

THE FLAG STONE

Summer Special Edition

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Welcome to the Summer edition of The Flag Stone, the third but last to be produced by Ken Baker. I want to thank Ken for all his excellent work and for his collaboration with our new editor-in-chief, Madeline Sproal, and Rick Sproal who will assist her. The next edition should be issued early next year.

Our 2025 Annual General Meeting was held in Wagga Wagga at the Wagga RSL Club on 27th September. Twenty-six financial members attended in person, by proxy or via Zoom, easily reaching the number necessary for a quorum. Many readers will know the outcomes already through a recent newsletter. All the proposed motions were passed unanimously, including the Annual Report, which has been lodged with Community Affairs Victoria and will be posted on the DSWAA website shortly.



Laurie Atkins guided us through the successful passing of several Special Resolutions at the AGM. With only one nomination for the office of President, I was re-elected unopposed. Because there were fewer than twelve nominations for Ordinary Members of the Committee, all five nominees were elected unopposed, and the Office Holders were decided by consensus. The results are set out on the back cover with other important names and contact details.

The work of two retiring Members of the 'old' Committee, Stuart Read and Laurie Atkins, was singled out for special recognition. Laurie has an article in this edition on rabbit-proof dry stone walls. Geoff Thomas, a welcome addition to the Committee, is a long-standing member of the Association and has been an active Committee member.

As usual, the AGM was followed by a field trip, this year to the Adelong Falls Gold Mill Ruins Site, some 85kms west of Wagga Wagga. The next field trip, "The Italian Settlers and the Lure of Gold", is in November and returns to Daylesford, Yandoit and the Castlemaine diggings in Central Victoria. A report by Jim Holdsworth on the field trip, "Volcanoes and Consumption Dykes" held in late June in the Corangamite Shire, is included in this edition.

The other articles are wide-ranging, including photographic essays from Wales and south-west Scotland, interviews with wallers working here and abroad, a brief history of quarrying in Australia, and a review of Nick Aitken's book, *Drystone: A Gathering of Terminology and Technique*. Nick, based in Seattle, is our only international member.

I wish you many hours of happy reading.

Timothy Hubbard

President



The Flag Stone is the official journal of The Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia, Inc. It is published three times every year. While The Flag Stone focuses on dry stone walls and walling in Australia, contributions are welcome from around the world.

Website: www.dswaa.org.au

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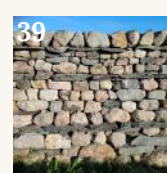
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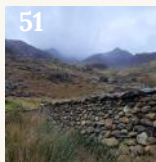
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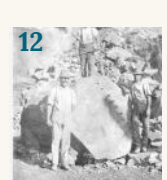
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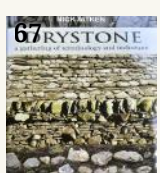
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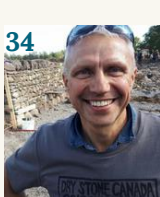
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Stone Age Language

A brief explanation of some of the geological terms used in this Edition



The Copes are on so....I'm off

This is my last stint as gatherer and arranger for *The Flag Stone*. I'm very grateful to everyone who contributed to this Issue, Your passion for the craft is evident on every page. Thanks also to DSWAA Committee members, Anne Harbison, Jim Holdsworth and Timothy Hubbard for proof-reading and to my partner, Samantha, for both proofreading and skilfully reining in my wilder editorial and design pretensions. Any errors that remain are entirely my fault.

Finally, a very special thanks to my Scottish farm hosts John, Eleanor and Terry and Mary for letting me loose on their walls and going out of their way to show me the amazing stone works in their area. And, to Sean Adcock and his partner Brenda, for their wonderful hospitality and that extraordinary tour of those misty Welsh mountains. I feel privileged to have spent time with such wonderful hosts in a fascinating and beautiful part of the world.

A PATH LESS ORDINARY

*Josh Bowes tells us about his unconventional journey as a
stone worker*

Words and Photos: Josh Bowes



I was first introduced to dry stone walling in my early teens by my father, who on many occasions had me labouring with him as he built walls on his property.

I remember it amongst the many other physical labours as being the only job I didn't mind getting roped into...everything else I'd try to evade, or I'd escape at the crack of dawn on my pushbike and return at dusk, rather than earning blisters from crow-barring post holes or mixing concrete.

Dry stone walling was a task I didn't feel the need to flee from; something to do with its creative problem solving, making sense out of abstract natural material and finding myself enamoured by the end result. Long before I understood its structure, I just enjoyed staring at the compositions stones made when placed together like this.

Many years later, after completing school and now enrolled in university, studying Landscape Architecture, I found myself concerned with the idea that I'd be stuck inside drawing landscapes and not building them.

This was contrary to my upbringing, where my father taught me the importance of making and fixing things, physical work and "if you want a job done properly, you'd better do it yourself".

I already had the thought of dropping out of university, but even more so after watching people draw landscape designs, they weren't even sure were possible to construct.

Around this time, I came across a book called "In the Company of Stone" by Dan Snow. Immediately the black and white photography of his dry stonework brought me right back to stone walling, something that had been absent in my life for a couple of years.

Dry stone walling is one of those things that when you see photographs of it, or someone building a wall, you just want to



leap back in, so I did, right into the deep end, starting my own dry stone walling business 2 weeks later, having only my teenage years stacking stone with the old man as experience.

I could have done with a mentor, teacher or at least courses but neither were available to me here at that time. So, I built with stone wherever I could find it—most often in the bush, figuring things out by trial and error, even taking on jobs a little above my pay grade.

It definitely was learning the hard way which is at times also the long road but one never forgotten.

Later on, I found social media and stepped into a whole new world of inspiring, highly skilled dry stone wallers and their craft. I spent many hours gazing at photos of both historic and recently constructed walls.

The exceptional quality of craftsmanship displayed in these walls motivated me to aspire to a similar level of excellence.

Whilst looking for wallers to follow on social media, I came across Fergus Packman, from Ireland. Fergus impressed by how he could make beautiful walls from awkwardly shaped limestone. This limestone wasn't too different to the basalt field stone that I was familiar with.

So, to cut a long story short, I

made contact with Fergus. There was a mutual appreciation of each other's work and he mentioned that I should come over and lay some stone. So on a whim, I did. Fergus very kindly put me up and got me to work instantly on a free standing wall he was building in Moycullen, just outside of Galway.

Until this point, I hadn't worked with many other wallers, so I didn't know how I would go working alongside another professional. He's a quick-witted fella and walls even quicker than he talks.

At the end of our first solid day's work together, I was quietly impressed with the amount of wall we had built.

I wasn't sure what Fergus reckoned the normal level of square meters should be for a day, so said nothing.

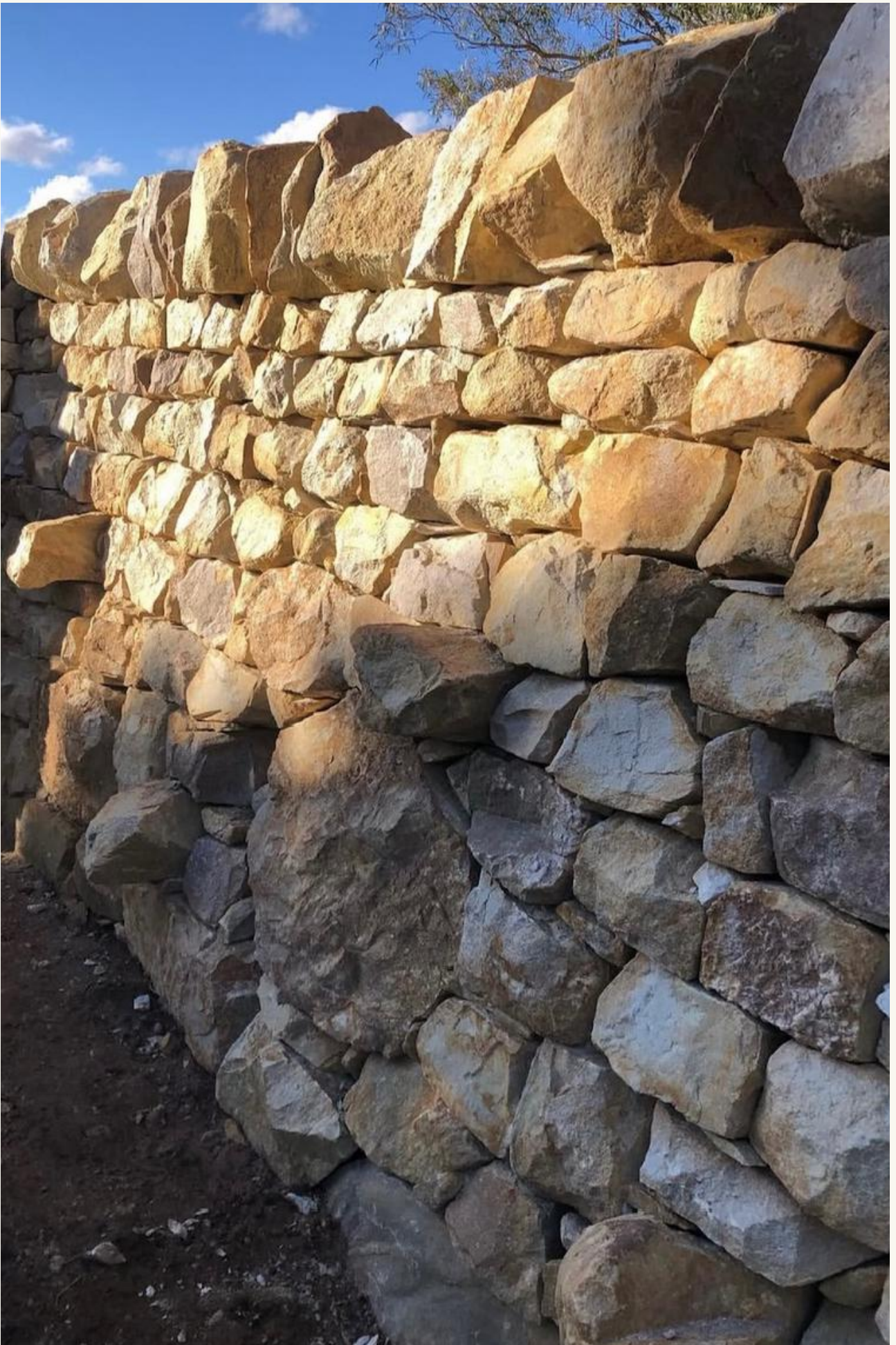
Whenever, you're abroad you work five times harder and I didn't want anyone to think that the Australian sun had made us lazy. But, to my relief Fergus said; we should do this more often..... phew!

Working with Fergus had a great influence on my approach to walling, loosening my style and having me lay stone just as you found it.

Fergus reckons that; "to be a Waller all you need is a bad lump hammer and a ball of string".



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It really has been bloody fantastic stuff - connecting with masons around the world, speaking the same stone language, finding the same joys and sharing the same frustrations.

Along this path I have always had a firm grip on how I've wanted my style of stonework to appear, always appreciating work of a more agricultural rustic aesthetic than a honed neat style. I also took cues and was guided by the work of other masons who's skill stood out to me-Dan Snow being one of the first. I found that if you stare long enough you understand the clever decisions made when walling with certain stone types.

Initially I wanted to work with more of the flat stone I saw in some of the books from the UK I had read, but the reality was

basalt was what was all around me in abundance and that I could have for free, so logically I decided to specialise in working with that.

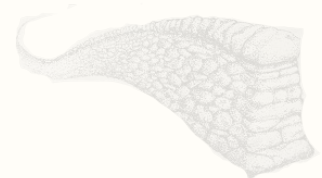
In the beginning there was the initial challenge of becoming good at working with stone. Over time I came to love it for what it is-something timeless, something lasting and always a challenge-sometimes even praying for a job to come along with the worst stone possible to work with, just to test my brain.

At first, I overworked the stone too much, too neat- you try to conquer stone a little too much inevitably losing its raw natural shape. However, I also think that this experience is also needed in order to understand the limitations of the material.

These days I specialise in many aspects of traditional stone

masonry, from mortared walls/houses, hand cut lettering, commissioned carvings if asked and smaller scale restorations.

After 25 years of working with stone, my advice to anyone who wants to take up walling is to approach wallers whose work you admire, rigorously do your homework, understand the structure and rules of thumb for dry stone walling first. And, keep away from stone cladding (haha) and most importantly say yes to every challenging stone project big or small that comes your way. Also, be aware that no matter how long you've been walling, the learning never ever stops.



CREATING BEAUTY WITH STONE

Interview with:
Jen Corrigan

Interviewer:
Ken Baker



Jen Corrigan is a Level 2 DSWA UK, Certified Waller and Stonemason from, Nova Scotia, Canada. Jen is a member of the Dry Stone Canada Cooperative and in 2022 was the Canadian Waldemar Wower Bursary award recipient.

Can you provide our readers with a bit of your back story?

I went to a college for Photography; it was something that I wanted to do since I was 10 years old. My co-op placement was a negative experience, it made me realize that commercial photography wasn't a path I wanted to walk down, so taking photographs became a pastime rather than a profession. After a couple of jobs that paid the bills but robbed me of joy, I ended up taking various farm jobs. Enjoying the work, I went on to have my own market garden selling garlic and vegetables at the roadside, and at a nearby general store and restaurant. Every spring when the soil was tilled, all these stones would appear at the surface, the result of the frost heaving them up.

I needed somewhere to put them other than in a messy pile, that's when I found out about Dry Stone Canada and the workshops they put on.

When did your interest in walling begin?

