

Drystone walls of the Mendip Hills



How many metres of drystone wall are there across the Mendip Hills? Best guess sits at over 260 miles of wall, many of which are concentrated in this Parish, and others on the Mendip Plateau. The drystone walls of Mendip, with their rough, irregular stones, are one of the twelve special qualities of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty that contributes to its status as a nationally protected landscape. The Mendip Hills AONB Service want to support farmers and landowners to restore their drystone walls in the unique style of the area. The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme has already supported two projects with a specific focus on the restoration of drystone walls. The first project from a farm at Charterhouse is spread out in three phases across the three years of the programme, restoring a huge section of wall along a field edge reverting from arable to permanent pasture. And one ambitious farm near Priddy aims to complete 200m of wall restoration in two months this Summer. Smaller sections of drystone wall restoration have also featured as part of wider projects on Mendip farms – including in West Harptree and at Ubley Warren.



Part of the drystone wall at Tynings, being restored through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme

Building or restoring drystone walls is a labour of love, a jigsaw puzzle without a box, but farmers, landowners, reserve managers, professional drystone wallers, and volunteer groups have spent thousands of hours carefully putting walls back together which will last for at least the next hundred years. A specialist volunteer group with the Mendip Hills AONB Service has been trained over the years to become a crack taskforce of dedicated wallers who meet every Thursday to restore key heritage walls within the AONB. There are courses available through the Dry Stone Walling Association, the Mendip Society, and AONB Service for anyone looking to learn the basics of drystone walling and get a taster for how it's done. For those who have completed some introductory training – new volunteers are always welcome.

For farmers and landowners wishing to employ a professional drystone waller, the South West England branch also have a list of accredited wallers in the area. Financial support for the restoration of drystone walls can be accessed through the Farming in Protected Landscapes programme or Countryside Stewardship, paid at £25/m.

The Farming in Protected Landscapes programme is currently open for new applications – please get in touch with us by email (mendip@mendiphillsaonb.org.uk) or by phone (01761462338) if you would like to make an enquiry about an application. A list of projects already funded in the area is available on the Mendip Hills AONB website.