

ART AND STONE

Building a future for an age-old trade

An International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship

EMMA KNOWLES

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Table of contents

1. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	1
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND	5
4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS	13
5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT	20
6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS	21
8. APPENDICES	22

1. Acknowledgements

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1. The International Specialised Skills Institute for this Agribusiness Fellowship, enabling her to travel throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland, undertaking training and meeting with people in the dry stone community.
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8. Knowles' mother Pat Knowles for her genuine excitement and support of Knowles' dry stone walling career, and her joy in Knowles' achievements.

Awarding Body – International Specialised Skills Institute (ISS Institute)

The ISS Institute plays a pivotal role in creating value and opportunity, encouraging new thinking and early adoption of ideas and practice by investing in individuals.

The overarching aim of the ISS Institute is to support the development of a 'Better Skilled Australia'. The Institute does this via the provision of Fellowships that provide the opportunity for Australians to undertake international skills development and applied research that will have a positive impact on Australian industry and the broader community.

The International Specialised Skills Institute was founded 29 years ago, by a small group of innovators including Sir James Gobbo AC, CVO, QC, and former Governor of Victoria, who had a vision of building a community of industry specialists who would lead the up-skilling of the Australian workforce. The Fellowship program builds shared learning, leadership and innovation across the broad range of industry sectors worked with. Fellows are supported to disseminate learning's

and ideas, facilitate change and advocate for best practice through the sharing of their Fellowship learnings with peers, colleagues, government, industry and community. Since its establishment, ISS Institute has supported over 450 Fellows to undertake skill and knowledge enhancement across a wide range of sectors which has led to positive change, the adoption of best practice approaches and new ways of working in Australia.

The Fellowship programs are led by investment partners and designed in a manner which ensures that the needs and goals desired by the partners are achieved. ISS Institute works closely to develop a Fellowship program that meets key industry priorities, thus ensuring that the investment made will have lasting impact.

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Agrifoods Skills Australia was the Industry Skills Council for the Agrifoods Industry covering rural and related industries such as food processing (including beverages, wine and pharmaceuticals), meat, seafood, and racing. The Fellow, and the project team, would like to thank them for providing funding support for this Fellowship.

2. Executive Summary

Background

The purpose of this Fellowship was to further grow dry stone work in Australia by increasing Knowles' own qualifications, expediting the development of a formal dry stone accreditation system in Australia as well as exploring opportunities to increase involvement and engagement of women and people from Aboriginal backgrounds in rural areas.

There is currently no formal training and accreditation system in Australia for dry stone walling. Anyone who wants to learn the art of dry stone work and become qualified in it must travel to the United Kingdom (UK) to do so.

From March-November 2019 Knowles travelled to the UK and Ireland, meeting with the DSWA UK, attending key branch meetings, as well as meeting with key individuals and groups.

Knowles commenced the Fellowship as a professional (Level 2) Dry Stone Waller, and with the assistance of the Fellowship is now one of only five female DSWA UK Advanced dry stone wallers in the world, and the only advanced level waller operating in the southern hemisphere. During Knowles' time in the UK, she also developed her own mason's mark and won third place in the professional category at the Yorkshire Walling Competition.

Fellowship learnings

The Fellowship contributed to three main areas of learning -:

A: Skill enhancement – enabling Knowles to successfully complete the requirements of Advanced Walling Certification. Skills were further enhanced through her involvement in various projects – both through Branch and individual commissions.

B: Training and Accreditation in Australia – Knowles now has an in depth understanding of the DSWA UK system that supports not only preservation of an age-old trade but also ongoing skills development. The culture that exists within DSWA UK, being a charitable organisation, ensures that all dry stone wallers make an ongoing contribution to the growth and development of other wallers as part of their professional commitment.

C: Women in Dry Stone work – women from the UK, Canada, Ireland and North America have contributed to identifying a number of issues facing women in dry stone work. These are not dissimilar to many trade areas – lack of representation in decision making forums, inappropriate Personal and Protective Equipment, sexism and harassment. As one strategy to address these issues, foundation work to establish an International Women Working in Dry Stone Network has already begun.