As long as I can remember I've loved stone; environment or genetic inheritance, I'm not sure. Half of my ancestors came from Scotland in the 19th century and formed the "Scotch Block" in Esquesing, and in nearby Nassagaweya and Puslinch, including a 3rd Great Grandfather, a Stonemason in Scotland, who came to Ontario to farm. I grew up on the Niagara Escarpment which is a 1,050 km belt of dolomitic limestone. I spent much of my childhood exploring the Bruce Trail and conservation areas in and around Halton Hills, exposed rock caves and waterfalls everywhere. My Grandparents lived in a stone house and had a dairy farm near a quarry, an opportunity for a kid to get a dump truck driver to honk their horn for fun, as they drove by hauling more stone. Walking back to the house, the haunting sound of a neighbour piper's lament wafted through the air. Later, at seventeen, my family went to Wales, my paternal Grandfather's birth country. I was blown away by the stonework in the landscape, the beauty of it all etched itself in my mind.

When did you decide that dry stone walling is something you wanted to do?

A few years ago I stumbled upon a dry stone wall when I was at the Alton Mill for a photography exhibit. The wall, standing there with its texture and shadows, intrigued me, drew me in further. I've always craved physical work, but with my small stature, I felt building with stone wasn't possible. Farm work was as close as I got until I took a dry stone workshop with Dry Stone Canada in 2019.

What do you find most enjoyable about working with stone?

I love this ancient craft, creating beauty by thoughtfully placing stones together, and I get a kick out of the juxtaposition of solitude and camaraderie in this work.

Do you think walling is a viable occupation?

For me in Nova Scotia, not so much, it's early days though. In general, I think it's a viable occupation, I know wallers in Ontario that work all year long under shelter in the winter, with supplemental heat. I believe the demand for wallers depends on a flourishing local economy, and the value a community places on its cultural heritage.



A lot of wallers work solo, how do you build community with other wallers?

I like the solitude but it can get a little lonely working alone day after day. Competitions and collaborations are great ways to connect with other wallers and stone workers, which makes walling more enjoyable and amusing.

In 2022 I was awarded one half of The Waldemar Wower Bursary, set up in memory of Waldemar Wower, one of the founders of DSWAI. It's a waller exchange program between Canada and Ireland.

I went to Inis Oirr for the Festival of Stone and Theo Burke, the Irish Bursary recipient, went to Amherst Island in Ontario for the Dry Stone Canada Symposium.

I was shown excellent hospitality in Belfast by Dr. John Lyness, a DSWAI Board Member, who toured us around breathtaking Northern Ireland stone sites.

Next I headed to the tiny Atlantic Ocean Island Inis Oirr, for the Féile na gCloch (Festival of Stone), where I met a lively group of skilled wallers and stone carvers, was welcomed and went straight to work building a Clochán (Beehive Hut). It was educational, inspiring, and energizing, we worked hard and relaxed enthusiastically, the guys took me into the fold, and we still keep in touch.

Above: Jen helping to build a Clochán (Bee Hut) at Féile na gCloch in 2022. **Photo:** Karl Kennedy



Left: The Clochán (Bee Hut) nearing completion



The 1.8 meter tall ironstone wall Jen Built in 2024

Is there a project that you are especially proud of?

I'm most proud of the freestanding wall I built last year, it's 1.8 metres (6 ft) high, and 9 metres (30 ft) long. Made out of local ironstone, so called because it sounds like a bell when you hammer it, and it turns rusty brown when exposed to rain. The stone breaks off in tiny splinters instead of satisfying chunks, rarely ever level bedded, it's gnarly stuff.

Is there any advice you would give to someone wanting to take up dry stone walling as a profession?

Join your local Dry Stone Walling Association, go to workshops and read books about walling, participate in international stone festivals, volunteer, and build practice walls wherever you can. It takes a lot of time to develop proficiency in this trade, but don't be dissuaded or intimidated, the walling community is friendly and encouraging. Personally, gaining stone masonry training was confidence boosting, I learned about safety, working to a line, and prepared me for the physicality required. A bunch of the wallers I know were stonemasons first. As a bonus it's a winter work option if the weather's too harsh for walling.

Instagram: [@stone.geek](#)

Dry Stone Canada Cooperative:
www.drystonecanadacoop.co

The Waldemar Wower Bursary
Award Recipient Stories:
www.dswai.ie/dswai-news



QUARRYING BUILDING STONE

A Brief History of Stone Quarrying in South Australia

Words: Bruce Munday

Until the Industrial Revolution there existed a natural harmony between architecture and the landscape. Villages were constructed of similar materials, usually stone and timber, quarried and felled locally. The simplicity of the architecture and the natural materials used, blended satisfactorily with the landscape. Derek Moule¹ British military engineer, Sir John Burgoyne's *Rudimentary Treatise on the Blasting and Quarrying of Stone for Building and other Purposes* (1840)

describes in detail the laborious and often dangerous work of winning stone for structures that we now admire. Dealing with slate he tells us: ... the most convenient method of quarrying to be by detaching the masses of slate vertically from the face of a trench or a gullet. The cutting of this gullet into the side of the slate mountain is, therefore, the first operation in the working of the quarry. As the trench proceeds and the height of the surface above becomes greater than convenient (say 40feet), a second trench is commenced above the other, and similarly

carried onward into the mountain until the height above reaches a similar quantity, when a third trench is commenced, and so on. In the upper part of the quarry the slates are removed with crowbars; but the slates become harder as they are lower from the surface and require gunpowder to detach the main masses. The miners engaged in drilling the holes for the powder are suspended by ropes from the upper parts of the rock and are liable to many severe accidents.² Early settlers were not long in the new colonies before they began digging holes in the

Photo Credit: State Library SA



Using 'plug and feathers' to split stone (circa 1920)

ground and pulling out the stone.

It appears the first serious hole in South Australia was Green Hill Slate and Flag Quarry in 1838 at the now fashionable suburb of Beaumont. This produced what is commonly known as bluestone on account of the earthy colours from iron staining along joints.³ More bluestone was found along the Adelaide foothills from Mitcham to Magill. Mitcham Council itself had no less than twenty quarries, perhaps the most famous being Glen Osmond, which now gapes at us from the bottom of the South Eastern Freeway. Bluestone from Glen Osmond, along with Tapley Hill, graced many of the most impressive buildings in early Adelaide.

From the 1920s, sandstone from Mount Lofty, Basket Range, Carey Gully and Stirling gradually took over the market, but today Kanmantoo and Wistow are important players when it comes to decorative stonework, Mintaro and Willunga for paving. And of course, there are many others. South Australia is blessed with a variety of good stone but there are storm clouds ahead. With the spread of urban development there are ever

increasing regulations and restrictions on quarrying and the inevitable problem of where to store the spoil.

At the same time quarry masters are finding it extremely difficult to recruit good labour. One day after visiting a quarry I went into the Apple Store in Rundle Mall to be greeted by a swarm of twenty-something young folk in blue T-shirts seemingly outnumbering the customers. It was not as if we, the customers, needed anything very technical – probably a new cable or how to switch off an annoying app. It seems that few young people want to do physical work outside, at least for the pay on offer.

The miles of dry-stone fences across rural South Australia were generally built from surface stone, as close as possible to the job. Some stone was raised from small local quarries, often no more than a few feet deep and a few yards across, but carting stone to the job could be a significant part of the workload and to be avoided where possible. The better stone was of course for buildings, and the very best for the best buildings.

Stone has left its mark all over South Australia and is an intimate part of its heritage.

When Kristin and I moved here in 1974 it was all the rage to knock down old stone buildings – a sign of progress. Fortunately that mood has changed somewhat, even if what we are left with is often just an edifice, but at least that tells a story. But it's not just classic buildings that need protection, the whole stone flavour is an essential part of built South Australia. The range of colours, textures and applications are unique to SA and a reminder that in the early days of European settlement, if you could not grow it you had to mine it. Here's hoping that the Ten Year Strategy for Heritage Tourism in SA takes advantage of this legacy⁴.



Photo: Jon Moore

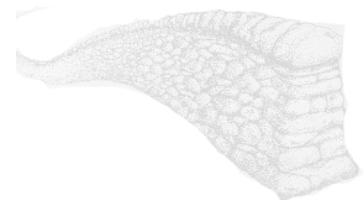
Carey Gully Sandstone being used in a dry stone walling workshop in the Adelaide Hills, South Australia.

¹Derek Moule [Landscaping With Stone](#)

²A fascinating [youtube](#) video from an old (1977) German quarry shows just how dangerous was this industry and how monotonous the process of splitting and pitching stone.

³SA bluestone is actually a siltstone and quite unlike the grey basalt bluestone used in many public buildings in Victoria and Tasmania. The important Kanmantoo and Wistow stone comes from a unique horizon in the Cambrian Tapanappa Formation east of Adelaide.

⁴Melbourne's [Living Museum of the West](#) has an illustrated commentary on historic Victorian bluestone quarries



VOLCANOES & DRY STONE WALLS

An account of the *Volcanoes and Consumption Dykes Field Trip* that took place on the 21st of June 2025

Words: Jim Holdsworth



Aaaah, there's Wayne Fox, down from Wagga Wagga to work on some walls with David Long.

Former vice-president Allan Willingham arrives, keen to be out and about after his accident. Over there is Ray Tonkin, retired Director of Heritage Victoria who says he's along for the chance to visit Dalvui, chatting with our President. And lots of other faces; frequent field trip attendees, some we've not seen for ages, and a goodly number of non-members. Come in from the warm winter sun, grab a tea or coffee and a biscuit, we're about to get underway.

The RSL Hall in Camperdown is set up for lunch and forty people settle in to hear talks about the places we'll be visiting this afternoon. First up is former DSWAA Secretary Andrew Miller who tells us about the work of The Corangamite Arts Dry Stone Walls Conservation Project. Led

by our former convenor the late Josie Black with Andrew as project manager, this creative project was undertaken back in 1995. It spawned two significant outputs; one a Dry Stone Walls Driving Trail to notable dry stone wall sites in the district and the other the publication of 'If These Walls Could speak', a book telling the story of the heritage of dry stone walls and wallers in this part of Victoria's Western District. A reprint of the book is due shortly thanks to Andrew's endeavours. Andrew tells us that the membership will be advised when the reprint becomes available.

David Long then describes his very first walling commission, also in 1995: the building of a dry stone wall in Terang, a town about 20 kilometres from here, to serve as a sculptural marker at the eastern entry to the town.

Our President, Timothy Hubbard, then gives us an illustrated talk on the homestead and garden of Dalvui.

The garden, designed by William Guilfoyle, will be a feature of our visit later this afternoon; the garden complementing the century old two-storey gable-roofed home and notable for its extensive lawns dotted with mature trees, stone grottos, decorative ponds and a long ha-ha dry stone wall.

We're well briefed as the kitchen door opens and a brace of ladies from the local Lions Club, ably orchestrated by Maree Belyea, bring out savory scones, a selection of soups (with seconds keenly offered), followed by scones with jam and cream, and fruit platters. All fresh, all home-made, all delicious!

By car convoy we set off, with the first stop being the Terang gateway wall.

An impressive structure with challenges of construction and robustness given its public location, as David points out what he had to grapple with.

Community involvement in supplying local stones



Photo: Jim Holdsworth

Former DSWAA secretary Andrew Miller tells the group about the history of early walling in the Western District, as people enjoy soups and scones courtesy of the Camperdown Lions Club

contributed to a successful outcome; so much so that twenty years later, David was engaged to build a matching dry stone wall to mark the western entry to Terang! Watch out for it as you head west along the highway.

The small town of Noorat sits adjacent to the impressive volcanic cone of Mount Noorat, its grassed and rounded slopes forming an evocative reminder of why there are so many large and beautiful dry stone walls in the area. We make several stops to admire the long, finely-crafted walls; both road boundary and paddock; which are in generally excellent condition, a testament to the wallers who gathered the prolific field stones and built many miles of over-sized consumption dykes.

Next, a stop at the entrance to Glenormiston to admire the dry stone gate posts



Photo: Hadyn Baker

Mount Noorat with Noorat township in the background

constructed by David Long, in memory of celebrated Waller Bill Harlock, the adjacent walls lining the drive and the avenue of majestic elms at Glenormiston. Then on to Dalvui where owner David Conn welcomes us in front of the property's long front dry stone

boundary wall. We meander the garden, consider the design of the ha-ha wall, admire the restoration work on the homestead that David and Penny have undertaken since becoming the owners a few years ago, then enjoy an afternoon tea arranged



Photo: Jim Holdsworth

The drive leading to Glenormiston TAFE is bordered by dry stone walls built by students and completed recently by Melbourne waller David Long

Dalvui homestead near Noorat. Its garden, designed by William Guilfoyle (who also designed the Melbourne Botanic Gardens) includes a dry stone Ha-Ha wall



Photograph: Glenn Wilson



Photo: Jim Holdsworth

President Timothy Hubbard chats with David Conn, current owner of Dalvui, in front of the property’s road frontage wall; an impressive example of consumption dykes in the area

Photo: Jim Holdsworth



Forty members and friends enjoy the tour and its extensive spread of dry stone walls

by Andrew and Karin Miller.

The warmth has gone out of the sun and the evening chill draws the trip to a close as we thank our hosts and leave Dalvui along its sweeping tree-lined driveway.

Quite a few of us are soon found in the warm and welcoming Hampden Hotel in Camperdown to chat about the day over dinner and drinks.

We’ve seen and heard much about the history of the area and the enviable contribution that dry stone walls, built both by pioneering wallers and more recent craftsmen, have made to defining the character of this part of Victoria. Located as it is at the epicentre of the vast volcanic plain that extends from Melbourne to Mount Gambier, the legacy of an ancient volcanic landscape being manifested by extensive dry stone walls cannot be denied.



STRING THEORY

Master Waller, Nick Aitken, explains why string lines help achieve accurate wall dimensions

Words and Photos: Nick Aitken

Warning - This piece quotes Imperial measurements because that is how the dyke was built, and the term 'dyke' is used for a Scottish dry stone wall.

