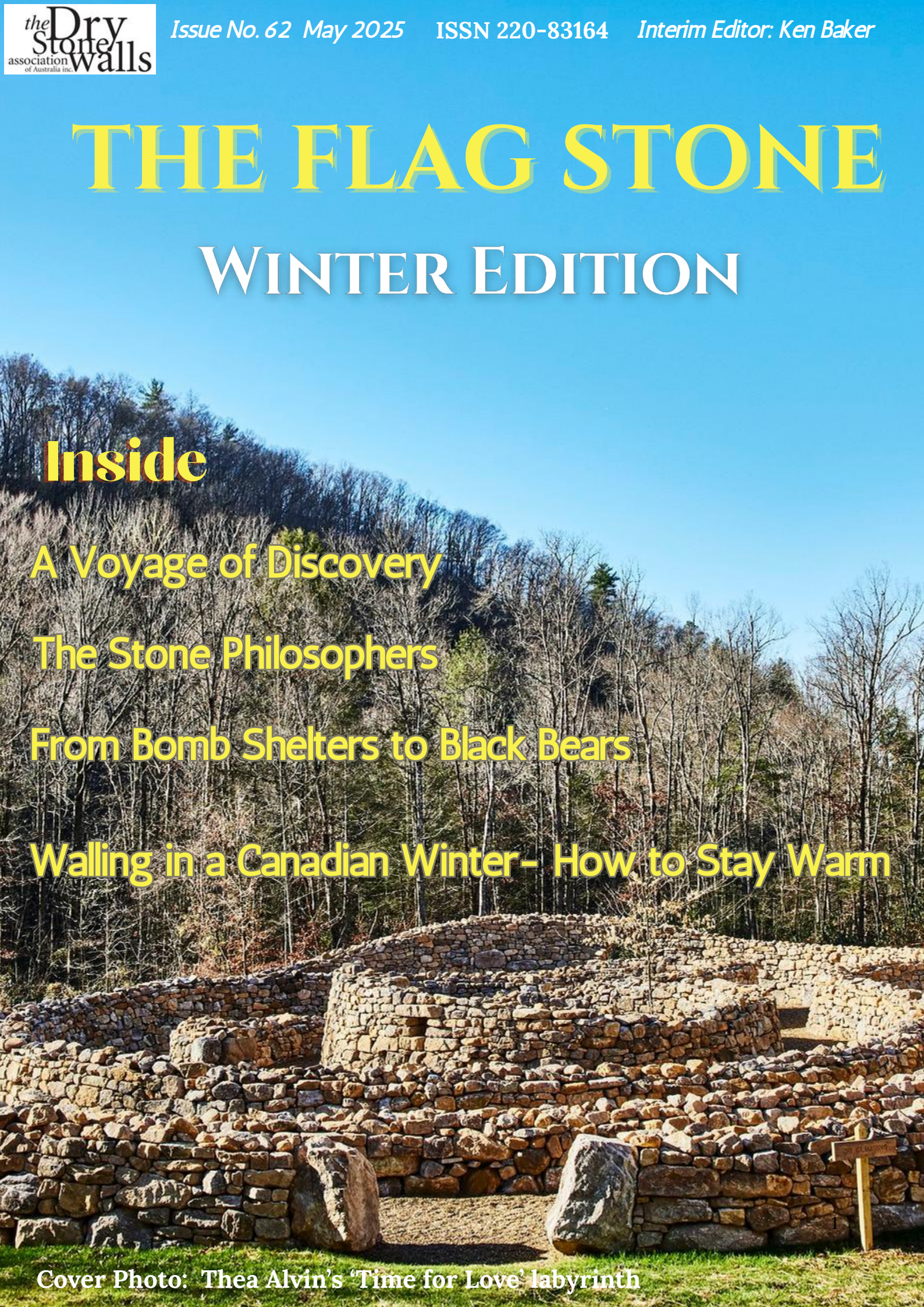
the Dry Stone Walls association of Australia inc.

Issue No. 62 May 2025 ISSN 220-83164 Interim Editor: Ken Baker

THE FLAG STONE

WINTER EDITION



Inside

Cover Photo: Thea Alvin's 'Time for Love' labyrinth

President's Message

Welcome to the Winter edition of *The Flag Stone*. The DSWAA Committee, on the advice of the editorial team, has confirmed that there will be three editions each year: Autumn, Winter and Spring. These will be complemented by six newsletters, generally linked to the Committee's monthly meeting cycle. You will have seen at least Newsletter 5 and possibly Newsletter 6 before you read this edition. More specific email messages, sent through MailChimp, will keep you up to date with events, appeals and advice. Of course, you can always follow, and use, the DSWAA Facebook page for more immediate news about what is going on and to share informal information at: https://www.facebook.com/drystonewallsaustralia.

Keeping in touch is better as a two-way process. The email addresses of executive and other members of the DSWAA are listed on the back page of *The Flag Stone*. Our positions and responsibilities, along with brief profiles are online at: https://dswaa.org.au/about-dswaa/dswaa-committee/. Ken Baker would welcome letters sent to him as the interim editor, and his email address is listed with the others. Our Administrative Assistant, Kathryn Henning, can handle general enquiries at: thedswaa@gmail.com or through the online enquiry form at: https://dswaa.org.au/contact-us/.

Ken Baker's first edition of *The Flag Stone* was very well received when it appeared in February. The Committee congratulates him on a substantial effort. The new column, "A Conversation with …", commenced with an interview with Thomas Garratt, aka 'Dry Stone Tom' by his YouTube fans, was a great start. The February edition of *The Flag Stone* also included an article on the Ross Bridge, Tasmania by Dr Jennie Jackson. I was proud to present her with a handsome, hard-copy of the journal when I thanked her as our after-dinner speaker at the Tasmanian Midlands field trip in March. This edition includes "A Conversation with Kit Goldman", a creative young Waller otherwise known as 'the Stone Bandit' based in Mount Macedon. It also includes a report on the recent successful Tasmanian field trip by Jim Holdsworth, one of the organising team. The articles show our usual range of national and international interests.
I am heartened by the diversity of the contributors, from our sagacious elders to a keen younger generation who are the future of the ancient craft of walling.

The next field trip, 'Volcanos and Consumption Dykes', on Saturday 21st June, will celebrate Winter and the rich tradition of dry stone walling in Victoria's Western District. It is based on the triangle of Camperdown, Terang and Noorat and will especially acknowledge the walling contribution of David Long, a founding member of the DSWAA. Planning continues for the field trip to Adelong, in association with the AGM in Wagga Wagga, scheduled for Saturday, 27th September 2025.

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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Thanks from the Editor

As the interim gatherer and arranger of stories for The Flag Stone I would like to thank the many contributors to this and the previous Edition. They have been unstinting in responding to requests for photos, clarifications etc. and (with good humour) pointed out any mistakes I have made in transcribing their pieces. Any errors that remain are the fault of the transcriber and not the authors.

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A Conversation with....

The Stone Bandit

A quest for excellence & beauty

We asked The *Stone Bandit aka Kit Goldman what inspires and motivates his work as a dry stone Waller*

INTERVIEW_KEN BAKER

PHOTOS_ KIT GOLDMAN

When did your interest in drystone walling begin?

I spent years actively trying to figure out what I wanted to do, and it took a decade of many experiments and dead ends to find walling.

Growing up in the UK, I was surrounded by stone buildings and dry stone walls, so when I got into masonry a few years ago I already had dry stone walling in the back of my mind.

Around 3 years ago, I started working in stone masonry in varying capacities – doing stints labouring and learning with different people. It got to a point where I was wanting to pursue the craft in a serious way. At the time I was in an 'apprentice' type role with a bigger company, working mostly mortared jobs/walls, and I felt my direction needed to be more precise and in a closer working relationship with a single mentor.

I wanted to use dry stone walling to teach me how to lay stone and work with the material in its rawest form. I wanted to really refine my skills in structural integrity and aesthetics and I saw dry stone walling as the best way to do that.

What do you find most enjoyable about working with stone?

You cannot lie or cheat with drystone walling. I love the honesty of it, the absolute necessity that I maintain a high standard for myself because it's on display right there in the rock.

You have to stay focussed, engaged, and creative; it's the only thing I've found that reliably keeps my hyperactive brain involved and happily occupied all day, because it is constant decision making. I think the aesthetic of the finished product is unbeatable.

All together, it's a beautiful craft that keeps me satisfied.

Is there a particular project that you are most proud of?

As I am fairly new to the trade I don't have a lot of projects to pick from. But out of the work I have done here in Australia, I am proud of the double sider that I pushed myself to build at the house where I'm living. It was a challenge I set for myself soon after arriving in Australia, to build a dry stone double sided wall completely on my own.

I spent a year either begging, borrowing or occasionally re homing rocks from farmers' paddocks, the roadside or the bush.

It took a lot of thinking to wrap my head around how to build it as structurally strong as I could and maintain the aesthetic I wanted.

It was a slower process than I would have liked but when starting out in this trade one has to realise that speed is the last element to come when walling. It is something that comes with time invested and experience under the belt.

I'm really happy with the aesthetic end result, as the rock that I used was predominantly basalt which was very irregularly shaped.

Do you think walling is a viable occupation?

I would like to think that walling is a viable occupation, considering I am fully committed to the craft and building with stone.

I'm on the cusp of moving back to Wales where I'm hoping to set up my own business and pursue a life in the trade.

Like with anything I feel if one moves with good intentions and has a passion for what they do, they can make it work or at least that's what I'm telling myself, fingers crossed.

In Wales walling is a big part of the culture and history, and wall building and restoration is more visible than here in Australia. We'll see.

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

As I'm fairly new to the trade I don't have a lot of advice, but what I would say to people looking to get started is find a good mentor and spend a couple of years working side by side with them.

"I've gotten so much from listening to those with more experience than me, just appreciating and respecting them for sharing their knowledge"

Do not be hesitant to ask questions or make mistakes - it all helps you learn and connect with other wallers.

I've gotten so much from listening to those with more experience than me, just appreciating and respecting them for sharing their knowledge. Also talk to people who are at the same stage as you are, for support.

Be tenacious and your skills will develop over time. Use different types of stone, have a lot of band aids in your glovebox and finally, if you haven't already, dedicate time to learning proper lifting techniques and to general physical fitness, because it is an extremely strenuous job.

You can see more of Kit's work on:
Instagram@(thestonebandit)

A Voyage of Discovery

Jim Holdsworth describes his voyage to Nuku Hiva in the French Marqeusas Islands and the intriguing ceremonial stone structures he encountered there

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Words and photos by Jim Holdsworth

A bay on Nuku Hiva with steep volcanic plugs rising in the background

Nuku Hiva is the largest of several sparsely inhabited islands of the Marquesas, one of the five archipelagos of French Polynesia, a French dependency in the south Pacific between New Zealand and Hawai'i.

Like many of its adjacent islands, Nuku Hiva's rugged terrain is volcanic and, as a result, has a dramatic topography of former volcanic plugs, steep valleys and, unlike many other islands of the archipelago, no fringing reef.

It was so favoured by author Herman Melville that it was the setting for his first book, entitled Typee.