Yorkshire Walling Competition - Professional category winners.
(Knowles won third place)

Personal, professional and sectoral impact

The impact derived from the Fellowship has been significant at a personal, professional and sectoral level.

The skills, qualifications, experience and networks that have been established will have long lasting benefits both personally and more broadly for dry stone work in Australia and women in dry stone work internationally.

While there is much more to be done, and challenges to overcome, the work that has been initiated through this Fellowship provides a solid foundation from which great things can be achieved.

In the years ahead it is anticipated that:

1. There will be opportunities for people working with dry stone in Oceania and Asia to come to Australia and participate in accredited training.
2. An international women working in dry stone network will be formally established.
3. Training and employment opportunities in dry stone work will be available for Aboriginal people in rural areas of Australia.

Considerations / recommendations

Learnings arising from this Fellowship and work initiated during this Fellowship will continue to be shared with key individuals and groups within the dry stone communities through the following means.

1. Presentation at meetings of the DSWA UK, International Women Working in Dry Stone, Standards Setting Committee and Craft Skills group
2. Events and workshops held around Australia – due to large distances within Australia, consideration will be given to sharing information through webinar and online resources.

Further work will also be done within Australia to explore relevant distribution channels.¹

Key recommendations are:

1. Establish a structure to ensure consistent intra and inter-national implementation of UK accreditation standards.
2. That an impartial, internationally recognised system of training, support and accreditation within Australia is progressed as a matter of priority.
3. That funds are secured for an international research project mapping the current involvement of women involved in dry stone work.
4. That funds are secured to conduct an intensive accreditation event for women in Australia, bringing international delegates to quickly and efficiently accredit wallers and also undertake the first in a series of international dry stone monuments constructed by women, designed to represent women's challenges and strengths.
5. To work towards facilitating an Australian based international weeklong dry stone festival with an initial focus on diversity and inclusion.

1

While the DSWA Australia would have previously been a useful distribution and engagement channel, perceived commercial conflict of interest issues are impacting on the credibility of the organisation.

3. FELLOWSHIP BACKGROUND

Fellowship context

The purpose of this Fellowship was to further grow dry stone work in Australia by expediting the development of a formal dry stone accreditation system in Australia as well as exploring opportunities to increase involvement and engagement of women and people from Aboriginal backgrounds in rural areas.

Currently anyone who wants to learn the art of dry stone work and become qualified in it must travel to the UK to do so. The DSWA UK frequently host lucrative training and examination opportunities for people primarily coming from Asia and the America's. Obviously, geographically, when Australia can ensure the same quality of program, it will be better placed to provide these opportunities to these regions in the future.

There have been numerous discussions in Australia regarding the development of an internationally recognised accreditation system and in February 2019 the Dry Stone Walling Association of Australia voted to adopt the UK Framework for Dry Stone Walling Accreditation. Unfortunately, however a range of issues, including perceived commercial interests and influence, have prevented this from being progressed in the required manner.

The DWSA UK state that the UK system is reliant on there being fully qualified Master Crafters, trained as Examiners available to assess candidates on test days, as well as qualified Instructors to deliver pre-training at all levels. Currently

in Australia there is only one Master Craftsman available to act as an Examiner. The adjudication process requires two Examiners for all levels except Initial. This currently precludes any examinations (test days) above Initial level taking place in Australia. In recent years there have been work arounds in place, including using photographic evidence with a second UK based Examiner. However, this has created multiple issues – the potential for preferential/unfair bias, due to one core Examiner, the concern re lack of equivalent scrutiny and therefore variable standards between UK and Australia.

This Fellowship has enabled the fast-tracking of training, with an Advanced Trainer and Master now in place and firm plans developed to ensure at least two qualified Examiners will be available in Australia by 2022 to facilitate all levels of training and test days, thereby increasing the availability of qualified dry stone workers to pursue the craft.