I read somewhere about an old Derbyshire waller who declared he could build a perfectly straight wall, freehand, without lines. What do you think? Maybe over a two-yard gap, less likely over ten or twenty yards.

Lines are important, they help keep things straight and level where they should be straight and level, and maintain the batter. It is obvious when a line has been ignored. The wall looks unbalanced and we must wonder what effect that has on strength.

We have to work with what's available. Different rock, different build, different skills.

In a recent internet discussion one contributor thought lines should only be used for strict coursing. The statement was understandable, from a waller who works with thin-bedded limestone which can be shaped and laid like brick (that's harsh!). His lines are essential to produce a wall with no swoops and dives in the coursing.

There is a debate about whether these coursed walls are strong enough - are the horizontal courses the equivalent of a

vertical running joint? You decide.

Most of us were raised on wilder stone, blessed by the local geology to have the freedom to build something where vertical zippers and long horizontal runs are disguised within a complex facia. I've seen it dismissed as 'boulder stacking' (that's really harsh!).

Three hundred years ago, when the process of building permanent freestanding drystone walls was being finessed, largely by adapting elements of mortared stonework (bondstones, coping, hearting etc), advocates for agricultural improvement (usually land agents or clergy with no practical experience), were really keen to apply a one-size-fits-all pattern to wall building. Their specifications assumed fairly flat stone; they left it to the builder to adapt the design to suit the local geology.

Dykers in the southern Scotland were praised in early literature for their initiative and ability to work with whatever they could grab from the landscape.

Dyking emerged as a skilled trade, distinct from brick or stone masons - it was no longer a labourer's task. Their style of walling was flexible enough to get them work anywhere, nationally and internationally.

Lines can be used less precisely

when using boulders or irregular stone. I usually say they should be raised by the average thickness of the stone - not so easy when the stones vary in size and shape. Raise the lines to the thickness of the biggest stone, or to a height where you want to level things out, maybe as much as 10 to 15 inches.

Building to an occasional levelled course creates a solid base to build on top of, keeps control of the structural strength and produces something which looks symmetrical.

When building a standard double dyke with irregular stone it is only vitally important to get the double level at two places - throughstone height and as a bed for the covers and copes. Everywhere else the line is a guide to keep the wall straight and the batter even.

You can lay the stone precisely by sighting down, looking from the line down to the edge of the existing stonework and laying the face of the stone on that plane.

I have seen works in progress with lines at the foundation, at various heights up the face and marking the top of the cope. Why give yourself the hassle of manoeuvring through all that string? Why buy all that string? Keep it simple, two lengths between frames is enough.

A boundary dyke near Newtonmore, Scotland



The photo above is of a boundary dyke near Newtonmore, Scotland, built in the mid 1850's. Most of it has stood the test of time and could be restored with not too much effort. The wall was built to a standard pattern, with consistent measurements at foundation, throughstone height and below the cope. There are only a few coverstones. The copestones vary from 10 to 15 inches tall. The throughs stick out about 4 inches on each side, on three feet (one yard) centres. Sometimes one sticks out further

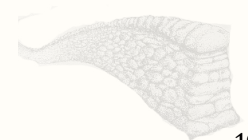
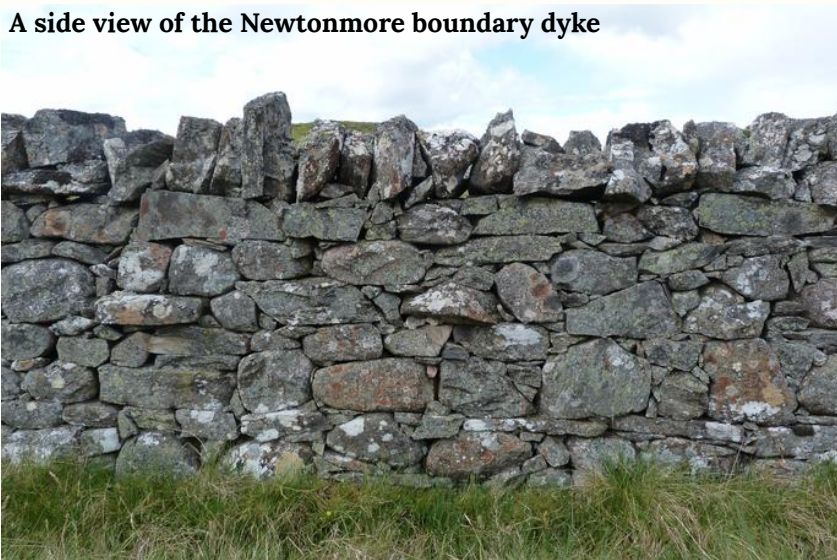
because that was the best way to use the stone without destroying it. The total height is 54 inches, four and a half feet - higher with dips in the ground. All this was built with hand tools, lines, frames, a measuring tape, and a lot of intangible skill.

In the side-on view of the Newtonmore dyke below, at least two throughstones are clearly visible. Lines would have been set for the foundation. We can see lines were used to bring the stonework to a level about 10 inches above the grass, at 24 inches for the throughs, at 34

inches, and finally at 42 inches - the base for the cope. The lift between levels is taken up with one stone or an arrangement of smaller stones.

The bonding pattern is similar to 'snecked masonry', a mortared style where different stone sizes interlink to create a very strong structure. Apart from the lack of mortar this looks like mortared cottage walls a few miles down the road. Strength is all about stone-on-stone contact. Mortar 'just' keeps out the weather by sealing the space between stones. Many of the face stones are split boulders. The flat face becomes the outer face of the wall; the inner end of the stone is secured with flakes and shards from the trimming. The centre of the wall is sometimes fairly hollow. Regular throughstones help compensate. I doubt if there was anyone wasting time breaking up stone specifically for hearting.

A side view of the Newtonmore boundary dyke



Interview with:
Kristie de Garis

A LIFE REBUILT

Interviewer:
Ken Baker



Kristie De Garis is a writer, photographer and dry stone waller based in Perthshire, Scotland. Kristie's book; *Drystone- A Life Rebuilt* has been featured in *The Bookseller*, *The Times* and *The Smithsonian Magazine*.

Can you provide our readers with a bit of your back story?

I currently live in Perthshire, Scotland, with my two children and my two ex-husbands (before you ask, it's platonic!). But before this chapter of my life, I spent years working in the arts, in photography. I didn't come from a particularly stable background, so I've had to build things myself, piece by piece, whether that was a home, a career, or a sense of identity. Much of my adult life has been about that process of rebuilding and finding steadiness after, and in the midst of, chaos. I've had periods of addiction and recovery, single parenthood, late diagnosis of ADHD, chronic illness, and a lot of struggle along the way. Each change has shaped how I think about work and what I value. These days my life feels simpler and more honest.

I live close to the land, I work with my hands, I write, and I try to make things that last, whether they're words, photographs, or walls. It feels like a good balance now, a life made through persistence and curiosity rather than any grand plan.

When did your interest in walling begin?

My interest in walling began as a child in Caithness, in the far north of Scotland. I grew up surrounded by dry stone boundaries. I didn't think of it as craft then; it was just something that existed, marking

the edges of fields and memory.

I remember vividly pulling weathered copes from a wall, like unsheathing a heavy blade; the slithering clatter of stone as the old walls gave way beneath my feet. I had no idea who had built the walls, despite them being everywhere.

That felt both magical and mysterious to me, as if the land itself had quietly arranged them. Those moments stayed with me. It's strange how early experiences like that sit dormant for years and then rise back up when you need them most, which for me was thirty years later.

What do you find most enjoyable about walling?

I love that it's about doing what you can with what you have. That deeply resonates with me. I also love that it's not about perfection, although I am prone to perfectionism.

Dry stone helps work that out of me. Every stone has a place, even the awkward ones, and they are often my favourites. That feels like a philosophy as much as a craft.

There's also the satisfaction of standing back at the end of a long day and seeing something that will outlive us all.

In a culture obsessed with speed, convenience and visibility at the expense of all else, walling is the opposite: slow, quiet, and entirely unshowy.



Photo Credit - Christie Hemm Klok.jpeg

A niche with vertical stone backing built with reclaimed York stone



Photo: Kristie de Garis

“It feels good to have built something that quietly supports that kind of stillness and healing”

Stone bench in the memorial garden at the Dhanakosa Buddhist retreat center

Photo: Kristie de Garis

Do you have a favourite project?

One that stands out is a bench I built with my ex-husband, Luke De Garis, at a Buddhist retreat centre called Dhanakosa, on the banks of Loch Voil. It was for a memorial garden, a place where people can go and remember those they loved. It feels good to have built something that quietly supports that kind of stillness and healing. I also just loved working there. Surrounded by hills, the sounds of birds, water lapping at pebble beaches, and the rare luxury of a Scottish heatwave. Walling in good weather is incomparable. On days like that, there is no place I would rather be.

Are there times when you'd rather not be walling?

Definitely, It's bloody hard work, physically, mentally and sometimes, emotionally. There are days when your back aches, the weather's miserable, and you've murdered six stones in a row. I joke that I'm a fair-weather waller, though it's only half a joke. I cannot stand the days when you turn up for work in minus five degrees Celsius and there's a pile of stone

huddled together that you have to smash apart with a sledgehammer. The exquisite pain of cold fingers trapped between cold stones. Cold seeping into your bones. But even on those days, I never regret being there.

I also don't love working when I have my period. The fatigue, the brain fog, and the reality of changing a tampon behind a bush while sheep watch. It's decidedly humbling.

Is there any advice you'd offer to women who wanted to take up walling ?

Don't be put off by the physicality. For every stone you can't lift, there's a stone a man can't lift.

Don't get caught up in all the nonsense about speed either. I'm not a fan of the DSWA levels for many reasons. No one in real life builds that fast. Especially at first. Speed is the enemy of precision. Focus on fit and good building. Speed will come in time.

Take prevention measures to protect yourself. Anything else is unsustainable. And, don't buy into the machismo, of which there is plenty.

Mostly, trust that you belong there. You don't have to prove yourself beyond the work itself. The stone doesn't care.

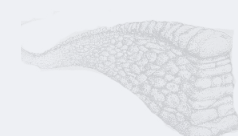
Much of what I have learned through walling has shaped how I write. My book, *Dry Stone- A Life Rebuilt*, grew out of the same place of patience and persistence, and from the understanding that you can rebuild almost anything if you're willing to do it stone by stone.

www.kristiedegar.com

www.thedrystonecompany.com



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THE STONE WALL

VERSUS

THE RABBIT

Laurie Atkins describes the various attempts made to rabbit proof dry stone walls in the 19th and 20th Centuries

Words: Laurie Atkins



The timber slats under the copestones of this wall near Corangamite, Victoria, were intended to stop rabbits climbing over the wall.

Photo: Bruce Munday

Dry stone walls (DSWs) started to appear in the landscape of the Port Phillip District, then to become Victoria, from the early to mid-800s.

DSWs were constructed to satisfy the envisaged agricultural functions of the times primarily to contain stock within a pasture or to exclude stock from a cultivation paddock and to define property boundaries.

With the introduction of rabbits into Victoria, DSWs were soon to be conscripted into the fight against the expansion and the control of the pest. The magnitude of the problem is hard to appreciate now. Domesticated rabbits arrived in Australia with the First Fleet and the first feral rabbit population was reported in Tasmania as early as 1827.

On the mainland, Thomas Austin freed about a dozen wild-caught English rabbits on his property near Geelong, Victoria, in December 1859. They reached the Queensland – New South Wales border by 1886 and covered most of their present range by 1910 (Australian Government 2011).

According to the *Victorian Year Book*, 1905, active operations for the destruction of rabbits on Crown lands were first undertaken by the Government in 1880, and from that date to the 30th June, 1905, sums amounting to £448,320 (pounds) had been expended.

In 1878 a Bill was introduced into the Victorian Parliament in response to the rabbit problem. There was much criticism of the Bill and several amendments were made before the *Rabbit Suppression Act* was passed in 1880.



This photo, from the Isle of Sky, shows a wall with overhanging copestones. These overhangs were around 250 mm on both faces of the wall.

After four years in operation a further amendment act was passed in 1884. These Acts, amongst other things, empowered Rabbit Inspectors to enter private land, determine the presence of rabbits and serve notices on occupiers or owners to destroy the rabbits. In cases where there was no action after 6 months, the Rabbit Inspector could pull down a stone wall to destroy the harbouring rabbits and charge the occupier or owner for the cost of suppression.

Faced with the impact of rabbits and the compulsion of legislation, land occupiers or owners began to modify field walls in the hope of a defence. Pickard 2019 identified several modifications made to DSWs in an attempt to render them rabbit-proof including; overhanging copestones, rebuilding, trenching, plugging the faces, and incorporating wire mesh when it became standard in the mid 1880s (Pickard 2019).



Photo: Laurie Atkins

A wall at Bamganie (near Lethbridge), Victoria, shows a section of regulation, free standing double DSW with wire mesh placed under the copestones and held horizontally on both sides by the remnants of a narrow timber slat. A run of barbed wire was fixed to the margin of the mesh indicating the need for a defense against sheep.



Photo: Laurie Atkins

This wall at Lake Wongan (near Streatham), Victoria, shows a relatively recent modification, perhaps from the 50's or 60's. There is a full height DSW with wire mesh supported by adjacent star pickets which are not incorporated into the fabric of the DSW. The lower margin is held down by stone and the upper margin is supported by a run of plain wire attached to the top of the tall star pickets.



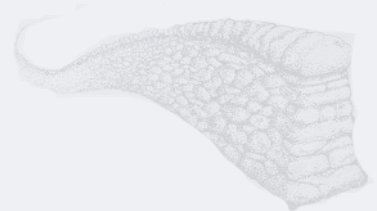
Photo: Laurie Atkins

This wall near Port Fairy, Victoria, shows a low double DSW incorporating a timber post with wire mesh extending the height of the fence. The posts are angled away from the property side toward the road reserve. The lower margin of the mesh is held down by copestones and the upper is attached to a run of barbed wire.