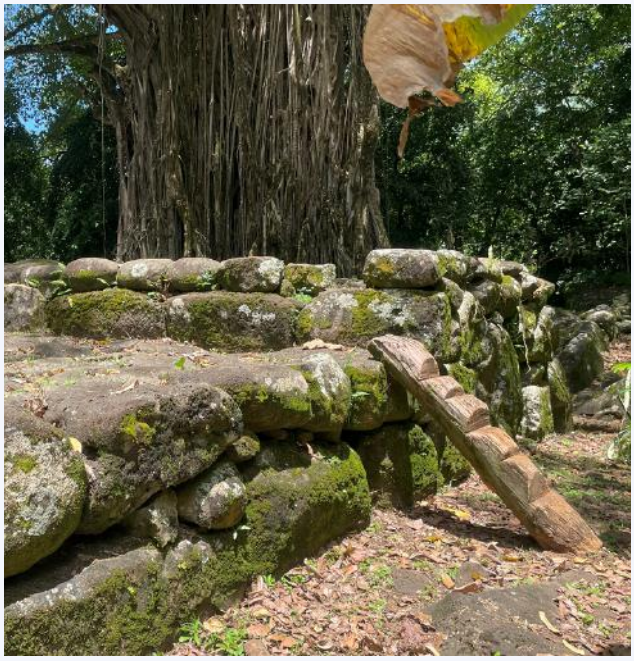
Humans first came to this part of the Pacific during the Great Polynesian Migration, frequently regarded as originating in Taiwan about one thousand years ago, although later waves of immigrants came from Hawai'i and other places to the north-east.

The late 18th century age of exploration brought mariners from Europe, then missionaries preaching Christianity. This varied history of immigration, exploration and settlement has led to the existence of small populations on islands such as Nuku Hiva, where Christianity co-exists with more traditional beliefs, and people lead simple lives of self-sufficiency but increasingly reliant of goods and services from beyond.

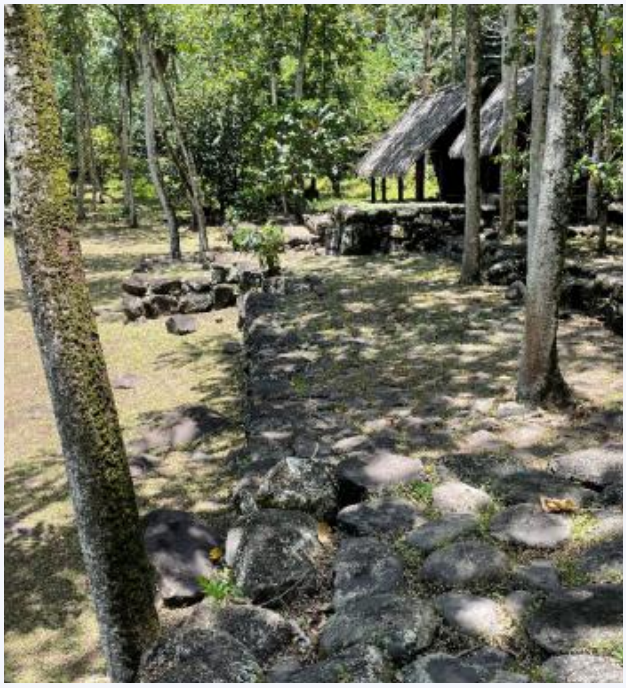
In October we travelled to Nuku Hiva and the other inhabited islands of the Marquesas on board "Aranui 5", a part freighter and part passenger ship that unloads essential supplies and picks up local fruit and other produce on its regular 12-day round trip voyages from Papeete, the capital on Tahiti, two day's sailing time away.

The Aranui 5 that Jim sailed on to Nuku Hiva

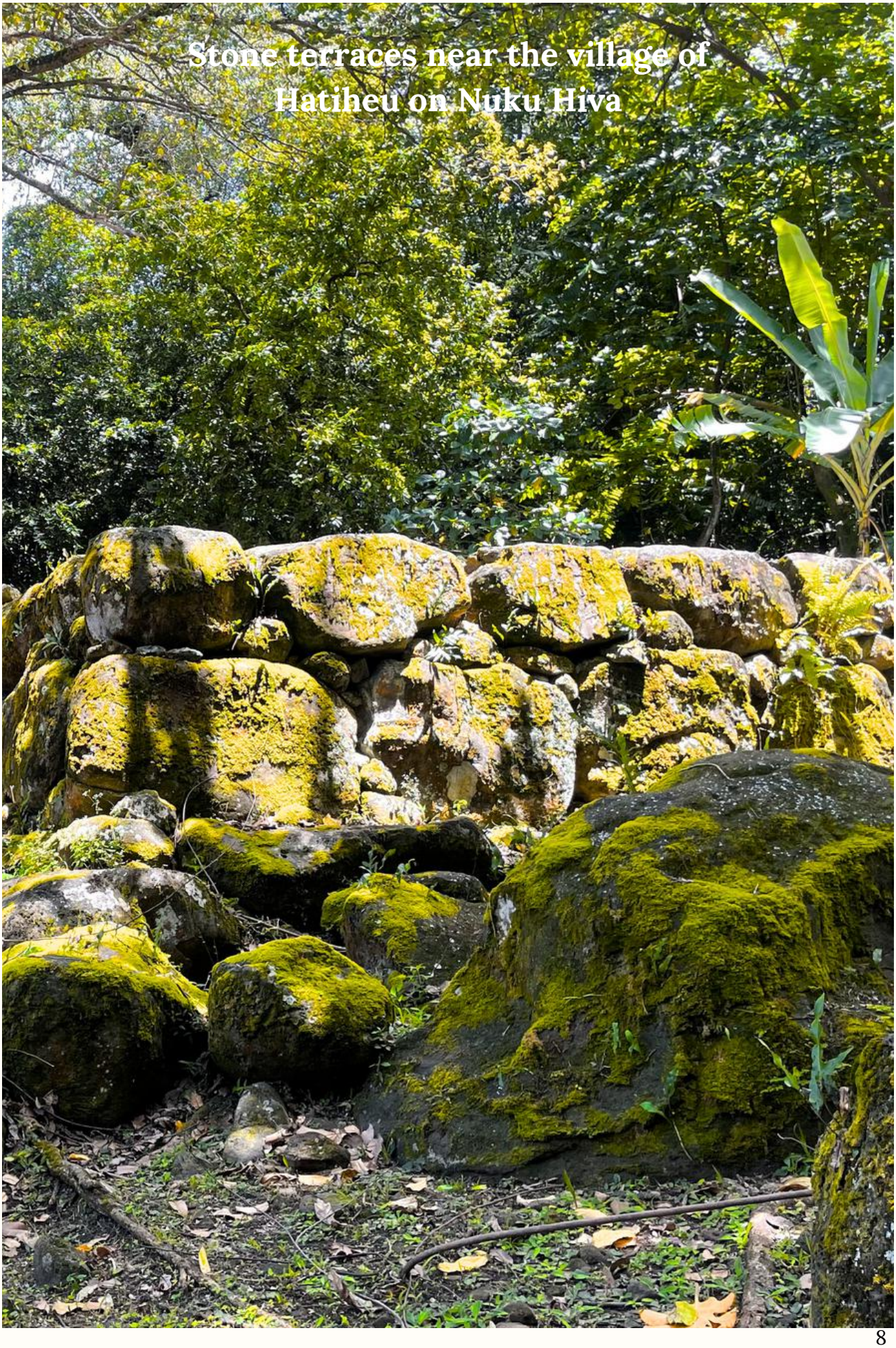
While there are the remains of many Polynesian stone structures, often temples or fortifications on these islands, we were fortunate to visit several sites still in use, one of which was in a wooded valley not far from the little coastal village of Hatiheu on Nuku Hiva. Here was a collection of dry stone retaining walls, ceremonial platforms and areas of paving, all constructed of large smooth volcanic stones, laid with some precision and robust enough to have stood the test of time. The local name for these spaces is *tohua*.



Ceremonial stone terraces beneath a sacred Banyan tree



Ceremonial platforms and areas of paving



Stone terraces near the village of Hatiheu on Nuku Hiva

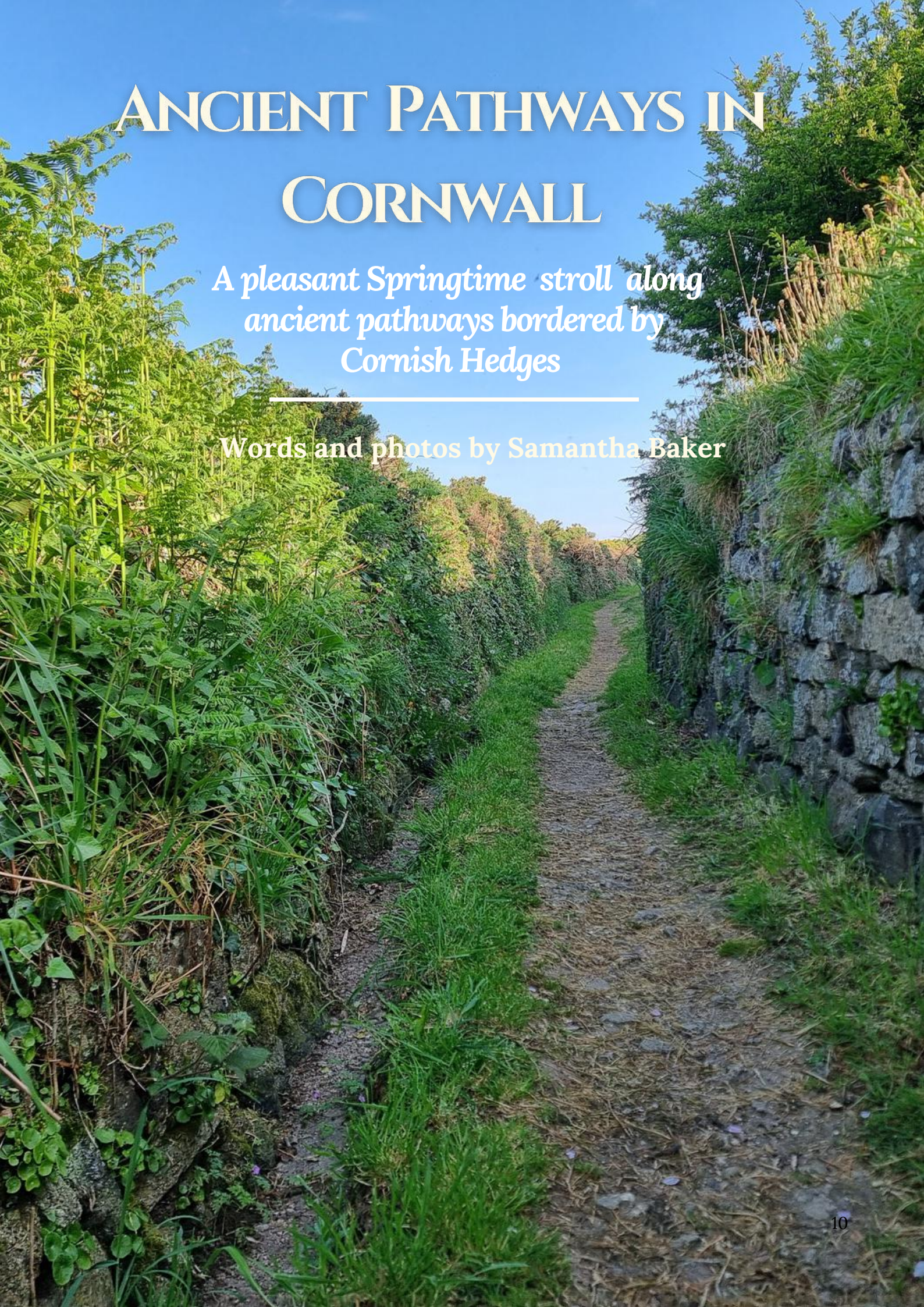
A recently built thatched roofed pavilion

Originally the site served a number of purposes: a meeting place for local chiefs, a religious site marked by a platform some twenty metres wide by twelve shaded by a venerable banyan tree and terraces faced by low stone retaining walls built on each side of a roughly paved ceremonial area 155 metres long and 40 metres wide. Some platforms were reserved for women, children or older men, while others were the sites of the warriors' house, the chief's house, the priest's house, elevated on low stone platforms lining the rectangular area.

