



Set in stone

A love for the outdoors and a trip to Scotland has prompted a revival of an ancient trade – dry stone walling. Story by **Bonnie Cassen**

Brett Hoffman was holidaying in Scotland when he became fascinated with dry stone walling. Brett wanted to learn the craft then return to Australia to build walls. He trained in Scotland for two years, under a well known dry stone waller, Bruce Curtis, “As far as I know there is only myself and one other guy in Australia with international dry stone walling qualifications.” Brett says “I just love it. I’ve got a real passion for building these walls and developing different features in dry walls and working with stone.”

Brett’s zeal is obvious when he talks about his work. “You’re only limited by your imagination – you don’t just have to build a straight wall – you can add seats, curves, archways. Even houses have been built using dry stone wall techniques and, of course,

Far left: Brett on site at a Kiama quarry. Top and middle left: This wall in Berry has been made from local bluestone. Bottom left: Brett selects each piece of stone individually to ensure the stones key together perfectly.

the pyramids. Each stone you put in a wall sits in perfect harmony with the other stones like a jig saw puzzle.”

The dry stone wall trade arose out of necessity. As farmers cleared their land for livestock they needed fences. Mortar didn’t exist and stones were found in workable amounts in the paddocks. “A lot of the walls I worked on in Scotland were up to 1000 years old. The reason they stayed up so long is maintenance.

The farmers walked the wall regularly making repairs as they went.” Brett explains “The only thing holding the wall together is friction and gravity.”

Since returning to Australia, Brett has set up his dry stone wall business in Berry. “This is the first job I’ve found where I get up and want to go to work in the morning. A lot of people don’t get that kind of satisfaction from their job.”

For quotes or inquiries Brett can be contacted on 0402 406 192.

