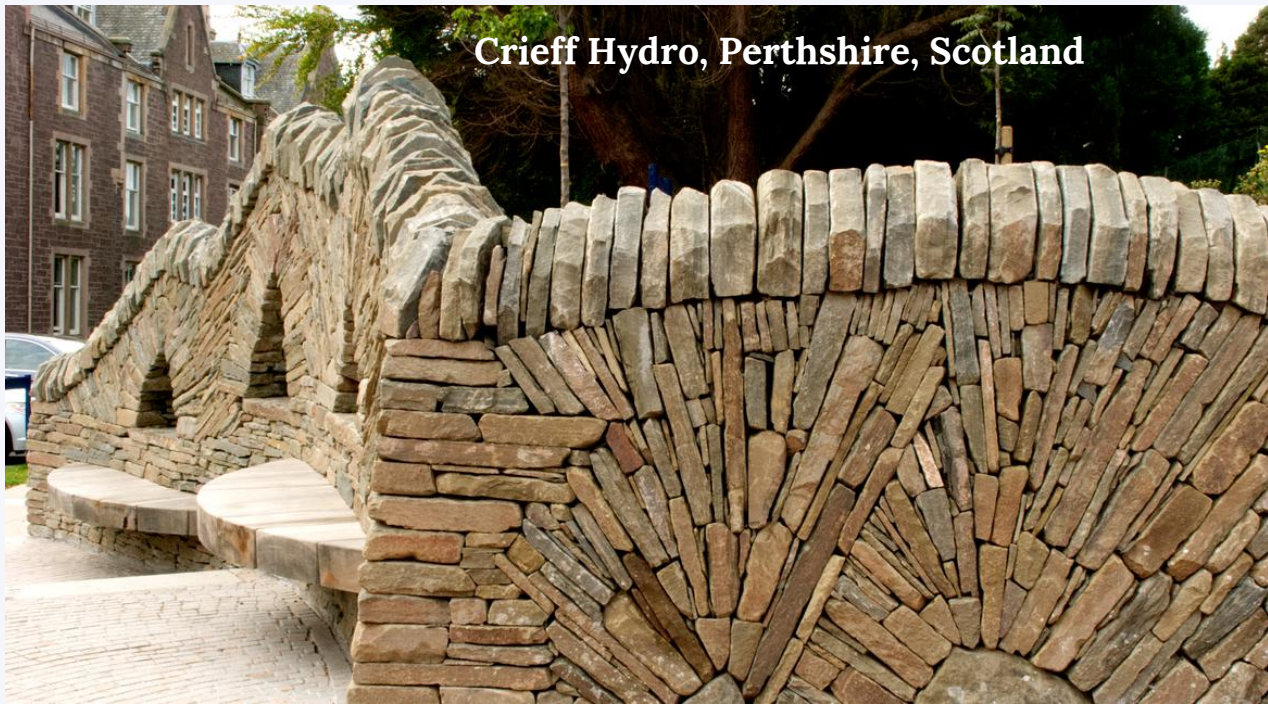
I'm enormously proud of my work at the Interchange. It's a project I frequently point to because virtually everyone I meet knows it, and it has been universally admired. It won a BALI award and was part of the works that contributed to me receiving the DSWA Pinnacle Award in 1993.

From an incompetent introduction to working with stone and with no formal training, it has become central to my professional life and as my wife might say, my personal one too. I'm the sort of person who points at stonework wherever we go, saying, "*Look at this wall!*" or "*Check out that boulder!*"

Stone has become my passion. I've been fortunate across my career to continually be offered opportunities to explore my creativity and create works in public spaces with stone often as the main material.



A section of wall at the Edinburgh Airport Interchange



“Returning from our travels, I felt invigorated and full of ideas”.

It’s never been secure. I’ve bumped along the bottom more than once, still riding life’s waves of ups and downs.

It was during one of my troughs that my wife convinced me to have a “reading” with a local psychic. As a confirmed skeptic, I was reluctant, but eventually, I agreed. During the session, the psychic’s cards prophesied “great travel” in my future.

Given that we were barely scraping by at the time, this seemed absurd and only reinforced my skepticism, he was talking BS or more politely total hokum.

But to my great delight, later that year, I was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship.

The Fellowship provided funding for me to travel to the USA and Canada to research “The Contemporary Use of Stone in Urban Spaces.” <http://dfwilson.co.uk/wcmt-creative-space/>

“Great travel” was in my future—who knew?

Jane and I traveled 10,000 miles over six weeks, journeying from the East Coast of the

United States to the West Coast and back again, diverting into Canada on the way home. It was the experience of a lifetime.

The Trust’s instruction to Fellows is “Travel to learn—Return to inspire.”

Returning from our travels, I felt invigorated and full of ideas. The experience broadened my understanding of stone as a material and of the creativity it could inspire in different cultural contexts. It also helped me appreciate the universality of stone as a medium, how it connects humanity to the natural world while simultaneously shaping the built environment.

Since completing the Wave Wall and the Edinburgh Airport Interchange, my work has focussed on Public commissions, each presenting its own set of challenges and opportunities for my creative input.

Along the way, I’ve continued to hone my skills, and aiming for the highest levels of craft that I can achieve is very important to me.

Reflecting back to my first incompetent efforts and the struggles I faced, it was a pivotal moment in my life. It forced me to confront my insecurities, adapt to challenges, and grow in ways I never could have anticipated.

