

## Feature

# Preserving history one stone at a time

Alistair Tune's profession dates back millennia, writes **Robyn Emerson**.

**I**t's not often you meet someone who works at a profession that has been practised right across the globe, unchanged for thousands of years and whose products last for lifetimes, but Alistair Tune is such a person.

He is one of the few people in Australia who still works creating and maintaining dry stone walls in the volcanic plains and farming country of Western Victoria.

The areas around Camperdown where he was born and lives are part of a large volcanic plain, peppered with rocks and ideal for building the dry stone walls. The only material used is the rocks themselves, without any form of mortar.

"The wall worked two fold - as a way of clearing the land, and as a way of enclosing the land. The material to build them cost nothing and labour was cheap," he says.

"If maintained, a wall will last many lifetimes as opposed to a post and wire fence. They have endured

many bushfires and even proven to be a significant firebreak."

Tune began helping a third generation stone waller in the Western District, Bill Harlock, build and repair walls for the local farmers after learning about the craft in his horticulture course, and his career grew from there.

"As a kid I jumped over walls, drove past them hundreds of times, but it wasn't until I did the workshop with Bill and then worked with him that I began to realise the significance and the effort taken to construct them," he says.

Camperdown and surrounds are part of Australia's largest network of dry stone walls. It's a proud tradition in the area as the walls are ideally suited to the local conditions and Tune is mindful of the history in what he does.

"Patience is the key, knowing there is a spot for every stone. There are a few important fundamentals that, no matter what scale of wall or structure, are



Alistair Tune says stone walling takes patience.

critical to a well-built wall and are techniques that have remained unchanged for hundreds if not thousands of years," he says.

Many think, as they drive past the walls enclosing the paddocks in

the area that they were built by convicts, but this isn't the case.

"The walls we see in this area are very similar to those of the UK, and many of the original walls were built by the Scottish, Irish and

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**Alistair Tune, stone waller**

Cornish immigrants who came to the area after the gold rush," he says.

Tune now runs classes on the fundamentals of building dry stone walls himself to pass on the tradition to others, and has a thriving business landscaping and repairing the walls.

The happiness he finds in his profession and the carefully-built dry stone walls ensure his work will last for generations.

"I often think whilst repairing a wall that may well be 130 years old, of the effort the builders went to. I gain a great sense of satisfaction and joy in repairing them, knowing I'm maintaining part of history."

## Health

## Joint effort to enable people to function efficiently

As part of the medical team at the Hong Kong Sevens rugby tournament in 2014, chiropractor Dr Nicholas Shannon says he spent his share of time pitch-side, ready to help injured players.

One of them was a Welsh player who had to be stretchered off before 30,000 fans after losing consciousness. Shannon's role was to help ensure the player was appropriately lifted on to the stretcher and removed from the field. Watching injuries happen at ground-level is not uncommon in Shannon's job.

"That's kind of what you sign up for. It all varies from the sport you cover, but ... in any sort of contact

sport, that's what you've got to expect," he says.

Shannon, owner of Melbourne Sports and Spinal Chiropractic in the CBD, says the crux of his job is about enabling people - be it on the sports field, in the office and in between - to function and perform as efficiently and effectively as they can.

"Orthopaedics is probably the area I find most enjoyable and why I've gone on to do a lot of sports medical education, training and work in the field," he says. "I just love how joints work, whether it be assessing an injured joint or trying to rehabilitate an injured joint."

Shannon was previously an

accountant. He obtained his chiropractic degree from RMIT University and has since become a certified team physician through the American College of Sports Medicine. He has also completed a pre-hospital sports care course and spent time in the University of Minnesota's sports medicine department.

He started his own practice about eight years ago and has seen it develop in tandem with his own professional development.

"The first two years are challenging," Shannon says. "You've got to believe in yourself and back yourself, and I think it's also important to continually

develop yourself and improve your skills and knowledge, so you can provide your patients with the best care you can."

*Chiropractic and Osteopathic Services in Australia*, a 2015 market research report from IBISWorld, is heartening for those interested in a chiropractic career. It indicates an increasing number of private health insurers are offering benefits for industry treatments, which is benefiting the public profile of the industry and driving revenue growth.

Shannon says his career looks bright, too. This year he's slated to publish research on running medicine and to travel to the US,



Chiropractor Nicholas Shannon assesses a patient's shoulder.

Hong Kong and South Africa for sports events work, conferences and course work. "This year's just really about continuing that professional development and building the sports medicine knowledge."

Josh Jennings

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