

Branch News



Gareth at SWEDSWA certification day, Nalsea, 2009

It is with great sadness that I have to inform readers that Gareth Pritchard passed away after a short illness (liver cancer) in May.

Gareth was a DSWA Master Craftsman who had dedicated the second half of his life to dry stone walling, having initially followed his father into working in Penmaenmawr Quarry, he later became a full time waller as a supervisor on a job creation scheme in the 1980s.

A former DSWA Vice President, long time DSWA Management Committee member and dedicated committee member of the North Wales Branch since the early 1990s, Gareth was also a DSWA examiner and enjoyed travelling to far flung places (such as South Wales and the Cotswolds) to carry out examinations, and attend competitions as either a judge or spectator. I was frequently surprised by a 'how you diddling' whilst nose down engrossed in a tricky foundation scenario and always found his subsequent encouragement a boost during my stressful excursions across the border.

For many years Gareth was the sole North Wales representative alongside the South Wales Branch at the Royal Welsh Show and had intended to resume this connection alongside me this year. One of Gareth's proudest moments came at the Show when he met the Queen, a photo of which adorned the top of his living room cabinet along with that of his wife Joan – an MS sufferer who Gareth had cared for, for many years before her death in 2007 - and grand daughter India.

Over the years Gareth had been responsible for the training of countless newcomers to the craft over the years and always took great enjoyment from encouraging others within the craft, either through training or at competitions, where he was also renowned for his impersonation of a fog-horn signalling start and stop times. As such he influenced many lives not least mine in a roundabout way. One of his trainees was Brenda who then joined the Branch and eventually the rest was history.

It is much harder writing an obit for someone who was a good friend and about the only person who complimented my cooking, than an acquaintance as in last edition, so I'm going to keep this short - which is something else I'm sure Gareth would have approved of. Gareth will be missed by all who new him.

Gareth's family kindly contributed all the donations from his funeral plus all his tools and books to the Branch and agreed these should be sold in aid of funds.

The Branch have set up the "Gareth Pritchard Memorial Fund" which will be used to help fund this year's "Standards Promotion" a Project with a budget of £10000 to produce detailed standards booklets on dry stone walling and cloddiau construction, as well as photographic material, tent renewal etc. The Branch needs to raise £1200 to match volunteer input and CCW grant aiding.

Please give/purchase generously in aid of this project and in memory of Gareth. The progress of the appeal can be seen at events as a graphic sees coping stones added to a wall. To date the wall is

around a third complete (about £400), if you would like to help complete Gareth's 'memorial fund wall', please send a cheque to North Wales Branch of DSWA of GB, or buy a book spade or hammer at any of our events.

Snowdonia Society Competition

This years Snowdonia Society was held at Hafod y Llan as part of a National Trust farm Open day. The Branch was much more involved in the organisation and set up this year which led to the invitation of a judge from England for the first time in the Competition's 27 year history. Sally Hodgson the DSWA's most recent Master Craftsman and one of only three women to have achieved this level, joined Sean Adcock in assessing the work of 17 competitors. The results in all three classes were close, not settled until the last cope had been set. In the professional category two former British Amateur champions battled it out after early leader Barry Roberts fell away after lunch. Branch member Iolo Jones eventually pipped Ed Park from Cumbria (and winner of the Amateur Class at last year's Cerrig competition) by 1 point mainly due to his more consistent crossing of joints.

The semi-professional class was to prove even closer as only 1½ points covered 4 competitors. The marking was very up and down in this class as most had some very strong aspects to their work interspersed with notable errors. In the end it proved to be the most consistent work that won, the honour once again going to a Branch member in this instance Brian Evans from Corwen.

Some of the work in the Amateur class was particularly notable. Ioan Doyle was awarded the Mike Cousins Trophy at the judges discretion for the best foundations on the field. Lesley Gwyer also produced some exceptional work, her coping was second only to professional Craig Evans' (yes that one) whilst her line and batter was only eclipsed by only 2 other competitors – Iolo Jones and Darren Parry. From a Branch perspective the performance of Bill Sheppard who only began walling last summer should be noted. Bill is the ONLY member to have taken advantage of our practice days this year and the extra tutelage has obviously paid off.



Iolo Jones receives the Professional Cup © Sean Adcock



Bill Sheppard (centre) levelling off © Sean Adcock

The Branch marquee

was present, although the marquee had gone walkabout on the Friday night necessitating some emergency surgery which would have made Uri Geller proud. Anyway it was in a fit enough state to house Brenda during the day. Many thanks go to her (they have to otherwise my life would be made intolerable), and mention also to Nick, Geraint and Kevin

Overall the wall was one of the most consistently well built seen at a competition in North Wales for many years. Congratulations to all who took part.

