

Putting up walls

A few weeks back I wrote about witnessing the prevalence and tenacity of British sheep while on a cross-country hike with my mom in July. A word must also be said about the people who have exerted tremendous effort throughout the years to keep them enclosed.

Whitney Crouch

wcrouch@timescourier.com

In 1914 Robert Frost published his blank verse poem "Mending Wall," which tells the story of two neighbors working to repair the stone wall between their adjoining stand of pines and apple orchard.

Keeping the wall between them as they work, the pair struggles to balance the stones and the author muses about what causes the walls to deteriorate when he is not looking. During the course of their toil, his counterpart repeatedly cites the proverb, "Good fences make good neighbors."

The residents of the counties we walked through in northern England have taken this old adage to the extreme. Along our 200-mile route we encountered numerous fences and barriers, the most prominent type being the dry-stone wall. Made without mortar (hence the term "dry"), these walls consist of carefully stacked rocks and are a familiar sight that from hilltops make the landscape appear to have been sewn together like a giant, irregular patchwork quilt.

Harkening to an age before prefabricated fencing and barbed wire, many of these style barriers cropped up across the English countryside between 1720 and 1840 as a result of the Enclosure Acts, under which large fields that previously had been used as common land were split into smaller parcels for individual owners.

My trail guidebook

estimated there are 125,000 miles of dry-stone walls in Britain today.

While they might sound like just a jumble of precariously arranged rocks, the structures are quite impressive, particularly since they can be found crisscrossing any type of terrain. Indeed, they can be seen running alongside country lanes, demarcating the edge of grazing land on a lonely moor and and running up rugged mountainsides, which I would have trouble standing upright on, much less attempting to build a wall up.

During our hike, my mother and I didn't just walk alongside these walls, we got up close and personal with many of them. Our route cut through numerous pastures and fields, and as a result, we were frequently opening and closing gates or climbing walls by way of stiles that ranged from wooden ladders built straddling the barriers to large rocks jutting out of the actual walls.

On the plane ride home, we went back through the guidebook and counted up the number of stiles and gates we encountered over the course of the whole trip. The totals came to 114 stiles and 261 gates, and while not all of the barriers these represented were stone walls, many fell into that category.

Instead of developing a hatred for the walls after encountering so many of them, I now have quite an affinity for them.

Indeed, since coming home I've missed encountering them in my rambles and have considered constructing my own elaborate system of dry-stone structures in Gilmer County, so as to add to the picturesque ambiance of the community.

While such a project would probably keep me busy for the rest of my life, it may be worthwhile as a lesson in perseverance, patience and hard work — not to mention my biceps would end up being very impressive.

Reward

from 1A

stolen, they believe on the Sunday night of Oct. 20.

"They tried to take the axles too," Nicholson said. "I'm perplexed, and so ticked off I can't stand it."

The sheriff's office is offering a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person(s) who stole the wheels and tires.

"I intend to exhaust every effort to determine who is responsible for stealing from the

taxpayers of this state and make an example of them," Nicholson said. "We have serious traffic issues on 52, and were just trying to do something to help, to try to prevent accidents, and went to a significant amount of effort to get the things brought there — and then somebody steals the wheels and tires."

The wheels are new and described as black steel. The tires are also new. Anyone having information regarding the theft is asked to contact the Criminal Investigations Division at (706) 635-4646.

Schools

from 1A

beige house across from the elementary school and found him hiding under a bush ... (and) ended up being able to tie him to the burglaries. He had items in his pockets that were taken from those burglaries."

Lacey said officers coordinated to keep Bragg away from First United Methodist Church and the Amicalola Electrical Membership Corp. office and the pursuit was "over in a matter of minutes."

Bragg was searched and authorities found a syringe that was tested and found positive for meth residue. He also

had some gift cards and a lighter with a name on it that was stolen earlier that morning.

Bragg confessed to the burglaries and told officers he used the money he stole that morning to buy meth and food, according to an incident report.

SROs monitored, acted on information

Lacey was asked about the lockdown of Ellijay Primary and Ellijay Elementary schools.

"We had no reason to believe he was dangerous or anything like that, but when we notified the sheriff's office the school resource officers put the elementary and primary schools on lockdown," he explained.

Sheriff Stacy Nicholson said there was no alarm sounded within the schools, and that they were placed on lockdown status "simply due to the situation in the vicinity of the schools."

"The schools were placed on lockdown as there were school resource officers inside each of those schools that were listening to the radio traffic, and it is their protocol to do so," he said. "The two day care centers in the immediate area of this incident were not notified of this situation as the circumstances of this specific incident did not cause there to be concern for the safety of those two facilities," he added.

Nicholson said he and

Lacey agreed in the future if Ellijay Primary and Ellijay Elementary are placed on lockdown, the First Baptist day care and First UMC day care programs, as well as the Mountain Academy (Mountain Innovation Program), will be notified "if the scope of the incident is applicable."

Bragg is being held without bond in the county jail, a spokeswoman said.

"The Ellijay Police Department would like to thank the Gilmer County Sheriff's Office, East Ellijay Police Department and the involved concerned citizens who made possible the solving of these two burglaries and the subsequent arrest," Lacey said.

DNR

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stated they became "belligerent" and made "anti-government" remarks. When the men refused to stop, VanLandingham alerted local law enforcement officers and the arrests were made at a take-out point downstream at Ellijay's River Park.

"Now if they had come (to the shore) to begin with, they would have been issued a citation on the life jacket and then been sent on their way," VanLandingham said at the time.

"But once you obstruct a law enforcement officer — any law enforcement officer — I can assure you they're going to put you in jail and charge you for it."

The three men were booked into the Gilmer County jail, stayed overnight and bonded out the next day. Sweat said at the time their Fourth Amendment

rights of search and seizure were violated.

'Quite familiar with case'

Capt. Johnny Johnson, a spokesman for the state Department of Natural Resources, said Friday he was "quite familiar with that case."

"That was probably a decision made by the prosecutor," he said of the dismissed charges. "It wasn't a decision made by us ... we don't have any issue with that because, I mean, they make those decisions."

Johnson explained the difference in severity of obstruction charges.

"One is a misdemeanor where someone is lying or someone doesn't do what the officer says they need to do," he said. "Of course, the other more serious obstruction is when there's a physical altercation. And this was the lesser one, where the officer asked them to come to the shoreline

and they refused to do so.

"So that sounds like what was dismissed — we don't have any issue with that. (We make the charges), then it's out of our hands and our job's done and theirs starts, and whatever decision they make we're good with."

'It's up to them'

District Attorney Alison Sosebee discussed the case with Johnson, she said last Friday.

"After a review of the file and a discussion, in fact, with Capt. Johnson on this case, we made the decision not to pursue, (not to) proceed forward," she confirmed. "We did not think that we would be

able to prove the obstruction beyond a reasonable doubt."

Sweat turned poetic when asked how he felt about the charges being dismissed.

"Everything is beautiful in its own way, like a starry summer's night or a snow-covered winter's day," he said in quoting a song from the 1970s. "That's the only thing I'd like to say."

VanLandingham said he had "no knowledge" the cases had been dismissed.

"We enforce the laws, we get the evidence together, put a case file together and turn that in to the district attorney's office," he said. "From there it's up to them."

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