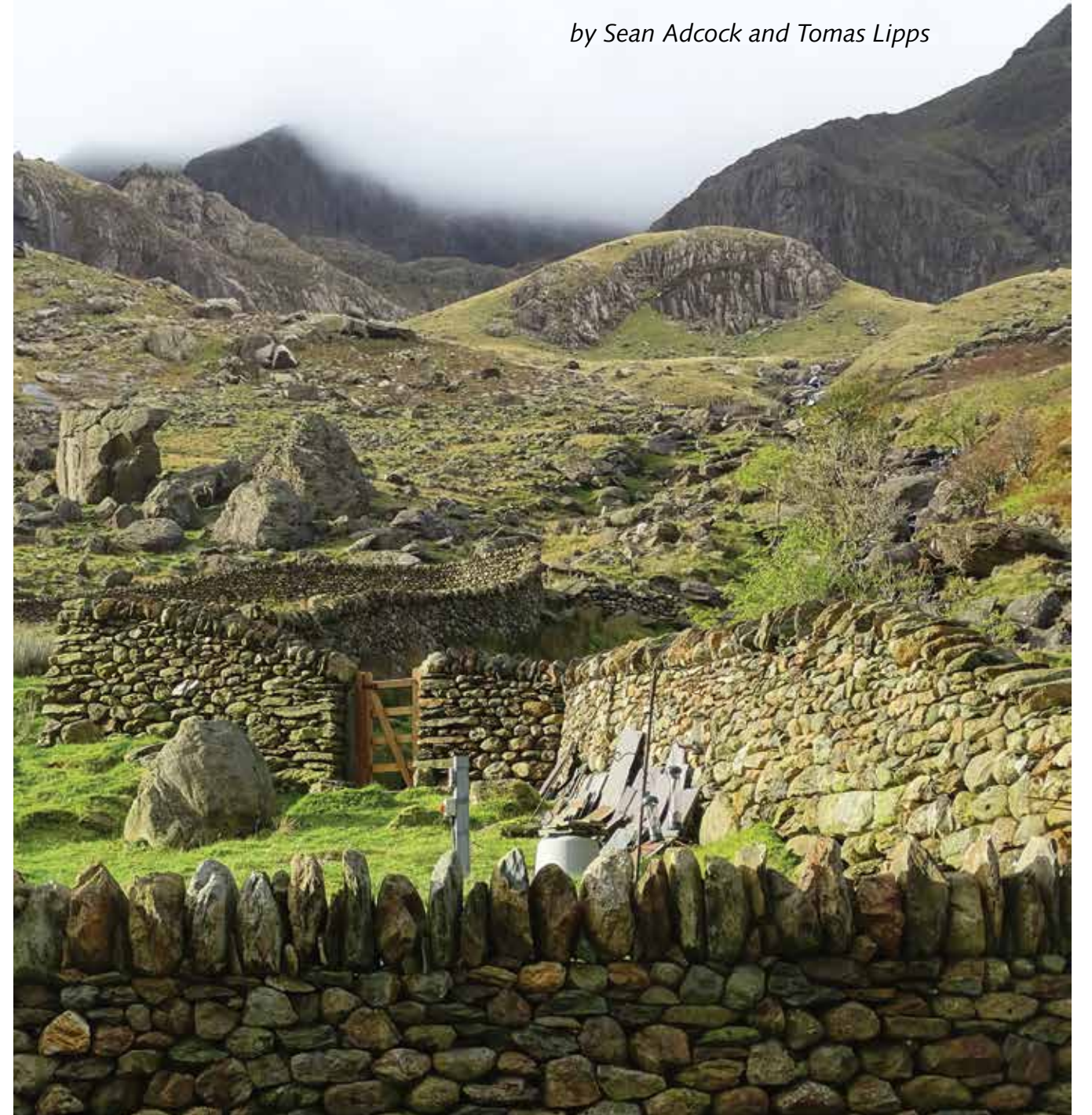


SEVENTEEN OF FORTY PAGES

A TWO WEEK STONEXCURSION IN NORTH WALES AND CUMBRIA

by Sean Adcock and Tomas Lipps





In North Wales there are stone walls galore. The boundary of every field, large or small, is marked by them and they border both sides of every road and lane.

