



# BRANCH NEWS AUGUST 2011

As there was a lack of space for Branch News in Stonechat 24, here's a separate in depth edition for all members and 'local' subscribers. Some of you will be receiving an empty Stonechat too, which means your subs have lapsed. If you wish to renew please use the form, if not may I thank you for your membership/support for the last year. If you receive a copy of Stonechat it means you're up to date and there's no need to panic!

## **COMPETITION**

Sadly the committee has decided not to hold a competition this year. Following the lack of support in terms of competitors and membership last year, and the disappointing turnout at the Snowdonia Society's recent event, coupled with the huge drain on resources (both financial and committee time) it was decided that the event was not viable at present.

## **BBQ**

On 20<sup>th</sup> August we will be having a BBQ at Plas Derwen, Corwen. We'll be hosting 7 members of the Otley and Yorkshire Dales Branch who will be helping us to restore part of the Orchard wall at Plas Derwen over the weekend, Branch members wishing to join in would be more than welcome and should contact Sean for more details. A booking for the Saturday evening BBQ is attached to this newsletter. Beyond the work the Branch will be carrying out at Plas Derwen there is also a contract up for grabs, professionals attending the BBQ will be given the opportunity to tender for this.

## **WALK**

Following the success of last year's quarry walks, (read all about them in Stonechat 23) on Bank Holiday Monday 29<sup>th</sup> August Sean will be leading a group 'delving in Dinorwic' (to borrow the title from Douglas Carrington's book) looking at inclines, blast shelters, retaining walls, mills, buildings and so much more! A number of routes are possible depending on interest/enthusiasm on a half/full day walk following a sumptuous Breakfast in Pete's Eats. All routes will require a degree of fitness, but are not impossible.... After all Sean's leading it. Bookings are currently very disappointing, so please fill in the form and join in, the booking fee will be refunded if you turn up....

## **A.G.M**

**AGM has been set for Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November, Foelas Arms Pentrefoelas, from 7.30pm.**

**Further details will be sent with Autumn Stonechat (25).**

## **MEMBERSHIP LEAFLET**

We've finally updated and revised our general information leaflet, a copy of which is enclosed (current members/local supporters only – for the lapsed, this was mailed before they were collected from the printer). We've had 2500 printed with funds from the 'Gareth Appeal', if there's a local outlet (cafés, local information dispensers, etc) you could keep stocked let Sean know and you'll be sent a few!

## **WEBSITE**

The website ([www.dswales.org.uk](http://www.dswales.org.uk)) continues to develop, a "News" section has been added, this includes the News snippets of recent events/achievements, Branches' contributions to the Branch Round up section of "Waller and Dyker", past Newsletters, and a photo gallery of recent events. A standards section and photo gallery is being developed. If there's anything you think should be added as a priority please let Sean know.

## SINGLE WALLING SHENANIGANS

A sunny July Saturday morning found four branch members gathered at the foot of Snowdon to dabble in the arcane art of single walling. As its name implies, single walling involves creating a wall mostly of single stones balanced on top of each other.



Sean & Colin manoeuvring a pebble onto the wall

To achieve this most of the rules of normal walling are put to one side and imagination, trial and error and downright cheating come to the fore. It was quite liberating to be told by Sean that tracing, putting stones on edge, creating letter boxes the size of aerial lunkeys were all acceptable, provided that the stones sat well and did the job. Having said that, as is usually the case, it isn't as easy as it may look and a whole series of new problems hove into view.



Bill Sheppard braves eating lunch in front of Colin's stone balancing. In a short day we felt pretty chuffed to have restored a decent section of wall and quite relieved to have survived the experience! The combination of steep slopes and big stones needing to be lifted higher than is the norm created some interesting health and safety issues. But most importantly it was good fun. Sean's touch on the tiller was light and we were allowed free reign to experiment and make our own mistakes, only to be brought back into line where we were creating problems that would be nigh impossible to resolve. The only down side is that so few people took the

opportunity to attend. It was a treat to see a new face, as Anne Forrest, a member of the Lancashire Branch who moved to Rachub a year and a bit ago, put in a first appearance for a Branch activity. It would be good to see a few more at future events.

Colin Brown



Section of single wall to be repaired



Bill, Ann, Sean, Colin in front of rebuilt section

There was coverage of this event at <http://www.welshicons.org.uk/news/gwynedd/rare-welsh-boundary-to-be-preserved/> and we're hopeful there will be something on single and holey walls in the Daily Post at some point, if you have any information on the history, any theories however fanciful on their construction, please contact Sean.

## TRAINING

Training remains the hub of our summer activities, as usual the papers in the west are not printing anything so numbers have been a little disappointing.



Rita and Emlyn. May Taster at Blaen y Nant. Rita travelled all the way from Aberystwyth to enjoy the scenery...