Fellowship methodology

From March-November 2019 Knowles travelled to the UK and Ireland. During this time, Knowles undertook her Advanced Walling training and accreditation, attended the biennial International Standards Setting Convention, held meetings with the DSWA UK and other key individuals and groups, presented her Fellowship proposal at key branch meetings and conducted workshops and information sessions.

An outline of key meetings and workshops is listed below:

1. March 25-29, 2019 – **Attended Advanced dry stone walling course** at the DSWA national training site and built a practice curve



Practice curve under construction



Completed practice curve

2. April 11-15, 2019 – **Attended the biennial DSWA Examiner Standards setting weekend** at DSWA HQ. Had the privilege of 18 (out of a global total of 37) Master Examiners providing feedback on her practice curve. Observed the entire standards process. Presented her Fellowship aims. Met and discussed international accreditation with leading UK, US and Canadian experts



Examiners assess constructions during the biennial Standards Setting weekend at Crooklands



DSWA National Training site, Crooklands, Cumbria

3. May 15-20, 2019 – Travelled to County Donegal Ireland to **facilitate a dry stone walling workshop for women** in collaboration with Downstrands Family Resource Centre. Conducted research into local stone, regional walling styles and common political issues around accreditation within the disparate dry stone wall associations



Top: Dry stone walling weekend workshop for women in Portnoo, Ireland

Right: Reconstruction of a free-standing dry stone wall completed during the women's workshop



4. May 22-June 24, 2019 – Constructed 2 x 5 metre complex features for **Part A of the Level 3 Advanced Craftsman certificate** at Otley Chevin. Completed two features within the timeframe and successfully passed all Part A requirements



Top left: Commencing the curve

Top middle: Progress continues during unfavourable conditions

Top right: Commencing the Lunky

Bottom left: Advanced level features completed

Bottom right: Part A Advanced level accreditation achieved, assessed by Bill Noble (pictured) and Phillip Dolphin

5. June 24-28, 2019 – Attended advanced time test preparation course at the DSWA national training site. **Undertook the Part B of the Level 3 Advanced Craftsman certificate B timed test and passed** – becoming one of only five female advanced wallers in the world, and the only advanced waller of any gender in the southern hemisphere



Examinees at the DSWA national training site

6. July 02, 2019 – **Presented Fellowship to the Otley and Yorkshire Dales Branch meeting**, which was very well received
7. July 09-11, 2019 – **Represented the Otley and Yorkshire Dales Branch at the Great Yorkshire Show**



Knowles joins Otley & Yorkshire Dales Branch members to construct an exhibit at the Great Yorkshire show

8. July 22, 2019 – Chaired the first meeting aimed at uncovering common issues and barriers faced by women within the dry stone trade. Working with women in Ireland, Scotland, England, USA and Australia and with the support of other international colleagues', good headway has been made with regards to **establishing an International Women's Dry Stone Network** who will work to reduce challenges and encourage greater numbers of women to become involved.

9. August 2019 – **Held meetings with DSWA UK**, participated in dry stone projects with some of the top specialists in the field, conducted **4 well attended public information sessions** in Yorkshire leading to the possibility of facilitating a summer school at two local colleges in 2020.



Well attended information sessions facilitated by Knowles during her Fellowship

In addition to the above meetings, workshops and training, Knowles also conducted extensive research into the multiple complexities involved in effectively implementing an Australian dry stone accreditation system.

Due to the large portion of time spent overseas, Knowles has only recently commenced the progression of dry stone training and employment opportunities

for Aboriginal people in rural areas. Thus far meetings have been held with two local Aboriginal youth organisations in Western NSW with a view to offering training opportunities in Autumn 2020.

Fellowship period

March – November 2019

Fellow biography

Between 2016 to present Knowles has spent a total of 18 months in the UK practicing the art of dry stone walling. During this time, she had the chance to work with and be trained and mentored by some of the trades' best practitioners.

Knowles qualified as a professional waller in Oct 2016 and continued her apprenticeship for a year before undertaking further training in the instruction of dry stone walling and establishing Stone of Arc, a traditional dry stone business focused on design, construction, restoration and training.