A large number of stone walls there are in some state of disarray, such as the one above and many have been repaired or rebuilt with varying degrees of skill. A few examples of well-built walls are shown on these pages. The one at the top of the facing page was done by Sean in his home village of Penisarwaun.





DRY-STONE COW BARN at Egryn near Harlech. An exceptionally well-built structure, this face features the entryway, a ventilation slit and an enclosure in front framed by dry-stone walls. Date uncertain, but the construction style is compatible with the 18th century.

below, right: The barn's location on sloping ground made the loft at the rear end accessible from ground level via the loft window. The tin roof is, of course, recent. The height of the gable above the roof (and its supports) suggests that originally it was thatched.

below: Ventilation slit in side wall.



A megalithic CONSUMPTION WALL at Egryn near Harlech. Consumption walls can be found scattered throughout the UK, commonplace in some areas, only occasionally in others. Their purpose is, as their name implies, to literally consume the stone continually being cleared from the adjacent fields. This wall near Harlech at about 8 feet across is possibly the widest in north Wales, but it pales in comparison to the Kingswell dyke near Aberdeen in Scotland, at 27 feet, the widest in the UK.

We were to encounter many more consumption walls at Wasdale Head in Cumbria (photo to the right). The stone there was so prolific that small island-like enclosures accumulated within the fields. Many of the fields' corners have also been rounded off and filled with excess stone, a practice also common in this area near Harlech.





STONE HOUSING for Dinorwic quarry's water wheel, mainland Britain's largest at 15.4 meters in diameter.



top: Roadside field wall near Dunnerdale, Duddon Valley. This style of coping with slates between rounded field stone occurs in a number of locations scattered around Cumbria.
above: Stone-faced earth bank. Common in Cornwall and Wales (known as clawdd walls there) but a rarity in Cumbria. Not really

photogenic, but it deserves inclusion here as it is an effective style of walling. The hedge growing from the earthen core increases its height and makes it stock proof.
below: This wall repair is actually in neighboring Yorkshire. It is shown here because the distinctive new work matches the earlier work and demonstrates that the future of dry-stone walling is in the hands of capable artisans.



WALLS *and more walls. . .*

Cumbria is home to the *Dry Stone Walling Association* of the UK and our first stop upon arriving in the county was to visit the DSWA Center at Lane Farm, Crooklands in Milnthorpe, Cumbria. After a very welcoming cup of tea and a chat with Coordinator Alison Shaw, we walked up the road to inspect the dry-stone walling specimens displayed in a nearby field.

This feature is very like the DSWA's Millenium Wall at the National Stone Centre in Wirksworth, Derbyshire.

The Millenium Wall is composed of sections of dry stone walling built by wallers from all over the UK using stones brought from their region in the style of walling peculiar to that region.

In this case however the preponderance of the stone used and the wallers using it are from the north. The variety of stone and styles, however, is striking.



The Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain

This charitable organisation was founded in 1968 to ensure that the best of walling and dyking craftsmanship is preserved and promoted.

Further information about the DSWA and its activities is available by post or on the website

The Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain
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Registered charity, 289678

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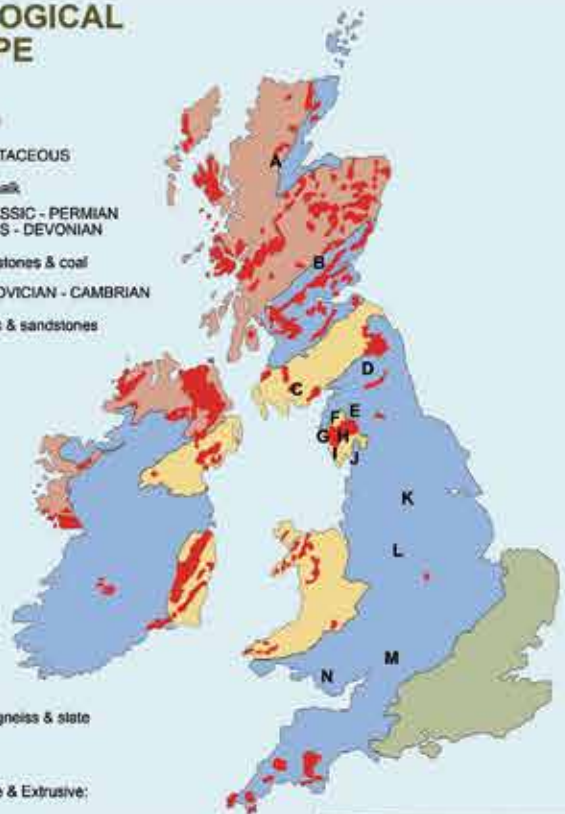
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THE GEOLOGICAL LANDSCAPE