Manifold's 'Rabbit Walls' at Lake Purrumbete is the most famous of the modified walls.

The original walls, 'four or five feet high, and two broad', were erected in 1857. Plagued by rabbits, modifications were well under way by 1878 (Pickard 2019).

Surviving examples of a variety of DSW modifications can still be found in many areas across Victoria even though the idea of DSWs as a primary defence against rabbits is long gone.



A WALL OR A BANK?

Master Waller, Sean Adcock explores the differences between Welsh Cloddiau, Cornish Hedges and Dry Stone Walls

Words and Photos: Sean Adcock



Garden Clawdd, Brynsiencyn, Ynys Mon, Gwynedd

I often say one of the hardest things about writing an article is deciding exactly where to start and which direction to head off in.

When I was asked to write a follow up to the Cornish Hedges article which featured in *Flagstone #62*, looking at the Welsh version - the *clawdd* (roughly clow as in clown, th as in them; plural *cloddiau* - clo as in clod - thee-eye) I could cover the obvious and then the more subtle differences between the two, but a bit dry maybe. So I turned back to the article and three things jumped out at me.

Firstly there was the mention of 4000 years, an aspect of these boundaries which needs a lot of unpacking and for me perhaps a bit of a potentially dangerous rabbit hole.

Secondly, there was the look at their botanic value, an area I am forever trying to research for *cloddiau*, most recently when writing an article¹ on the wildlife value of dry stone walls in the United Kingdom.

There is a plethora of information on the marvellous *Cornish Hedges Library*²- any one interested in the wildlife value of these structures should read *The Life and Death of a Flailed Cornish Hedge*³, informative in some ways, uplifting but ultimately depressing.

Sadly, I have yet to find a *cloddiau* equivalent, in fact, not a single substantive article.

Running out of options, the photo of a 'Cross section of a Cornish hedge' stirred something. I don't think I have a decent pic of a cross section of a *clawdd* in my somewhat extensive wall photo library.

Differences between Welsh and Cornish Hedges

Cloddiau are generally found in the coastal plain in Wales, between the sea and the uplands, in areas where there is a tradition of stonework but not so much stone as a few miles up the road. Often areas which have a tradition geared towards rearing cattle rather than sheep. This leads to perhaps one of the subtler differences between *Cloddiau* and Cornish Hedges. Welsh *Cloddiau* are usually 80-100 cm high and more often than not at least as wide on top as they are tall.

To grossly simplify things Cornish hedges start off wide but are often taller with a concave batter and ultimately narrower at the top.

Some Core Principals

This brings me to the earth core, one - maybe the main - aspect that distinguishes these structures from dry stone walls *per se*.

Hopefully we all know that pouring soil, even small stones, into a drystone wall does not lead to a very stable structure so why are *cloddiau* and Cornish hedges allowed to get away with it?

I have taught *Clawdd* construction and written a book about them and promoted them for years.

When teaching, emphasising the need for a well compacted core has always been a key aspect. (but I have a literal, somewhat subjective) "rule of thumb"... it should be quite difficult to push your thumb up to its first joint into the compacted core.

In 2012, I was instructing at a festival in Canada, a passer-by asked "why are putting soil in the middle of your wall?" I had a

"It is not a wall filled with soil. It's a bank covered in stone"

light bulb moment which had never occurred to me before-we are not really putting soil in our wall; we're putting stone around a soil core'.

Suddenly, it seemed a blindingly obvious explanation; a *clawdd* is essentially an earth bank protected from the elements by a skin of stone. It is not a wall filled with soil. It's a bank covered in stone.

Well, it seemed obvious to me, so I included it when writing a specification leaflet for the DSWA GB *Technical Specifications for Welsh Cloddiau*⁴. However, apparently, it's not that obvious.

I recently bought a book *A Natural History of the Hedgerow*⁵, lured by the additional smaller print, all lower case "and ditches, dykes and dry stone walls". There were over five pages on Cornish hedges, and just half a page on *cloddiau* which includes the text *in a leaflet detailing the specifications of a clawdd, the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain insists they are absolutely not earth filled stone walls (which they clearly are), but stone clad earth banks*" (which they clearly are as well).

Important distinctions

The structures of *cloddiau* and 'pure' dry stone walls are very different. If you fill a wall with soil, you cannot effectively compact it (i.e. lack of space, hitting the tails of face stones and moving them). Inevitably, to a greater or lesser extent, the

soil will settle and not support the internal wedges stabilising face stones. One way or another the wall will collapse considerably earlier than when 'hearted' with stone. It could also wash out or down.

Effective Compaction

If you build the wall wide enough to enable effective compaction of the soil you are in effect forming a bank which would be free standing if you removed the stone. It would subsequently suffer some damage from rain and wind, but will eventually will grass over and, in the absence

of stock, remain relatively stable. Remove the stone from a stone wall filled with soil and you will end up with a loose pile of dirt. Stone used to face a bank prolongs the life of the bank, which is a bank, with or without stone. Soil used to fill a wall shortens the life of the wall, whilst, without the soil, the wall is just a pile of stone. And, without the stone the fill is just a pile of soil.

Historically, earth banks are probably the oldest form of field boundary. I do not have a time machine, but it seems to me

that it is logical to assume that when a field was first cultivated, stone was cleared to the field edge. Then as the amount of stone grew, there would be a need to organise it in a better fashion, so a skin was formed on the bank.

Better ways of organising , rather than just piling up the stone would have been investigated for efficiency and stability.

Over time, the clad banks would be seen to outlast/require less maintenance than the grassy banks.



Participants in a Canadian workshop building a clawdd foundation. The double 'skin' of foundation stones is intended to ameliorate frost heave.

eventually, stone faced banks themselves would have been built.

Cloddiau, are banks, they are not walls. The stone is part of the bank. The bank is not part of a perceived wall.

I'm also tempted to pedantically point out, that a stone wall is made entirely of stone and so, if it has soil in it, by definition it can't be a stone wall.

Achieving Stability

Much of a *Clawdd*'s stability is down to the earth bank itself. In creating this bank in a new wall, it's generally easier to build

Below: Compacting soil with a tamper

some stonework, then fill a layer with soil and compact that soil, around 15cm, or a course at a time, observing the 'rule of thumb'.

Pummel the soil with a tamper while avoiding hitting the face stone and carefully compact around their tails.

On large road schemes you sometimes see the bank formed first with a digger. I always wonder how compact the core then is. As a practice it's a relatively modern one.

Right: A wedge shaped "Catchee" hammer is ideal for compacting around the tails of stones



A Welsh clawdd hopper demonstrating the grace and agility required for compacting a clawdd's core.



Cloddiau are (probably) ancient, and so for the next 50-100 years the jury will remain out on how effective bulldozing a bank is. At 64, I'm not entirely optimistic that I'll ever be able to form a definitive opinion, but here's hoping.

Filling the void

Usually, the filling comes down to a little filling and frequent compacting. There is usually very little stone within this core.

Putting stone in the fill can complicate the actual compaction. as when your compactor/tamper hits one it can damage the compactor, your hands or both.

In addition, *cloddiau*, almost by definition, tend to be in areas with less stone and so you don't want to go wasting it. Usually, only absolute rubbish ends up in the middle and, usually, only in the very bottom.

One exception to this was a *clawdd* I built with members of DSWAC at a festival near Montreal⁵ in Canada.

At this site temperatures regularly drop down to - 40 Celsius. Wisdom would have it

that *cloddiau* cannot survive beyond their western, coastal, distribution. Wales is largely frost free.

We did several things to try and counter this; sowed fast growing grass seed into the face to help bind stone; sandy free draining soil in the center to reduce potential freezing; a double layer of face stones in the lower courses.

On site stone was plentiful and we were demonstrating building techniques rather than trying to save on materials.

The concept of a double skin was to create the *clawdd* equivalent of a gunpowder store.

Traditionally these had thick walls and thin roofs so accidental explosions would go up rather than sideways, thus creating less damage. Here our hope was that any frost would heave more up than out, And, as far as I'm aware so far, it has survived.

Restoring a *clawdd*

When repairing a *clawdd* that has not been left in a damaged state for years there is usually the remains of an intact core.

The dismantling of the remains and the actual rebuild require a slightly different approach compared to a dry stone wall repair.

Here the concept that it's a bank clad with stone is crucial. A bit like leaving a derelict stone wall's foundations if they have not slipped or tipped after years with several hundred kilograms of stone sitting on them means they are well bedded and you're unlikely to improve on that aspect. Similarly, an intact bank is not likely to be improved upon.

You need to cut out anything slumped around the base, beyond that you usually try and peel any remaining face stones off, disturbing the bank as little as possible. Larger foundation stones are almost invariably left in situ and worked around or over, and you should never dig the bank out to fit larger stones in length wise. On balance it is better to "trace" (length along line) rather than set footings, and any irregular stones set in the lower layers, length in. It's a bank protected by stone and so the bank is sacrosanct!



The *Clawdd* Sean built with members of DSWAC in Montreal, Canada

Understanding the nature of a structure determines much of what you actually do in its construction.

For the rest of the rebuild, you usually trim as you go, cutting just enough of the bank to allow placement of the face stones and sufficient compaction around their tails (as in the photo on pg. 30).

Size and Pitch

Unrelated to the core but perhaps amongst the more interesting differences between *cloddiau* and walls (and many, but not all Cornish hedges) is the size of the stone.

Many *cloddiau* are coursed with the stones pitched (set on edge) similar to coping.

This method is often employed where the stones are mostly undersized. Often, much smaller than say, a paperback book. These are not suited to substantial dry stone construction, but ideal for protecting an earth bank.

Setting them like copestones has a couple of major advantages. Firstly, they are wedged together which gives them a certain solidity for their size. At least in the short run.

The short run is often all that is needed as it gives grass a chance to establish. Grass roots easily penetrate between the stones (certainly compared to setting the stones flat).

Pitched stone also means that the grasses roots are also likely to be better watered.

The grass roots help bind the stone together making the size of the stone irrelevant, giving the bank a very resilient skin. Have you ever tried pulling even small stones out of a grassy sward?

Where the stones are larger, the *cloddiau* often have a more random nature. However, the preponderant style, presumably because of the availability of stone and geological type, is the pitched/coursed version. This type often has an irregular footing, or lower course of the larger, more awkwardly shaped stones.

The second point is the width. Plain un-clad earth banks tend not to be tall and skinny; they are relatively squat for stability, and so you would expect *cloddiau* to follow suit.

It is also said that the wider top enables additional stock-proofing (dead wood, gorse etc)

“Where the stones are larger, the *cloddiau* often have a more random nature”



if a field needed to be made stock proof against sheep for example, for any period.

In addition, a wider top facilitates hedge planting, a staple of new *cloddiau* along roads and many old *cloddiau* in fields do have hedges.

However, many do not and it is not totally clear the extent to which any supposed hedge remnants are just that or just colonisation.

Having noted that one of the hardest things I find about writing an article is deciding exactly where to start, the hardest thing, itself, is knowing when to stop and that should probably be now. However, having left a 4000 year old rabbit hole hanging, I will continue this exploration in the next Edition.



Photo: Ken Baker

Sean inspecting a *clawdd* he built about 20 years ago.

¹A Comprehensive Guide For Spotting Wildlife In Dry Stone Walling Across The UK. [Link](#)

²Cornish Hedges [Link](#)

³Life and Death of a Flaield Cornish Hedge [Link](#)

⁴Technical Specifications for Welsh Cloddiau [Link](#)

⁵Clawdd Cuckoo Land [Link](#)

THE STONE PHILOSOPHER

David F Wilson outlines the philosophy behind his approach to stone work

Words and photos: David F Wilson



When I first meet clients about a walling project, I usually start with: “If you want a well built traditional wall, there’ll be better people out there, however if you want something a bit different... I’m your man.”

That statement has become my modus operandi.

I stumbled into walling during my second public art commission (see ‘From the Aegean Sea to Dundee’, *The Flag Stone*#61). I brought no knowledge of the craft, just naivety, enthusiasm and an absolute joy in making things. I’m sure many reading this may concur, working and using stone quickly gets into your system, I soon grew to love what I could do with it. The connection to the

past and tradition was important but also the fact it was such a ‘flexible’ material that was open to my imagination and contemporary aesthetic. I also had a deep sense that my role wasn’t to repeat what others had already mastered, but to ask what else stone could be.

Once stone had entered my consciousness, I looked at it with new keen eyes, absorbing the techniques and differences on display everywhere I went.

Every subtle difference, every technique, every story told through a chisel or saw mark resonated with me. Scotland is rich in stone buildings and in the sheer variety of ways they’ve been shaped and worked across history; it’s a constant source of inspiration.