A large boulder with cryptic petroglyphs

The age of this complex is not certain. Probably it has been maintained and added to over the years. As one indication of age, higher up the wooded hill are two large boulders with cryptic petroglyphs believed to be 900 years old.

Today this *tohua* is used for ceremonies and gatherings of the community of Nuku Hiva and other nearby Islands, with the original structures having been replaced by more recently built thatched roofed pavilions. However, its fine state of preservation, and the reverence which our guides showed towards it, reinforces the value of this example of local Marquesan history told in stone.



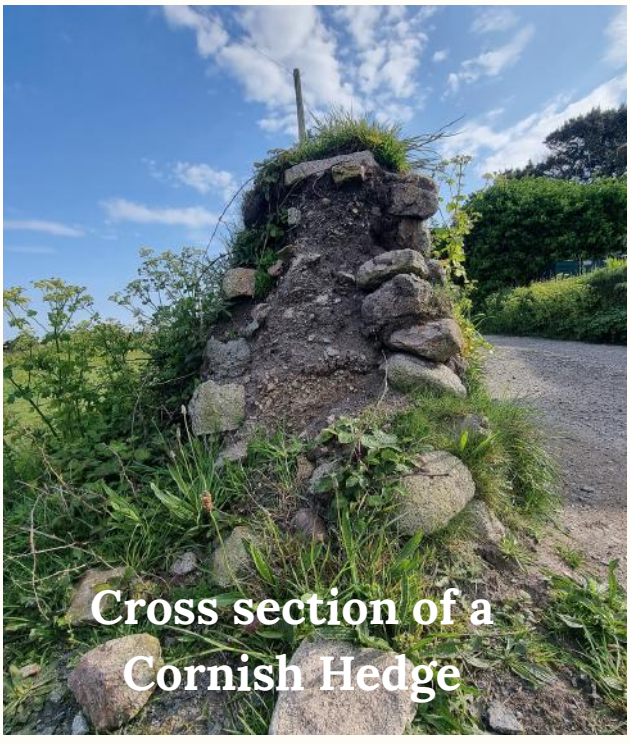
Ancient Pathways in Cornwall

A pleasant Springtime stroll along ancient pathways bordered by Cornish Hedges

Words and photos by Samantha Baker

A Cornish hedge along the road to Cape Cornwall

As an Australian visiting Britain, I have been tremendously impressed by the beauty and history around me-especially in Cornwall, where I am exploring now.



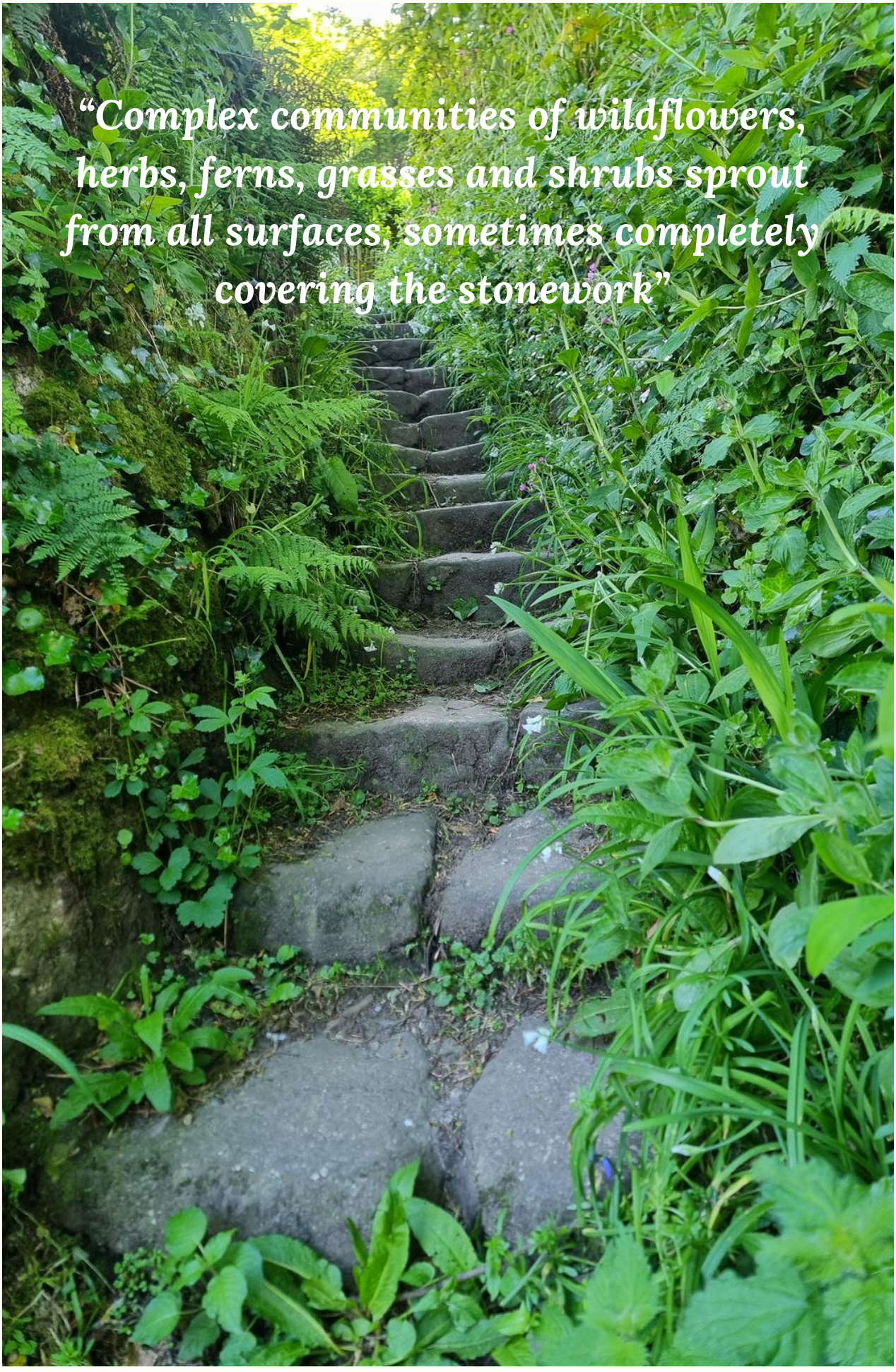
Cross section of a Cornish Hedge

Apart from the dramatic Cornish coast-all granite cliffs with drifts of pink thrift, hidden coves complete with smugglers tunnels and quaint stone villages set in a patchwork of ancient green fields and bluebell woods, what I am appreciating are the footpaths and hedges

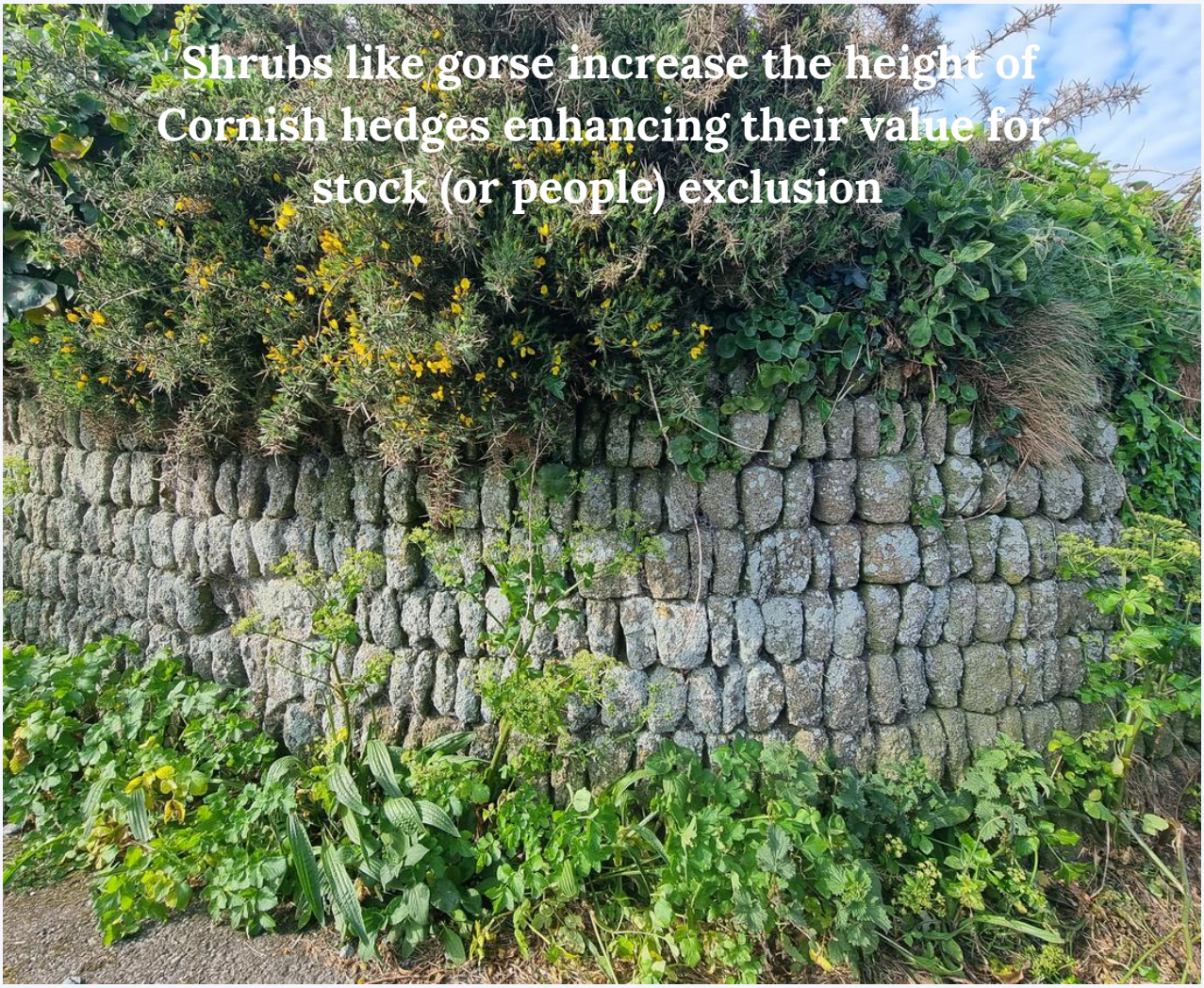
Relevant to Wallers, 'hedges' in Cornwall are 'Cornish Hedges'. These are a dry stone/ hedge hybrid, made by infilling two parallel dry stone walls with earth and planting the top.