GEOLOGICAL ERAS

- TERTIARY - CRETACEOUS**
Sedimentary:
Clays, sands & chalk
- JURASSIC - TRIASSIC - PERMIAN**
CARBONIFEROUS - DEVONIAN
Sedimentary:
Limestones, sandstones & coal
- SILURIAN - ORDOVICIAN - CAMBRIAN**
Sedimentary:
Slates, mudstones & sandstones
- PRECAMBRIAN**
Metamorphic:
Quartzite, schist, gneiss & slate
- Igneous - Intrusive & Extrusive:**
Granite & basalt



The geological history of the British Isles is very complicated. The map has been simplified to show only the main outcrops of geological eras and their principal rock types.

Wall Locations

- A Scottish Highlands
- B Central Scotland
- C S.W. Scotland
- D Northumbria
- E Cumbria – Eden Valley and West coast
- F Cumbria – Skiddaw
- G Cumbria Borrowdale - volcanic
- H Cumbria Borrowdale - river cobble
- I Cumbria - Brathay
- J Cumbria - S. Lakeland
- K W. Yorkshire
- L Derbyshire
- M Cotswolds
- N S. Wales

DRY STONE WALLS

- are found mainly in the higher areas to the north and west of Britain
- are made with stone collected or quarried locally
- run for over 200,000 kms (125,000 miles) in the UK
- will survive for centuries with careful maintenance
- mark out boundaries
- provide security and shelter for stock
- offer a haven for a variety of wildlife
- are usually called dykes in Scotland

WHY DO WALLS LOOK DIFFERENT?

Walls differ throughout Britain because of the way rocks have been formed.

- The rock's composition, shape and size determines the way it can be split or shaped
- Walls display the characteristics of the geology forming their landscapes.
- Rocks to the south and east are generally softer, less exposed and often not as suitable for building walls.



SCULPTING THE LANDSCAPE

Rocks beneath the surface form the skeleton of the landscape.

The formation and weathering of each type has its effect on what we see today.

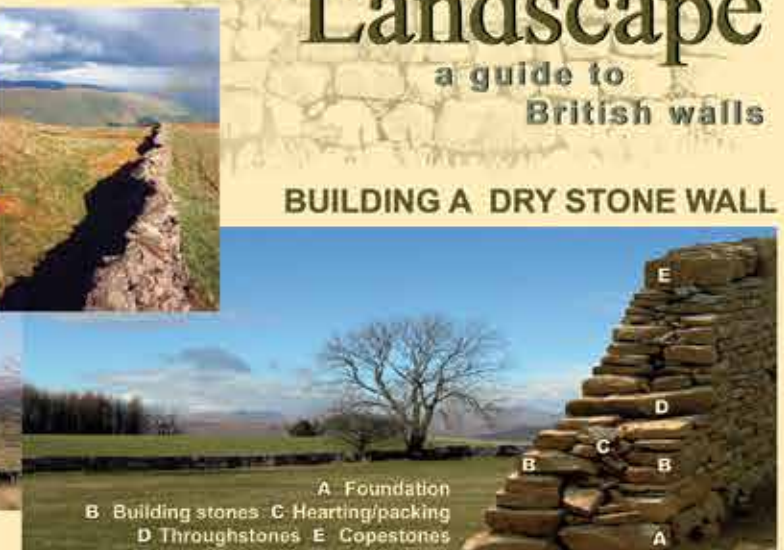
Rocks are constantly undergoing change. Older rocks are broken down to produce younger rocks in continuous cycle. Many processes affect these changes:

