

NORTH WALES BRANCH REPORT

Last time the editor presaged my 'epistle' with a health warning and smacked my wrists to boot. A new year another resolution. Its positive all the way. Start a sweepstake on how long that will last.

Winter is of course a quiet time for the Branch. This year we've experimented with having occasional talks in a local (to me, well I've given the talks) café. What a success they have been. Open to the public as well as Branch members the first one attracted eight times as many member of public as Branch members (excluding yours truly). There were also as many people at the next one where the number of Branch members doubled, well it was the official-ish Christmas get together. I suppose three people is still a get-together. The last one a week or two back was a little disappointing, however I shall remain positive, 4 Branch members in 3 talks must be some sort of record. I gave a talk in Ventura California in January there was even a Branch member there (plus 50 odd others), a talk in Eugene Oregon around 20 souls, most recently 2 talks last week - to the Otley Branch 45 members turned up (and they'd even had me before), then a local historical society 65, yippee!!!!

Winter has seen the arrival of a website, still under development, check it out at www.dswales.org.uk. A comprehensive training programme has been drawn up for the summer, 2 competitions and one or two displays. We might even manage a guided walk or two if my enthusiasm and weight of numbers demands. Feet up for me then. Oops getting a little negative there.

Much of the winter has gone into producing a booklet on standards in dry stone walling, identifying faults etc, and another on Clawdd construction. These are archetypal stone faced earth banks with vertically coursed 'bookended' stone. You can find out more when they arrive on the website sometime in the early summer as pdf files. This is a very positive development; the fact that they were to be printed, but couldn't be finished in time for the grant, is not at all disheartening.

Stonechat has had a winter rest, but back copies can be found on the website. There will be a slightly longer lag before new copies are added, but you can always get paper copies, contact sean@stonewaller.freeserve.co.uk. We're trying to boost circulation so we can afford to get them professionally printed, several branches have signed up for copies, nag yours if you want one on the cheap.

It's been a good winter and not just because I spent 5 weeks in western USA from 2nd January without a spot of rain. Could this explain the new positivism. Small Branch of the year again, could that explain it. Maybe you've guessed. Still all smoke and mirrors. Sing along now, I'm H-A-P-P-Y, I'm H-A-P-P-Y, I know I am, I'm sure I am, I'm H-A-P-P-Y.

Sean Adcock