This method is used everywhere in Cornwall and for so long that some may be the oldest man-made structures still used for their original purpose. There are farmers today using and maintaining the same Cornish hedges Neolithic farmers made to enclose their tiny, hand-tilled fields of grain over 4000 years ago.

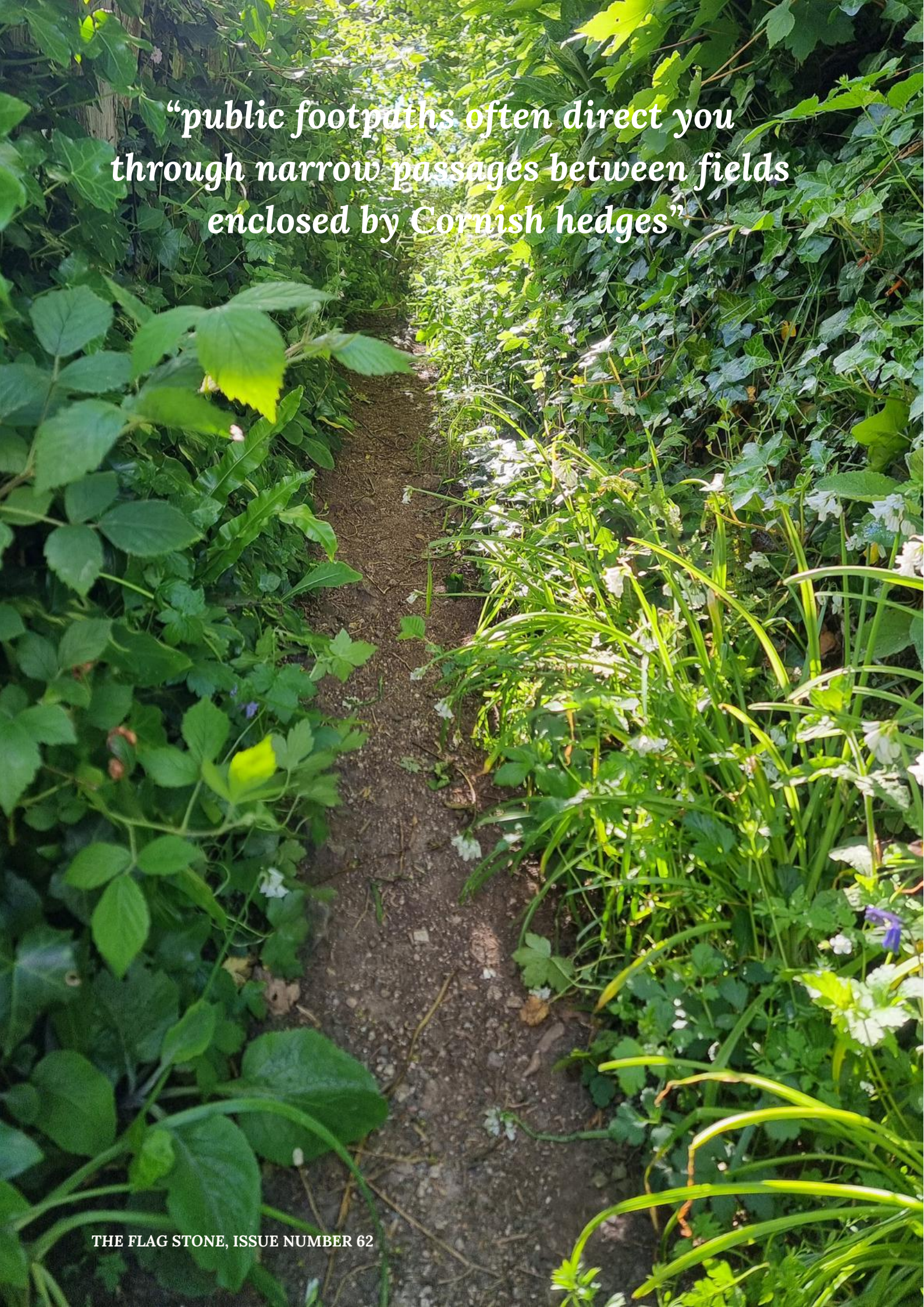
The extensive web of public right-of- way footpaths throughout Britain are another feature with ancient roots. Many are medieval, but can also have been established by Anglo-Saxons, Romans or right back into pre-history, when those neolithic people followed the quickest way from A to B.


“Complex communities of wildflowers, herbs, ferns, grasses and shrubs sprout from all surfaces, sometimes completely covering the stonework”

A Cornish hedge with stile



Shrubs like gorse increase the height of Cornish hedges enhancing their value for stock (or people) exclusion



“public footpaths often direct you through narrow passages between fields enclosed by Cornish hedges”

"The effect can look just like the land itself has risen up to make a wall..."

These paths snake around the countryside, over rocky outcrops, through woods and meadows and, most disconcertingly for Australians, right past private houses and through working farmyards, as they follow in the footsteps of untold generations.

When you're not rambling through the middle of some ones cow paddock or peering through the window of a cottage one is squeezing past, public footpaths often direct you through narrow passages between fields enclosed by Cornish hedges (as nearly every field is).

The thing about these hedges I want to remember for future use is the delightful way that, being filled with earth, they become absolutely covered in plants of all sorts. What, if built as a regular dry stone wall, would be just dry stones, bursts into Botanical Beauty.

Cornish hedges are commonly used as garden walls

Complex communities of wildflowers, herbs, ferns, grasses and shrubs sprout from all surfaces, sometimes completely covering the stonework. The effect can look just like the land itself has risen up to make a wall-one which concentrates a line of glorious colour and variety through the landscape.

Narrow paths can be transformed into green tunnels, studded with flowers, and almost every road and lane is lined with hedges displaying their botanical wares in such an attractive way that it more than compensates for their hair raising proximity to the road itself, when walking or cycling, to passing traffic.

With 48,000 kms of Cornish hedge, it is Cornwall's largest wildlife habitat. So greatly do locals value their hedges, Cornish planning regulations insist new development include new Cornish hedges-no doubt a boon to members of the the *Guild of Cornish Hedgers*- and they are also used as a very common option for town and village garden and municipal walls. Whether dry or mortared, garden walls almost inevitably have open planted tops, to great decorative and environmental effect.

So, definitely worth a wander about the paths and byways of ancient Cornwall. I'm sure any lover of stonework, history or landscape design will find something to stir the imagination.

A Rill Ordeal in Canada

Scott Young recalls the challenges and satisfaction of building a dry stone Rill during a Canadian Winter

Words and photos by Scott Young

The Rill, shaped ready for stone work

The Stone Rill project is located an hour west of Montreal , Quebec, Canada on a private vineyard. The client, for whom I have done multiple dry stone walling projects, asked for my expertise to fix an erosion issue behind his vineyard.

The erosion was occurring around a drainage pipe that runs underneath the vineyard from a mountain on one side of the vineyard to a large pond on the estate. This pond receives a large volume of water in the spring thaw and during large rain storms.

During the thaw a 46 cm diameter culvert pipe located on the side of the mountain channels this water like a fireman's hose, down to the pond.

The volume of water was creating problems for the pipe, eroding around it, and down its length under the vineyard, to the pond.

To remedy this issue I proposed creating a functional dry stone 'Land Art' build that would stop erosion and would withstand the high flow rate.

The client accepted the proposal and was thrilled to be able to use stones left over from previous dry stone walling projects.

The Rill is 15 metres long and 3.5 metres in diameter on the finished surface. It ties into a brook with an existing very large granite boulder which the water follows over to reach the drainage point below. This boulder was integrated into the Rill design. In front of the arch for the culvert I created a silt collection depression that can be cleaned out in the summer when dry.

"The main challenge from this build was not that I was doing it solo, in a ditch , in winter , with very poor access, but rather the mental and physical effects of poison ivy."

The type of stone used for this build was a mixture of local granite fieldstone from a sandpit with limestone and sandstone from two quarries that were left overs from other builds.

The project began at the end of August 2020 with excavation and staging materials at either end of the Rill. There was a rush to bring in all the stone before machine access was cut off due to netting being erected around the vineyard to prevent the wildlife eating the grapes.

I lost track of how many tonnes I brought in but it would be safe to say 50 to 70 tonnes of stone plus other stones set aside when excavating.

A herbal remedy for winter warmth

The main challenge from this build was not that I was doing it solo, in a ditch , in winter , with very poor access, but rather the mental and physical effects of poison ivy. You will never be cold in winter when you have poison ivy. It's suprising how warm it keep you.

While hand picking stones for a few days on site and transporting them by tractor to the staging area for the project I was confused as to why my arms were on fire . I thought it was my muscles protesting the activity of collecting stones but to my horror it was not.

With more stones needed and netting going up I pushed through dunking my arms in Tupperware full of Camille lotion to ease the pain while on a huge stone pile collecting materials.

Once all the stone was collected for the building I needed to seek medical attention at the local ER. With several hours of waiting I was seen by the physician who stated he has never seen a case of poison ivy this severe before and asked if he could show his fellow doctors.

I told my client that there would be a slight delay in starting to build. He fully understood and offered any assistance he could to see me through. I took off one month of work. Each arm was covered in one big blister.

Commencing the build

With arm wrappings on I started laying my first stones in October.

I used a layer of geotextile for the Rills base layer. On top of that I placed pond liner and another layer of geotextile before before placing the stones.

My batter frames which looked similar to a segmented large wooden wagon wheel, were placed at each end. Up to 10 or more string lines were run between these frames to keep the courses in alignment.

I began laying the stones from the lowest point in front of the culvert to the one end working on a few linear courses at a time.

The retaining sections on the vineyard side consumed a massive amount of stone being 1.5 meters wide at the base and taking care not to get too far ahead of myself when I needed to lay a face stone to the line.

With the medical break I was starting to enter the rainy fall season where water was flowing down the hillside into the building area but I was lucky to be out of the lowest parts of the build.

At this point I moved one batter form to the opposite side of the build and began integrating the different elevations .

Cutting the curve into the stones and laying them horizontal was a challenge that was rewarding once completed.

Stones were placed on a base layer of geotextile and pond liner

"I had a great time cutting the voussoirs for the reverse arch and integrating them into the wall ends"

A wall end reverse arch under construction

During this build I had poison ivy nine more times, each less in severity. Perhaps because I was becoming immune or maybe it was due to a lack of skin available to be affected.

I had stone stockpiled from the excavation that probably had poison ivy on it... but when you need stone, or it was the perfect stone for the area, it's hard to ignore. So it was a struggle telling yourself you need that stone but on the other hand you know in three days you have to pay the piper.

