

## NORTH WALES BRANCH REPORT JULY

### Summertime and all the fun of the fair

Last time we met our new treasurer was getting steadily dizzy at the behest of HSBC. Fortunately these gyrations have stopped but HSBC now think the former treasurer and partner of our Chairman has moved in with him, either that or the Hon Treas has undergone some fairly serious “Reassignment” surgery. Aah bureaucracy.

Aaargh bureaucracy. No sooner do we have one merry go round sorted than another sidles into view. The Countryside Council for Wales Grant officer we normally deal with is on secondment his replacement is a box ticker *par excellence* and has decided that my already busy and complicated life needs spicing up. Not so much ever decreasing circles as looping the loop. Please resubmit filling in x and y, despite the fact that x and y clearly state we don't need to, never mind. Here's another form we'd like you to fill in, which basically replicates a section of the original but having to give everything a posh title or something and replicating the 'milestone' dates. No problem. Only there is a problem, could you please tell us when a,b,c will be ready to view I was a little more tactful than suggesting he read the bl@@dy form he'd sent me last time, but only a little. Could you also please explain such and such... 'I attach the breakdown I submitted with the original application'. Gibber.

He also wants to know how we propose to show interim evidence of research. I shall get out my magic wand. Which reminds me, wizardry is indeed my latest accomplishment amazing the modern day requirements of Branch Secretary. Apparently we're the small Branch of the Year which came as a bit of a shock, small is overegging it a bit micro would be better. I maintain it was all achieved with smoke and mirrors (particularly useful in doubling the attendance at meetings). Apparently “Stonechat” (available from absolutely no major booksellers) was key – one ‘judge’ apparently shut himself away and refused to come out until he'd read them all – the mind boggles... quite dreadfully at times. Anyway its available at £5 for 3 copies, there will be a special display at the Ambleside Congress with special offers and an international cast of contributors to a couple of special editions, assuming I get a breather from the CCW roller coaster that is.

More magic, this time of the Uri Geller variety came in handy at the Snowdonia Society Competition which we now help (dis)organise. Our marquee blew away over night, the poles carrying out a fine impersonation of a set of those metal puzzles where you have to somehow separate two weirdly shaped bent wires or nails. Somehow we got it back up. So we are now even more in need of the replacement last seen chasing me around Alton Towers.

To actual walling – what we sometimes do when we've successfully extricated ourselves from all that red tape – the competition was a success, 17 competitors including Ed Park from Cumbria, a very close second to our own Iolo Jones in the Pros. Another Branch member Brian Evans triumphed in the semi-pros and relative newcomer Bill Sheppard was a creditable second in a strong amateur field. Newish Derbyshire Master Craftsman (should that be woman, person??) Sally Hodgson helped yours truly with the judging. 25 metres of semi derelict stock proof wall rebuilt for free, no vehicles allowed near the wall in case we damaged the field, a phrase involving consuming cake comes to mind.

Our training programme is gathering momentum especially in the east of our realm where we have a programme in conjunction with the Clwydian Hills AoNB, courses are full to overflowing, extra instructors' arms bent, and even a few column millimetres in the press. Further west they're less popular (despite my not instructing) ironically the local AoNB here is running its own free courses. More swings and roundabouts.



I end for once on a sad note. Gareth Pritchard, (shown left at SWEDSWA certification in 2009) Master Craftsman, examiner, judge, instructor, former DSWA vice-president, management committee member for the North Wales Branch since the early 90s, passed away on 18<sup>th</sup> May. Gareth had dedicated much of the later years of his life to dry stone walling and our Association and will be missed by all who knew him. His family kindly donated the donations from his funeral plus all his tools and books to the Branch to sell. The proceeds (over £400 to date) will go towards this years 'standards promotion' as we need to raise £1200 towards our CCW grant application for this £10000 project. More smoke and mirrors, and a personal roller-coaster.

Sean Adcock