

SUTHERLAND LONGHOUSE PROJECT: DRY STONE WALLING WORKSHOP

Brilliant sunshine on Monday morning made Dalnainain the perfect setting for our Dry Stone Walling workshop led by Master Dry Stone Waller, Dave Goulder. Armed with spades, hammers and strong gloves, our budding dry stone wallers made their way beyond the derelict shepherd's house to the large stone sheep enclosure. This post-clearance structure was probably built using stone from the pre-clearance longhouses on which Historylinks' Sutherland Longhouse Project has focused. Now in a state of disrepair in places, we had been given permission to make repairs to the wall. Dave chose a suitable, broken down spot and set the participants to work, clearing the rubble back to the foundation stones and removing any unsound stones from the wall on either side of the hole. Some of the huge foundation stones had to be lifted and moved back into place. Working one course at a time, Dave explained that two rows of stones should be placed with their lengths reaching into the wall and not along it. The gap in the centre of the course, between the two rows of stones was then packed with hearting – small stones which support the large, outer stones. Using stick-and-string guidelines to ensure flat and smooth horizontal and vertical surfaces, further courses were then placed on top – large stones first, taking care to cover the joints below each time before infilling with more hearting in the centre. There should be a gradual inward slope on each side of the wall making the base wider than the top. Dave explained how, after 3 or 4 courses, a row of long through stones would normally be placed across the full width of the wall to tie the two faces of the wall together and help to distribute the weight evenly. We had no through stones, and so had to continue without these, making sure that the wall was strong and stable after each course. Finally, on reaching the desired height, the top or cope stones are placed to complete the wall. The participants stepped back to admire their handiwork – an excellent first-time effort! Lunch was well earned! Revived by food and drink, the group set off to take a look at the footings of one of the pre-clearance longhouses from which most of the stone had been robbed. Then it was time for more dry stone work and Dave set the group the task of repairing a wall end. Beginning again by clearing the loose stones and realigning the foundations, participants sorted the stones, selecting and reserving those with a straight face to form the square end. Building course by course to the guidelines, and infilling with hearting as before, the wall end was eventually completed and the day's work finished – all in the dry. A great achievement and testament to the skills and teaching ability of master dry stone builder, Dave. Thank you, Heritage Lottery Fund!

#HeritageLotteryFund #HistorylinksMuseum #SutherlandLonghouseProject #DaveGoulder
#DryStoneWalling

