

The Peakys Wallers - A Wall in a Day



It's February and the weather forecast is not good. Our Challenge - a collapsed section of wall on the track leading to historic **North Lees Hall**. The historic hall, thought to be the basis for Thornfield Hall in Jane Eyre can be seen in the background.

As with all our repairs, the job begins with the unpleasant but necessary task of clearing some working space, sorting the stone, and then putting in new footings where required. As with many jobs, preparation is key.



Once the footings are in we begin to put the first courses in. This was a difficult wall because there is a bank from the base to the road, and most of the stone had collapsed on the field side, probably due to earth movement over the years.

The author posing with a mattock, pretending to know what he is doing! The line used to help us keep the courses level can be seen. We would usually use an 'A' frame to ensure the 'batter' (the slope of the wall from top to bottom) was consistent. This was not possible due to the way the wall had collapsed. We did this by eye.





We have learnt so much from this man - Tom Lewis. Tom is a Ranger with the Peak Park and is a demanding taskmaster. He won't settle for a shoddy job - understandable, especially when the wall is in such a public place as this (the road is a very busy footpath leading to Stanage Edge)

Classic walling! Two people working either side of the wall matching courses as it goes up. Mike Baker is our coordinator and a volunteer Park Ranger. The rest of our group is out of shot, probably sorting stone or making 'hearting' (the small stones that fill the middle of the wall and give it strength).



Mike can only stand and admire Tom's workmanship! The access was very difficult. We had to pass the stone over the wall to Tom as there was little on his side. A number of the stones have been 'faced' with a walling hammer to knock off any protruding lumps. This is not just cosmetic - it helps water run down the batter of the wall and away.

One of the joys of walling in the Peak District is the backdrop to our work. From this location we look across to Stanage Edge. The scenery is dramatic, whatever the weather.





Mack being helpful as usual! Tom's dog has become an honorary member of the team. He seems to spend a great deal of time searching for imaginary rodents.

The walling team pose in front of the completed repair. The makeup of our group varies from month to month. Some of us have been walling since the U3A group began. Others are new or just trying it out. We all look happy with the final result!



We finished at about 4.00 pm and the repair 'looks well' as they say in Derbyshire