

The use of the rocks



Each rock has its own physical properties and components which characterise it.

It is precisely these properties and elements that man has taken advantage of in using the rock. We have several examples in Andorra, such as Romanesque architecture or granite architecture.

Another of the most significant examples in Andorra is presented below: the art of dry stone.

What is the art of dry stone?

The art and technique of dry stone consists of a constructive method of Neolithic origin where the stones are competently put together in such a way that they find their own stability, without the help of any mortar to bind them together, creating structures that they can last for centuries.

The surprising fact is the ingenuity of this technique when taking advantage of such an abundant and diverse resource. Each stone, meticulously selected and placed, contributes to a composition that integrates with the landscape and to create an important life refuge for the flora and fauna associated with rocky environments.

This technique was used to build constructions related to agriculture and mountain cattle breeding to facilitate the hard-working conditions.

Dry stone and mountain cattle breeding

Associated with Andorran cattle breeding, several structures appear to support the development of the activity during the summer stay in the high mountains, when the herds take advantage of the communal pastures or the seasonal rental of summer pastures.

The **dairy** is a structure designed to milk the flocks of sheep during their stay in the high mountains; cheese was made with the milk obtained. The dairy is usually accompanied by huts and some enclosure.

The **enclosure** is an enclosed area, surrounded by dry stone walls. Its purpose is to protect livestock during the night hours, preventing losses and protecting them from predators.

The **hut** was mainly a temporary residence for high mountain shepherds, although some of these huts also had the function of making and storing cheese.

The **enclosure walls** were constituted as structures used to mark the boundaries of plots or properties, mainly with the purpose of preventing the incursion of outside livestock. They were crowned with a row of stones arranged in the form of a rake, oriented vertically to strengthen the defense against the passage of animals.

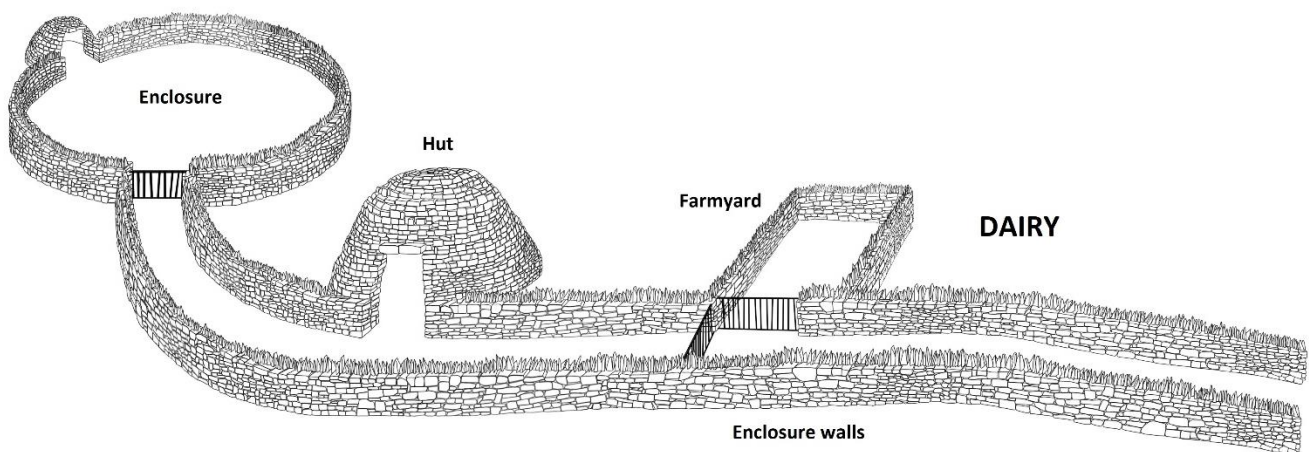


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Protection, restoration and recovery

During the last century, the dry stone technique has fallen into disuse, motivated by a significant decrease in the primary sector. This fact led the administrations, as well as the private sector and citizens, to develop protection and restoration measures, while promoting the recovery of ancestral knowledge.

In the Ordino's Biosphere Reserve, this heritage is valued, through archaeological studies and the restoration of relevant elements. Thus, several structures have been recovered in the Sorteny Valley; you will find good examples of them on the way to the refuge, with the aim of promoting their dissemination.