Up to 10 string lines at a time were used to keep the stone courses in alignment

Two views of the completed Rill

"The sound of rushing water over stones was great to listen to while I worked"

The Spring Melt

I worked through Winter hoping to have the Rill functioning before the spring melt. During the winter I covered the sections that I was working on and continued working. Some days (when the snow was more than 30cm deep), I would just go to the site to shovel snow.

Spring arrived early and the snow melting was offering an amazing sight of flowing water.

The sounds of rushing water over stones offered great photo opportunities and was great to listen to while I worked. With only a few feet of capping to complete the build it was perfect to see the dust being swept away leaving vibrant stones.

The final touches of adding soil and sod to the ends of the build to integrate the landscape to this feature happened in the summer at the driest time.

You can see more of Scott's great work via the following links:

Instagram @s.a.ystone

Facebook @s.a.ystone

Ancient Sheep Pen Restored

Five times UK Grand Prix Champion Waller, Steven Allen, teamed up with fellow Waller, Trevor Stamper to rebuild a sheepfold and wash, in the Yorkshire Dales

Words Claire Braeburn **Photography:** Rob Fraser

A three hundred-year-old sheep pen has been restored on Brant Fell as part of a the *Uplands Commons Project* supported by a National Heritage Fund.

Steven Allen and Trevor Stamper completed the task in 15 days this winter, in bracing weather conditions.

Master craftsman Steven said: “Being a farmer's son, with sheep on this moor back in the day, I was delighted to be able to rebuild this historic sheep pen. I hope the commoners use it for many years to come.”

Historic sheepfolds are used by commoners today to separate out hefted sheep back to individual farms, to treat sheep and for gathers. Gathers are when multiple commoners and their dogs work together to guide sheep off the fell for tupping, shearing and lambing throughout the year.

The *Our Upland Commons* project comes at a pivotal time for the 12 commons getting help- totalling 18, 000 hectares. There are serious threats to commons and the system of commoning. If not addressed these rare landscapes and the benefits they bring now and, in the future, will be lost.

Project backer, *The Foundation for Common Land* says commoning is a way of shared land management in which each flock has an area of land where they stay without fencing; in the Dales this is known as a “heft”. Only 3900 farmers are commoners in England, grazing the land for food production or using resources like firewood and bracken.

The practice of commoning, with people exercising rights over land that is privately owned, dates back to the 13th century.

Steven Allen (right) and Trevor Stamper rebuilding the sheep pen at Brant Fell in the Yorkshire Dales

Today common land accounts for just 3% of England. It includes large tracts of the most well-loved, free to visit and ecologically rich landscapes, which are also important for health and well being.

This story has been adapted, with permission, from an article originally written by Claire Braeburn for the *Foundation for Common Land*

Further Information about *The Foundation for Common Land* can be found by following the link: https://foundationforcommonland.org.uk/

FOUNDATION FOR COMMON LAND

The restored Sheep Pen and Wash at Brant Fell in the Yorkshire Dales

Bomb shelters and Black bears

Thea Alvin describes the origins and evolution of her skill as a stoneworker

Words and Photos: Thea Alvin

Like many children, I was conscripted into working for and with my father who was a brick-and-mortar mason. He built artistic chimneys and bomb shelter type multi-roomed basements, for the wealthy on Martha's Vineyard Island where I spent my teenage years. One such was a 12-room concrete pour with window like openings between the rooms to allow the son of the family to be able to run his train set around through all the rooms. This was at the time when we feared nuclear attack by Russia, and we would have bomb drills in our classrooms. This particular ultra wealthy family intended that their child still play with his train set even if his entire future life would be underground.

I got my driving license when I turned 16 and three days later, I totaled my fathers very fancy car. My dad had it towed home and parked it where he always did so I could see it. He could see it. Every day going to work or coming home it was there in its usual spot. He took me out of school and from then, I worked every day to pay for the car and never earned any money working for him. I guess he thought I would learn my lesson. It was not a fun childhood and I ended up eloping when I was 18 and moved from the Island to Stowe, Vermont.

From Bricks to Stone

Stone is the opposite of brick and block but can be used to build all the same things. There was a lot of stone around my new home in Stowe. I gathered it up and played with it, knowing I could do something, but not knowing how. The lace walls of my home island were not really sturdy enough for the mountains of Vermont....and I didn't know one thing about building retaining walls, but I needed to feed my family and the earth grew more stone than food, and before long, I had a veg garden and stone walls keeping the forest back

I dabbled in stonework doing a bit of self teaching over the 10 years of my marriage, working to make garden walls for myself and my friends.

A growing passion

I learned staircases in retaining walls, which was very tricky and super disappointing to get wrong multiple times, but I persevered. As a single mum of three, at age 28, I went to work for a dry stone Waller in Stowe and learned the trade properly.

I was still was a tender, though, and I fetched stone and backing material for years before I was allowed to lay any. In Vermont, we work outside half the year and inside the other half due to severe winters. I took a job in an arts and crafts store and became a sales clerk. This kept me and my kids warm and well fed, and I made friends and connections.

By and by, one of the women I worked with entered me in a sculpture show. When I asked her what I would do for it, she said with a smile and great confidence that I'd 'figure it out'. That was the year I learned how to build an arch. Not from the internet, I don't think YouTube was even invented yet... but with a pile of marble blocks and a good many late summer afternoons. That marble arch was my art teacher and from that moment my journey to explore stone as an art form began.

It was no longer a thing my dad forced me to do, it was no longer subsistence for survival, it became a love affair, a passion to seek.

As an artist, using stone as my medium, I enjoy stepping away from the rules, the testing and the levels and become just a person making a beautiful heap of stone into something durable and lovely.

"Most of the structures I build now are clocks of some sort, telling solstice or equinox, or even birth or death days"

I know the rules. I bend them. I love the stone more than I love the rules and it is like the parts of myself that are less admirable: wrinkles, pimples, unexpected bulges here and there, the stone also has these, by accepting them or even highlighting them, instead of tooling them off, I practice a sort of self-forgiveness, kindness and above all, acceptance. .

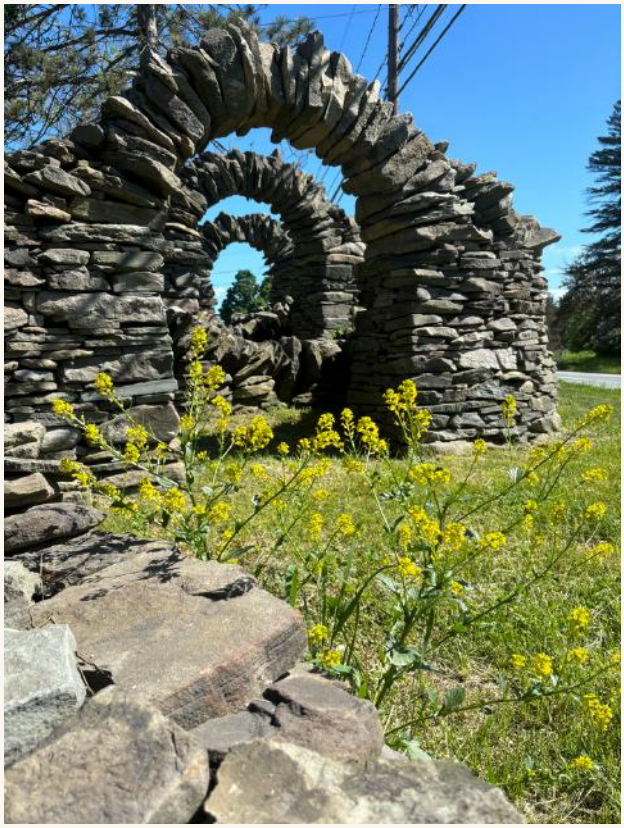
The symbolism of stone

My work is organic, and asks nothing of the viewer except to be welcome. I love that the most about my work. 'Come as you are. It is enough'. I also like for it to look pushed up by wind or worn down by water, to show time as part of its shape, and actually keep time as part of its function.

Most of the structures I build now are clocks of some sort, telling solstice or equinox, or even birth or death days. Time again, stopped in this moment, this shape. Water, wind, ephemeral movement stopped in this moment with time. Not trapped. Just slowed down so slow that we could watch it.

I prefer, random course patterns and no pokey-outy throughs, but at the end of my day, I am full of the joy of creation, and happiness of the day well spent, very tolerant of the mood swings of others around me and not full of bitter,

The Mandala Moon Gate, Mandala Gardens in Marion, Illinois.



The Phoenix Helix (above) is a set of intertwined arches that loop through Thea's front garden

cantankerous grumbling after pounding stone and forcing it with my will and ego to be a shape it wasn't or I wasn't. It's natural, beautiful, imperfect, unexpected, sturdy and patient. Like me.

Time for Love in the Smokey Mountains

One of my favorite projects is a massive labyrinth called 'Time for Love' I built together with 12 other masons and workers.

We spent 5 weeks living together in Eastern Tennessee in the Smoky Mountains, alongside black bears who came onto our porch, into our trucks and on our job site to eat the gas tanks, seats, trash and hopefully but thankfully not our lunch... and the occasional feral pig or copperhead snake.

The labyrinth was a big puzzle for me of how to accomplish the work. We needed equipment and material on both the inside and outside of each of the walls. The entire diameter was 46 metres across, the shortest wall was 1.2 metres tall and the tallest bit was close to 3. 6 metres tall. All the walls were 1.2 metres thick and all the pathways were 2.4 metres wide.