Dry-stone pyramids David constructed for an exhibit at the 2015 Chelsea Flower Show



Eskbank, Dalkeith, Scotland



“Stoneworking has been more than just a career for me; it’s been a journey of self-discovery, creativity, and connection”

Every wall I’ve built since carries a part of that journey, a testament to the lessons learned. Little could I have foreseen amid the stress and pressures I felt then, that one day I’d be invited to share my work and thoughts on stone with people in Australia, I’m really grateful that I’ve now had that privilege.

Stoneworking has been more than just a career for me; it’s been a journey of self-discovery, creativity, and connection. From the dry-stone walls of Turkey that first inspired me to the bustling Edinburgh Airport Interchange, each project has been a step in the lifelong process of refining my craft and deepening my appreciation for the material I’ve come to love.

At 62, I find myself in what might be considered the third phase of my career. With the learnings and insights I gained

through my Fellowship, I have the ambition to shift my focus away from practical making, towards making a legacy contribution to the craft and stone in a wider cultural context. As the problems with a Modernist aesthetic are becoming more and more apparent for society.

Those of us who work and know stone understand it’s profound benefits, not just on a personal level but for communities and society as a whole.

Stone carries with it an inherent connection to history, sustainability, and resilience, qualities that are more relevant now than ever.

My current focus is on realising a bold vision: the creation of an **International Festival of Stone**, to be held in Dundee in August 2026.

This event will be a celebration of the joy, creativity, and cultural significance of stone in all its forms. I hope some of you reading this will come and join me, to celebrate the joy and fun of STONE.

SHARD FENCES STAND TALL AGAIN

Unique stone fences are restored in Cumbria

Story by Emma Dewhurst

Shard Fences at Hawkshead in the Lake District

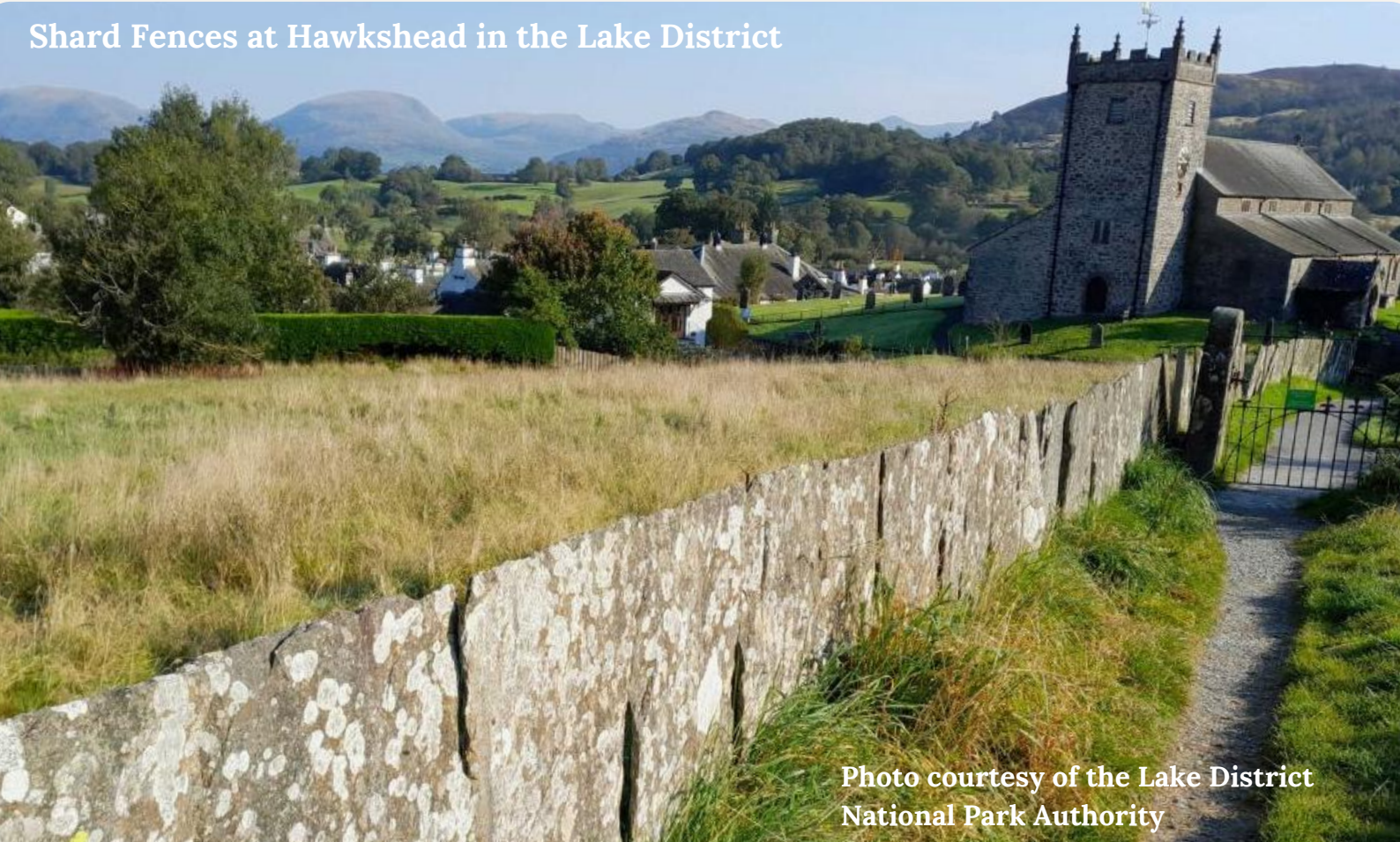


Photo courtesy of the Lake District
National Park Authority

*“Interlocking shard
fencing is unique to the
Central Lake District of
Cumbria.”*

Rare, centuries old, slate shard fences are once more features of the farming landscape. The shards have been carefully restored in two locations. Earlier this year at Jackson Ground in the Upper Lickle Valley 260 metres have been reinstated in Hawkshead, six sections are being restored, including 64 metres of new shards along the footpath between Hawkshead and Roger Ground and the boundary to Dolly's Orchard near the Church.

