

A Day in the Life of a Drystone Waller

Hello! My name is **Andrew Mason** and I am a professional dry stone waller. I have passed tests and am now called a **Master Craftsman**.

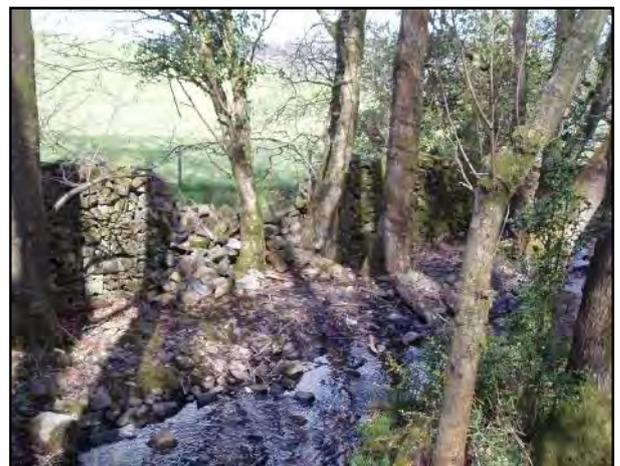
A drystone waller builds walls without using any cement. The stones are placed one on top of the other and wedged together.



These walls are very strong and can stand for hundreds of years. Many of the walls that we can see in Cumbria today have been standing for over 300 years. It is said that some were even built by Viking settlers.

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 in Cumbria were 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; then



walls were constructed with the stone. If you look at the walls going up the sides of fells, you will see some that they 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 then I took some walling examinations.



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 put them 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.

At 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. However, they are not

stepping stones - please do not climb over walls. Use gates or styles. 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 cam stones or copes.

Which country do you think this wall is in?

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.

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 very nice 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.

In Cumbria there are different styles of walling: it all depends on the sort of stone that is in the area.

Limestone

Slate

Granite

Sandstone

How many of these walls have you seen?

However, no matter what the stone, the way we build the walls is much the same. 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 - like brick walls.



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. 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.

This old wall was built in about 1880 to keep deer out of a big garden near Grasmere but still allow the owner to see over the top to enjoy the view when he drove past in his carriage! We repaired it recently.



Can you see how the posts are fixed to the wall?

Can you guess what this was used for?

Some Walling Words

Can you remember what they mean?

- Foundations
- First lift
- Throughstones
- Cam stones



- Hearting
- Batter