



# grampian speleological group NEWSLETTER



No. 173

November 2019

## Journey Through Elphin

As many will know, the Elphin community have been working on a wall hanging to illustrate the life of the village past and present. The project is headed by local artist Jan Kilpatrick. The tapestry had its official unveiling on November the 9<sup>th</sup> and now adorns the community hall.

The GSG as a long-standing part of village life, has not been overlooked as Jan writes on the website:

*‘And there was one surprising addition to the work. At the opening event in March, a couple of members of the Speleology Society (pot-holing and caving enthusiasts, to give them their common name) had attended. They have had a ‘hut’ in the village for many a year and are a friendly bunch who mix well with the locals.*

*They jokingly suggested that they should be represented on the wall-hanging by a big black hole! How we laughed, but did not expect to hear any more about that. However, they have now been in touch to say that one of their members is a good embroiderer and would indeed like to sew a black hole, which they will send by post for us to attach to the main work. What a great example of community spirit and we are all delighted to have them on board’*

The project website can be found here:

<https://www.wildtiles.co.uk/community-textile-projects/174-a-journey-through-elphin>

### A Journey Through Elphin



Join us for the unveiling and celebration of our community-made textile wall-hanging depicting Life in Elphin—past and present.

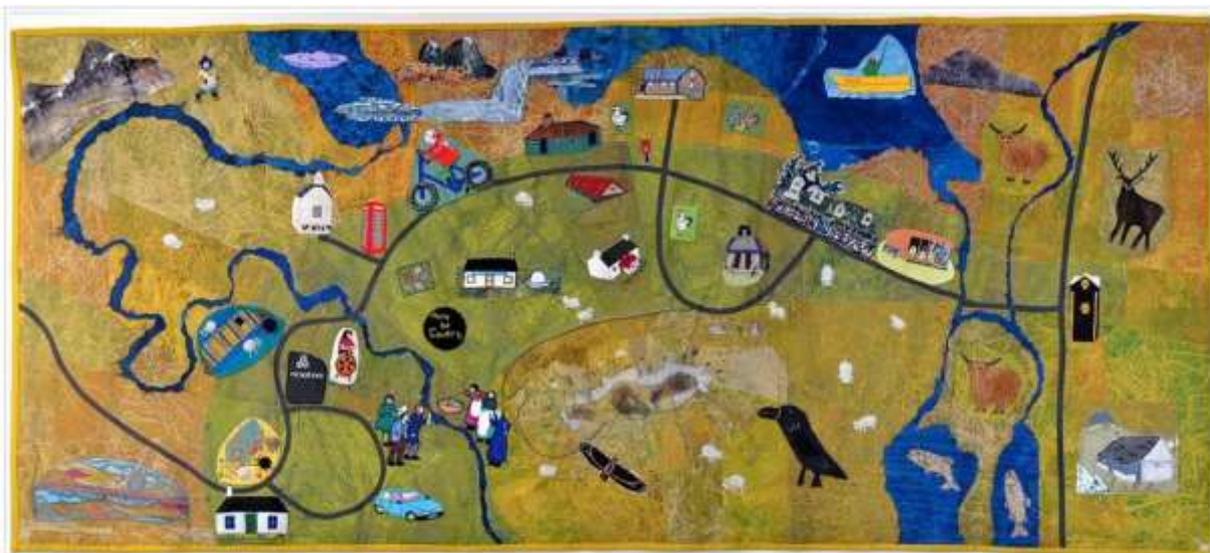
2—4 pm, Saturday 9th November

Elphin Community Hall (the old school)  
Refreshments  
Local History Display

All Welcome!

Bob Sommerville



## **Hidden Earth 2019**

This year, Hidden Earth sought to travel north (well, north for most cavers!) but as always, huge difficulty in sourcing a usable premises meant that 2019's location was late in being announced. It was held at the Glyndwr University campus, Wrexham over the weekend 27-29th September.



Photo: Alan Jeffreys

This national get-together of like minds served up an excellent blend of British and foreign caving ventures, along with a few specialised workshops, video salon and other attractions. Only three GSG members made it down from Scotland – Lucy Freem, Martin Hayes and the writer, although I counted eleven other members, including Thomas Arbenz who travelled over from Switzerland with the Claonaite survey, obtaining a ‘distinction’ award in the survey competition.

