

RURAL SKILLS HUB EXPERIENCE DAYS: FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

The UK has over 120,000 miles of dry stone walls, and 300,000 miles of hedgerows, which must be looked after. We offer hands-on opportunities for community groups to learn about traditional boundaries and what it takes to maintain them, with our partners at the [Dry Stone Walling Association](#) and the [National Hedgelaying Society](#). Our experience days are ideal for groups of 10 people aged 18 and over, who have no experience with dry stone walling or hedgelaying. You will learn the basic skills required to maintain traditional walls and hedges, and find out how they benefit the landscape, including acting as corridors for wildlife.

Dry Stone Walls

Dry stone walls have been part of our landscape for thousands of years. As well as marking our boundaries, they provide valuable habitat for plants, animals and insects. Mosses, lichens and fungi colonise the stones, whilst mini beasts, frogs and rodents reside within the nooks and crannies, using them to move around the landscape safely. Predators like foxes may hunt along a wall; owls use them as lookout posts. Dry stone walling is a sustainable practice, using locally sourced materials, and very few tools.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows define our countryside. Like walls, they act as corridors for wildlife, but are also an invaluable food source. The correct management of hedgerows is essential if they are to remain healthy and provide lots of food. Sympathetic management allows blossom and berries to form, allows the hedge to slowly increase in size, and maintain its condition. Eventually every hedge needs to be rejuvenated from the base, to encourage new growth and start it on a new life cycle – hedgelaying is a traditional way of doing this.

The benefits of learning boundary maintenance skills

Walls and hedges provide many benefits to our wildlife and landscape. However, even just one day working outdoors could also benefit your group. Here's how –

- **Outdoor physical activity improves health & wellbeing.** We think an experience day covers the [5 Ways To Wellbeing](#): connecting with others, being active, taking notice of your environment, learning something new, and giving time to your community.
- **Learn about ecology and heritage.** Experience days are an opportunity to get close to nature and to discover more about local history, with people in-the-know.
- **Inspire your group to get involved** with other land- and nature-based initiatives e.g. maintaining your own outdoor space, volunteering with local environmental charities, developing a link with your nearest dry stone walling or hedgelaying group.
- **Learn basic skills which you can take with you**, helping you to take better care of the boundaries in your own garden, park, or community green space.
- **Skills and career development.** If someone in your group is interested in a rural career, we can help them access our grants, placements or further training.

What we will provide:

- Venue
- Qualified Traditional Boundaries Instructor(s) to give you basic training and demonstrations of dry stone walling and/or hedgelaying
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the day
- Tools for the day
- Educational materials
- Advice on further skills development and rural career opportunities
- Some venues may offer refreshments

What we cannot provide:

- Travel / transport
- Overnight accommodation
- Some venues may not offer refreshments, in which case you would need to bring a packed lunch and drinks



How to book:

Nominate a lead contact to get in touch with us using the contact form on our [website](http://www.ruralskillshub.org.uk). Or fill out the enquiry form on the next page (digitally in a PDF editor, or print and fill out by hand) and return by email to info@ruralskillshub.org.uk. This will tell us more about your group, what you want from the experience day, and how far you can travel. We will try to match you with a provider in your area, who will work with you directly to organise an experience day at a time that suits everyone.

If we are unable to match you with an experience day provider:

Our service is expanding, and we may not yet have a provider operating within the distance you are able to travel. If we cannot match you with a provider, we will discuss other options e.g. alternative dates, locations, activities, or other ways you could get involved with the Rural Skills Hub.

If your group is larger than 10 people please contact Carrie (Rural Skills Hub Co-ordinator) at info@ruralskillshub.org.uk.



RURAL SKILLS HUB EXPERIENCE DAYS: ENQUIRY FORM

Please email completed form to info@ruralskillshub.org.uk.

About your group

Your group's name:

Location / business address:

Email address:

Phone number:

Tell us about your group e.g. what you do, what sector you work in, who your members are, whether you have experience of dry stone walling or hedgelaying?

About you (lead contact)

Name:

Role / job title:

Email address:

Phone number:

About your experience day

Ideal dates (can be exact dates, a range, or you might be flexible):

Note: dry stone walling and hedgelaying are seasonal activities. Generally, dry stone walling days can be held in March-September; hedgelaying in October-February. There is some scope for combined sessions in spring/autumn.

Group size:

Interested in Dry Stone Walling or Hedgelaying or Both?:

How far are you able to travel?:

Would we have permission to take photos/videos during your experience day? Yes / No

Photos or videos would be used by the Rural Skills Hub, the Dry Stone Walling Association and the National Hedgelaying Society for marketing, promotions, websites, social media, educational materials, and other purposes.