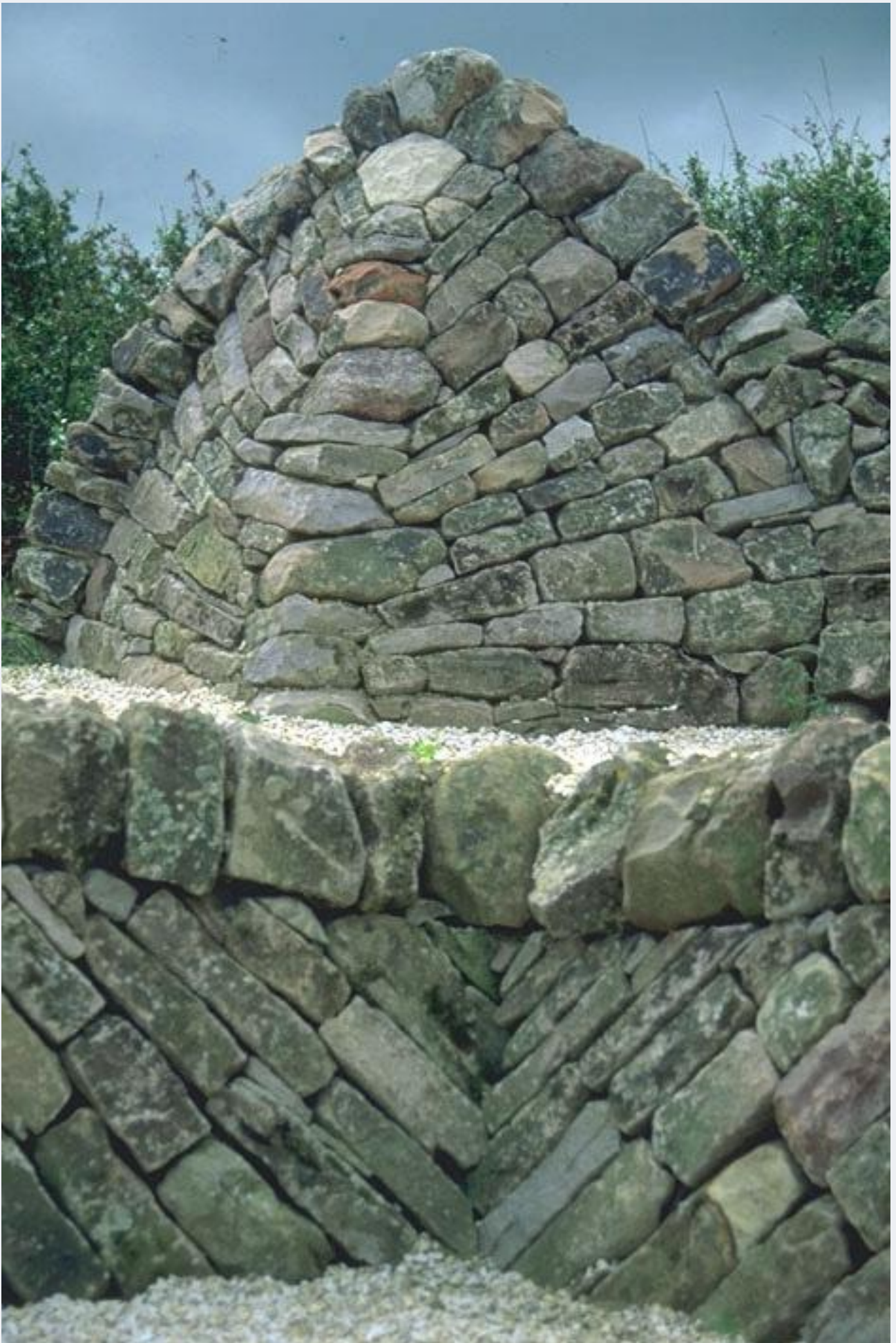
Dry stone walls are ubiquitous across the UK they are the backdrop to any drive from A-B. My first efforts reflected that tradition, albeit with my own quirky twist. But international travel has influenced my walling profoundly. What fascinates and intrigues me is that once you start looking there are a myriad of different ways to use the material. Experiencing stone

work outside the UK opened up my mind to additional possibilities and confirmed what I’d already begun to sense; when stone is used creatively, it brings a quiet, universal joy.

My art college training was around Public Art; art that sits within and is inherently about our shared spaces. Our built environment is experienced by everyone, streets, walls, public spaces, they are where society quietly expresses its values. Over the last decade or so, those shared spaces have been neglected, eroded by financial pressures, online shopping, and a stark sense of loss of civic care. In that context, working with stone isn’t nostalgia for the past. For me, it’s a gentle act of resistance, of making something real, honest and human.

Using stone is my own quiet act of playing Don Quixote tilting at windmills, at what I see as the failures of modernist design and material choices. A personal, public act of inserting stone back into our shared spaces when given the opportunity. I’m making my own small statement that materials matter, that places matter, that communities are currently poorly served by







“Stone reminds us that not everything can be digitised, it and craft will always be real”

contemporary aesthetic choices that don't care if you're there or not.

My Winston Churchill Fellowship Travels were an inspiration, I experienced so many great stone projects both public and private, full of craft, care and imagination. In many ways though it is still a niche part of design thought. It actually amazes me when I interact with designers, architects, planners and engineers that stone isn't even on their radar.

Stone reminds us that not everything can be digitised, it and craft will always be real.

The debate around stone has shifted from 'it's a dying art' which was the public perception when I started my career.

Ideally I want to play my part in helping others on their journey with stone.

The world is changing rapidly! AI is here. What effect that has on people, the world of work, identity and purpose is scary to consider. I agree with Elon Musk; those that 'shift atoms' will probably be shielded from the worst implications of our digital 'superiors.'

My career has been a bumpy ride to say the least, but I have a fundamental belief that having a 'relationship' to stone is a deeply rewarding endeavour, spiritually if not always financially! The smiles, pride and inner joy of those I met on my journey proves to me, others feel the same as I do.

Current concerns around climate, decarbonisation, net zero, are bringing a reassessment of stone as a material of choice.

There are many really interesting and exciting developments happening in the stone world, it's my belief that those that 'know' stone, those who place their hands on it on a daily basis must play a more central role in how it is used going forwards.

All of this is why I've chosen to focus my energy on creating the *International Festival of Stone* in Dundee in Spring 2027. It's not a conference or a trade show, it's a meeting place, a celebration of diversity of practice. A space for those who work with stone, those who design with it, and those who simply care about how our world is made. A place to share knowledge, challenge assumptions, celebrate creativity and, above all, put heart and craft back at the center of the conversation.

Our past proves that when the hand and eye are central to practice, society benefits. I also want to make the case that there's a more crucial element that must sit at the centre of this debate - heart. That human quality, the emotional intelligence that separates us from instinct alone. 'Heart' to me equals creativity, it's the physical expression of the inner voice. I think that needs to be centred in a future where stone moves away from being purely a niche activity.

<http://davidwilsonpublicartist.com>



STONE AGE LANGUAGE

Geological Periods : A brief history

Words: Ken Baker

The Cambrian

The Cambrian is a period of geological time that lasted from about 539 to 485 million years ago (Ma.) It was named by English geologist Adam Sedgwick for slate-rich rocks in southern Wales. These rocks marked the first appearance of abundant and diverse life (aka, the *Cambrian Explosion*). The term “Cambrian” comes from the Latin name for Wales, *Cambria*, which is itself derived from *Cymru*, the Welsh name for the region. In his piece on ‘Quarrying Building Stone’ (pg. 13) Bruce Munday notes that Kanmantoo and Wistow stone come from a special layer of the Cambrian Tapanappa Formation east of Adelaide.



The Ordovician

The Ordovician geological period spans 41.6 million years from the end of the Cambrian, 486.85 Ma. to the start of the Silurian Period 443.1 Ma. The Ordovician was named by geologist, Charles Lapworth because the rocks he was studying were found in the former territory of the Ordovices tribe in northern Wales. The greywacke stone often used for dyke construction in Southwest Scotland (pg. 47) originates from the Ordovician and Silurian Periods. Sean Adcock, who features in this Edition, currently resides in the former tribal lands of the Ordovices.



This Trilobite fossil lived during the Ordovician Period. Source: Michal Boubin

The Silurian

This Period began 443.8 Ma. and ended 419.2 Ma. As with the Ordovician, the Silurian Period was named by a geologist, after a sequence of rocks found in the former territories of the Silures people in southern Wales. Interestingly, the Roman historian, Tacitus¹, describes the Silures as having a dark complexion and curly hair. This suggested to him that they must have, at some stage, come over from Spain. He also describes them as a pretty feisty bunch who objected vigorously to Roman rule.

The Silures have re-emerged in recent years, albeit, with a different complexion, coiffure and temperament, as Silurians, in the Dr Who TV series. They are now a highly intelligent race of ‘reptilian humanoids’.



**A modern day Silurian
Source: [Flick.com/photos](https://www.flickr.com/photos/)**

The Devonian

A Period extending from the end of the Silurian (416 Ma.) to 359.2 Ma. It was first named after an ‘Old Red Sandstone’ rock strata found in the County of Devon in southwestern England. The Devonian is often referred to as the ‘Age of the Fishes’ because there was a major increase in the diversity of fish species at that time. Many of the rock types referred to in the following section were formed during the Devonian Period.



**Devonian Age fish fossils
Photo: Bob Ainsworth**

REARRANGED REGOLITH

*A photographic exploration of how rock types
in the UK have influenced walling styles*

Words and photos: Ken Baker



This distinctive wall is built from cobbles and slate, which was formed during the Devonian (cobbles) and Silurian (slate). The rounding of the cobbles and boulders was created by the action of ice and water. The slate has been used to create a stable platform for the rounded stone.

While traveling through the UK in August and September this year, I took the opportunity to record as many dry stone walling styles as I could.

Fortunately, while participating in a walling workshop near Crooklands in Cumbria, I discovered that the nearby showgrounds featured a series of display walls showcasing many of the walling styles

commonly seen throughout Great Britain.

This display, called *Walls & Landscapes- A guide to British Walls*, was organised by the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain.

Each wall featured an information board with details about the age and origin of the stone used in the wall's construction. Additional details were provided about the properties of the stone and how



Photo: Ken Baker

this determined its use in a wall. What follows are photographs (with descriptions) of some of these walls.



Photo: Ken Baker

This solid looking wall is built from granite from Galloway in Southwest Scotland. The rock was formed during the Devonian Period, around 380Ma. The rounded boulders have been shaped by glacial action. Due to its hardness this rock is used as found. The wall has been built as a single dyke, in the Galloway Style



Photo: Ken Baker

A wall built from Metamorphic quartzite from the Grampian and Northwest highlands of Scotland. This rock was formed in the pre-Cambrian period, 545 Ma. The stones hardness means it cannot be shaped. It breaks into irregular stones which have to be laid randomly



Photo: Ken Baker

This wall was constructed from sedimentary sandstone from East Cumbria which formed around 280 to 210 Ma. during the Permian/Triassic Period. This stone splits easily into uniform sizes with regular edges.



Photo: Ken Baker

A metamorphic gritstone from the Northern Fells region of Cumbria has been used to build this wall. This stone was formed during the Devonian period. It breaks down to irregular sized angular blocks. This section features a Bee Bole which was used to protect the Skep (beehive) from wind and rain.



Photo: Ken Baker

A wall built from Devonian sandstone. This rock forms uniform layers of various thickness. The copingstones are often shaped into semi-circles. This section features a small rectangular opening (Lunky or hogg hole) which allows the passage of young lambs (hogs).

SCOTTISH SHAPE SHIFTING

Holiday snaps of both artistic and functional stonework in South West Scotland

Words: Ken Baker

This year, I spent some time walling on two farms near the village of Penpont in Southwest Scotland. While I expected to see many dry stone walls (they're everywhere), I was surprised to learn that Penpont is the hometown of well known 'Land Artist' and photographer Andy Goldsworthy.



Photo: Fiona MacLachlan

Before visiting this corner of Scotland, my only memory of Andy Goldsworthy's work came from a photo in his book *Stone*¹. This photo (opposite), shows Andy? flinging red sand into a blue Australian sky. While I liked the apparent nod to the transience of life and beauty, I didn't find anything else in the book particularly memorable. So, I was slightly bemused when my hosts on both farms urged me to explore Andy's many creations in their area. To be polite, I did and discovered that besides flinging red sand, Andy had been "throwing up" massive red sandstone creations weighing many tons. He had also built some intriguing structures from slate and greywacke stone.

Beyond Andy's artistic works I found the more rustic and functional dry stone walls on farms and along roads in the area equally captivating. What follows is a kind of photographic montage of all the dry stone structures that caught my attention in this fascinating part of the world.



Photo: Ken Baker

This slate structure by Andy Goldsworthy, located in a forest near Penpont, was originally round in shape. However, some local youths 'redesigned' its shape by exuberantly flinging many of the slates into a nearby Burn.

The amazing structures below and on the facing page were created by Andy Goldsworthy from a red sandstone quarried from the Locharbriggs Sandstone Formation. This stone was formed from wind-blown sand that was deposited as sand dunes in a desert environment around 285 million years ago. At that time Scotland was situated at roughly the same latitude as the equator².

This 'sphere' or pinecone as some locals call it, is located on a hill, in a cow paddock, on the approach to Penpont. It was built to commemorate the start of the new millennium.



Sisyphus reimagined

Photo: Eleanor Thomas

This photo shows *The Byre* at Cairnhead, one of four Striding Arches³ created by Andy Goldsworthy near Moniave. *The Byre* arch consists of 31 blocks of hand dressed red sandstone weighing approximately 27 tons.



Photo: Ken Baker

²The Stone Library

³The Byre at Cairnhead

The sandstone arch below was built by Andy Goldsworthy in 2009, in the Marr Burn which runs through the Estate of Castle Drumlanrig. It represents a salmon leaping upstream.



Photo: Ken Baker

A sheep 'fold' built by Andy Goldsworthy from greywacke, in a forest near Penpont



Photo: Ken Baker



Photo: Ken Baker

Rustic and functional - Field dykes around Penpont

While most of Andy Goldsworthy's local creations are built from Locharbriggs Sandstone, the farm 'dykes' and many of the houses in the Penpont area are constructed from a stone the locals call Whinstone. Whinstone is a catchall term used to describe various hard, dark-colored rocks⁴. In this area it typically refers to greywacke. And, while greywacke is classified as a sandstone, it differs markedly from the well sorted wind-borne deposits that gave rise to the Locharbriggs Sandstone. Greywacke is described as a 'strongly bonded' sandstone formed from muddy sediments that have been deposited in deep ocean basins (during the Ordovician and Silurian periods). Consequently, this stone tends to have poorly sorted, angular and heterogenous grains. And, while the fine grained Locharbrigg stone has long been favoured by masons for both its aesthetic appeal and ease of working, greywacke is also highly valued for its hardness and durability.