Since establishing Stone of Arc, Knowles has been successful in obtaining diverse commissions including heritage restorations, public space constructions and numerous private designs. Knowles has also delivered multiple Introductory and Intermediate level training workshops in various parts of Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland.

In recognition of Knowles' professional training and work in Australia she was awarded an Agribusiness Fellowship in 2018 through the International Specialised Skills Institute. The Fellowship enabled Knowles to focus on sustaining and increasing the authentic art of Dry Stone work in Australia through the development and implementation of an on-shore accreditation system that will reduce the need for people to have to travel to Europe to gain certification.

Despite a prolonged absence due to the sudden illness and subsequent death of Knowles' beloved mother in England, interest in Stone of Arc and demand for both construction projects and training (including mentoring and international volunteer opportunities) continues to grow.

Abbreviations / Acronyms / Definitions

DSWA UK – Dry Stone Walling Association of the United Kingdom

DSWAA – Dry Stone Walling Association of Australia

ISSI - International Specialised Skills Institute

PPE – Personal Protective Equipment



4. FELLOWSHIP LEARNINGS

As a result of the ISSI Fellowship Knowles has been able to significantly increase her skills in dry stone work as well her knowledge and understanding of accreditation systems, challenges faced by women in walling and the development of strategies to increase their involvement.

Skills enhancement

With no existing accreditation system in place for dry stone work in Australia, and the UK having the only internationally recognised accreditation, it was essential for Knowles to travel to the UK to complete her Advanced training (Knowles previously self-funded three trips to the UK in order to gain the skills and qualifications she has attained thus far, however this places both financial and time burdens on her and everyone in the industry seeking to pursue formal qualifications).

Level 3 Advanced Walling Certification

The requirements within the Level 3 Advanced Walling Certification are significant with many experienced wallers finding the examinations extremely challenging. The opportunity for Knowles to spend a significant amount of time in the UK, practice, be mentored by experts and further refine her knowledge and experience through meetings with key people in the industry, enabled Knowles to significantly enhance her skills as well as successfully meet the requirements of Level 3, Advanced Certification within an extremely condensed timeframe.

The following provides an outline of the requirements for an Advanced Waller.

Part A

Candidates must build five square metres of curved wall plus an additional five square metres incorporating one of the features below.

Five square metres of wall at least 1.8 m high; OR • Five square metres of wall incorporating a lunky or waterpen (at least 0.5m x 0.5m); OR • Five square metres of wall on ground with a slope of 20 degrees or more.

When Part A is successfully completed the candidate can then apply for Part B (Timed test - Retaining Wall),

Part B The candidate is required to strip down and rebuild at least 4.5 square metres of wall in total, including foundations and copes. The actual retaining part of the wall must be a minimum of 1.2m in height, measured from base of foundations, and should be retaining to the base of the copes. The work must be completed within a single, seven hour period and not spread over multiple days.

The standard for an experienced waller is to build 1.5 square metres of wall per day. Less experienced but competent wallers generally build one square metre per day pending conditions. The Advanced Level 3 requirements required 3-5 times the normal achievement level with no compromise on quality.

As a direct result of achieving her Advanced Certification, Knowles was given the opportunity to work with leading walling professionals and was also awarded a prestigious commission on Beverley Westwood (public pastureland in Yorkshire).



Top Left: Witton Fell Quarry face,

North Yorkshire, UK

Bottom left: Placing the stone

Top right: Shaping the stone

Bottom right: The completed

Westwood close commission



In addition to passing the Advanced Waller certification, the ongoing practice both with other wallers through Branch activities and Knowles' own projects also contributed to the growth in her skills and confidence.

The opportunities of skills enhancement extended well beyond traditional training and included tool making, stone types, quarry work, shaping, drawing and design.



Knowles got the opportunity to make her own Pitcher, Nicker and Punch Tungsten stone chisels



Top left: The forge,



Top right: Sharpening chisels



Image 8a – Looking into an ancient Irish sandstone quarry

Training and Accreditation in Australia

In the interests of enabling more Australians and others from the Asia and Oceania regions to complete qualifications in dry stone work, Knowles used her Fellowship to gain a deeper understanding of the UK accreditation system, as well as the application this system has in other countries including Canada and USA, and is currently working on how this may be applied within an Australian context. As a transitional strategy, Knowles has built a strong international network of trainers and examiners willing to come to Australia and establish more comprehensive training opportunities and therefore accreditation events to upskill Australian wallers.