Professional

- 1st Iolo Jones (Deiniolen)
- 2nd Edward Park (Kendal)
- 3rd Barry Roberts (Rachub)

Amateur

- 1st Lesley Gwyer (Lanbedr)
- 2nd Bill Sheppard (Chester)
- 3rd Ioan Doyle (Rachub)

Semi-Professional

- 1st Brian Evans (Corwen)
- 2nd Darren Parry (Bethesda)
- 3rd Dilwyn Williams (Pwllheli)

Training

Our expanded training programme got off to a shaky start given bad weather and a lack of booking in the North West, a continuing problem although bookings for the north east are very good, with the July 3rd taster already fully booked. To date 13 individuals have completed 23 trainee days. Most of these have been within the Clwydian Range AONB at Moel Famau, Moel Findeg and Nercwys. CCW project. There is still plenty to do at our main site at Blaen y Nant, the one taster we've had so far not completing last year's gap, and another section has collapsed over winter. Don't forget members can attend these days free as practice days, but as noted earlier with one exception this offer has met with a spectacular lack of take up.



Trainees and instructor Craig admire the day's efforts at Moel Findeg © Robert Godfrey

International Congress

The programme for the congress is more or less finalised but as of yet not on line. Booking forms are available in the events section of DSWA website. I have a copy of the speakers schedule if anyone's interested – plenty of interest including a couple of speakers from this and the next edition. I've drawn the graveyard shift, last speaker up on Saturday after a full day of others. Everyone will be asleep or have gone home. I shall just continue to delude myself that the only way they could hope to keep people interested all day was to save the best to last. A communal meal is planned for the Saturday evening, with a number of visits to choose from for the Sunday and Monday afternoons. There's some talk of practical workshops too. Don't forget that to coincide with the conference we have a couple of walks/guided tours planned for the preceding and following weekends, a stroll around Dorothea and its phenomenal "pyramids" on 30th August (Bank holiday Monday) and on 12th September a visit to the Wailing Wall of Cwm Ystradllyn – an overhanging half arch retaining wall as well as Tyddyn Isa Quay, and Cei Mawr probably the tallest dry stone wall in Europe at around 60 feet in height. It's a freestanding wall, not a retaining wall and has the Ffestiniog railway wending its merry way on top. There should also be a midweek talk relating to the quarrying industry at some point. Meanwhile my talk at the congress "From the Pyramids to the Wailing Wall" is on stone structures in the North Welsh slate quarries in general. It is planned to include an extended version of this in a programme of talks for the winter months (see Diary). These talks will be taking place at Pete's Eats Llanberis, starting at 8pm giving plenty of time for a 'snack' in advance. Each show will last about one hour, and it is hoped that we can develop the December edition into a Christmas get together.

Please note the change of date for Porthmadog quarry structure walk (moved from Saturday to Sunday) as I have yet to achieve being in 2 places at once and I am currently standing in as Branch Representative at DSWA management committee meetings.

Sean Adcock

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Diary

June	
5-6	North East Training Course
13	Snowdonia Society Competition, Hafod y Llan, Nant Gwynant
26	North West Taster Day
26-27	Demonstration Ruthin Medieval and Country Show
July	
3	North East Taster Day, Moel Famau
7	Branch Meeting. Saracens Head, Cerrig y Drudion (venue and speaker to be confirmed)
15	Talk to FFWAG, Pencychnant
17	BBQ, Blaen y Nant, Nant Ffrancon
17-18	Training Course, Blaen y Nant, Nant Ffrancon
19-22	Royal Welsh Show
24	North West Taster Day
25	Display, Eryrys tractor Event
31	Display, Clawdd Newydd
August	
7	South Wales Competition, Vaynor Show
14	North West Taster Day
19	Display, Denbigh & Flint Show
21-22	North East Training Course, Moel Famau
30	Half Day Guided tour, Dorothea Quarry stonework.
September	
4-6	International Conference, Ambleside, Cumbria
7-8	Clawdd Course, North West
8	Evening event/talk
12	Full day Guided Tour Quarry structures, Porthmadog area
18	North Wales Open Dry Stone Walling Competition, Nant Peris Carnival
25-26	North West Training Course
October	
2-3	Certification Training/Orientation
9-10	Clawdd Course
16	DSWA Craftsman Certification day
November	
3	AGM Foelas Arms, Pentrefoelas. Guest speaker David Sallery on Mostyn Docks.
12	Presentation, "Inscriptions upon the Landscape" - the dry stone treasures of the British Isles Pete's Eats, Llanberis 8pm.
December	
10	Presentation. "Not Another temple" – ancient stone building around Europe. Pete's Eats, Llanberis 8pm.
January	
15	Presentation. "From the wailing wall to the Pyramids" – the dry stone structures of the North Wales Slate Industry. Pete's Eats, Llanberis 8pm.

Sponsors

The North Wales Branch would like to thank the following for their help in the last 12 months:
Countryside Council for Wales,

SPONSORS

Mr & Mrs Freeman-Attwood (Pennant Estate, Llangynog);
Christine Vasey; Justin Kellet (Anglesey Masonry Ltd., Moelfre)

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