Through my brief experience 'dyking' with greywacke I can attest to its hardness. I soon found that greywacke is not for whacking. And, if you did succeed in breaking it, you ended up with a lot of 'hearting' stone. Conversely the bits of Lochabriggs sandstone I came across were easily shaped with a brick or scutch hammer.

A typical roadside dyke on the way to the village of Moniave

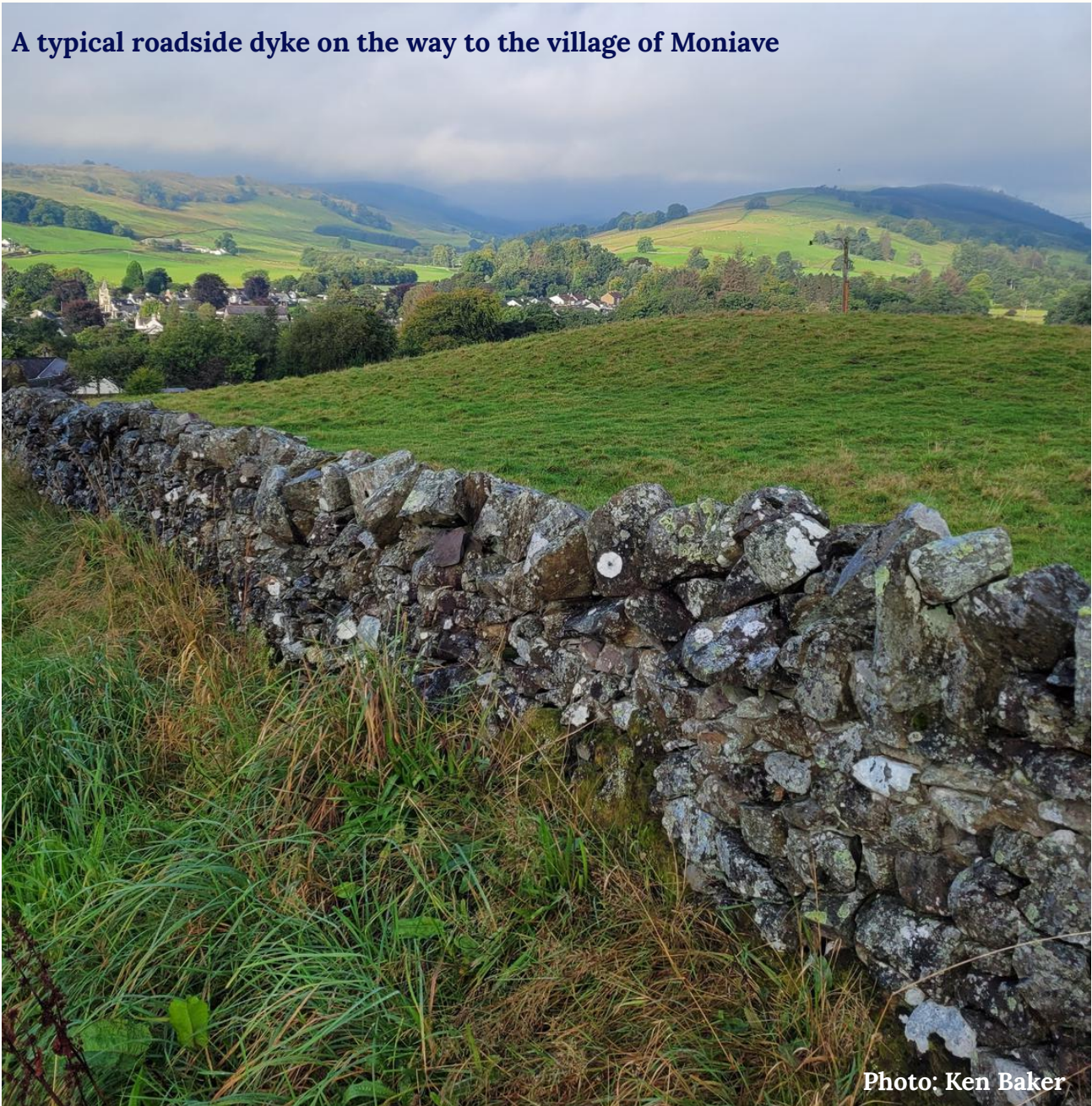


Photo: Ken Baker

A roadside dyke built from greywacke stone



Photo: Ken Baker

A section of a collapsed dyke showing the importance, of 'ties' when building with this type of stone



Photo: Ken Baker

A mossy road-side dyke

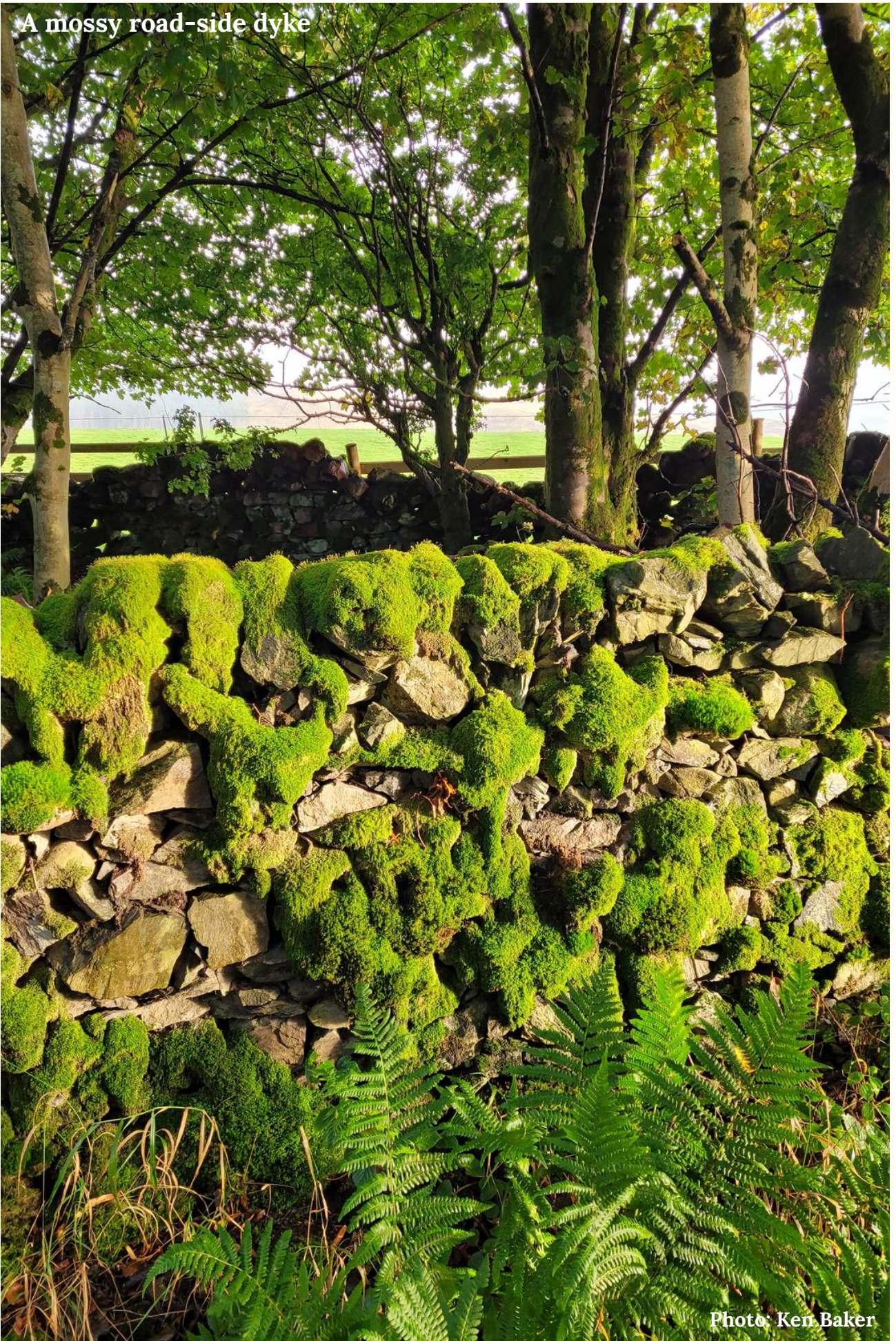


Photo: Ken Baker

The cheekend depicted in the photo below is typical of dykes constructed of greywacke stone on farms around Penpont



Photo: Ken Baker

The Lochabriggs Sandstone gate post below is very common in the Penpont area.



Photo: Ken Baker

Below: this photo shows a creative use of whatever material was to hand. When taking down an old dyke, I found two very old stone troughs had been used as 'runners' in the cheekend. You can also see an old sleeper on the right, that appears to have been used to 'bridge' the roots of a large tree. The troughs were sitting on top of a slab of 'reclaimed' Lochabriggs sandstone.



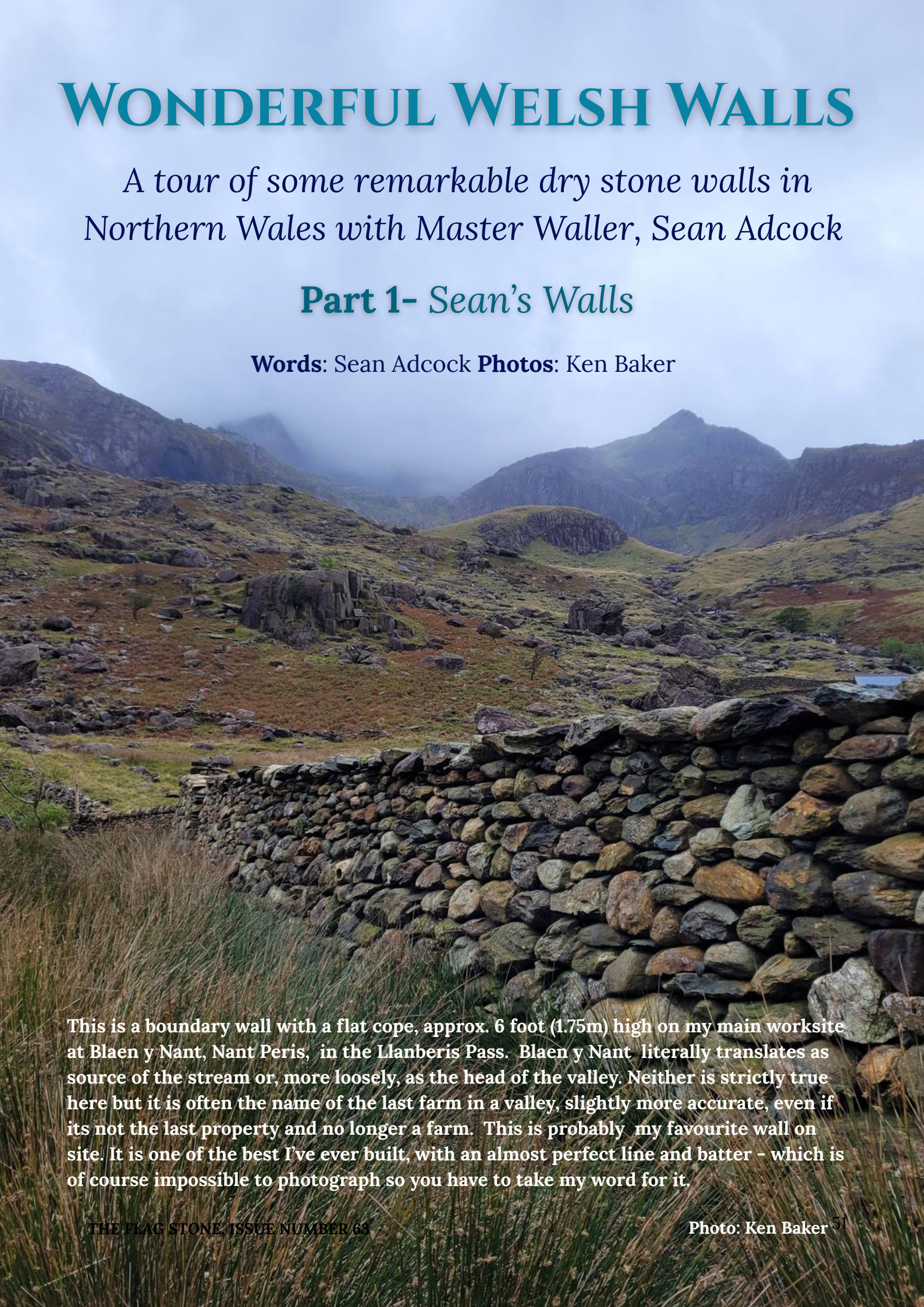
Photo: Ken Baker

WONDERFUL WELSH WALLS

A tour of some remarkable dry stone walls in Northern Wales with Master Waller, Sean Adcock

Part 1- Sean's Walls

Words: Sean Adcock **Photos:** Ken Baker



This is a boundary wall with a flat cope, approx. 6 foot (1.75m) high on my main worksite at Blaen y Nant, Nant Peris, in the Llanberis Pass. Blaen y Nant literally translates as source of the stream or, more loosely, as the head of the valley. Neither is strictly true here but it is often the name of the last farm in a valley, slightly more accurate, even if its not the last property and no longer a farm. This is probably my favourite wall on site. It is one of the best I've ever built, with an almost perfect line and batter - which is of course impossible to photograph so you have to take my word for it.