Elanor Kingston the LDNPA's strategy advisor says that whilst shard fencing is found in other parts of the UK what makes the Lakes District one unique is that the shards interlock with each other.

Since 2018 Neill Cooper, Celia Caulcott and their adult children, Joshua and Anna, have embarked on a long-term restoration program for the farm and farmland.

It included reinstating the traditional shard fencing—a hallmark of the area’s farming and cultural identity.

“Structures like these served as vital field boundaries,” Celia explained. “The fact that they’ve endured is a testament to the Lake District’s long-standing pastoral farming traditions, which have helped secure its UNESCO World Heritage status.”

At Jackson Ground, shard sizes vary significantly, with some standing as tall as five meters and requiring heavy machinery for placement.

The installation process involved a team of up to three people and a digger, taking several months to complete. The result is a sturdy, gap-free boundary reinforced with hedging that supports local biodiversity.

“These fences are more than just practical,” Celia added. “They’re green corridors that provide habitats for wildlife while preserving the character of our landscape.”

“Shard fencing is an incredible blend of practicality, heritage, and ecological value,” Sara said. “For farmers, it provides a durable boundary for livestock. For wildlife, the accompanying hedgerows act as vital corridors, enhancing biodiversity.



Photo by Eliza Hodgson, LDNPA Assistant Farming Officer

And for visitors, these fences offer a glimpse into the traditional ways this land has been managed for centuries.”

As part of the project, the grant also funded an interpretation panel installed along a nearby public footpath.

The panel invites walkers to learn more about the shard fences, ensuring that this cultural and environmental legacy is appreciated by future generations.

LDNPA Area Ranger Sara Spicer, who has overseen shard fence restoration in the Hawkshead area, emphasised the wide-ranging benefits of the project.



LEMON SOLO AND STOICISM

How Victoria Aced her Level 2

Photos and words by Victoria Merriman

“It’s the newest of new years, the freshest of fresh starts.”

I opened my journal with these words on January 1st, 2020 as my plane departed from Boston. I’d always promised myself that if I ever sold or closed the web design company I’d run for two decades, I’d take a few months off to travel. But by then I’d fallen in love with stone walling, so I felt an equally strong desire to continue learning my new craft. I finally hit on the perfect answer: an apprenticeship in Australia.

“Apprenticeship” implies a more formal setup than actually existed. The reality: I found the name of Emma Knowles, a Level 3 Waller, on the DSWA website and sent her an email that went something like, “Might I work for you in exchange for free or cheap lodging?” She said yes.

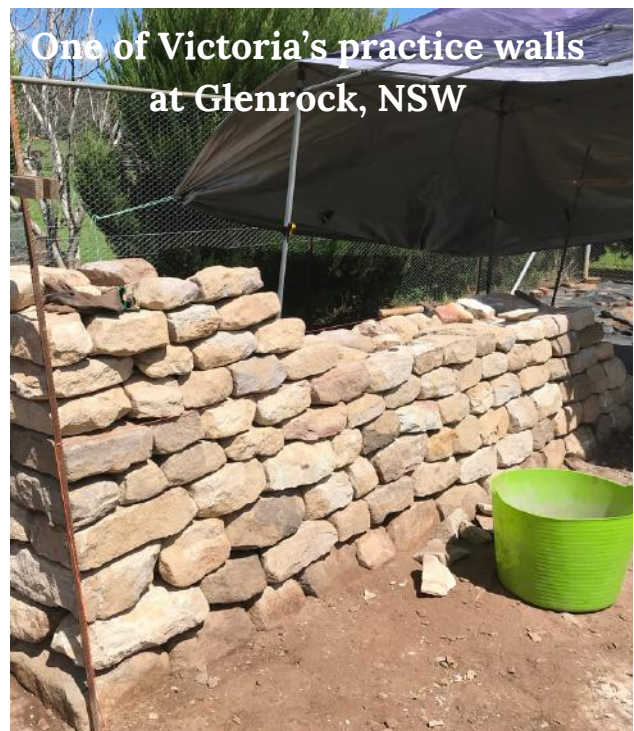
I describe my time at Glenrock—Emma’s home in Wellington, NSW, a historic brick farmhouse surrounded by cattle paddocks—as walling boot camp. I spent all my time walling, eating, sleeping, or recovering from walling. Emma turned out to be the perfect mentor. She too had quit her corporate career in her mid-40s, stumbled upon dry stone walling, and built a successful business. She was living proof that it could be done.

Emma had me build two walls on her property in preparation for the Level 2 test, the next step on my certification journey. The first day, she showed me how to drive the snakes (all poisonous!) out of the piles and got me started on the first wall. She answered questions when needed and emerged, latte in hand, for periodic critiques.



“a million swigs of Lemon Solo, the most delicious, refreshing soda I’ve ever had, preserver of my sanity on so many hot, exhausting days.”

But mostly she left me alone to try, fail, succeed, fail some more, and try again, which I appreciated. I learn best by figuring things out for myself.