In the past, the club has won the best club stand three times and there used to be a healthy attendance from Scotland. Sadly,

that no longer happens, which is a shame. It is a superb opportunity for net-working, seeking bargains in the trade hall, having epic drinking sessions with friends and of course learning about new discoveries and expedition offers. Perhaps we can do better next year, but be warned, it is likely to be back ‘down south’ probably Mendip or Monmouth, which could mean braving the dreaded M6/M5. I assure potential visitors that it is all worth it.

**Goon**

## **Hidden Earth Art**

Lucy Freem had reason to celebrate this year's Hidden Earth. Her artistic endeavour in the form of a cave scene rendered in textile, earned a distinction award!

Hidden Earth also ran a cave filming completion. Those who entered can be seen on a dedicated YouTube channel. The GSG also shone with commendation award for the Claonaite survey

**Bob Sommerville**



Photo: Lucy Freem

## **CNCC Meeting 5.10.2019**

The Autumn committee meeting, which was well attended, reported work completed on access to Barbondale caves; work at Providence Pot entrance and access to Leck Fell (where caving can now be undertaken all year round – see online booking system). A new Secretary, Josh (?) will now take over from Matt Ewles who will be the new secretary for BCA. Also, Alan Speight has taken over as co-ordinator for the CNCC anchor scheme.

Discussion took place on conservation of cave entrances and access routes, with expenses incurred re-payable from BCA funds (via CNCC). The Access Officer (Tim Allen) announced that visits to Weathercote Cave have been negotiated, with the proviso that arrangements are made in advance with Weathercote House. Parking for Birkwith Caves is now at Low Birkwith Farm (en route to the road end). The webmaster Gary Douthwaite reported good use of the new booking site, and many visits to the cave description section. The Scottish section of this last could be expanded.

Readers are urged to visit the site and if they go caving in the many caves (especially in Argyll) that are missing, write a description and forward to Goon. Pictures of entrances also welcome. A large quantity of 'New to Caving' leaflets were available and Goon picked up a plentiful supply. These are excellent for handing out to prospective new members and are recommended.

Finally, all BCA insurance card holders will shortly be contacted by email or post regarding a vote for a change in the voting structure at BCA. Currently, clubs have a block vote alongside individual members. It is proposed to remove this 'two house' system and make it individual member voting only (apart from constituent bodies such as regional councils). CNCC are in favour of this, but you are asked to read the email closely and vote according to your personal views.

**Goon**

## **GSG Annual Dinner Weekend 2019**

The 2019 GSG Annual Dinner took place at the Smoo Cave Hotel, Durness on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> October. It was attended by 26 members from various parts of the UK. The weather was intermittently miserable alternating from dry but cold to torrential rain and hail. This did not prevent intrepid cavers from taking an active interest in the caves in the area.

Fraser, Goon and Iain Greig took part in some digging at Colin Coventry's dig in Smoo Cave. Another active group went for a wet tourist trip to Uamh a' Clachan Dubh (the recently discovered Cave of the Black Stones at Ach a' Chorrain). Another large group walked the coast of the Kyle of Durness from the Cape Wrath Ferry to Balnakeil. I investigated the shore from Leirinbeg to Faraid Head finishing with a visit to Smoo and some of the smaller caves along the geodh.

Sunday trips were limited to brief tourist trips to the main Smoo Cave. The Golden Gnome was not awarded this year as the Committee felt no-one this year quite met the requirements (advancing the club ethic and aims etc).

**John Crae**

## Rosmarkie Cave Archeology



Photo: Rosmarkie Cave Project

The caves at Rosmarkie on the Black Isle have been undergoing archaeological investigation for a number of years. Several GSG members including Bob and Rosemary Jones along with archaeologist Steve Birch have been involved with the digs. Recently new information has come to light regarding a Pictish man who was killed and buried in the cave 1,400 years ago.

New genetic evidence shows the man was related to Iron Age peoples on Orkney. The death has been suggested as part of a ritual relating the belief in the underworld.

The skeleton was discovered in 2016 and further research is ongoing. More detailed information can be found on the Rosemarkie Caves Project website-

<http://www.spanglefish.com/rosemarkiecavesproject/>

**Bob Sommerville**

## Fraser Simpson Road Less Travelled



Photo: Julie Hesketh

During July a number of GSG members attended the retrospective exhibition of the late Fraser Simpson's photographs. The pictures on display were a small selection from over 10,000 in Fraser's collection. They highlighted his wide-ranging interests, taken on his numerous travels across the globe.