The first taster at Blaen y Nant attracted two hardly souls in the pouring rain, Sean stepped in at the last moment to substitute for an AWOL Geraint, and oversaw the mud wrestling with boulders. This was followed by another wet day in the Llanberis Pass as Sean once again took the reins (rains?) aided by young walling tyro Ioan Doyle to marshal the hoards...



Ioan, Mark Edwards, John Collins, Jo Lewis, Richard Bachelor, Sanja Jenkins, Tony & Jane Clarke, Mei Gwilym, David Carwyn Morgan .... Behind part of wall built on June taster near Pen y Pass

Nine, I kid you not, the most for a couple of years over this way. We were swamped by members of the Snowdonia Society, and continued a section of wall begun with the NHS in 2010. A couple of weeks later Iolo led a course completing a section of the wall and extending one end of it. It's good to be involved in restoring the boundaries of such a prominent enclosure, but there's a long, long way to go. This is the same field on which we ran the 'single wall seminar' described by Colin above, hopefully more will turn out next year.

Meanwhile in the east there has been at least one weekend course, I can tell because Colin provided details and photos of the one he instructed on... I assume there have been others but Information has proven difficult to obtain, and so press coverage might be described as muted over this way too.



Proof positive that they do have courses in the east, and better weather too. (June)

Anyway we must assume something is happening as our sponsorship from the Clwydian Range AONB continues.



June taster day on Moel Famau

A reminder to all members that provided you've had formal training or been a member for years you can attend any taster day/course free of charge to receive informal training/advice as you practice.... Very few takers so far this year... well I'm guessing as there have been none in the east.

## CHESHIRE BRANCH ON TOUR

Being spoilt with some of the most regular stone in the universe every year masochistic members of the Cheshire Branch decamp for a weekend to experience real stone somewhere else. This year we invited them to join us by Pistyll Rhaedr near Llanrhaedr ym Mochnant to work on a wall alongside the café. Three members of the group camped along with Sean and Brenda (who took longer to get to the site than some of the Cheshire members, who said our Branch area is ridiculously large) on the associated retreat camp-site owned by Phillip Facey, our host for the weekend and provider of sumptuous lunches. The rest (wimps) stayed at local B&Bs but missed out on the convivial campfire!



L to r Bernard, Delia, Brenda, Janet basking in the sun?

Around 15 metres of wall were dismantled, realigned (including some humungous footings) and rebuilt over the weekend. Richard built an end on Saturday and scuttled about most of Sunday bringing extra stone and

even managed to find sufficient to put on a 'proper' cope. Colin (Saturday), Ray (Saturday and a bit of Sunday before the lure of darts superceded walling) and Sean (both) respectively helped, supervised and confused.



**Organised mayhem, the wall is dismantled**



**let and Duncan**

The highlight of the weekend was must have been the Saturday Evening meal which replaced the BBQ which got lost somewhere in translation. On the Friday we had descended on "The Plough" in Llanrhaedr y-m unannounced and received excellent service and food. For the Saturday a meal for 11 had been booked at the nearby Winnstay Arms. The evening got off well. There was an extensive wine list and Sean approached the bar to buy two bottles of red and one of white as a treat from the North Wales Branch to our 'foreign' guests. "I'd like two bottles of red, what have you got..."; "we only have 1"; "what's that then"; "no we only have one bottle of red wine left"...; "Oh" [crestfallen]; "I'm sure we can sort something out". 15 minutes later another bottle of red arrives at the table... we notice that it (and the 1 from earlier) were specially selected for Spar (across the road).

We were not disheartened , it did after all taste okay.

To the meal... Eventually, an order was taken. Sometime later 4 Lamb steaks arrived fresh and steaming, then the rest began to arrive in dribs and drabs... long after Brenda had finished her lamb Sean's vegetarian curry arrived, a rubberised naan, the most overcooked rice possibly in the history of catering, although it should be said that not all of the cauliflower was frozen. It also became obvious at this point that one meal was missing. A search party was dispatched, staff were found, a delay, further search parties. An answer, I suppose an apology of sorts 'they're having trouble finding it in the freezer'. It's gone 9pm, the meal was booked for 7.30, providing 10/11 meals, we're gone and without paying too. Bernard returns the following day with contributions, they settle for half price and a freebie for Bernard and wife to be enjoyed at a later date. Enjoy? Compensation or retribution?

Anyway it was a good weekend, thoroughly enjoyed by all present, it even attracted local press coverage via Oswestry Advertiser, and as this goes 'to press' hopefully the Tanat Chronicle too.

Thanks to Richard for all his work in sorting the site, for Phil Facey for the site, camping, wall to work on, and donation.