This wall at Blaen y Nant Nant Peris is 9 feet (2.7m) tall. This part is the corner of an old sheep pen with a dip. The ground level on the other side is around 4 feet, (1.2m) higher. The dip has been removed and the area above is now a cobbled courtyard for the new building in the background. The rubble cope is in the back of the standard vertical coping. Typically around here the coping is set with best face to the lower side of a wall and often doesn't cross the whole of the wall top, which here is around 20" (50cm) wide and irregularly shaped. There's still plenty of space to fit sizeable wedges.



This is another section of the Blaen y Nant boundary wall. Here the wall rises to over 8 feet (2.4m). I like my walls to flow with the landscape, and this one rises smoothly to climb a lump of bedrock maintaining a constant height on the far side as there is around 3 feet difference in ground levels.



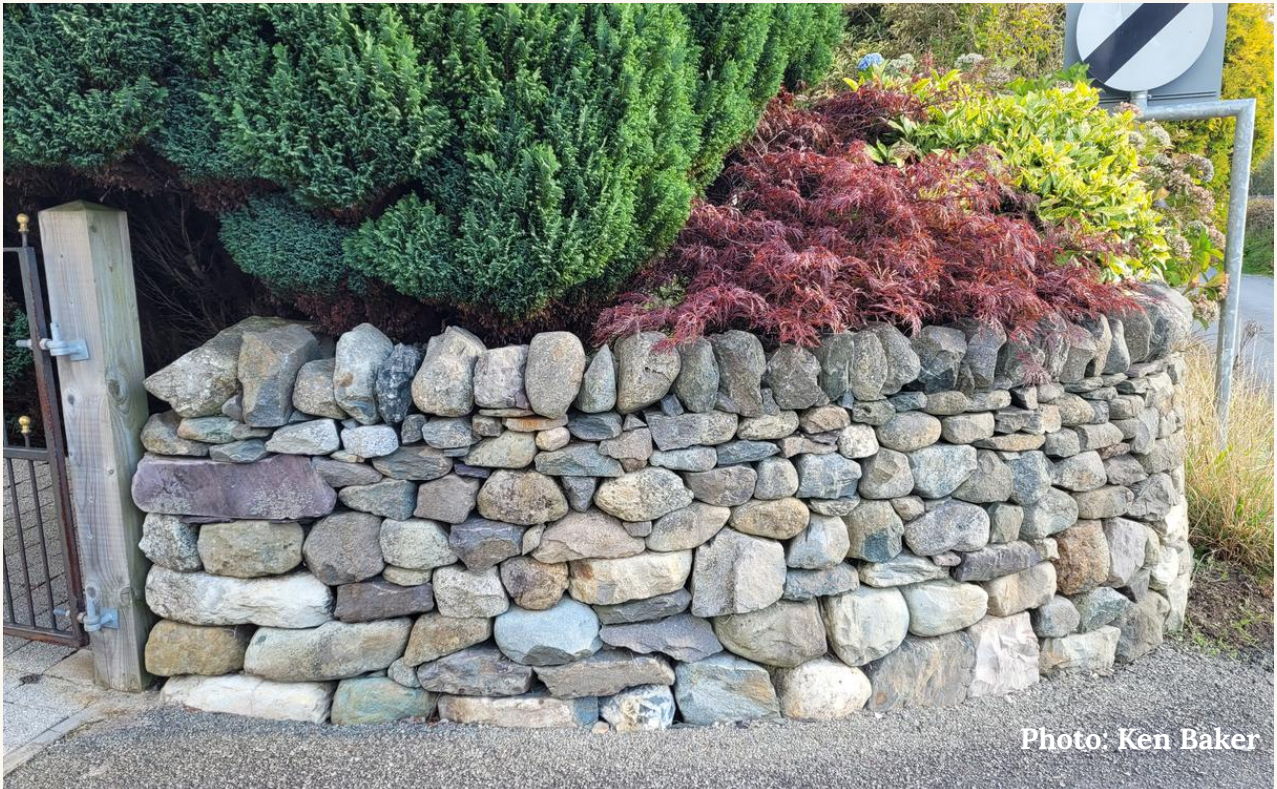
Photo: Ken Baker



Photo: Ken Baker

Another boundary wall, at Blaen y Nant, in Nant Ffrancon. This valley runs parallel to the Llanberis pass. The two properties are separated by a mountain 'ridge' about 3000 feet (1000 meters) high. This wall has a rubble cope and is just under 6 feet (1.75m) tall. I'm pointing out that the longest runner is around halfway up where it will bind the end to the wall better than if it was strictly graded and lower down. Even higher might be better, but it can be difficult to lift them there.

This is an entrance splay, in my home village of Penisarwaun. It's just over 3 feet tall (1m) and has a small rubble cope. This wall actually replaced a nasty limestone mortared wall, with glacial field stone from a local farm.



A roadside garden wall in Capel Garmon. The road slopes more than it seems in this picture. I was pleased with how level I kept the stones and the overall grading of size given the slope. On the whole the stone was ridiculously small for a wall almost 6 feet high (1.75m) at its taller end. Only the top couple of feet is above ground on the top side.

A garden wall with niches, in my home village of Penisarwaun. It's a bit over 6 feet (2m) tall. In gardens the maximum height permissible without having to get planning permission is 2m. The top is capped with a flat concrete slab. To the left is a clay pizza oven clad with over 100 former roof slates. Each slate is about 1/8 inch (3-4mm) thick. Every one of these had to be cut to size with a disc cutter.

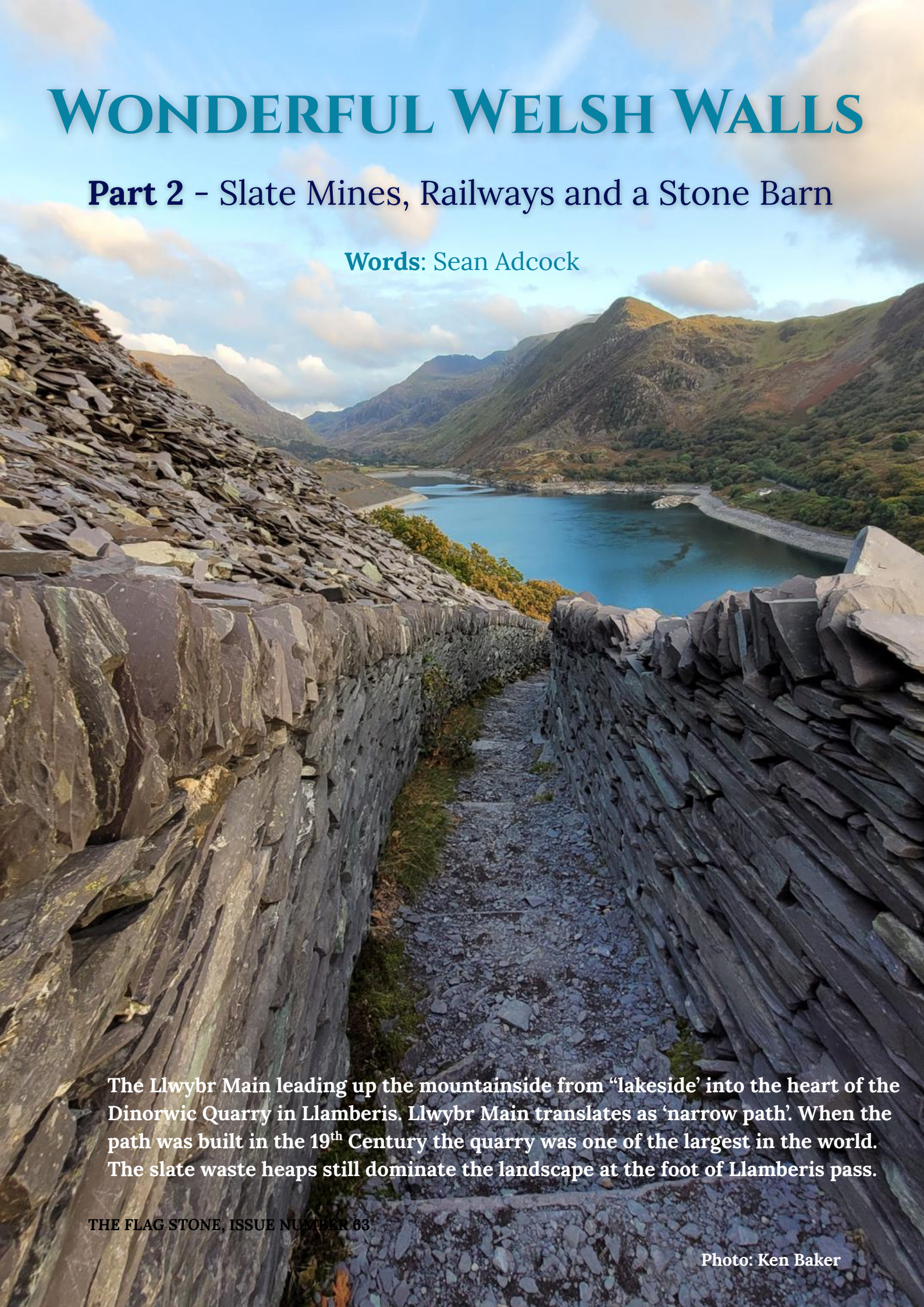


Photo: Ken Baker

WONDERFUL WELSH WALLS

Part 2 - Slate Mines, Railways and a Stone Barn

Words: Sean Adcock



The Llwybr Main leading up the mountainside from “lakeside’ into the heart of the Dinorwic Quarry in Llamberis. Llwybr Main translates as ‘narrow path’. When the path was built in the 19th Century the quarry was one of the largest in the world. The slate waste heaps still dominate the landscape at the foot of Llamberis pass.

Cei Mawr - The tallest dry stone wall in Europe

Cei Mawr is on the Ffestioniog railway. *Cei Mawr* translates as big quay, or, more loosely, as big embankment. It's neither really. Around 62 feet (almost 19m) at its tallest, and has a similar width at its base. It's 9-15 feet (3-5m) wide on top and over 100 yards long (about 100m). It is a free standing dry stone wall with a narrow-gauge railway on top. It was built in 1836 as part of a gravity tramway/railway from the Blaenau Ffestiniog slate quarries to the Port of Porthmadog around 13 miles (20km) away. Trains of wagons would be set off from Ffestiniog with gravity taking them to the port. There was no engine, each wagon had a wheel-controlled brake, with brakemen jumping between the wagons to control speed. Empty wagons were returned to the quarries through horsepower. The buttress was added in the late 1880s. The *Cei Mawr* is thought to be the tallest free-standing dry stone wall in Europe, possibly the world, depending on how you define and measure these things!!



Cei Mawr - Viewed from below

The Flag Stone editor can be seen (circled) standing amidst brambles at the base of the wall.

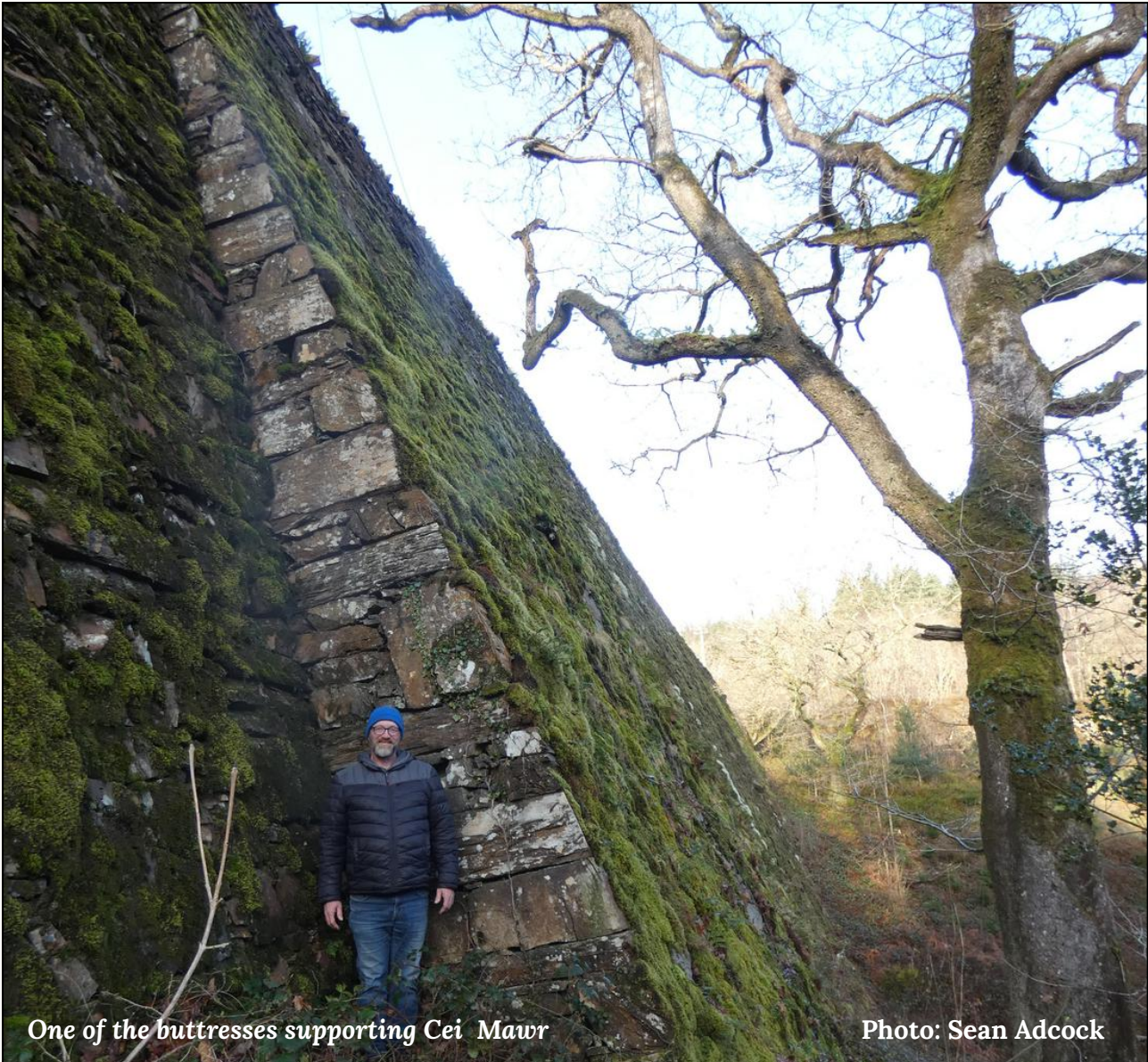


Photo: Sean Adcock



A train crossing the Cei Mawr Embankment

Photo: James Pelts



One of the buttresses supporting Cei Mawr

Photo: Sean Adcock

Dinorwic Quarry, Llanberis - An overview

In its heyday, Dinorwic slate quarry was the second largest in the world¹. It operated between 1787 and 1969, and has over 30 galleries, or terraces, each linked to a rubble tip. Each of the galleries are connected to one of the inclined railway systems. One of the most impressive can be seen in the photo below. After the mine closed in 1969 the site was purchased by a company which went on to develop a hydroelectricity scheme.

