

Building a drystone hut: an instruction manual

ISSN 0751 - 9656

2nd edition

Christian Lassure

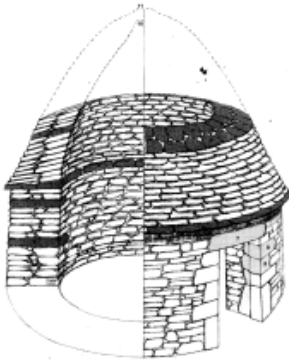
Études et recherches d'architecture
vernaculaire no.29 2009,

C.E.R.A.V

54 pp A4

Christian Lassure

Building a drystone hut:
an instruction manual
2nd edition



études et recherches
d'architecture vernaculaire

C.E.R.A.V.

N. 29
2009

C.E.R.A.V - Centre d' Études et de recherches sur l'architecture vernaculaire – the centre for studies and research on vernacular architecture, is an organisation which... well it does what it says on the tin. Its stunning, associated, website www.pierreseche.com was reviewed way back in "Stonechat 11" (downloadable from <https://www.box.net/shared/ces10bql0y>). The organisation has produced a wealth of literature on dry stone – mostly on cabanes – this is the only publication available in English. It is a 54 page A4 comb bound booklet, with black and white line drawings and photographs.

Most of the information has been gleaned by Christian Lassure from a number of and it starts by briefly covering the nitty-gritty of sourcing stone, tools etc. In fact it deals with most things briefly and you have to be careful not to miss hidden nuggets of information.

There's a little bit on setting up and foundations. The use of a pivot or vertical axis is dealt with, although the pitfalls are not mentioned, nor how you would know how long to set the strings. The 'rules of good drystone masonry' are dealt with very succinctly, but with some good insights. We seem to have settled into a theme, good information, succinct and to the point, probably as good as I've ever come across in such a brief document but at the same time leaving perhaps too much unsaid.

A section on doorways, with annoyingly poor photographs, is interesting, followed by a section of roughly equal length on roof building. Except it is actually much longer. Somewhat bizarrely in the middle of this section (which is still far too short and for such a unique practice, sadly lacking in the little insights and tips I was hoping for) are a series of seven "inserts" mostly historical, one about growing irises on cabane roofs covering 22 pages. Why not in an Appendix? Insert 7 'Building a dry stone hut (or capitelle) by Jean-Marie Barre in 2004-2005' is essentially a photographic record of the stages of construction of a stunning dry stone hut built in a service area of France's A9 motorway. It forms 17 of the insert 22 pages and is perhaps the highlight of the whole booklet. It provides tantalising glimpses into the process, illustrates the central pivot far better than the main text, and as with everything else leaves you wanting more.

There are other bits and pieces on corners, and square buildings. 2 pages cover the interiors: niches, windows, seats, floors, fireplaces and hangers. Rather than just give a few ideas and dimensions each tries to introduce something technical, which is a little incongruous in essentially very short paragraphs. As seems to be the norm a lot of information is crammed into a few words, but is it ever enough?

All in all I feel it's a bit of a curate's egg. It is not perhaps just good in parts, it can be said to be excellent, this however seems only to make its brevity and inevitable lack of information in some areas all the more annoying.

This booklet is undoubtedly a valuable addition to my library. It's a subject area sadly bereft of information in English and this publication contains some excellent explanations/interpretations of aspects of general dry stone work, which leave me wondering how much I'm missing through not being able to read other French publications. It is however a frustrating booklet, partly because of its layout and the fact that it leaves so much un-answered. 'Leaving them wanting more' works only if you follow it up. I wait with baited breath.

Sean Adcock

ISSN 0751-9659

€17 from C.E.R.A.V., 11, rue René Villerme - 75011 PARIS

Order forms and purchase details

at bottom of page

http://www.pierreseche.com/ERAV.html#5_annonce_erav29