"We became a family, though, which is steady and constant. Stuck together by more than mud or blood"

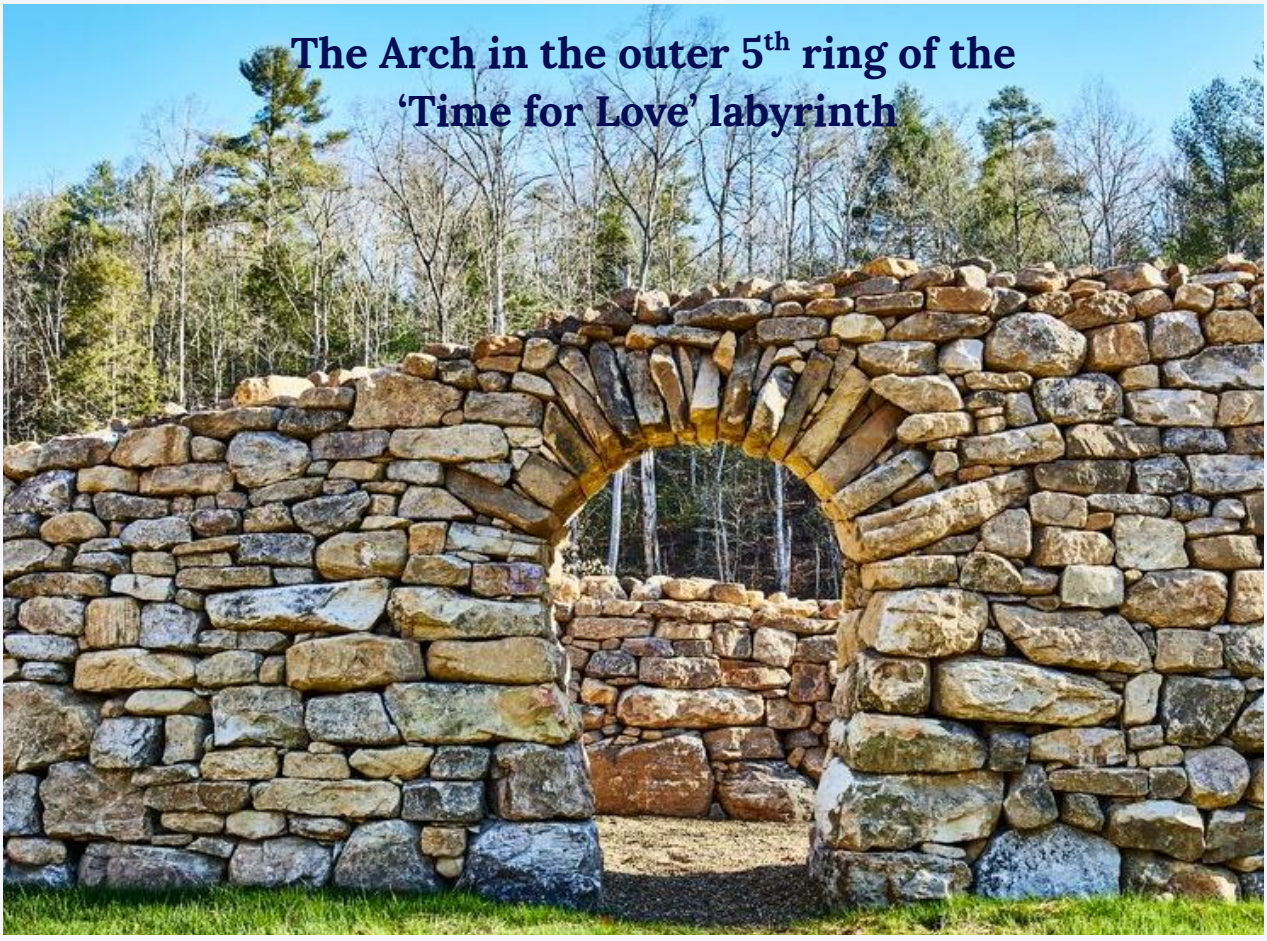
The Design Process

I work almost entirely in collaboration. I collaborate with the client, with their land, with the material, with my crew and our equipment and capacity and also with myself- what do I want to build and what shape will it be or where do I let that go and let it become itself?

I start with an idea, work with incredibly talented people, and allow the process to unwrap and build together, tapping strengths and encouraging development where growth is needed.

My clients and I understand that the process of listening to the stone is included in the project, and allow for that to happen. Micromanaging isn't part of my vocabulary. I ask so much from the crew but also build beside them. I trust them to make good decisions and when they do, I, hopefully, respect them and honor that. I ask everyone's opinion and take it all into consideration and have a stream of consciousness type conversations with people while working out designs and making plans of how to accomplish them. So the whole time I am working out the idea, I'm vocalizing that and talking it through with everyone and engaging opinion and skill. This non hierarchical process creates empowerment in the crew, encourages growth and rewards effort and builds the best and most beautiful walls.

I had the design for the labyrinth done on paper and I built a model in clay, showing the top lines and cheeks and arch. We'd work at it all day out there in the mud pit and at night we'd study it as a group. Strategizing first with an engineer and ultimately on site with the crew, this was our plan: we started in the very centre and built the first three rings over and around all the boulder benches. Then moved to build most of the outer, fifth ring, and arch, then went back in and built the fourth ring backing our way out of the labyrinth and cleaning as we went until we closed the fourth ring then completed the fifth by closing that door hole. It was complex and hard and beautiful and such a satisfying puzzle.



The Arch in the outer 5th ring of the 'Time for Love' labyrinth

Inside the labyrinth

An aerial view of the labyrinth

The labyrinth is set into the side of the Three Sisters Mountain Range at the Five Star resort, Blackberry Mountain.

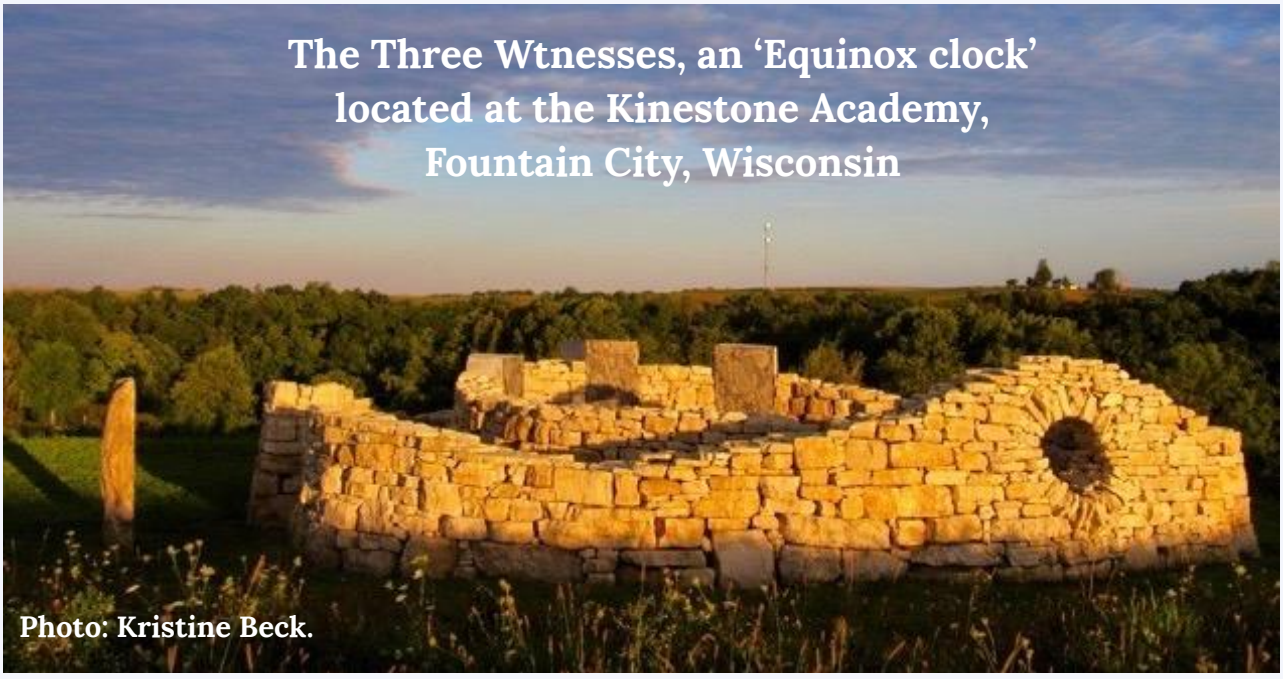
The sculpture of the labyrinth was meant to be a discovery on a long hike, so we also had no proper roadway to get to it.

Every day, we'd hike down into the site, carrying some of our tools and out again at the end. I took a photo at the end of every day from the same spot and reviewed progress and goals for the next day and stories with the gang over dinner every night.

Putting bits together

Stone asks you not to be lazy. Stone is old, and sort of embodies time. Stone is grounding. Stone needs some shaping. Stone is strength itself but asks you for yours....to share your strength for a time. It was originally all one rock and it's gone into millions of bits.

By being a stone mason, dry stone waller or however your dialect names it, we are reassembling all those bits back into a whole. Of course, the stone is heavy. I seem to work only in the rain and mud which means the stone is slippery. I've been bit by all sorts of spider and scorpion, smashed knuckles, bled my knees, nails and fingertips. And, been burned by the sun and clients. At the end of the day, none of that is the fault of the stone. The stone is steady, reliable, quiet, and almost always shows up on time.



The Three Wtnesses, an 'Equinox clock' located at the Kinestone Academy, Fountain City, Wisconsin

Photo: Kristine Beck.

The joy of problem solving

Stonework is a practice of problem solving. Each problem is solved by creating a new problem. Our job is to sort out what sort of problems we want to solve. Round ones, flat ones or pointy ones. I choose to see the problems as fun, a joy to be solved with laughter and a through line of understanding of compassion and self-acceptance and some roundy edges to go with my own roundy full heart.

Thea with a pod that was built in a day during a mini workshop on her property.

The stone I often choose to work with is mossy with a natural roundy face. Something old that's laid around on the forest floor for a while. When I lay it in to the wall, the wall will be new but will look aged because the faces are worn and any tooling is in the back.

Such a wall is softer, more friendly. It asks you to come near and sit a bit. I work hard to set a sculpture into a landscape in a natural way, responding to lines and structure of the earth and light and pathways naturally

An enduring craft

There's not much more satisfying at the end of a day than looking at your work and knowing it's going to be there for centuries. Not many other professions can say that. Not many other jobs will be as full of beauty, endurance and complexity.

You can see more of Thea's amazing work on her webpage: https://www.myearthwork.com/

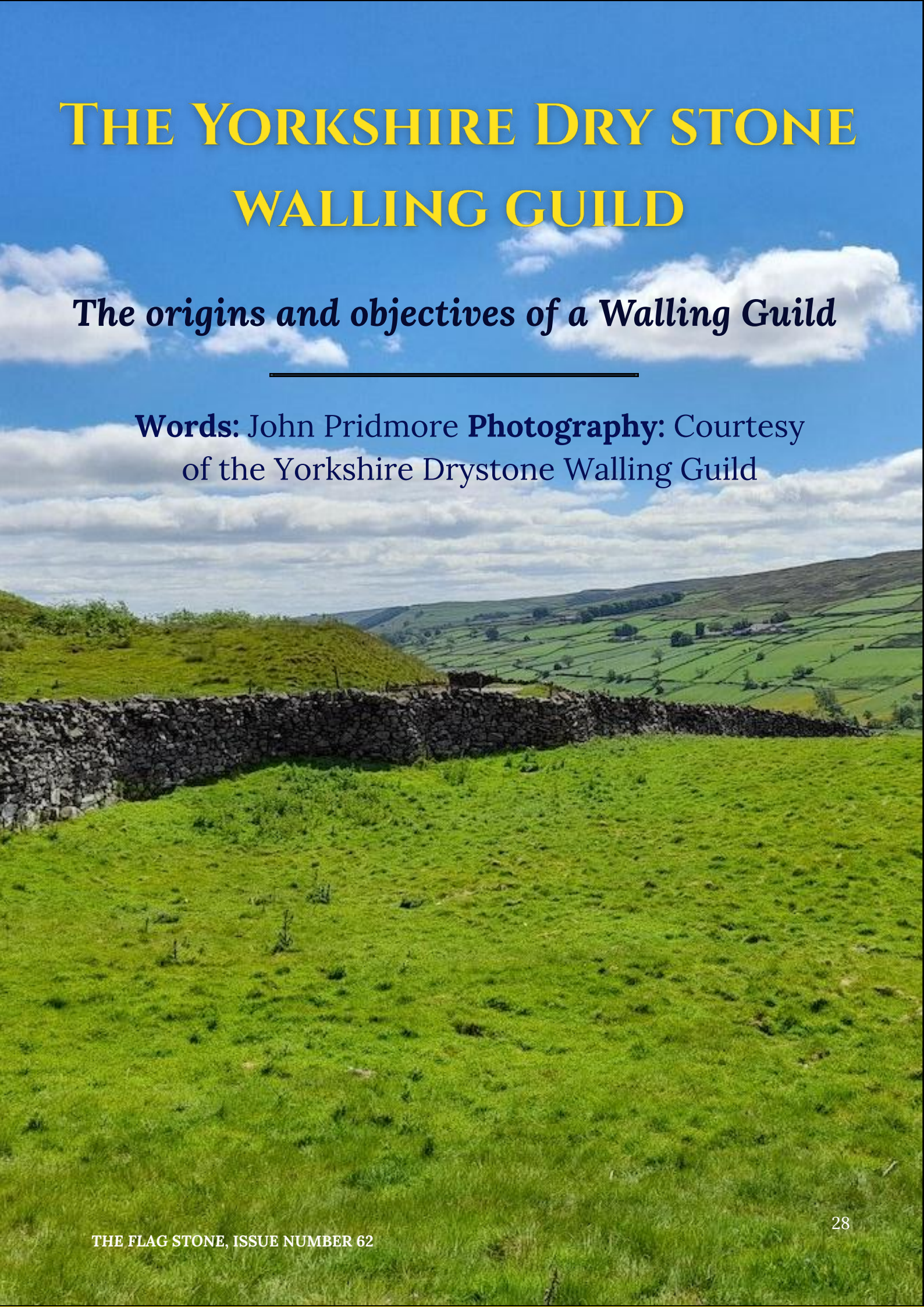
There is also a very nice summary of Thea's work and philosophy on the Ophra. com website