The passageway described on the opposite page is circled on the lower left of the incline in the foreground of this photo

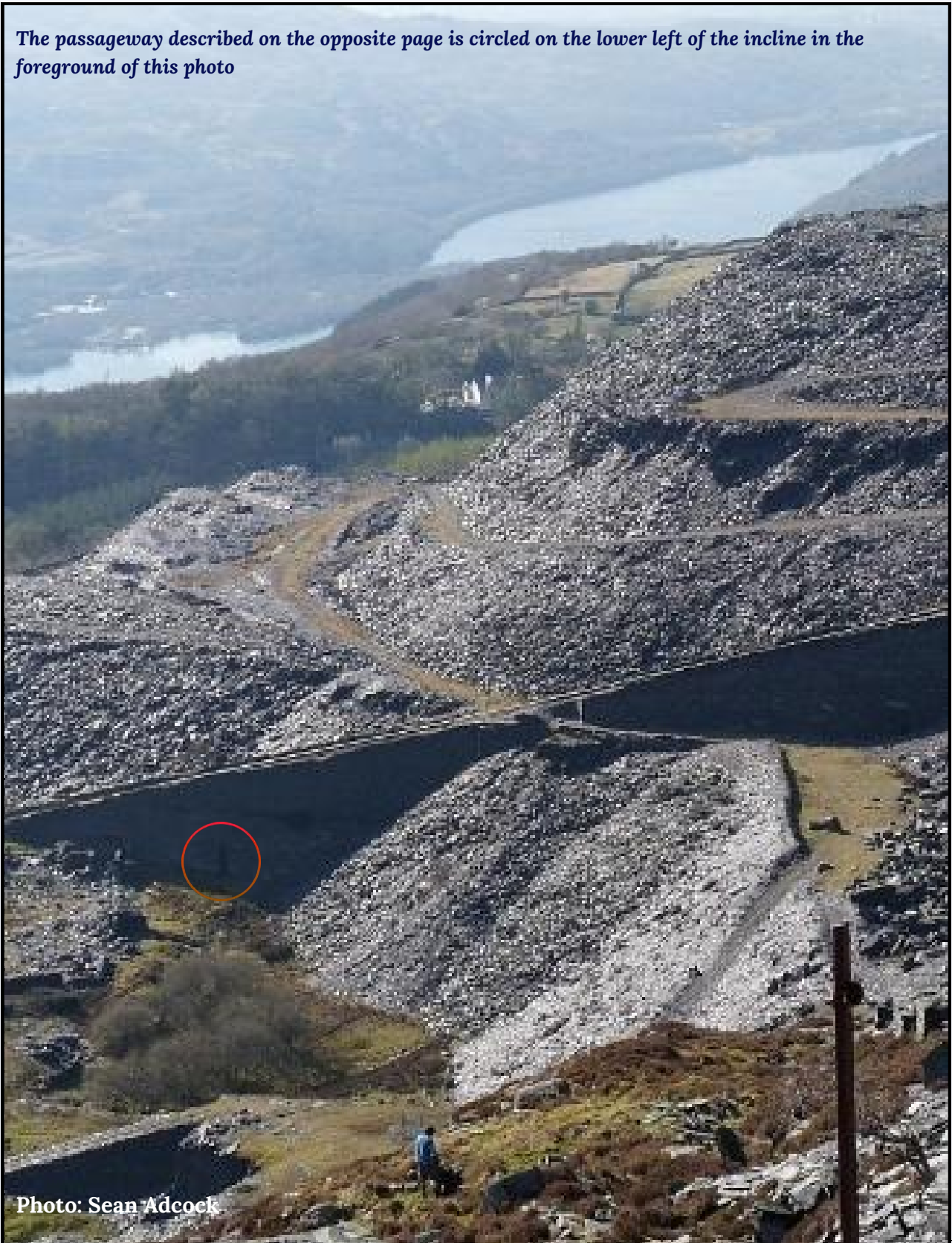


Photo: Sean Adcock

Dinorwic Quarry- A passageway

This is a passage through the incline (pictured in the foreground of the opposite page). It is one of the most impressive inclines in Dinorwic Quarry. Inclines were gravity tramways used to lower slate from upper levels in the quarry to transport routes lower down. As they cut through work levels, they would have passages to allow steam locomotives and hand pushed carts to get past them. Coming in all shapes and sizes no one knows why some are so tall. This passageway no longer has an exit as the far side of the incline has become a retaining wall for slate waste. This is one of the longest inclines remaining, connecting 4 levels (connecting is not quite the right word as you could only get off, so to speak, at the bottom, but could join on at the origin or the two levels it crossed).



Photo: Ken Baker

Dinorwic Quarry- 'Railway' and retaining wall

Another incline, this is one of just two in Dinorwic quarry not actually raised above ground, but instead running down the graded mountainside itself, hence the dry stone wall alongside retaining the base of a slate waste heap. The stone pitched pathway runs between what would have been two sets of rails. One set lowering slate filled wagons on a wire rope controlled from a large brake house at the top, whilst at the same time their weight would have been pulling empty wagons back up the parallel track.



Photo: Ken Baker

Dinorwic Quarry- Brake house & winding gear

The remains of one of the brake houses which housed the winding gear used to lower the loaded slate waggons down the incline. The weight of the loaded waggons would pull up the empty waggons.



Photo: Ken Baker

Dinorwic Quarry- Bridge support

This structure is on the same incline as the photo on pg. 62. As this incline isn't raised this structure is the support for a small bridge which would have allowed slate wagons working at the higher levels it cuts through in order to pass from one side to the other.



Photo: Ken Baker

The 'Liquorice Allsorts' Wall-Ffestiniog Railway

This wall is trackside on Ffestiniog railway near the Rhiw Goch passing loop. I have only ever seen this style of wall in a small area between village of Penrhyndeudraeth and hamlet of Tan y Bwlch, but there it predominates field boundaries. It is known locally as rustic slate. The large slabs are poor quality and shatter easily resulting in the smaller bits (seen in the wall below). It's quite a clever use of the available material.

Large slabs do not make a great wall as you face all sorts of problems if you try to sit one on another stably. Small overlaps tend to be necessary, but then you get windows between the slabs. The small stone alone doesn't make for a great wall, although its often much longer than you think. The one wall I I've been involved in rebuilding in this style had a lot of stones running all the way through-not systematic through stones. These stones were often very narrow.

It does however make a good bed for slabs and even if a few work loose, the slabs stability is not really compromised and the slabs in general help hold them in place. A sort of symbiosis. A wall built out of one without the other would not likely be as strong or stable. The same would apply if there was a strict grading of size. As far as I'm aware the term 'liquorice allsorts' to describe them has only been used by me, I've never found another reference to them, and few have ever really noticed them.



A Field Barn on a 'Plas' near the village of Lanadecwyn



Photo: Ken Baker

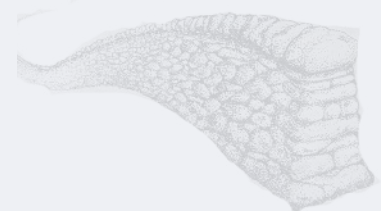


Photo: Ken Baker

A Plas is a country house or hall, basically a grand building of the landed gentry.

Lanadecwyn is the name of the local village, and this is a barn belonging to the Plas (in this instance described as a small gentry house by Cadw, the government's Welsh historic building authority).

The barn is thought to have been built in 18th Century. Many of the massive stone blocks are traced (length along) and set upright (largest face showing). One door has been blocked. Not a lot of info available about it and no knowledge of inside so can't say anything about the actual function. Haven't seen a comparable dry stone barn with such huge stone.



A BOOK REVIEW

Words: Bruce Munday

DRYSTONE – A GATHERING OF TERMINOLOGY AND TECHNIQUE.

By Nick Aitken

Rymour Books & Tippermuir Books 2024

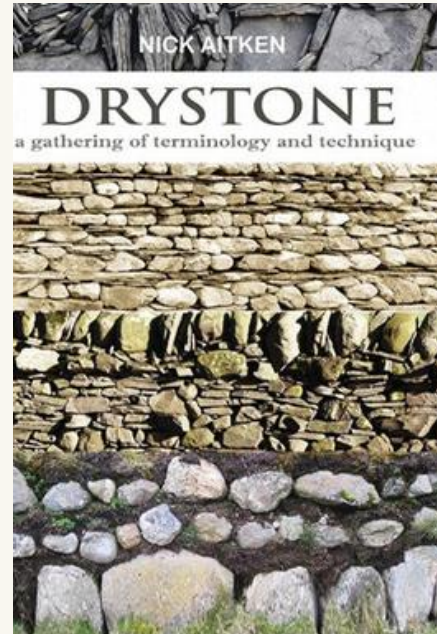
370 pages

Nick Aitken, Master Craftsman and Instructor, is no stranger to *The Flag Stone*. Over the years he has contributed several articles and in Issue #57 I reviewed his book *Dry Stone Walling – materials and techniques*. As if that very fine book was a mere aside, the author has devoted 25 years to his new book *Drystone – a gathering of terminology and technique*.

This epic tome – a dictionary or an encyclopedia? – could not have been done any other way. The material could only be gathered patiently by someone deeply involved in the subject, well connected, ever enquiring and gifted with great endurance.

Drystone is wide-ranging and thorough, and inevitably it contains a lot of material you will never use. But as I browsed I found myself fascinated by entries such as ‘jostle stones’ and ‘rummels’ of which I had absolutely no real interest. These prompted me then to look for things I was indeed interested in such as wedge walls, and the relationship between cobbles, pitchers and setts. I soon realized that I could find anything and everything in these pages, then spent several hours doing so.

The absence of an index seemed at first a deficiency, but as the author points out it would be ‘long and complicated’. The table of contents is well organized and logical, and all entries are arranged alphabetically. Entries are well referenced and linked to an extensive bibliography. Disconcerting was the style of running the subject title directly into the definition.



For example ‘Onions spheroids of weathered basalt ...’ would benefit from a colon following the first word.

The contents have a heavy (but not exclusive) bias towards the UK and within that to Scotland. But that is not at all to its detriment. Indeed, it is embellished with a 19th century Scottish poem in original dialect, fortunately accompanied by an English translation.

As with Aitken’s previous book, this volume is on quality paper deserving of the one hundred and forty excellent and well-chosen photos. Graphics, of which there are few, lack a consistent style.

In summary, this is an important piece of work. To my knowledge there is nothing else quite like it in the English language.

Drystone is available from [Waterstones Books](#), [Tippermuir Books](#) and [Amazon](#)



..... and at The End

A miscellany of walled views & wisdom

*It's lock and bind, and bind and lock,
That's where the true skill lies,
Hence stand I firm as any rock
'Neath fair or frownin' skies.
Mute evidence nane can gainsay
O'stalwarts lang syne gane,
Whose matchless worth frae day to day
Still breathes frae ilka stane.*

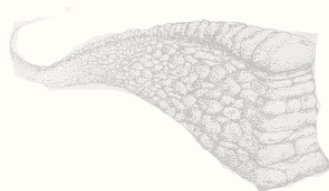
*Reflections of a Dry Stane March by John Wilson
of Gatehouse*

*'Dry stone walling is problem-solving.
So there is never a moment when you
can say: "I can do this, it's easy!"
because it isn't. Every stone is different
and gives you a new challenge.'*

*Quoted from Sally Hodgson in the Youtube video titled: Go With
Stone. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qNFpZIoJ_VQ*

*"to be a Waller all you need is a
bad lump hammer and a ball of
string".*

*Fergus Packman quoted by Josh Bowes in 'A Path Less
Ordinary' The Flagstone #63*





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 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 walling grows as a modern reinforcement of the contribution that dry stone walls and structures have made to the culture of Australia.

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP

The DSWAA has enjoyed a diverse and wide-ranging membership over the years. This is a continuing strength, especially through the cross-fertilization of ideas and the sharing of skills. The Association welcomes new members. Anyone can apply for membership on an annual basis or as an individual.

Annual Membership fee

Individual annual membership is \$50, payable by 31st of May each year.

New Members

There are three steps in the process of becoming a member. Firstly, please complete and submit the online membership form on our website at: <https://dswaa.org.au-as-a-newmember/> Secondly, please pay the annual membership of \$50.00 by a **DIRECT EFT Deposit** to the DSWAA, BSB:013373 Acct: 4997 47356. Don't forget to provide your name and the purpose of the payment in the Reference and/or Description box. Alternatively you can make a **Bank Deposit** at any branch of the ANZ Bank. Please also send a separate email to the Membership Secretary, copied to thedswaa@gmail.com, with your contact details and the purpose of the payment.

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