- movements of plates on the Earth's crust allowing molten rock to well up from deep in the earth
- volcanoes showering the land with ash and lava
- dramatic earth movements shifting continental sized areas of land
- mountain building movements, squeezing, twisting, thrusting and tilting the land
- climatic changes creating scorching deserts and frozen wastes
- weathering by wind, frost and water over millions of years
- glacial action in northern parts of Britain
- depositing and compacting of marine sediments

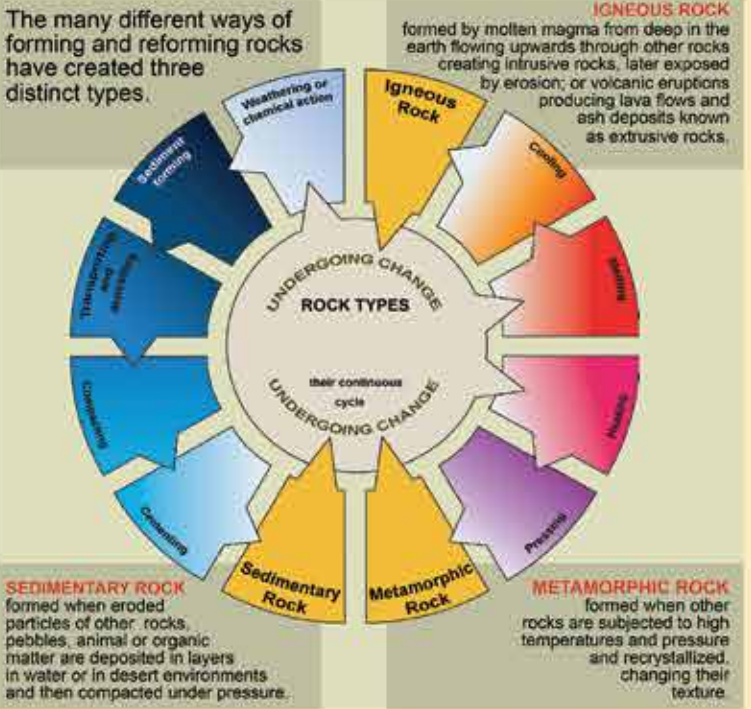
Walls & the Landscape

a guide to British walls

BUILDING A DRY STONE WALL



THE ROCK CYCLE - forming and reforming the landscape



Follow the arrows to see how changes occur over the years

BRIDGES

The TROUGH HOUSE BRIDGE is located not far from the village of Boot in Eskdale. Probably a cart bridge originally, it is now a vehicular bridge with parapets. These parapets, added sometime after the initial construction, seem to be of a different stone, one not local to the area.

A band of granite constricts the Esk River at this point, making it a conveniently narrow place to build a bridge, but also a place that is liable to flooding. Two stone markers bear witness to major floods that the bridge withstood in 1890 and 1962.



BIRKS BRIDGE

This bridge is near the hamlet of Birks. The name derives from birches which are particularly common trees in the area.

It is an 18th century packhorse bridge that was built over a narrow gorge in the Duddon River valley. Like the Trough House Bridge's location, this was a place convenient for bridge building, but also subject to frequent flooding—hence the drain-pipes in the parapets at road level and the wing walls with open spaces in their bases.

This section of the river is quite picturesque and, owing to the depth of the water beneath the bridge, it is popular with swimmers.



above, left:
MONKS BRIDGE,
 named for its proximity to a nearby abbey, is believed by some to have been built its monks. Said to be the oldest packhorse bridge in Cumbria, it was built where a stream, Friar Gill, passes through a narrow deep chasm. It probably served as an alternate route when a lower road crossing just downstream could not be used due to high water. One side of the unusual pointed arch has slumped, but still supports the masonry that was added to raise the path leading away from the bridge to the level of the field on the other side.

left:
SLATERS BRIDGE
 in Little Langsdale is a former packhorse bridge across the Brathay River. Admirably built of slate slabs and natural boulders in the 16th century, its use by workers in a nearby quarry led to its name. The metal hand rail is a later addition.

above, center:
 This renowned 17th century structure in Ambleside is one of the most photographed houses in the world. The bridge was built across the Stock Beck (beck is a colloquial Cumbrian word for a small stream) to provide access to orchards on one side for families living on the other. The house is said to have been built on the bridge to escape land tax.