“Each day I felt the hardships of being a rank beginner working with very heavy material: my screaming hamstrings, the obliterating summer heat”

Each day I felt the hardships of being a rank beginner working with very heavy material: my screaming hamstrings, the obliterating summer heat, the dearth of usable stone, stone that *was* useable until I accidentally broke it, blisters on my hands. cuts on my legs, swarms of flies who seemed intent on tasting my eyeballs. Some days I fantasised about leaving Emma a note - “Sorry, not cut out for this, Thanks for trying”- and disappearing on the next train to Sydney.

There were small triumphs too. Like when I’d find the perfect stone to nestle between two neighbours, or when the cheek end stone I chiselled for hours finally formed a nice square corner.

Back home in New Hampshire (USA) Victoria has developed a successful dry-stone walling business



Wall Notes: The round stone in this wall is glacial till and the flat ones are mica schist. The wall end is modeled after a wall in the UK that the client liked.



The heavy sandstone Victoria used to practise her wall building skills at her Australian ‘bootcamp’

I celebrated or mourned as needed with a million swigs of Lemon Solo, the most delicious, refreshing soda I’ve ever had.

Preserver of my sanity on so many hot, exhausting days. Please corporate powers: bring Lemon Solo to America.

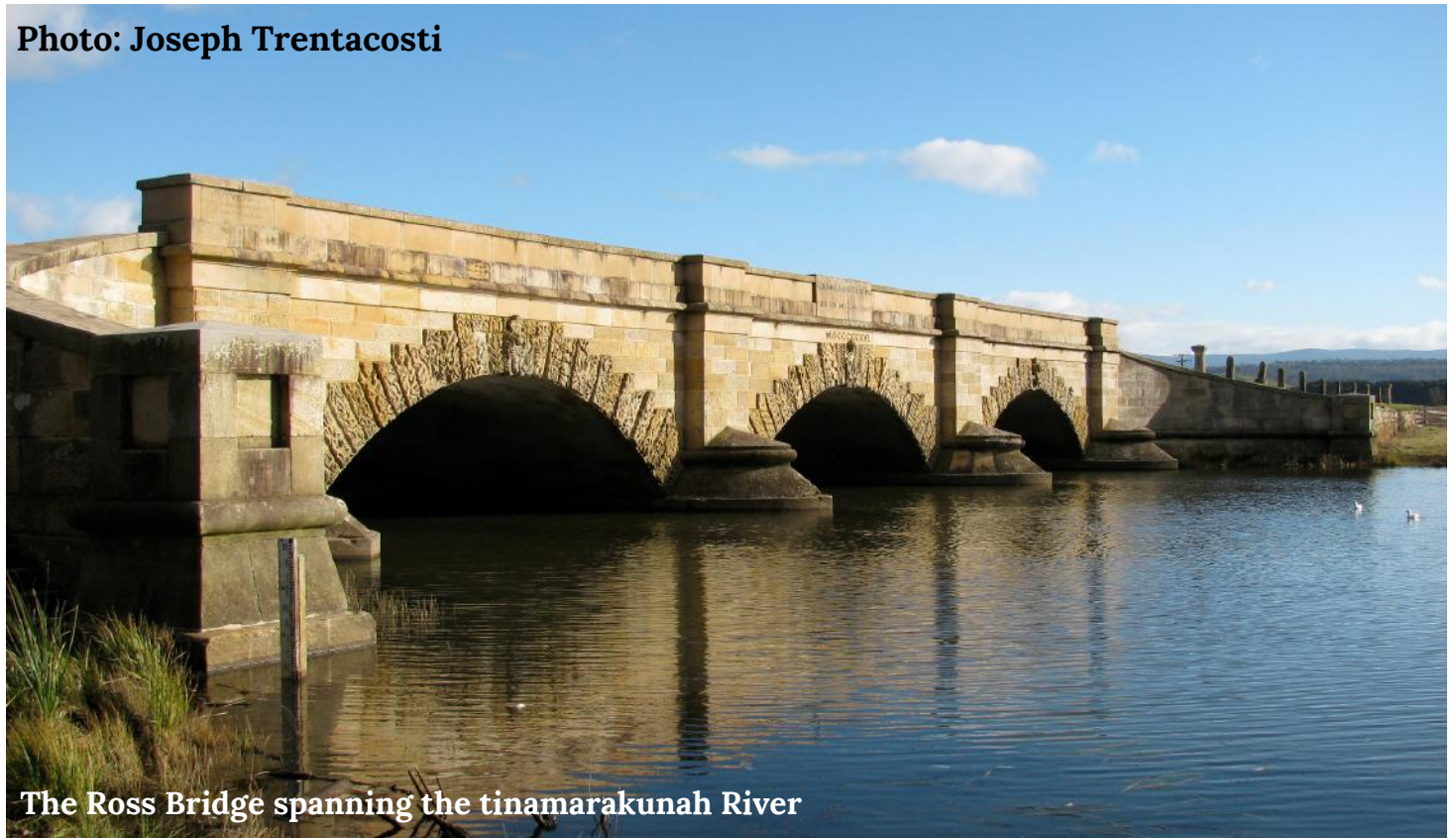
Reading my journal entries from that time, I’m both amused at how inept I was and proud of how far I’ve come. Thanks to Emma’s guidance, I aced the Level 2 test on my first try. I went on to work with other DSWA wallers in the States and now have a successful stonework business called **Friction and Gravity**, named after the two forces that hold a dry stone wall together. I guess I am living proof that it can be done too.

