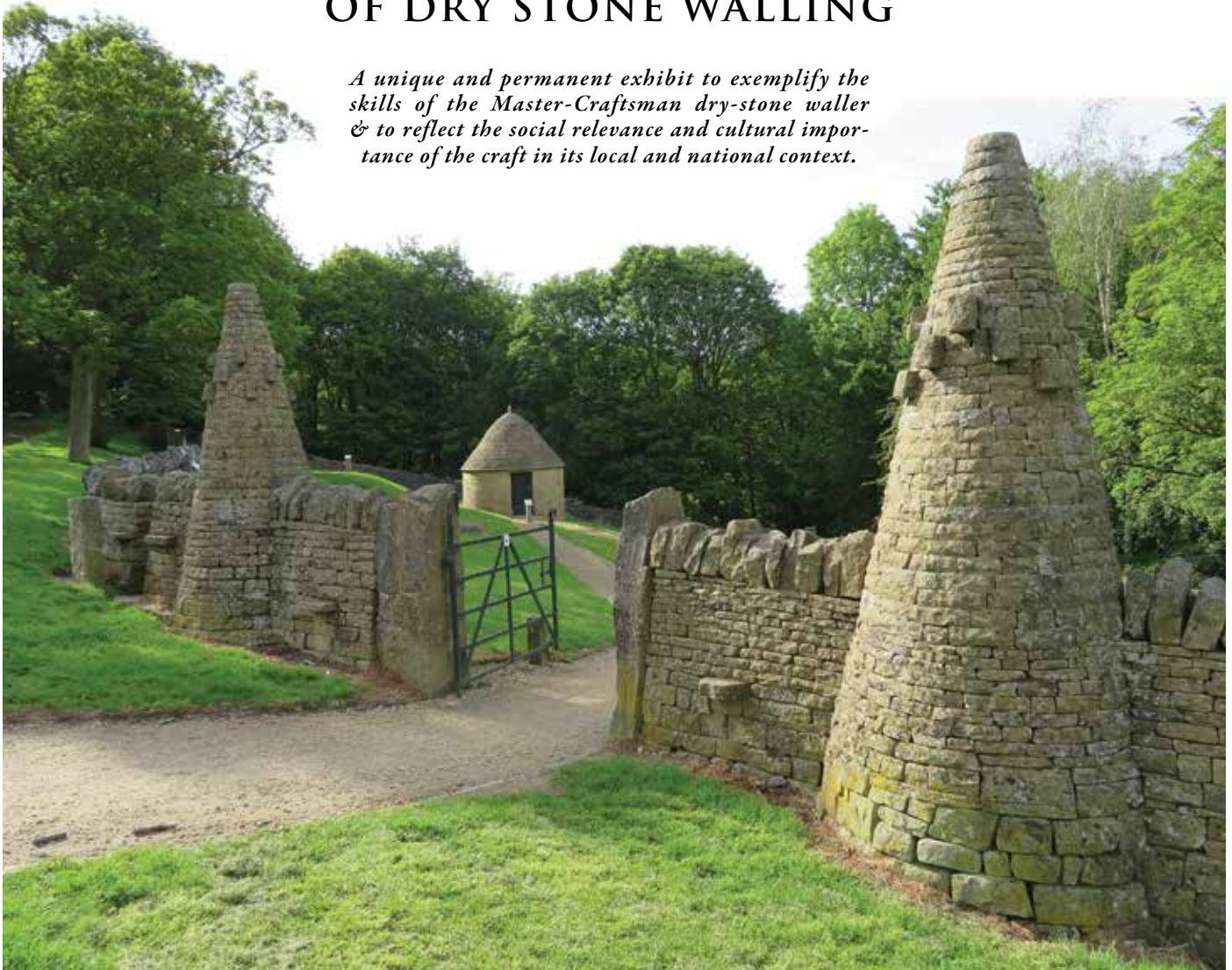


THE YORKSHIRE EXHIBIT OF DRY STONE WALLING

A unique and permanent exhibit to exemplify the skills of the Master-Craftsman dry-stone waller & to reflect the social relevance and cultural importance of the craft in its local and national context.



THE GREAT WALL OF SHIBDEN

*by David Griffiths
photos by the editor*

I can't quite believe that this project began over twenty years ago. The idea for its creation emerged from the DSWA's request to all of its branches in the UK to mark the Millennium by adding something special to their calendar in the year 2000.

The West Yorkshire Branch, based mainly in Huddersfield, decided to explore the possibility of creating an exhibition of dry-stone walling which would include a) samples of every type of feature which a Master Craftsman would be expected to build and b) sections of walling which would reflect the geological variations to be found in upland Britain, and especially in Yorkshire. In short, a permanent exhibit which would, in one small area, embrace every element of the dry-stone craft.

The first task was to find a site which was already established as a popular place of public interest and gathering. The second, to source the stone. And third, to do the building, which would be undertaken and supervised by wallers from the Branch.

We visited a number of suitable venues in West Yorkshire, whose administrators all showed enthusiastic interest, but it was Calderdale Council that gave us the authority to create it at Shibden Park in Halifax, on a half-acre area of grassland adjacent to a wonderful Tudor building, the historic home of the Lister family.

We were successful in our application for funding from the Heritage Lottery and gained further support in the form of sponsorship and in-kind work from a number of local organisations. None of this would have been possible without the level-bedded sandstone donated by Johnson's Wellfield Quarry in Huddersfield.

So we set off in the year 2000 on the first of what transpired to be three phases of the project. The site chosen was close to the Hall on a half-acre of sloping ground. This fulfilled one of the main conditions of construction—in our Yorkshire uplands the landscape is defined by dry-stone walls which soar up and down the hills and dales, often defying gravity.