



## Life of a dry stone waller

Hello! My name is **Andrew Mason** and I am a professional dry stone waller. I have been building and repairing walls for over 30 years. I have taken qualifications and am now a **Master Craftsman**.

A dry stone waller builds walls without using any cement. The stones are placed one on top of the other and wedged together. These are the sort of walls you see in the countryside.



Dry stone walls are very strong and can stand for hundreds of years. Many of the walls that we can see in the countryside today have been standing for over 300 years. It is said that some were built by Viking settlers and there are even dry stone walls in Orkney that are over 4000 years old.



Walls were built to separate one person's land from another's. They were built high enough to stop animals escaping. Most of the dry stone walls you see today were first built between 1750 and 1860 after the Government passed Acts to allow people to enclose land that previously had been called common land where people could graze animals freely, or cultivate crops and hay.



Often all the stone from the fields was scraped off and piled at the edge so that the farmers could grow crops; then walls were built with the stone that had been cleared from the field. If you look at the walls going up the sides of hillsides, you will see some go in a straight line, regardless of the slope or bedrock outcrops.

***Can you think why this should be?***

However, you will have seen some walls that have fallen down.



***Can you think why walls would fall down?***

When the walls have fallen down, people call on me to come and repair them. I live on a farm and I have been repairing farm walls ever since I can remember. My father taught me first and when I was good enough to work on my own I took walling qualifications and started my own business.

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First I have to clear the stones that have fallen down and lay them out away from the wall.

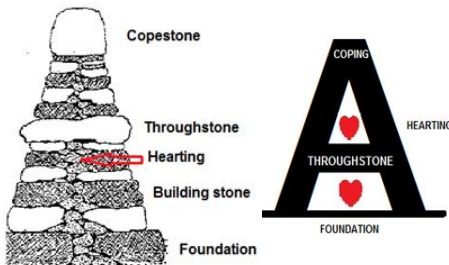
Then I take down the rest of the wall, right down to the ground.

I dig out a trench and lay in the **foundation stones** - these are often big, ugly stones. These have to be put in very carefully and make sure they do not wobble, because the stability and strength of the rest of the wall will depend on them.



I then fill in between the stones with what we call **hearting**. I can then start to build the wall. This is called the first lift.

I make sure that the stones are placed with the long edge into the wall. I have to build up both sides of the wall as I go and I make sure that each layer of stones is filled in with **hearting**.



The wall slopes inwards as it gets higher: it is wider at the base than at the top. It's like a letter A.

**Can you think why this would be?**

We call this sloping edge of the wall the **batter**. I sometimes use poles and string to make sure the walls are straight and sloping in properly all the way up.



When the wall is about knee height, we put in **through stones**. As the name suggests these go right across the wall and sometimes stick out. They add weight to the wall and anchor both sides together. They can look like stepping stones but please do not climb over walls. Use gates or stiles. Climbing over walls can disturb and loosen the stones which makes them more likely to fall down.



Above the **through** stones I continue building the second lift up to the top.

The stones we put on the top of the wall are called **cams or cope stones**.

There are different sorts of patterns to these cam stones but they all do the same job of weighting down the top of the wall. They also make it more difficult for animals to jump on.



These sheep have jumped on the wall because there are no cope stones

**Which county do you think this wall is in?**

**C** \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

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I have to work in all weathers. It's very nice being out on the fells in the sunshine, but it can be a bit unpleasant when it's pouring with rain or in the snow. And that's when it can get a bit dangerous too, especially if you are working on a hill.

### ***Can you think why?***



I often work by myself, although it is good when I have other wallers to help me! In one day I can build 4 metres of wall if the stone is good to work with and I don't need to use my hammer too much to make it all fit together.



Stones are laid one on top of the other, in rows, crossing the joints between stones on the row below and we try to lay the stones out in rows a bit like brick walls but we lay the stones length ways into the wall. Sometimes the shape of the stones makes this difficult - like a giant jigsaw puzzle. But we try to make all the stones fit tightly together.



I also build new walls of course and I have built new walls in America and several countries in Europe.

And I can add decoration and special features and build pillars, round or square.

In Britain there are different styles of walling: it all depends on the sort of stone that is in the area. Here are three walls built with different types of stone from different parts of Britain

### ***Have you seen any walls like these?***

#### ***Limestone***



#### ***Slate***



#### ***Sandstone***



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**1. Can you see the hole in the wall?  
Who do you think uses the hole?**

(Answers below)



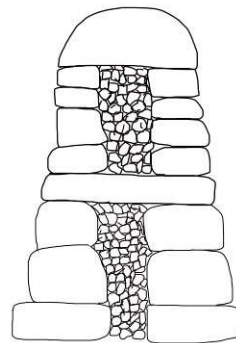
**2. Can you guess what this was used for?**



### Some Walling Words

*Can you remember what they mean?*

- THROUGH STONES
- CAM OR COPE STONES
- HEARTING
- BATTER
- FOUNDATIONS



Answers

1. This is called a Lunky or Hogg Hole and it is used by the farmer to let sheep from one field to another.

2. This is called a Bee Bole and was an traditional way to keep a hive of bees sheltered from the weather. Monks are known to have used bee boles