Thea's interview on Ophra.com

The Yorkshire Dry stone walling guild

The origins and objectives of a Walling Guild

Words: John Pridmore **Photography:** Courtesy of the Yorkshire Drystone Walling Guild



The Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild was formed in the late 1990s as a breakaway from the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain.

It started from very small roots to grow into the organisation it is today.

Its aims and objectives were and still are to promote the craft of Dry Stone Walling across Yorkshire and to keep the craft alive and healthy. Membership was quite small in the early years, especially before the dawn of the internet. Membership was generated through word of mouth or at country shows where people showed an interest.

I came across the Guild at the Nidderdale Show in Pateley Bridge near Harrogate. I played cricket for a local team and there were some walls down on the boundary. I volunteered to fix them and after an unsuccessful attempt I decided I needed some more knowledge. I signed up for a 2 day course with the Guild and a month later was trained by the then Secretary John Clifton. I was fortunate to have 2 days on 1 -2- 1 tuition and learned a great deal from John. I went back to the cricket club and fixed the derelict wall (it's still standing today 20 years later).

The Guild struggled for funds in the early days and was rescued financially when we held a sponsored build for a client. An all-hands-on deck call was made to members and after a few weekends the wall was restored along with the Guilds financial stability.

"The courses are run across Yorkshire from the east coast near Scarborough to the English Heritage site of Fountains Abbey"

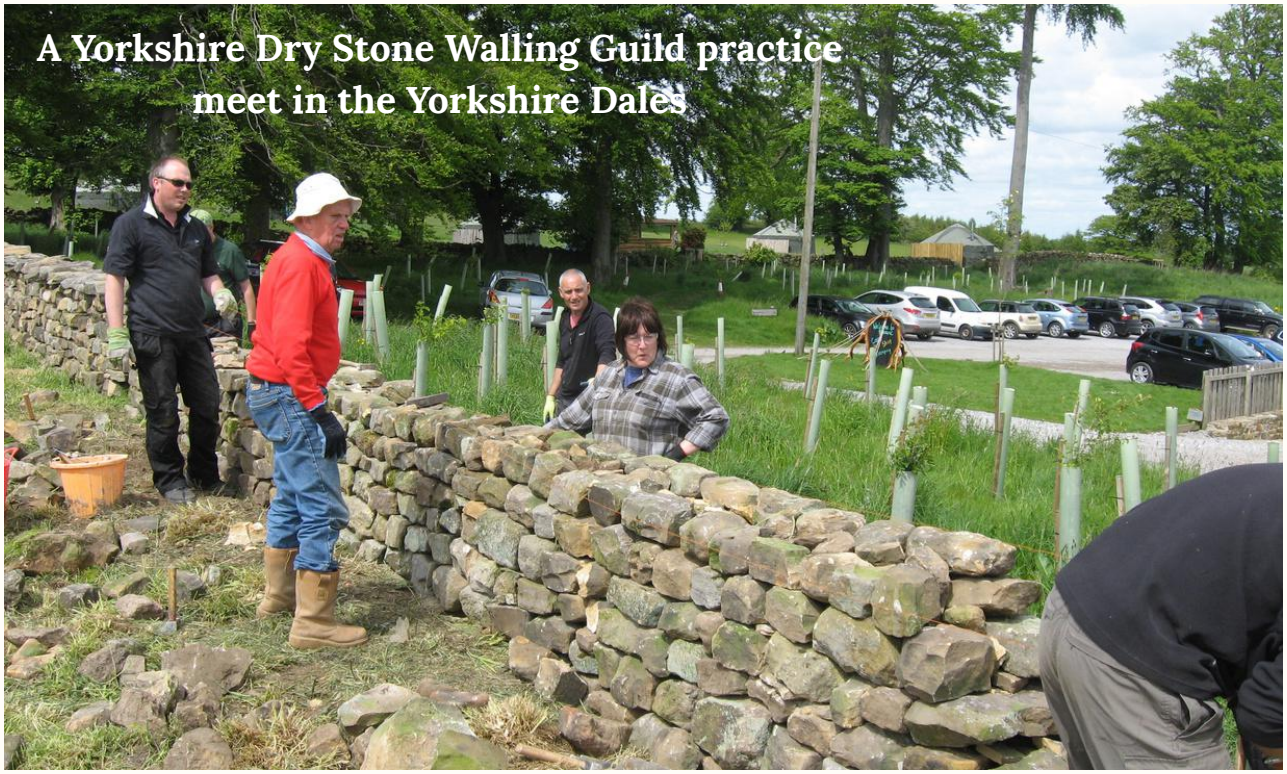
The onset of the internet really transformed the Guild. We established a website which gave members and those with an interest a central point of reference. More importantly it allowed us to sell our 2-day beginner courses. These have grown from around 4 a year to 12 or 13 a year now. They are very popular with people coming from all around the UK along with Europe and the USA.

People attend for a variety of reasons, from it being a birthday gift to wanting to undertake a project of their own.. We have a bank of 12 instructors, some full time Wallers and others who just enjoy teaching the craft to other people.

The courses are run across Yorkshire from the east coast near Scarborough to the English Heritage site of Fountains Abbey (we have not yet been asked to restore the Abbey though).

Another mainstay of the Guilds activities are Practice meets. These are one day events that are open to all members where they can come along to practice newly learned skills or just have a fun day out. There are always experienced wallers on hand to give advice to help improve skills and techniques. These are held from April to November at venues across Yorkshire restoring derelict walls to their former glory.

Participants in one of the Guild's, Wall End training courses



A Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Guild practice meet in the Yorkshire Dales

Princess Anne inspecting the Crimp Valley Oracle

One of the features built by the Guild at the Great Yorkshire Show

The Guild also attends agricultural shows starting with Duncombe Park in May. The main show is the Great Yorkshire Show where over a period of 4 days the Guild builds a permanent feature that can be enjoyed for years to come. Over the years we have built numerous seats and locations all over the showground. Our most prestigious build was a feature called The *Crimple Valley Oracle* designed by Guild member Johnny Clasper** The build even received a royal visit with Princess Anne coming along to see what we were doing.

In 2023 the Guild transferred to operating as a charity which better reflected the activities it carries out. The organisation wouldn't exist without the great team of trustees and volunteers who are all unpaid and offer their time because they have a passion for the craft.

Further information about the Yorkshire Drystone Walling Guild can be found via the following link: www.ydswg.co.uk

** A story by Bruce Munday about Johnny Clasper and the Crimple Valley Oracle appeared in **Issue 41** of *The Flag Stone*. *https://dswaa.org.au/?s=The+Flag+Stone*

A Weekend in Tasmania

A tour of historic and modern stonework in the Tasmanian Midlands

Words and photos by Jim Holdsworth

Claire Petroff, owner of former Wardour Castle Inn, tells Field Trip participants about the history of the property

The long weekend in early March was an ideal time for the Association to hold its third field trip in Tasmania.

In 2016 member, Andrew Garner, his colleague James Boxhall and their families hosted a memorable weekend of visits to many historic and fascinating places, many with impressive dry stone walls, some built by Andrew and James, in the region west of Launceston.

Way back in 2006 the Association held a weekend hosted by Eleanor Bjorksten and her husband Barry in and around the historic town of Oatlands, with a side trip to the colonial homestead Sherwood, south of Bothwell.

As the Committee considered destinations for forthcoming trips, the Tasmania Midlands loomed large; a timely opportunity as much has happened in Oatlands over recent years, and it was time for another look.

On a warm Friday evening, members and friends gathered in Oatlands for registration and a welcome drink hosted by our President. Trip notes and maps led to a keen sense of anticipation about what lay ahead and, under clear skies the next morning, about 25 of us gathered beside Lake Dulverton to embark on a tour of the town and its surrounds on foot and by coach. We'd come from Victoria and South Australia as well as from places more local.

A carefully crafted tour enabled us to see and learn about the recent work of the women wallers of Oatlands as well as seeing garden and boundary walls, both aged and more recent, that are instrumental in giving Oatlands its unique and appealing character.

The coach dropped us at the former Wardour Castle Inn, a one-time coaching stop near the southern entry to the town where we wandered through the rambling garden, guided by its owner Claire Petroff. We'd seen the property back in 2006 and it was a treat to see it again, with mature shady trees, dry stone wall settling into the garden's landscape, and a sense of maturity and informal elegance. Tea and coffee provided by the local Hospital Auxiliary accompanied our delicious boxed lunches.

President Timothy Hubbard outlines the day's tour beside Oatlands' Lake Dulverton

A corner of the garden at Wardour Castle Inn

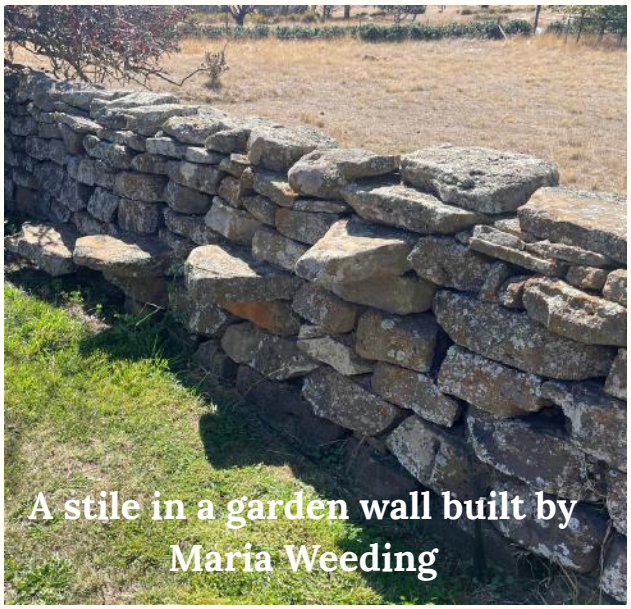
The last group of stops, included a fascinating wall with a three-step stone stile built by the owner Maria Weeding within a garden wall. The final stop at a recent wall built by Ian "Wally the Waller" Carline in front of "Woodbine" concluded a busy and engaging day.