1. DSWA

- » Level 1/Initial
- » Level 2/Intermediate
- » Level 3/Advanced Part A features

- » Level 3/Advanced Part B timed
- » Masters Part A features
- » Masters Part B timed

While it may appear simple to just adopt this framework, the conditions in Australia are quite different, with both geography and availability of venues, qualified trainers and examiners having a significant impact. The system in the UK is of course not just an accreditation framework but a comprehensive system that includes standardised training venues, facilitated training and practice opportunities, mentoring support and guidance, regional and national communities of practice and expertise.

In many respects the DSWA branches act as a community hub for wallers with regular networking, project support, exhibitions, training and more. This enables all candidates to take at least one practice test before the actual test day.

The construction of a giant woodland maze provides diverse learning and practice opportunities for branch members



With the limited number of walling professionals in Australia, (currently one DSWA trainer/examiner and two trainers), initially there will need to be modifications to the UK approach that do not negatively impact on the overall quality or credibility of the accreditation system.

The main three issues arising within the Australian context are:

1. Impartiality for the process – two Examiners are needed for each assessment above Level 1, Examiners should not examine their own trainees or employees
2. Opportunity – there is a need to build an Australian dry stone community that can support and develop further walling interest and expertise. This needs to address the geographically dispersed community and ensure clear standards for skills and venues.
3. Consistency of the examination process – there is no regular opportunity for Australia's Examiner to work with peers and benefit from constant review and feedback which helps ensure consistency across all Examiners. Interestingly at the DSWA UK International Standard Setting Convention, the Australian Examiner consistently marked harder than other Examiners. This inconsistency is likely to continue without the benefit of regular peer review and comparison. (Australia is the only country Internationally that relies completely on one Examiner).

In order to assist Australia to overcome these challenges in the short term, we would benefit from international input that enables a greater diversity of training opportunities for local dry stone workers to participate in guided practice and assessment.

The Fellowship has enabled Knowles to build up a strong network of trainers and examiners across the UK so that in the interim, dry stone workers in Australia can continue to train, practice and be examined at Level 2 and above. However, it is imperative that any international support is coupled with a coordinated and

cohesive approach within Australia, maximising local training and development opportunities in keeping with international standards.

Women in dry stone work

As with many non-traditional industries, the recording of participation on the basis of gender is very poor and this combined with the overall lack of formal structures and no participation data within many countries makes it difficult to assess the total number of women involved in dry stone work internationally.

Women do work in dry stone and have achieved some amazing things. However, the numbers are small relative to men, the issues the same as many other non-traditional industries including very low representation in decision making forums, and a historical lack of inclusion of women's views and feedback, sexism, inappropriate Personal Protective Equipment and constraints on use of traditional tools. For example, current rules require only walling hammers and chisels to be used in examinations rather than light power tools (which are often used during construction). While a strong understanding of and preservation of traditional techniques is important, the opportunity to complete work with a range of both traditional and more modern tools would facilitate a more inclusive approach.

In discussions with female colleagues internationally, it is considered that the industry would benefit significantly from a much greater inclusion of women's voices. As one of the initial steps, it would be beneficial to undertake research into current participation rates of women working in dry stone.

Initial work has already commenced on the establishment of an International Women in Dry Stone Network. It would be greatly beneficial to hold an inaugural event, providing the opportunity to

1. Assist women gain advanced qualifications
2. Profile the expertise of women in dry stone work

3. Construct a community feature wall – recognising women's challenges and achievements
4. Finalise and formalise the formation of the International Women in Dry Stone Network.

Through Knowles' research and meetings as part of her Fellowship Knowles is now in a strong position to host this inaugural event. Bringing founding with international women in dry stone members to Australia would not only benefit the further development of this Network but also benefit the trade in Australia more generally through the provision of additional training and mentoring opportunities.



