



BRANCH NEWS

In the last Stonechat you were promised a Branch news before the AGM so here it is, brought to you by Sean.

A.G.M

First thing to note the AGM has had to move to Wednesday 10th November, Foelas Arms Pentrefoelas.
Further details at back

TRAINING



Our taster programme petered out a couple of weeks ago on Moel Famau with two trainees and Bill Sheppard out for even more practice prior to his Initial test, which he would have taken on Saturday but he decided to break his ankle instead. The first couple of tasters suffered from rain, the north west courses suffered from a lack of interest all summer, but the north east made up for that, one weekend course had 10 trainees necessitating 2 instructors. Brenda and I popped in towards the end from a distance it looked more like a 4 wheel drive convention just below the summit of Moel Famau.

8/9th October saw 5 members of the South Wales Branch visit for our Clawdd course at RSPB Conwy where they were joined by Colin and Richard under my watchful gaze. We replaced a nasty piece of wall by the visitor centre, and generated a degree of interest amongst the passing public. The display panels spent a fortnight in the centre's foyer, and all the available Stonechat's were taken – although this could have been because of the name rather than the content. The South Wales contingent stayed at Blaen y Nant in Nant Ffrancon. I treated the early arrivals on Friday to a tour of the walls and features on the farm, and on the Saturday Evening gave a short talk on Cloddiau and the “Inscriptions on the Landscape” presentation due to be aired at Pete's Eats in November. Bizarrely they

hope to be back in the Spring to take their advanced tests...



Il Tests



Ceri Jenkins Compacting clawdd core

21 training days 51 individuals 91 trainee days, only 2 have joined, and a further 9 participant practice days.

Richard has borne the brunt ably assisted by Colin, Craig and myself have chipped in and thanks too to Geraint, Iolo and Kevin who've all done their bit.

TEST DAY

We held a test day on 16th October at Tyddyn Isaf, Tal y Bont, Bangor. 5 Initial candidates attended sadly this did not include any Branch members, Bill Sheppard from Chester, as mentioned earlier, had been due to attend but broke his ankle instead, the lengths people are going to in order to avoid Branch activities is getting a little ridiculous. Anyway 3 candidates from Kehoe Countryside (who provided the wall), plus Ioan Doyle and Matt Stowe – two highly promising wallers we have seen at the odd competition, all passed.

COMPETITION

The 23rd North Wales Open dry stone walling competition was held at Ffair Nant Peris on 18th September. This was the first time since that the competition has been held in Gwynedd since 1991 and the first time ever it has been held in Arfon.

Entries were down on previous years with a number of competitors shying away on the day due to the poor weather forecast with 5 professionals 3 amateurs and 4 novices. It started off nice and sunny, intermittent showers followed and by the time it came to coping it was, fortunately thanks to a grant from Countryside Council for Wales the competitors and organisers were able to squeeze into the Branch's new display marquee being used for the first time, for the prize giving.

The poor weather meant visitors to the show were somewhat limited, but Allan Wilcox chair of the fair organising committee noted that "There were several people at the fair who, despite the bad weather, returned to the competition area over and over again to check on the progress of the wall and admire the skills of the competitors. The people of Nant Peris are pleased and proud to have hosted it this year." The competition returns to its normal home, the Cerrig y Drudion show in 2011 but the organisers hope that the competition will be able to return to Nant Peris in 2012 with the two venues alternating for the foreseeable future, although the lack of competitors threatens the future of the competition which takes a lot of the Association's time and funds to run. The change of venue had seen a boost in sponsorship this year although the competition had still run at a loss. Main Sponsors were First Hydro Ltd., Meirion Pritchard (owner of the site), and Pete's Eats Café (Llanberis). Other local businesses who contributed were Cefn Du Construction (Llanrug), Mark Sykes Contracting (Waunfawr) and Kehoe Countryside (Bangor).

Prizes were presented by the rector of St Peris' Church, Nant Peris, the Reverend Robert Townsend.

Professional (Terry Eggleshaw Cup)

- 1st Sean Adcock (Penisarwaun)*
- 2nd Brian Evans (Corwen)*
- 3rd Kevin Chilvers (Bellech)*

Amateur (Tarian Betrol Beran)

- 1st Darren Parry (Bethesda)
- 2nd Ioan Doyle (Bethesda)
- 3rd Malcolm Davies (Deiniolen)

Novices (Margaret Saeger Trophy)

- 1st Jason Jones (Bethesda)
- 2nd Ken Robinson (Eryrys)
- 3rd Bill Sheppard (Chester)*

*denotes branch member. Judges were branch doyen Alaw Jones (Bethesda) and National Skills and Training supremo Andrew Loudon from Cumbria.

