



Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain Lancashire Branch



Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

Summer Newsletter 2008

Now that the two summer shows are out of the way it is time to put pen to paper and keep you up to date with branch activities and national developments.

Michael Foster and I attended the Great Eccleston Show on 12-13 July, followed a week later by the Green Fayre in Wigan. It was the first opportunity to make use of the sack trolley that the branch purchased last year for such events and believe me, it made a big difference. Both shows went well with a lot of interest and enquiries about the craft. We are also building small walls with children which are always popular.

The first event for the branch this year was on 27 April at Hartshead Pike. This was the branch's contribution to the DSWA 40th Anniversary which is being celebrated by all the branches this year. The last six or seven years have seen a big change to the organisation that once operated out of someone's kitchen and spare room. Our offices at Crooklands, with one and a half paid staff, are worth a visit if you are ever in the area. Adjacent to the office (which is on the Westmorland Showground site) you will be able to view the stunning panels of walling that depict walling techniques and types of stone from different parts of the country.

But back to the practise meet at Hartshead Pike. The branch has been running training courses at the Pike for about 12 years now and we have reached a point on one side of the wall where it would have been too difficult for beginners to train on. WE offered to rebuild this bit for Tameside Countryside Service as a thank you to them for having us up there all these years. It has always been a happy and productive partnership with Tameside and we work very well together. We have achieved such a lot up there and trained many hundreds of people over the years. The event got a lot of local media publicity, and many thanks go to Carl Watson, Master Craftsman, who did a live interview with Radio Tameside which was a great success.

A lot of preparation was necessary before the event as we only had one day to do the job. Tameside took the fence back, but thanks must go to Chris and Gill who took the wall down before we got there and laid all the stone out for us to work on straight away. The weather was the typical drizzle all day long, but thanks to Michael, Mike, Iain, Carl, Howard, Anne, John Courtman and Ian Barroman from Tameside Countryside Service for their efforts on the day. We even incorporated a lunky just so John's Hartshead hares could have right of way! Carl also fettled a damaged corner at the end of a public footpath which is constantly being vandalised.

It was a good day but we were all a bit crestfallen when we returned a few weeks later for the training weekend only to find that about a third of the wall had been knocked down by vandals. Some of the comments aren't suitable for repeating however we got back to it, working to rebuild the wall.



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The training weekend at the Pike was fully booked and thanks must go to Chris, who was the instructor on that event, as well as all the branch members who turned out to support us. The wall was slightly undulating due to the nature of the site but it looks good and John Courtman was as pleased as punch with it. That was another good weekend under our belts and perfect weather conditions to work in.

We welcomed a new member on the training weekend, Paul Clayton. On day 2, Paul brought a thin, A4 sized piece of lead, on which he had inscribed the DSWA logo and details of the weekend. With a long nail, all the trainees and branch members were invited to sign their names, and this plaque was then incorporated into the wall. This was repeated again at Denshaw a month later, and we have enough lead left for 3 more training weekends. Many thanks go to Paul for this.

The Denshaw Training Weekend a month later was also very successful and fully booked. Thanks go to Carl for being the main instructor throughout the event. We had another good crowd of trainees, five of whom were women, and the Oldham Countryside Service sent four of their volunteers on the course. Another one of the volunteers, Maurice, came for a third time! A good stretch of wall was put up, but not without its problems. Firstly the stone had not arrived on site as promised. It did eventually arrive, but it set us back a bit. Secondly, we had to dig down *a long way* before reaching ground that was suitable to build on. There also wasn't a lot of big stone in the foundations but despite all this, we finished well ahead of schedule on Sunday. John Callahan, Countryside Ranger from Oldham Countryside Service was delighted with the wall and made sure we are returning next year, hopefully to finish the last section.

Ken Clayton, our Chairman, didn't have a very good start to the year but he is well on the road to recovery now. A few months ago he had a pacemaker fitted and he was able to pay us a quick visit when we were at Hartshead and a longer visit when we were at Denshaw. It was good to see you looking so well Ken and thank you for coming to see us as it was much appreciated and good for branch moral.

Now that the shows and training weekends have finished, Michael will be starting to work with Euan Raffel, a university student and freelance website designer, to create a website for the branch. More news will come in the next newsletter.

Don't forget! The next practise meet is at Burnedge Bent Farm on Sunday, 5 October with a 9am start, and the AGM is on the 6 October at Cross Keys Inn, Uppermill, starting at 7.30pm.

Brenda Koo
Secretary, DSWA Lancashire Branch