Completed test features: Curved wall and lunky

5. PERSONAL, PROFESSIONAL AND SECTORAL IMPACT

Personal impact

Significant growth in Knowles' skills level, her confidence and international networks. Clarity about business development, partners and collaboration opportunities.

Professional impact

Completion of the Level 3 Advanced Dry Stone Walling Certification - COMPLETED

Development of an International Network of Women working with Dry Stone – a founding committee is in place and research and development is underway regarding the preferred functions and the subsequent structure that will be required. As an international network consideration needs to be given to the legal entity that will be created and what country this should operate from - COMMENCED

Sectoral impact

Stronger support for women working with dry stone internationally - COMMENCED

Development of an impartial, internationally recognised system of training, support and accreditation within Australia - COMMENCED

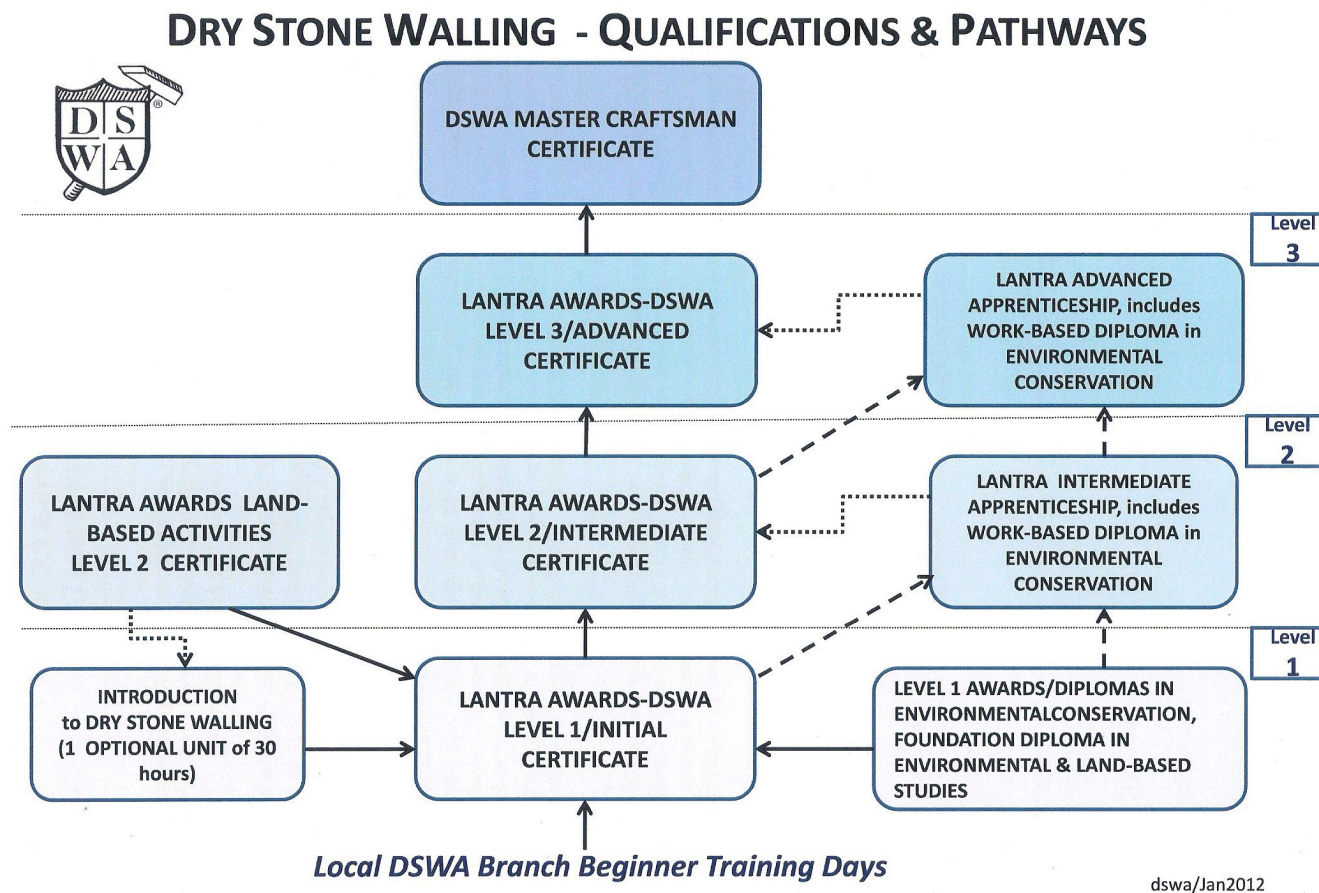
Training opportunities for Aboriginal youth in Western NSW – Discussions underway, training planned for Autumn 2020 – COMMENCED

6. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

1. Establish a structure to ensure consistent intra and inter-national implementation of UK accreditation standards
2. That an impartial, internationally recognised system of training, support and accreditation within Australia is progressed as a matter of priority
3. That funds are secured for an international research project mapping the current involvement of women involved in dry stone work
4. That funds are secured to conduct an intensive accreditation event for women in Australia -bringing international delegates to quickly and efficiently accredit successful dry stone workers, and also undertake the first in a series of International dry stone monuments constructed by women designed to represent women's challenges and strengths
5. To work towards facilitating an Australian based international week-long dry stone festival with an initial focus on diversity and inclusion.

7. APPENDICES

1. DSWA Qualifications and Pathways flowchart



2. Promotional material from the Donnegal workshop



With Guest Instructor Emma Knowles
DSWA Qualified Waller



Stone Wall Building weekend for women

Facilitated by
Louise Price & Caite Fealty

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th May
10.00am — 4.00pm

€30 for the weekend workshop
Call 074 9545879 to book a place



This weekend workshop will give you the basic principles of stone wall building and repair and give you practice in the construction of a field wall.

3. A UK newspaper article generated during Knowles' Fellowship

NEW FEATURE ON BEVERLEY'S ICONIC WESTWOOD

A traditional dry stone wall built by Beverley-born Australian citizen Emma Knowles has recently become a new feature on Westwood common.

Emma is one of only five female Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) Advanced Dry Stone Wallers in the world, and the only advanced waller and instructor operating in the southern hemisphere!

Emma is currently in England fulfilling the requirements of an international Specialized Skills Institute Fellowship, as well as managing the estate of Pat Knowles, Emma's mother, who passed away late last year.

The Fellowship aims to develop Dry Stonework in Australia by establishing an internationally recognised accreditation system and further developing the diversity of the walling community, with a particular focus on women and people from Aboriginal backgrounds in rural areas. Pat and Emma spent a lot of time together on the Westwood over the years, and in recent years Pat had commented that the dry stone wall at Westwood Close could do with Emma's attention.

A chance discussion with owner Professor Barbara English, a well known and highly regarded historian, meant Pat's suggestion is now a reality.

Born a snicket away around the same time the original wall was built, Emma said "As this chapter of my family's history in the town draws to a close it's an absolute privilege to be able leave our mark in such a special place." Normally a feature of the North and West Ridings, dry stone walling is an unusual sight in the East Riding of Yorkshire so this construction has attracted a lot of attention over the last few weeks, from both people and cows alike!

Emma added "Through the construction of this wall I hope to have raised awareness and understanding of traditional dry stone techniques, as well as provoking thought around the capability of women in trades".

Emma is director of Stone of Arc an Australian based company focused on design, construction, restoration and training in dry stone work. Primarily working on commissions in Australia, Emma has worked on several UK constructions, facilitated training workshops internationally, and has been

instrumental in foundation work to establish an international women's walling network.

A number of information sessions have been held during the course of the construction at Westwood Close, and a marker stone has been laid within the wall bearing the date of construction and the owner's initials. A unique Stone of Arc masons mark has also been included and the Yorkshire rose incorporated in the design.

If you haven't seen it yet, be sure to check it out next time you're on Westwood!





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