

BOLTON PARISH/BOLTON-IN-BLOOM

SHEEPFOLD-INSPIRED STONE BENCH PROJECT, 2019

A CELEBRATION OF OUR CUMBRIAN HERITAGE

In 2019, Bolton Parish was awarded a grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund to construct “a sheep-fold inspired stone wall enclosure, modified to provide public seating”. It is sited in the Memorial Hall Recreation Field in the heart of the village, and provides a welcome resting place in a peaceful, natural environment near a public footpath. The project was a joint effort between the Parish Council and Bolton in Bloom, supported by Bolton Primary School and local volunteers.



The project celebrates the Cumbrian heritage of sheep farming, pinfolds and sheepfolds, and dry-stone walls. It also incorporates a Bee-Bole - a south facing recess used in the past to hold a coiled straw bee-hive called a “skep”. An informative sign was erected on site, summarising the heritage aspects of sheep farming, dry stone walls, pinfolds and sheepfold.

PINFOLD-INSPIRED STONE WALL BENCH

Pinfolds (or pounds)

In the manorial open field system of the Middle Ages, there were no fences or hedges to confine livestock. Most villages had a pinfold (or pound) to hold stray animals until their owners paid a fine. Animals could also be impounded as an indemnity against debts. The word originates from the Saxon "punnefall" - "pound" (enclosure) and fall (field). Pinfolds were built in different shapes and materials, depending on the available materials. In Cumbria they were mostly made of stone. They were situated on waste or common land, close to a water source for the animals. In the 19th and 20th centuries field enclosures became common, and pinfolds have mostly fallen into disrepair.

Photo: Pinfold stone



Sheepfolds

Sheepfolds were similar structures made of dry stone walls, but they had a different purpose. They were usually found on open fell or in field corners, and built to contain the sheep for checking their health, shearing, hobbing, dressing, mending, treating for parasites and washing, clipping and marking. However, on maps of the 19th and 20th centuries the terms have sometimes been used interchangeably.

Photo: Vic Carlett ©



Bolton pinfold

The Bolton pinfold was restored during the SHEEPSFOLD project commissioned by Cumbria County Council in 1996. It contains one of Andy Goldsworthy's cairn-inspired cones. It is situated on the Calfly Road, about 100 yards up on the right.

Photo: Ric Hall ©



Dry stone walls

Cumbria has 3,000 miles of dry stone walls, many of which are over a hundred years old. The walls were built with stones cleared from fields and used to mark out the boundaries of fields and limit the movement of sheep, cows and horses. They were quite cheap to build as the only cost was the wages for the people building the wall. Dry stone walls are built without any cement or mortar holding them together. The way the stones are placed on the wall helps hold the structure in position. This allows the wall to settle naturally and to survive frost, which can cause cement to crack and the wall to collapse. The cross section for a typical wall is like a capital letter A, with a gentle slope on the outside edges.



The larger stones are used lower down and the smaller ones nearer the top. They are laid 'low stone on two, two stones on one', and the cavity is filled with smaller stones known as 'battering'. Throughstones are placed about half way up the wall and go all the way across, holding the two sides together. The top layer (topping stones) holds the wall together and helps stop damage if animals or humans climb over them. Dry stone walls are home to a wide variety of plants and animals. Mosses and lichens live on the shady side and these also help other plants like ferns and ivy to grow. Small mammals such as mice, voles and hedgehogs live in the wall, along with insects like spiders, bees and millipedes. Frogs and toads nest in cool damp cracks and birds may use the top of the wall as a perch / viewpoint. Bats have also been found in cracks near the top of walls.

Bee holes

Bee holes are a row of recesses, often in a south-facing garden wall. Each recess was big enough to hold a skep - a coiled straw hive used by beekeepers in Britain before the introduction of the modern wooden hive in the late 19th century. Skeps are sometimes used today for capturing swarms. Bee holes have been recorded since the 12th century. Over 1,200 sets have been recorded in Britain. The detailed construction was left to the craftsman's inspiration, local style and available material. Frequently the roof and base overhangs to provide additional protection from the elements. Some had a padlocked metal bar to prevent theft of the honey.