There is no doubt that Oatlands is the richer for the enthusiastic contributions to the character of the town by the efforts of female wallers, among them Eleanor Bjorksten, Shirley Fish, and the others over many years.

Sunday, and we're away again by coach through the countryside to Bothwell where, after a peek inside the museum which celebrates Australia's oldest golf course nearby, to the rolling but very parched hills of Sherwood and the abandoned two-storey and very impressive homestead, a couple of outbuildings and a very solid dry stone bull-pen, all nestled in a valley beside the Clyde river. Sherwood's owner, Richard Hallett, gave us a little history of the property and we fanned out to explore the abandoned homestead and outbuildings.

Memories of colonial settlement and the prosperity that accrued in the early days of European farming were there to reflect upon. The highlight of Sherwood is its massive and very sturdy dry stone bull-pen, standing firm on a hill overlooking the homestead. Lost among elm suckers are two tall dry stone walls curving to each side of the main house's entry steps. What a stunning arrival point for people when the property was one of several grand farming properties in the area.

The afternoon drew to a close as the coach brought us, after a stop to see the dry stone walls at Allan and Linda Cooper's garden at Woodbury,



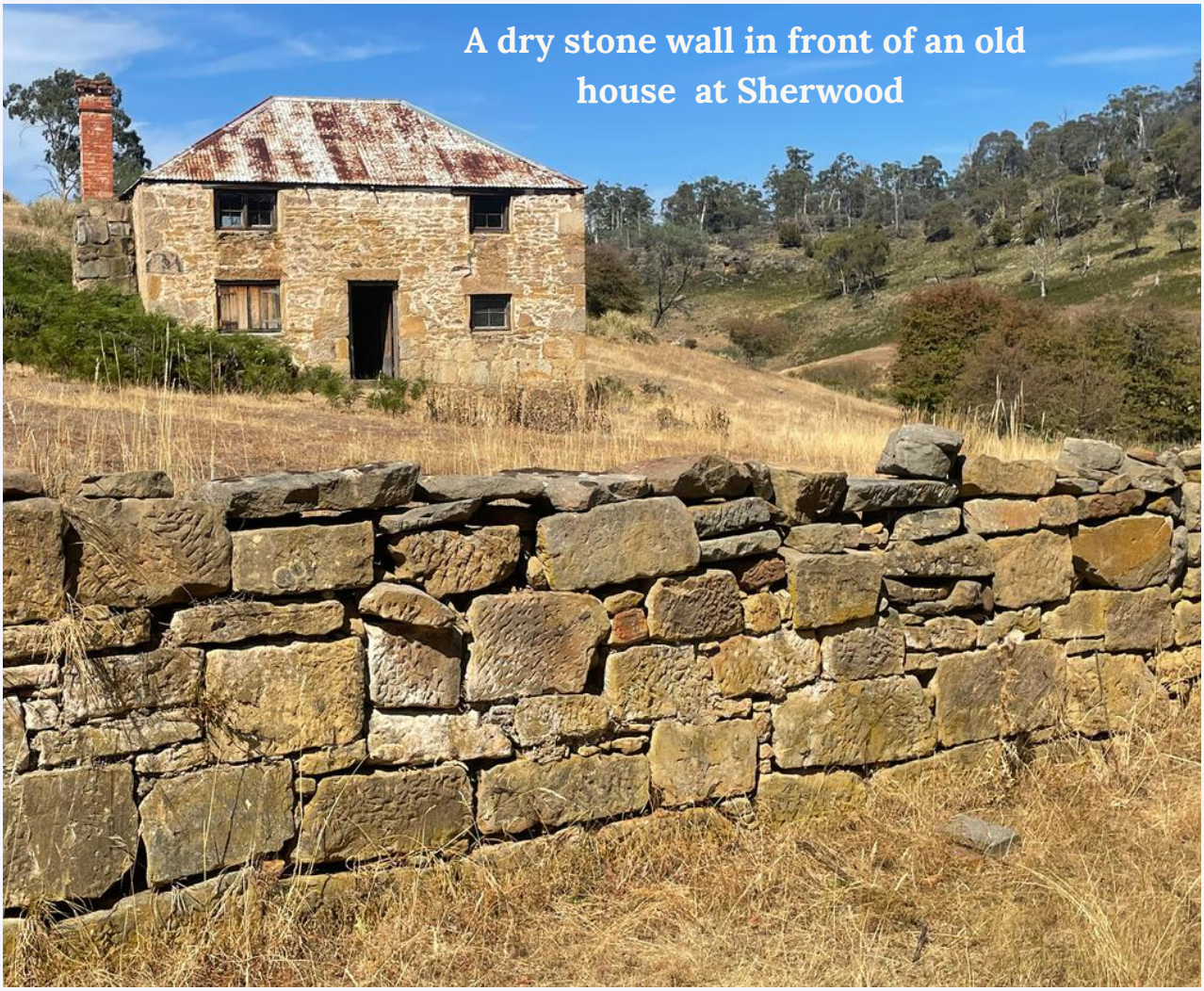
A stile in a garden wall built by Maria Weeding

to the historic town of Ross, and its three-arch stone bridge across the Ross River. We were greeted by Dr Jennie Jackson whose research into the stone carvings on the stones that define the three arches revealed quirky, amusing and occasionally irreverent craftsmanship by skilled and cheeky convicts.

Adjacent to the bridge is a stunning dry stone wall facing Bridge Street. Andrew Garner tells me that this highly visible wall's tiered construction is rare, and this is a fine example in excellent condition, its height and condition demonstrably testament to this method of construction.

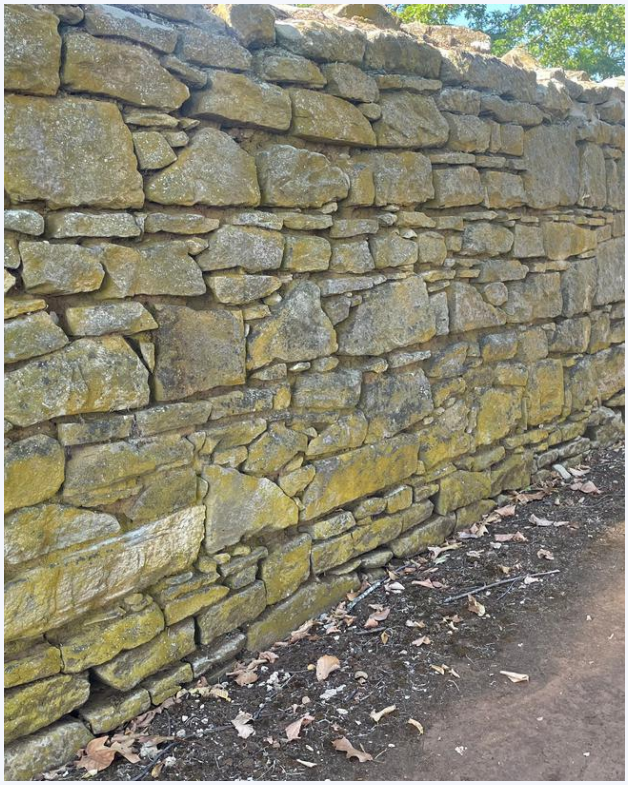
Over dinner at the Man O'Ross Hotel, Dr Jackson told of the background to her research and, within those curious tales, was able to find parts played by women; a happy coincidence with Saturday being International Women's Day!

impressive dry stone retaining walls frame the entry to Sherwood homestead



A dry stone wall in front of an old house at Sherwood

Below: A curious wall along Bridge Street, Ross.



Weekend outings require a lot of planning, arranging, co-ordination and management. Our President deserves particular praise for his efforts in those regards; a busy but very satisfying weekend, with wide-ranging places, stunning dry stone structures all set in the context of one of Australia's most interesting places and periods of colonial settlement. Once again, dry stone walls and structures are the catalyst for a multi-dimensional weekend; historic, educational, social and, without doubt, memorable for all.

The Committee appreciates the responses to a feedback form sent to all attendees, especially as the responses were both useful and broadly supportive of this aspect of the Association's suite of projects, activities and advocacies.

THE STONE PHILOSOPHERS

A novice Waller comes away with a philosophy for life after participating in a dry stone workshop

Words: Jungling Wang **Photos:** Geoff Duggan

Five life lessons from dry stone walling

1. You can never find a perfect stone, but you can find a decent one and try to fit it in, and finally, you can get a beautiful wall.

2. Sometimes you need to try, and make mistakes, and learn from your wasted time and labor.

3. Step back and watch from a distance, you can understand your situation better.

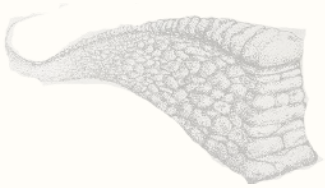
4. Regular stones are easy going, but you always build deeper connections with weird ones.

5. In the beginning you have a lot of choices and you can make beautiful plans for your future, but finally you run out of options and only some ugly stones are left . You have to accept them. That is like your life.

Junling Wang on the way to building a beautiful wall and life philosophy

Junling Wang (3rd from left) celebrates with fellow participants after completing a retaining wall at one of Geoff Duggans Walling workshops held in Picton, NSW

..... and at The End



A miscellany of world views & wisdom

"A weel-built dyke's a bonnie sicht For ilka body's e'e, A source o' keen and rare delicht Wherever it may be. Whilst man may come and man may goe, Since life and man must sever, If heed to our sma' needs ye pay We weel micht last forever."

Quoted in a PhD thesis by Mhairi Paterson titled: *'Set in Stone?' Building a new geography of the dry-stone wall* (2015).

"The Comfortable balance of logic, strength, and scale found in a well-built wall is what defines its beauty"

Extract from Dan Snows book: *Listening to Stone- Hardy Structures, Perilous Follies, and Other Tangles with Nature*

"You cannot lie or cheat with dry stone walling. I love the honesty of it, the absolute necessity that I maintain a high standard for myself because it's on display right there in the rock"

The Stone Bandit in: *The Flag Stone* Edition 62


Constructed by ‘The Stone Bandit’ aka Kit Goldman
Instagram@(thestonebandit)

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 statutoryprotection and landowner and community respect and celebra-tion.
- That the craft of dry-stone walling grows as a modern reinforce-ment of the contribution that dry stone walls and structures have made to the culture of Australia.

Membership

Joining the DSWAA

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

To apply

Membership Application/Renewal forms are available on our website www.dswaa.org.au
OR
Send an email to thedswaa@gmail.com and an Application/Renewal Form will be sent to you.

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

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

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