You can see more’ of Victoria’s work at:

www.frictiongravity.com

Friction & Gravity LLC Custom Stonework





The Ross Bridge spanning the tinamarakunah River

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ENIGMATIC ART OF ROSS BRIDGE

A tale of Convict Satire

By Dr Jennie Jackson-

One hundred and eighty-six sculptures in relief decorate the north and south facades of the elegant arched bridge crossing tinamarakunah/Macquarie River at the town of Ross in Tasmania's midlands. Its low profile was conceived by the Colonial Architect and the Civil Engineer, John Lee Archer. He employed Charles Atkinson to draw up the plans, a guileless young architect from London who boasted Archer need to defer to him.

The stonemasons were convicts transported from Regency England. It is a remarkable thing that that the sculptures of the Ross were not mutilated by the military under orders from the Lieutenant Governor as they were being carved

Convicts would be harshly punished if they dared to publish critical opinions of the administration and the conditions under which they laboured.

And yet, these subversive and sculptures are no more or less than published comments on the monarchy, the regime in Van Deimen's and the conditions that prevailed in Britain which induced the young men to commit their crimes.

The plans were requested in 1831 and completed in 1833; the bridge was finished in July 1836 and opened in October.

The superintendent in the final year was Captain William Turner, remembered in plaques on the four pillars.



The keystones stand in proud relief, mocking the monarchy.

In his angst, mad George III stares out between two sheaves of corn. The extravagance of his son, the Prince of Wales, the Prince Regent, distresses him beyond reason.

Many of the convicts stole because their families were hungry because of his government's enactment of the Corn Laws which perpetuated the high price of grain in England after the Napoleonic wars had ended.

Life had been hard enough then, with industrialisation and the drain on the government's coffers.

But the ministers would not repeal the laws to ease the common man's poverty. The satire is plain.

The Royal Rat on the opposite facade is a grotesque carving of his daughter-in-law, Caroline, the Princess of Wales, despised wife of the Regent.

In her bare-bosomed state, she exudes wealth and privilege, yet her left arm curls around her rat-child, rejecting it.



Photo: Brad Harris

Mad King George III

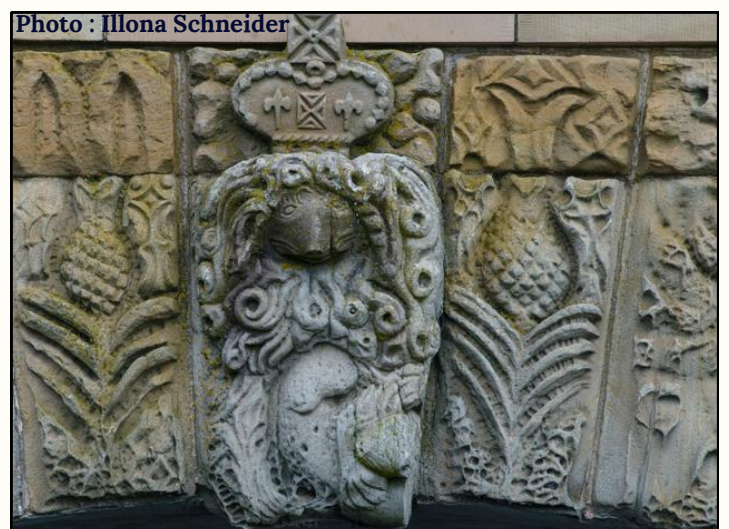


Photo : Illona Schneider

Caroline, Princess of Wales

“The bridge is an example of narrative architecture; there is no other like it in the world”

Crossing to the other bank, her husband, George, is presented as a ridiculous foo-dog, a guardian lion. His features are foolish, his crown is puny and he plays with a cub or puppy, as would the female in a pair outside a prominent establishment.

Does the work represent oppression by the monarchy? Probably it does, though carved by a cynic. Absurdity is a great camouflage

The bridge is an example of narrative architecture; there is no other like it in the world.

Usually, decorated architecture telling an important story, such as a triumphal arch, faces a thoroughfare for the erudition of the illiterate people.

These face a waterway which has never been used as a public way. Why spend so much energy?

The convicts' ghosts might say: “to exorcise our demons; to make sure the stones' meanings were obfuscated by distance as irony. To tell the truth”

The irony is that we do not know which stonemason carved which stone.

Daniel Herbert



George IV

Between June 1835 and July 1836, Daniel Herbert and James Colbeck were the convict overseers of the Ross Bridge road party.

Colbeck was of a Methodist family from the West Riding, Yorkshire; he was illiterate when he arrived but experienced in his trade.

Herbert was literate, from Manchester, but had been incarcerated twice for burglary since he was seventeen.

James Colbeck



He would have gained experience working at Woolwich docks when he was held in a hulk for four years but not transported though that had been the sentence.

He was released in 1826 and immediately committed four acts of highway robbery for which he was sentenced to death. Transportation was a commutation of the capital punishment they both had received.

It is not known where they learned about the symbols that they carved into their work; perhaps they had been exposed to the mysteries of the craft of Freemasonry.

Why else would Herbert have carved a mason's square into his beard?

Colbeck returned to Dewsbury, his hometown in Yorkshire.

His wife was alive but on her death he married the widow of a stonemason and died in 1852 of typhus, cabin fever, a bitter irony after he had survived dungeon, hulk and transport ship.

Herbert remained in Ross, an unacknowledged stone carver. He died insolvent, of 'bronchitis' ... it was likely to have been silicosis from the dust given up the stones that ought to have brought him notoriety and admiration.

He is buried in the old Ross cemetery, in the idiosyncratic table grave he made for his baby son, Ernest.