Photo: Bee holes at Shep



Commissioned by Bolton Parish Council in association with Bolton Memorial Hall and Bolton in Bloom. Constructed in 2019 by Colin Bulman and Jim Woods, with the assistance of volunteers. Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



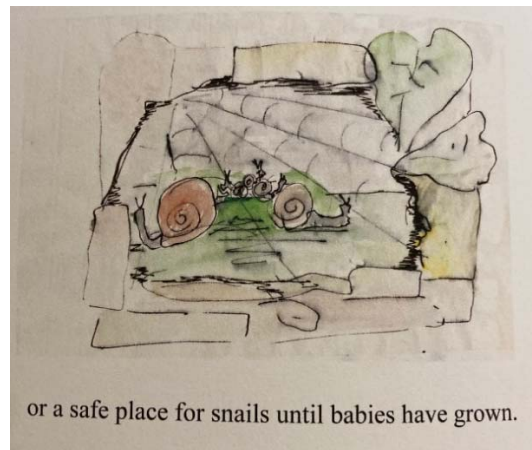
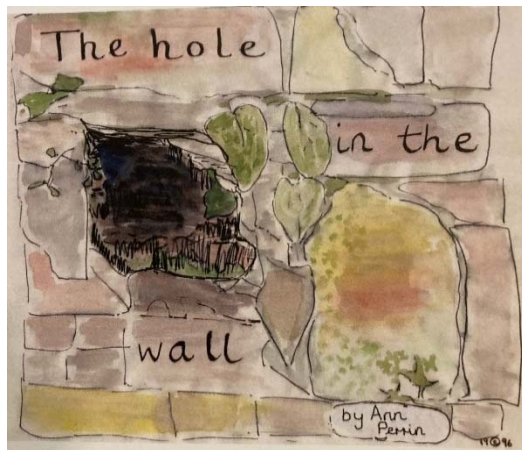
The structure complements the original pinfold in Bolton which contains a cairn by the celebrated sculptor Andy Goldsworthy.

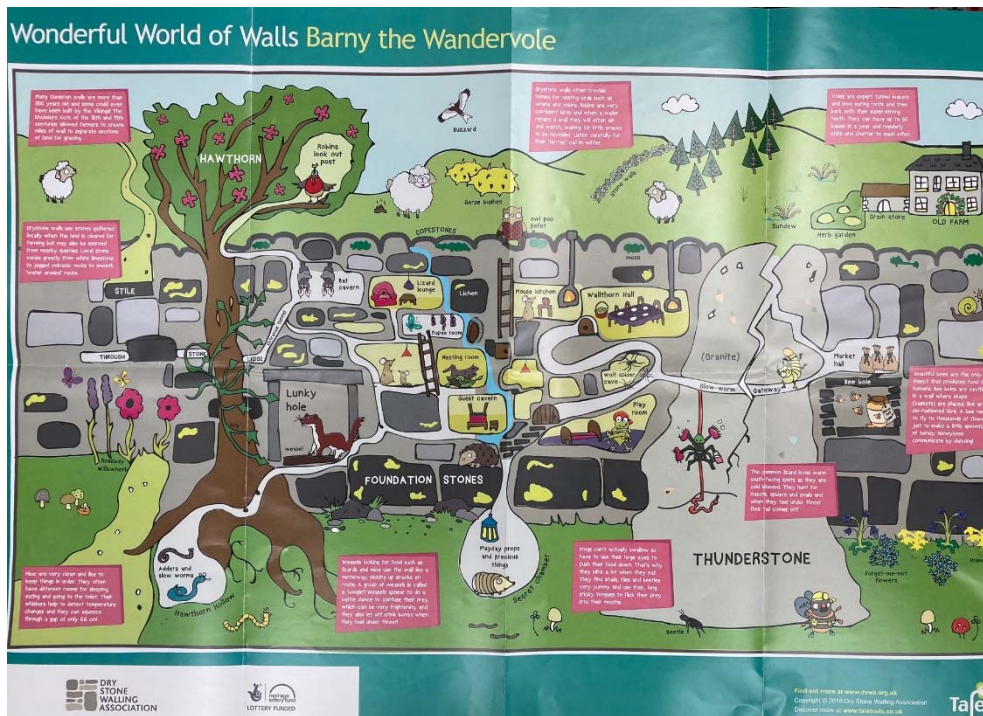


The bench feature was constructed by two local stone wallers, with support from farmers, builders, and community volunteers. Bolton Primary School was involved during their annual Nature Week. The children were inspired to investigate their heritage, including the wide variety of plants and animals found in stone walls, and the history of sheepfolds and pinfolds. They all helped to fill in the “hearting stones”, and each one deposited a lolly stick with their name on it.



The project paid for education materials and stationary supplies for the school. Every child received a copy of Ann Perrin’s wonderful little book “The hole in the wall” and the “Wonderful World of Walls” poster, both purchased from the Dry Stone Wall Association.





The children produced some wonderful wall panels showing the range of flora and fauna that can be found in dry stone walls.



As part of the project, Bolton in Bloom supporters planted 26 native shrubs and trees in the immediately surrounding area: juniper, holly, crab apple, wild cherry, field maple and guelder rose. These complement the 100+ native shrubs and trees that have been planted in the field over the last few years.

Yet another example of the great community spirit in Bolton.