All class winners received commemorative salvers to keep, sponsored by former chairman Don Eland and his wife Ann, whose perpetual trophies for foundations and coping respectively were both won by professional champion Sean



Photos by Colin Brown, left Ken Robinson, Jason Jones, Chris Johnson in the Novice class, Right Sean Adcock applies the finishing touches to his prize winning coping.

Meanwhile Sean also supported the competitions in West Yorkshire, Mid Lancashire and South Wales. Attendances at these competitions were similarly disappointing, although Sean's results weren't with three firsts and two best footings and one best coping – all three special prizes available.

CCW Grant

We've finally had approval for our standards promotion grant from CCW. The display is being expanded to include information on wall and clawdd standards. The first wall standard photos were shown at Nant Peris Competition and some Clawdd photos have been on display in the foyer to the RSPB information centre at Conwy where the Clawdd course took place. We've replaced the old marquee which took flight prior to the Snowdonia Society competition earlier in the year and never really recovered. The nice shiny new one... a little more complicated to erect made its debut at Nant Peris (left housing Brenda and Richard), to widespread admiration, alongside our revamped hand-written signs, and large photo banner. The standard name banners arrived in time but with the same spelling mistake as last year, which was corrected in time for a debut in the RSPB car park. Further roll-up banners are to be produced over the winter, along with the clawdd and dry stone standards booklets. The draft for the dry stone booklet is well underway, although please let me know/provide photos of any particularly bad bits of wall/clawdd... it would be nice if it wasn't all just the A55 side roads! The last string in the promotion is a dedicated Welsh Branch DSWA website which will be up and running if only in a formative state by the New Year. All this of course assumes 30 hour days and 10 day weeks.



We still need to raise some funds to pay our £1200 share. The "Gareth fund" currently stands at £585.20, we have a few tools which must go at the AGM (forks spades any offer of a pound or two accepted), some books too. If you have not attended any Branch events this year then send a reasonably sized cheque payable to North Wales Branch of DSWA-GB to me and go some way to assuaging your guilt. Well I live in hope, my optimism not having been entirely undermined by the last year.

WALKS

To coincide with my presenting a paper on Stonework in North Wales Quarries we held two walks one to visit Dorothea and the other to have a look at Gorseddau, Tyddyn isa Quay and Cei Mawr on the Ffestiniog railway. As ever turnout was abysmal although everyone who turned up seemed to enjoy themselves and Colin has written a piece about the trips which will appear in the next Stonechat so I shall not belabour the subject other than to remind you that an extended version of my Congress presentation will be shown at Pete's Eats in January.

The photo (left) shows Craig atop Gorseddau's amazing overhanging 'wailing wall', whilst the other participants take a close look at the stonework.



Right Ceri and Sean at RWS (report below)



DEMOS

Our planned attendance of the Ruthin medieval event never materialised, Craig attended the Eryrys Tractor event and Clawdd Newydd Show with our display boards and actually sold some DVDs at Eryrys. Sean attended the Royal Welsh for 1 day and built another `bench` seat in the demonstration wall with Ceri Jenkins and took typical North Welsh weather with him. Fortunately the safety netting hides the result of a soggy days work.

WINTER TALKS & XMAS DO

A new departure to be held on occasional Fridays at Pete's Eats Llanberis. Kicking off at 7.30pm (earlier than previously advertised), arrive early for a good meal and convivial company. Pete's eats show films every Friday from 9pm phone Sean for details, (hence the early kick off).

12th November: "Inscriptions Upon the Landscape" a talk originally devised for the Stone Foundation Symposium held last January in California. An overview of the "Walling Treasures" Project (<http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/wallingwonderland>). A look at dry stone walls and structures from Britain and Ireland.

10th December: "Oh No Not Another Temple" aka Sean's holiday snaps. A look at some of Europ;/e's stone structures and temples visited by the Hon.Sec. THIS IS OUR (un)OFFICIAL CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER PLEASE BOOK BELOW FOR CHRISTMASSIE DESSERT, DRINK (TEA/COFFEE/ALCOHOL) CHRISTMAS CRACKERS, PAPER HATS, buy your own meal on the night, assembling at 6.30pm. Scrooge's can just turn up and watch the presentation (7.30ish) or even stay away, nah go on break the habit of a life time and join in.

