

In There Somewhere

written and illustrated by David Griffiths.

the DSWA, the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain in 1999

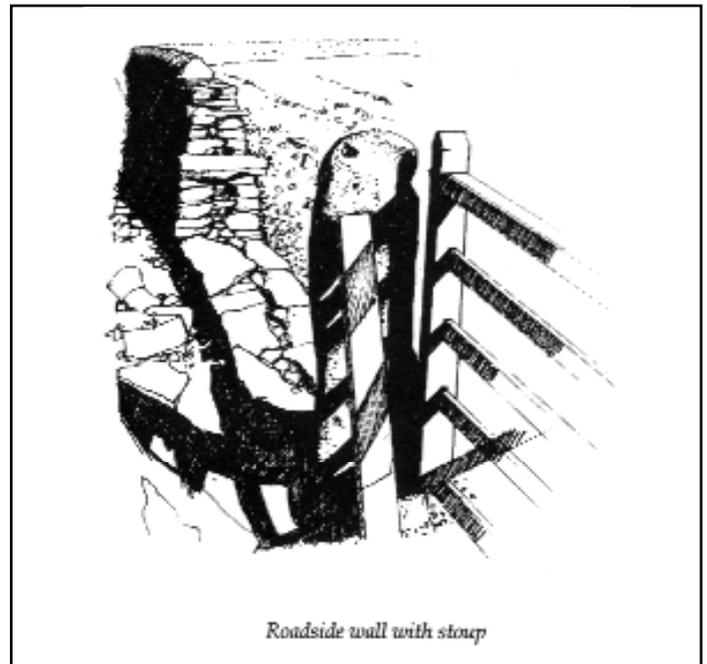
This is not going to be an objective review; I have a particular fondness for this little book that began on page 3 with the definition of a dry stone wall: “A wall built from unmortared stones, held together by itself .”

David is an artist, a graphic artist. The book is chock full of his fine pen and ink drawings which reveal a knowledge of the principles of the craft available only to someone who has been involved in it. This involvement which, as many who read this know can be obsessive, began for David with the patching of a garden wall to keep his children in and cattle out. In that experience a passionate interest in stone construction, particularly the dry stone walling aspect of it was born, an interest which led to years of experience, research and, finally, this book.

It was the person of Steven Allen, an acknowledged modern master of this ancient craft that acted as a catalyst for the book David wanted to write. Steven’s life and work is the means by which attention is focused on the traditions and present day status of dry stone walling. “For me, Steven is one of the finest exponents of the craft of dry stone walling of his generation ... he allowed me to watch and work with him on an extraordinary range of walling projects, and it was during the hundreds of hours we spent together that I was able to glean his technical, experiential and sometimes philosophical views about walls and walling.”

Another person “In There Somewhere” is Andy Goldsworthy, the well known artist who has utilized the talents of Steven and other dry stone wallers in his remarkable installations in England as well as in this country. The relationship of artist and artisan in these projects is explored.

A considerable part of the book is concerned with the dry stone walling competitions which are popular in Great Britain. It is at one of these that Steven Allen comes to David’s attention. David also candidly describes his own participation in one of these events and finally outlines the procedural sequence of a DSWA “Grand Prix” competition.



Roadside wall with stoupe

Although this is not an instructional manual, there is much a novice or even an experienced professional mason can learn from it. In the tracing of Steven’s evolution many elemental practices of the craft are elucidated and a section in the latter part of the book a chapter describing dry stone walling features with which a certified DSWA Master Craftsman is expected to be proficient was particularly instructive.

If the book has a fault it is that it is so small. Some sections were all too brief. The chapter on walling styles in different areas of Great Britain was disappointingly sketchy; it left me hungry for more. Perhaps, David, that might be the subject for a future book?

Tomas Lipps

IN THERE SOMEWHERE was published by the Dry Stone Walling Association of Great Britain c/o YCF Centre, National Agriculture Centre Stonleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG England (www.dswa.org.uk)

David Griffiths's drawings have been used to illustrate the article SOMEONE THERE IS WHO LOVES A WALL by Michael Finkel in this issue. Steven Allen and dry stone walling competitions are also the focus of this piece.