<http://www.rossbridge.com.au/contact>



THE STANDING STONES OF TARRONE

A Slightly Smaller Enigma

The Dry-Stone Tourist Explores the mystery of the Standing Stones of Tarrone

Words by the Dry-Stone Tourist

The DSWAA's November, 2024 field trip ventured to the Port Fairy area. The group visited several sites where a range of stone fencing styles, historically important stone fences such as that built on the western boundary of Atkinson's Special Survey and the enigmatic standing stones of Tarrone were inspected.



Photo: Ken Baker

Participants in DSWAA's November Field Trip inspecting one of the Tarrone standing stones.

The DSWAA visited the standing stones on a field trip in April 2013 (TFS No28 p4) and reported:

"We stop to view a row of standing stones marching across the open landscape. Speculation is rife; are these of Aboriginal origin, built by farmers, placed by surveyors, the work of aliens? There's dozens of them, set about 10 metres apart; in one place following what might have been the edge of a low lake, in another place possibly marking a property boundary".

Similar and additional speculations apart from the work of aliens, and the preliminary results of recent research were discussed in the field beside a run of standing stones.

Recent research focusing on the standing stones in this area has revealed the following information;

The Moyne Shire Heritage Study (Stage 2) identifies the use of stone boulders on the Tarrone Run as fence posts.

"Much land had been fenced by the 1860s, in response to both the rabbit problem and new land selection legislation.

Felled timber was the most common fencing material, but stone was also readily available, especially the surface basalt that lay about in profusion in many parts.

A photograph of a landscape featuring a grassy field with several large, dark, rounded stones scattered across it. A tree with green foliage and bare branches is on the left. In the background, a utility pole is visible against a clear blue sky.

**“We stop to view a row of standing
stones marching across the open
landscape”**

Photo: Ken Baker

THE FLAG STONE, ISSUE NUMBER 61 <33>

Early fencing at Tarrone, for example, used large basalt boulders as fence posts and gate-posts. In the 1860s, stricter fencing legislation and the availability of the necessary skilled labour led to the construction of dry-stone walls from surface stone”.

(Moynes Shire Heritage Study (Stage 2) 2006, Helen Doyle and Context Pty Ltd, p17)

The Hamilton Spectator in February 1899 reported a fencing innovation identifying both the Tarrone Run, its manager, William Boyd and the building of field stone “pillars”.

“Mr. William. Boyd, of Tarrone, near Koroit, has hit on an ingenious plan for making use of stones which would otherwise be useless, and this gives promise of being of great practical utility.

This gentleman has erected about 75 miles [121 km] of wire netting fencing on Tarrone, using red gum posts, 3ft 6in [1.1m] netting, with galvanised wire, and a barb wire on top. In erecting the subdivision fences, he found it necessary to remove a number of stone walls and was at a loss to know to what useful purpose the stone from these might be put.

After some consideration the thought struck him to use the stones as posts, and with this object in view he made experiments, and found that his idea worked out satisfactorily.

A red gum straining post is erected every five chains [100 m], and between these posts a stone pillar is built up at intervals of about 24ft [7.3m].

The foundation is laid about 8ft. [2.4m] square at the bottom, and gradually built up in a cone shape, till at the top it runs to about 18 in [0.5m].

A wire is fastened to the top stone, and brought down both sides of the pillar. This, of course, secures the solidity of the structure, and saves it being knocked down by cattle rubbing against the fence.

The advantages of the plan are that only the straining posts are required, and a big saving is effected both by the less number of posts

used and in the cost of sinking post holes in stony country, whilst the fence may be claimed to be almost fire-proof”.

Hamilton Spectator on 18 February 1899, p2: Trove)

How fantastic would it be to find one or more of the described dry stone pillars surviving in the back of someone’s property!

It’s not too much of an interpretive leap to think that after building a number of pillars, Boyd found that a “boulder” had sufficient mass to do the same job as the pillars but erected much more efficiently.

Additionally of interest are the comments that Boyd had erected 75 miles [121 Km] of subdivision fences and that he had removed a number of stone walls in 1899. This was a large fencing operation for the Tarrone Station.

After the First World War a number of the larger pastoral stations were purchased by the Soldier Settlement Commission to be subdivided into smaller allotments and offered to returned servicemen.

The soldier settlement allotments as well as new access roads were progressively surveyed in sections prior to being offered for sale.

In the surveyors notes associated with surveying a new road into the Tarrone Estate dated August 1948, the future road easement cut across a few fence-lines.

In the diagram below, the surveyor notes a wooden post and netting fence and further along a stone post and netting fence.

As the surveyor differentiated between wooden and stone posts, it is interpreted as indicating a standing stone post rather than a combination fence with a rubble or half stone wall component beneath wire.

Another note indicates an old stone post and netting ‘fence’ around springs.

The implication is that this stone fence post method existed prior to the Tarrone Estate being subdivided.