**Wall Before**



**Wall After**



Cheshire members and Phil Facey (3<sup>rd</sup> left) behind completed wall

### **SNOWDONIA SOCIETY COMPETITION**

The Snowdonia Society held its 28<sup>th</sup> Dry Stone Walling Competition at the National Trust farm Hafod y Llan in Nant Gwynant on 12 June 2011. The Branch was unable to help out this year as Colin was on holiday, and Sean had been summoned to the deep south (Purbeck) to carry out a DSWA Craftsman Examination and it was felt that it would be too much to heap on the shoulders of Craig and Richard as there had been few other offers of help.

First prizes trophy went to Brian Evans of Corwen in the Professional Class, Dilwyn Williams of Pwllheli in the Semi-Professional Class and Bill Sheppard of Hoole in the Amateur Class. Iolo Jones was runner up in the professional class, with Ioan Doyle securing second spot in the semi professional. The society has unfortunately not offered up the name of the third prize winner in the semi-professional. Congratulations to Bill and Iolo who are current Branch members, and to Brian too he's normally a member...

The competition took part in horrendous weather, which would probably account for the very disappointing turnout of only 6 competitors. Judges Arthur Hughes and Alaw Jones commented that the standard of wall was one of the best they had seen, with not much to decide between the competitors.

This year the competition was sponsored by the Esmé Kirby Snowdonia Trust. Esmé Kirby founded the Snowdonia Society and was the driving force behind the early years of the competition, being a strong supporter of traditional heritage and skills. The Society have asked the Branch to help again next year... over to you membership, volunteers wanted NOW!!!



Brian Evans "copes" with the rain



L to r: Bill Sheppard, Brian Evans, Dilwyn Williams, Alaw Jones, Arthur Hughes and un-named

Photos courtesy of Snowdonia Society

# Diary & Completed Events

## January

13 Presentation "An Idiosyncratic Survey of the Dry stone walls of the British Isles". Stone Foundation, Ventura, California. USA

## February

18 Presentation "From the Wailing wall to the Pyramids: The stone structures of the North Wales Slate Industry." Pete's Eats, Llanberis.  
7.30pm

## March

1 Presentation "From the Wailing wall to the Pyramids: The stone structures of the North Wales Slate Industry." Otley Branch DSWA, Yorkshire

3 Presentation "Inscriptions on the Landscape". Conwy Historical Society, Civic Hall Conwy. 7.30pm

## April

9 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

16 North West Taster Moel y Ci, Tregarth

30 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

## May

1 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

14/15 North East Training Course, Moel Famau, Mold

21 North West Taster Blaen y Nant, Bethesda

21 Display Greenfield Valley Heritage Park, Holywell

## June

4 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

12 Snowdonia Society Competition, Hafod y Llan, Beddgelert

25 North West Taster Pen y Pass, Snowdon

25/26 North East Training Course, Moel Famau, Mold

## July

9-10 Walling Weekend and BBQ, hosting Cheshire Branch, Llanrhaedr yn Mochnant.

18-21 Demonstration with South Wales Branch, Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells

23 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

23/24 North West Training Course Pen y Pass, Snowdon

23/24 Single skin wall seminar Pen y Pass Snowdon

## August

6 North East Taster Moel Famau, Mold

13 North West Taster Blaen y Nant, Bethesda

18 Display, Fflintshire Show

20/21 North East Training Course, Moel Famau, Mold

20/21 Walling Weekend and BBQ, hosting Otley & Yorkshire dales Branch, Plas Derwen, Corwen

29 Delving in Dinorwig, Guided walk - dry stone features of Dinorwig Quarry Llanberis. Breakfast in Petes eats, Leaving 10am. Full day

## September

10/11 North West Training Course, Blaen y Nant, Bethesda

## November

2 AGM, Foelas Arms, Pentrefoelas. 7.30pm

## Contacts

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## Sponsors

The North Wales Branch would like to thank the following for their sponsorship in the last 12 months:

**First Hydro Company, Llanberis.**

**Pete's Eats, Llanberis.**

**Mr Meirion Pritchard, Ty Isa, Nant Peris**

**And the following for their support:**

Don& Anne Eland; Andrew Kehoe, Kehoe Countryside; Mark Sykes, Mark Sykes Contracting;

Alan Williams, Cefn Du Construction; The National Trust (Carneddau)

# Event Booking

Please return to: Sean Adcock. 2 Bryn Eithin, Waen, Penisarwaun, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 3PW by 26<sup>th</sup> November

I ENCLOSE CHEQUE FOR .....(Payable to North Wales Branch of GB DSWA)

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....POST CODE .....

TELEPHONE .....E MAIL .....

PLEASE FILL BOX WITH NUMBER OF PLACES REQUIRED

members non-members

20<sup>th</sup> August Plas Derwen, Corwen BBQ (£5/head)

29<sup>th</sup> August Dinorwic Walk (£20/head, refundable)

I ENCLOSE CHEQUE FOR .....(Payable to North Wales Branch of DSWA-GB)