18th February (Note change of date); "From the Pyramids to the Wailing Wall". The dry stone structures of the North Welsh slate industry. An extended version of Sean's presentation given to 2010 International Dry Stone Congress held this summer in Cumbria and possibly an airing next January in California (hence change of date). It's a hard life.

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Please detach and return to: Sean Adcock. 2 Bryn Eithin, Waen, Penisarwaun, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. LL55 3PW by 26th November

(un)OFFICIAL CHRISTMAS GET TOGETHER

NAME

ADDRESS

.....POST CODE

TELEPHONEE MAIL

NUMBER OF PLACES REQUIRED I ENCLOSE CHEQUE FOR

(Payable to North Wales Branch of DSWA-GB)

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*****G.M

The AGM has had to move to Wednesday 10th November, Foelas Arms Pentrefoelas.

Guest speaker David Sallery will be talking about the Mostyn Docks from 7.30pm sharp, so don't be late especially if you want a chat. Following David's talk there will be a short refreshment gap followed by the main meeting.

This Branch News is going to all members plus supporters who are not members of other Branches. You're all welcome to attend and make suggestions as to how we can take the Branch forward. There is currently only one substantive item on the agenda requiring a vote, our membership year (any other items requiring a vote should be raised with the current Chairman at least 3 weeks prior to the AGM, although we'll accept a fortnight). Currently this runs from August which means final reminders go out around Christmas which we feel is far from ideal. There is also a problem that most (if any) new members tend to be generated during the summer so they either get over a year's membership or if they join early in the summer just a few months membership. The committee is proposing changing the membership year to run from April, new members generated during the summer would have to rejoin the following April. Final reminders would be out during the summer etc. It is also proposed to raise membership fees to £16 from April, but extending the current membership to next April at no extra charge. It is proposed to increase supporters' rates to £6 and to ask for an interim payment of £2 to cover the Winter Stonechat, in essence asking supporters to renew now for £8 carrying their Stonechat 'subscription' through to April 2012.

As usual officers will be elected at the AGM with nominations taken from the floor and there will be an opportunity for any other business to be discussed, this will include the future of the Branch and we would appreciate all your input.

This year has been very disappointing, with poor turnout at events, cancellation of others. Craig has been persuaded to carry on as Chairman if no one else comes forward, but only reluctantly. I have little option to carry on given commitment to the CCW grant which runs to April. As things stand I cannot see either Craig or myself surviving another year. The committee has already decided not to hold+ Branch meetings outside of the AGM. Frankly it is embarrassing to arrange speakers and then get literally two members plus the occasional supporter plus committee at the meeting. I have always argued that if we don't hold meetings then people cannot turn up. After a couple of years it's obvious that even if we do organise them and move the venues beyond one or two diehards nobody can be bothered to turn up. Frankly attendance at each meeting has become a demoralising slap in the face and we've had enough. At the moment we have monthly winter evening talks scheduled for Pete's Eats. If these are popular we might reconsider and maybe choose more central locations but as I'm giving the current series and I'll probably be 50% of the audience Llanberis it is, and anyway I'm not holding my breath attendance wise.

Similarly we organise events, and walks attended by one or two die-hards again. Free practice at training events for members, only 2 takers all year. What do you want? We only have a limited membership so we cannot expect hoards of attendees, but outside of the committee 2 bookings for the BBQ, a couple on each walk, 8 members at the competition plus a couple of supporters, our biggest event of the year, hours of hard work. It's basically unacceptable and untenable if the Branch is to continue. I have plenty of ideas on how we can develop and move forward, but there is little point trying to organise anything with so little support. If the Branch is to continue you must tell us what you want and support us. Either attend the AGM and have your say, or let Craig know in advance if you are unable to make it. Similarly if you want to raise any matters for a formal vote/discussion contact Craig before 27th October... 01824 750650 tcskills@fsmail.net. **STAY SILENT AND WE HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ASSUME THAT YOU ARE NOT ACTUALLY BOTHERED IF THE BRANCH FOLDS, AND BELIEVE ME IF THINGS DO NOT IMPROVE IT WILL.**