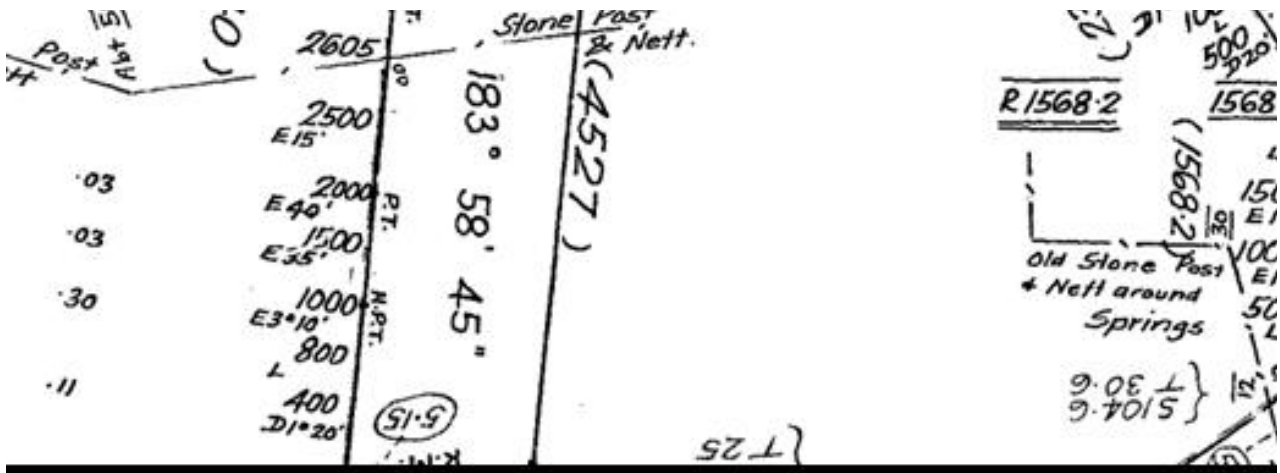


Figure 1 Part of surveyors notes from a new road survey of Tarrone Estate in 1948 (LASSI SPEAR, On-line).

The John T Collins Photograph Series in the collection of the State Library of Victoria contains three images described as stone fence or gate posts. These black and white photographs were taken by John T Collins and are dated January 1971.



Figure 2 John T Collins, Photographer, 1971 Tarrone, "Tarrone" State Library of Victoria



Figure 3 John T Collins, Photographer, 1971 Tarrone, "Tarrone" State Library of Victoria

These photographs were taken in 1971 at the Tarrone Homestead, some 5 km west of the field trip sites. The Tarrone Homestead images clearly show stone fence posts with wire looped around the stone to carry plain wire and wire netting, or grooves incised by the wires or prepared at time of fencing. The images are available on-line.

The report of the Cultural Heritage Assessment of the Tarrone Gas-fired Power Station and Gas Pipeline, Victoria (2009) includes a number of images related to the proposed footprint of the works. The report is available on-line.

The images described below show views within the old Tarrone pastoral station area. Plate 8: Scarred volcanic rock – North-South Option (p 65); a large stone on its side with a longitudinal groove very reminiscent of the gate stoops from Collins' 1971 photographs.

Plate 9: Remnant stone wall – Alignment North-South Option (p 66); shows a line of stone protruding from the soil surface appearing to run parallel to an adjacent modern post and wire fence.

There is stone scatter on either side of the line of foundation stones suggesting a demolished dry stone wall. Smack in the middle of the run of foundation stones is an obviously upright and substantial stone post!

Plate 10: Volcanic basalt gate post – North-South Option (p 66); shows a stone post with wire netting held with plain wire wrapped around the post reminiscent of the Collins' images at Tarrone Homestead.

The report does not comment on the novelty of field stone fence posts.

Closer Inspection on the November 2024 Field Trip

At one site the stones were able to be examined close up. The stones were around one meter tall and arranged orthostatically. Stones appeared to be field stone and had no signs of fixtures (Fig. 4).



Figure 4 A standing stone adjacent to Tarrone North Road



Figure 5. Showing wire mesh at the base of the stone.

However, a closer examination (Fig. 5) showed degraded plain and wire mesh components surviving at the base of a number of stones. The examined standing stones had smaller stones around their base.

These at least appeared to be holding the wire mesh against the base of the stone post and possibly acted as wedges to assist with holding the post upright. Small stones can also be seen in one of Collins' photographs suggesting it was part of the technique of setting posts upright.

Research is continuing to identify surviving runs of this fencing method in the general area.

To date, no other examples of this approach to fencing have been found elsewhere in Australia.

Conclusion

The standing stones of Tarrone are likely of pastoralist origin placed in the late 1800s to mark property and internal division boundaries which needed to be realigned to Crown survey boundaries which were established from the 1880s.

The Author would be interested to hear of any other examples from readers.

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

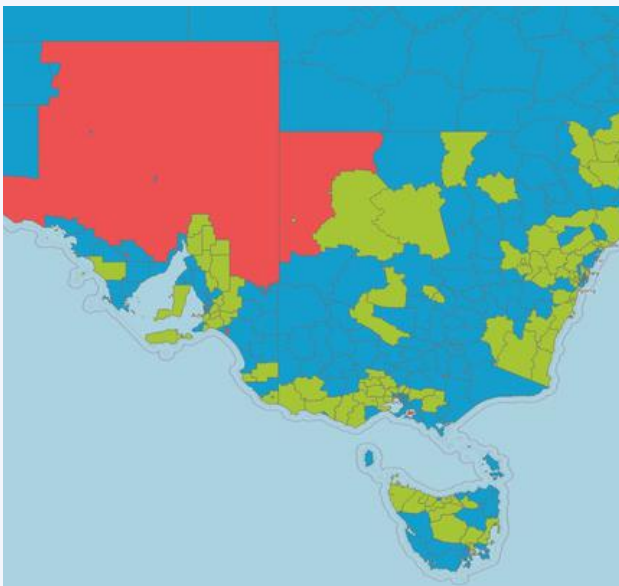
Laurie Atkins - DSWAA Committee Member

Many community-based organisations have established groups within their membership to focus on areas of specific interest to the organisation.