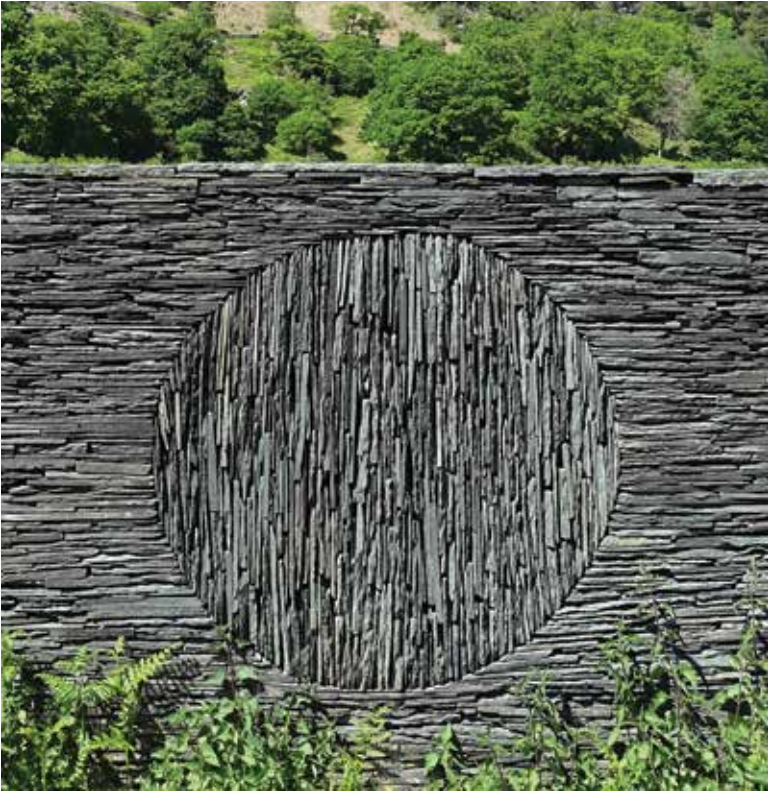
Originally an apple storehouse, over the years it has been used for various purposes: a counting house for one of the many local mills, a tea house, a cobbler's shop, a weaver's, a chairmaker's, a family home and, currently, the National Trust.

above:
 A 'clapper bridge'—a single stone slab used to span Cockley Beck at the Dunnerdale Head Trough.



below:
SEAN ADCOCK might be embarrassed to be featured so prominently here but he has to grin and bear it. When I photographed this remarkable bench in a park in Ambleside, my camera settings were off and my photos were useless. Fortunately Sean's wife Brenda had taken this shot of him there so you can see it, and him. The bench was built as part of the 12th International Dry Stone Walling Congress in Ambleside hosted by the DSWA in 2010. The build was organised/supervised by Andy Loudon and built by wallers of various nationalities, including Sean.

The circular seating wall planned as a demonstration of masterful stonework during STONEWORK SYMPOSIUM 2020 in Santa Fe New Mexico will be similarly proportioned.



ANDY GOLDSWORTHY is from Cumbria and it is where he did a series of installations relating to a local phenomenon: the sheep folds—stone enclosures for holding livestock. From 1996 to 2003, assisted by traditional wallers, he designed and directed the rebuilding of 46 folds, in each case adding or incorporating sculptural elements such as those shown in the photos below and the top right corner of the facing page.

facing page, top left corner: STONE HOUSE, an early Goldsworthy installation, 1997. It is not in a sheep fold, however, and it is not in Cumbria; it is on Herring Island in the Yarra River, Victoria, Australia. We have included it here because it is a really nice piece of work and it fills that space beautifully.

