

THE WALL

This poem was used as a base for the performance structure of CL1: the Caer Llan Sestina. Filkins wrote it for Peter Carpenter, owner of Caer Llan, after spending a long summer there working in the grounds, particularly building walls. It has subsequently been published in an anthology of his work. (Filkins is a professor of Creative Writing and Literature in the USA.) Peter Carpenter has 'The Wall' framed and hanging on a wall in the Berm House, the earth shelter that provides half the accommodation at Caer Llan.

The poem - and its key role in CL1 - was partly the inspiration for my [Individual Response](#) called [The Years Pass](#) in CL3: performing Place, 2004.

In a bizarre yet happy coincidence, Peter Filkins made a rare visit to Caer Llan during CL3, 2004, from the States. In addition to observing some of the work, he recorded the poem for the MA students who used it in one of their pieces.

([Click here](#) to hear Peter Filkins reading *The Wall*)

The Wall by Peter Filkins (For Peter Carpenter)

In the morning the wall
we'd built from various stones
stood somehow changed
by sunlight in the garden,
the morning dew, and the air
cool from the valley and clear.

For what was clear
was that our wall,
as if out of thin air,
had become more than its stones,
more than just a shape in the garden,
to organise the weeds. It had changed

because how we saw it had changed,
standing there in the patch we'd cleared.
What had simply been a neglected garden
now contained our wall,
larger, more wobbly, than any stone.
Way off in the valley the air

Lay open as air,
grassy, wild, unchanged.
There the fields were scattered with stones.
But was our field a field more clear
because divided, set off by our wall?
Or was it simply our garden?

Answers grow poorly in gardens,
It has something to do with the air.

Yet for all its bulk, the idea of our wall
had brought us a delicate change.
The flowers less wild, more clear
in their reds and greens on the stone,

somehow something strange, not of stone,
had crept out in the midst of our garden.
How sad, how clear
it felt there in the early air.
Everything around us was changed.
For what had been our wall

was clearly now a part of the garden,
destined to change in the air
from garden to wall to stone.

Filkins, 1998:19/20