Such groups have often been called a special interest group or SIG. SIGs enable members to apply their existing skills and knowledge, or develop expertise, in areas that are both interesting to them and valuable to the organisation.

Do you have the interest, time and the on-line capability to participate in researching the occurrence of dry stone structures across Australia by mapping their locations? Join the DSWAA Mapping SIG!

For a decade the DSWAA website has listed LGAs (Local Government Areas) which have dry stone walls. These LGAs are shown in green in the figure below. This information was useful but not very precise.



Such information is foundational to enabling investigations that enhance our understanding, appreciation and the importance of dry stone structures.

Using modern methods for remote identification and a geographic information system platform for recording, the exact location of dry stone structures can be documented such as in the picture below depicting Pomborneit, Victoria.



Participation would be based from home using participant's own computer equipment. Training will be provided where required.

The cost is expected to be low to no direct cost as commonly available, free-to-use software will be involved. Participants can invest as much or as little time as they wish.

To make an expression of interest and to get more technical details, email me (Laurie Atkins) at the DSWAA with your name, email address, and your home locality and state to the dswaa@gmail.com.

Workshops



Geoff Duggan - DSWA U K-Master Waller

22-23rd March - Picton NSW - Dry stone basalt retaining walls

5-6 April - Kangaroo Valley NSW - Sandstone free-standing dry stone walls

12 - 13 April - Picton NSW - Basalt free-standing walls

geogenic.com.au/dry-stone-walling-workshops.html



Jon Moore & Bruce Munday- Adelaide Hills

22nd -23rd March

Over a weekend in the beautiful Adelaide Hills, you will learn all the basics – and some more advanced skills – to do with the construction of dry stone walls.

Contact: bruce.m42@bigpond.com

Stone of Arc- Wellington NSW



Training

Stone of Arc actively promotes traditional techniques Stone of Arc provides a rare opportunity for people in the Oceania and Asia regions to learn...

 Stone of Arc

An introduction to Dry Stone Walling

Feb 22nd - 23rd

April 5th - 6th

May 10th-11th

Click link below for other courses, dates etc

<https://stoneofarc.com/courses/#book-a-course>

Assessments/Certification

26 - 27 April - Level I and Level II craftsman certification assessments, Wellington NSW

drystonewalling@bigpond.com

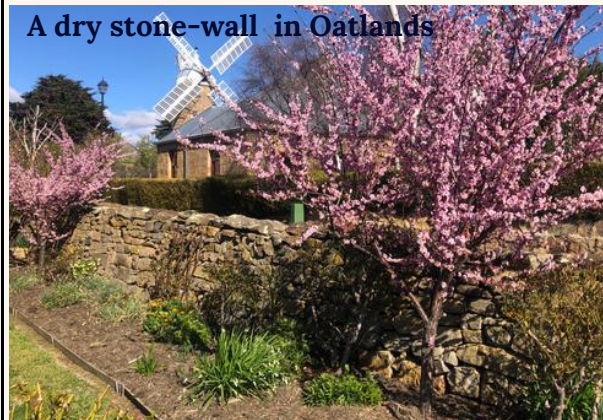
emma@stoneofarc.com

Field Trip

Tasmanian Midlands Field Trip

8-10 March 2025

A dry stone-wall in Oatlands



This Field Trip includes:

Local walks

Visits to historic properties

Insights into the rich heritage of dry stone walling in the Midlands, with some modern walls as well

Plus some meals and guest speakers.

**Dry-stone bull pen at Sherwood Homestead.
It will be the highlight of the field trip**



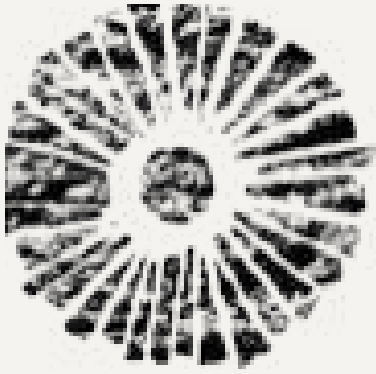
Photo: J. Holdsworth

Registering your interest

If you are planning to be part of this exciting and informative long weekend, now is the time to provide us with your name and contact details via email:

dswaa@gmail.com

jimholdsworth@hotmail.com M:0417648218



International Festival of Stone Dundee 2026

Dundee, renowned for its vibrant culture and rich stone heritage, will host the International Stone Festival in August 2026.

The International Festival of Stone Dundee 2026 is an ambitious proposal to hold a festival of all things stone within urban spaces in the heart of the City Centre. It aims to highlight the positive benefits of reconsidering stone for use in architecture, urban design, public art and landscaping projects.

This unique event celebrates the artistry, sustainability, and innovation of stone through a dynamic mix of practical and theoretical events designed to educate, engage, and inspire.

For conference enquiries dundeestone26@gmail.com

Crieff Hydro, Perthshire, Scotland
Constructed by David F Wilson



VISION

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 artifacts 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.

Membership

Joining the DSWAA

The Association welcomes new members. Anyone can apply for membership, which is on annual basis, renewable on 30 May each year. The annual fee is \$30 per person

To apply

Membership Application/Renewal forms are available on our website www.dswaa.org.au OR

Send an email to thedswaa@gmail.com and an Application/Renewal Form will be sent to you.

Applications are processed once the Form has been received and the annual fee has been paid.

Applications for membership are endorsed at the next meeting of the Association's committee.

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the Dry
Stone
walls
association
of Australia inc.