

DRY STONE WALLS – A PART OF OUR HERITAGE



"Dry stone walls are an integral feature of the landscape, particularly in the upland areas of England and Wales. Many people who visit these areas perhaps take the dry stone wall for granted – they are simply there and always have been."

Not only are dry stone walls an integral feature of our countryside's rich heritage and tradition, creating a sense of history and place, they also offer a practical form of stock proof boundary, some of which date back to medieval times.

Dry stone walling is an ancient craft, with the earliest form known in Great Britain built some three and a half thousand years ago on Orkney. However, it is the field walls, mostly of the 18th and 19th centuries, by which man has made the greatest impression on the present day landscape. You can still see areas where the small patchwork of field boundaries stretch out from the valley floors and up towards the poorer ground on the slopes.



Dry stone walls are built without mortar or cement, which allows the structure to settle naturally and resist frost damage. Walls provide valuable wildlife habitat for plants, animals and insects and act as wildlife corridors for species to move about safely. Lichens and mosses also find a home on a dry stone wall and stock appreciates the shelter afforded by a wall during inclement weather. Not something a fence can offer. Dry stone walling is a sustainable practice, using locally sourced materials, very few mechanical tools and requiring limited maintenance. Built correctly, walls should stand for many years; out lasting a fence several times over.

Dry stone walls also reflect the geological differences within the UK. Most of the walls are found in areas where soils are thin and rock is close to the surface. Historically, walls would have been built using the local material; it would not have been cost effective to transport stone over large distances. Regional variations in the construction of dry stone walls have developed due to the type of stone being used so when repairing or rebuilding walls it is important to study the surrounding walls and ensure the new sections blend in with what is already there to maintain the character of the area.





Far from being a "dying craft" dry stone walling is thriving and it is possible to make a good living from the craft, whilst also helping to maintain the landscape for future generations to enjoy. Master Craftsmen regularly build features for Gold Medal Show Gardens at Chelsea and take on commissions for renowned artists like Andy Goldsworthy.

The Dry Stone Walling Association was founded 50 years ago to improve the knowledge and understanding of this traditional craft. There is a network of branches throughout the country offering training courses and opportunities for people to develop their skills as dry stone wallers for the future. More information about the Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) is available from the website, www.dswa.org.uk, including the craftsman certification scheme that offers accredited qualifications in dry stone walling.

Linda Clarkson

Training & Education Coordinator
Dry Stone Walling Association
Lane Farm, Crooklands
Milnthorpe, Cumbria, LA7 7NH



Mobile: 07989848167 (Available Mon - Wed)

Office: 015395 67953

Email: training@dswa.org.uk

www.dswa.org.uk