Fraser's travels and adventures, were suitably illustrated by his keen eye for detail, the majority of

the subjects being non caving related. All of the framed works were on sale and at least £1700 was raised and donated to the Maggie's Centre charity.

**Bob Sommerville**



Photo: Fraser Simpson

## **Nenthead Beginners Meet**

At the end of August, Lucy Freem organised a beginners meet at the Nenthead mines near Alston in Cumbria. The trip was well attended with several GSG members helping out. One group, without the novices, led by an experienced local guide explored the Rampgill mine to its furthest extent. The Rampgill system once connected to the Smallcleugh system but has since been sealed due to low oxygen levels near the so called 'county line' boundary.



Beginners group in Smallcleugh photo Carol Dickson

The second group with the potential new members explored the Smallcleugh mine. The novices seemed to enjoy this experience to the extent that they were happy to have another trip into Rampgill on Sunday. This was a shorter trip but more cave like that the Smallcleugh mine. The beginners appear to have enjoyed themselves to the extent that they have applied to join!

**Bob Sommerville**

## **Thailand Cave Rescue Film**

The recent cave rescue in Thailand has inevitably generated a lot of publicly and interest in all things caving. As a spin off a film dramatization (at least one) has been made. The trailer looks quite interesting although I've not seen the full film it is imaginatively called 'The Cave'

The trailer is worth a look

<https://www.screendaily.com/news/first-full-trailer-for-thai-cave-rescue-movie-the-cave-exclusive/5143536.article>

**Bob Sommerville**

## **GSG Xmas Dinner**

This year's GSG Christmas dinner will be in the hut on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December. Please note that this has changed from the initial advertised date. A competing event on that date would have resulted in all Santa's elves being absent! The menu isn't available yet, but the cost is expected to be about the usual £10 with any surplus being donated to Water Aid. You can book your bunk now with Imo Furlong and your place at table with Peter Dowsell or wait for the usual email with the full details.

## GSG Membership Subscriptions for 2020

GSG subscriptions are due on the 1st January 2020 and with BCA rates also unchanged are exactly the same as last January. For those paying by standing order please check that the correct amount is paid. If it was correct for 2019 it will be correct now unless your circumstances have changed.

All GSG members must also be members of BCA. BCA subscriptions are unchanged at £17 for caving members, £6 for non-caving members and £8 for caving student members. The GSG part of the subscription is £17 for full members and £22 for joint membership. Members who are receiving full time education, who are unemployed or who have retired and are over state retirement age all qualify for a £5 reduction. Life members get a 100% discount on this part and only need to pay the BCA subscription.

If you are already a direct individual member of BCA (a DIM) or a member of BCA through another caving club you don't pay BCA twice. You only pay the GSG part of the annual subscription to the GSG. Please tell us your BCA membership number if this applies to you.

To calculate your payment, decide whether you want to be a caving (£17), a non-caving (£6) or a student (£8) member of BCA, or whether you will be a BCA member via another route (£0). Add on the GSG portion £17, reduced to £12 if you are a student, unemployed or retired, or zero if you are a life member. Joint members must decide independently if they want caving, non-caving or student status in BCA and add on £22 for the GSG part or £17 if BOTH qualify for a reduction.

Examples:- A caving member pays  $17 + 17 = £34$ , a non-caving member  $6 + 17 = £23$ , a student pays  $8 + 12 = £20$  (caving) or  $6 + 12 = £18$  (non-caving). Joint members pay  $22 + 17 + 17 = £56$  if both cave,  $22 + 17 + 6 = £45$  if only one caves and  $22 + 6 + 6 = £34$  if neither cave.

Make your cheque payable to "GSG" and send it to:-

Ivan Young, 45 Maitland Road, Kirkliston, West Lothian, EH29 9AP

To pay by Internet banking you need the following information:-

Sort code:- 80-02-19

Account Number:- 00246373

Please ensure that you clearly identify yourself as the person making the payment when you set it up, and send me an email so that I can check that it arrives. It isn't always obvious from the bank statement who made the payment. If you have any questions about subscriptions please contact me.

The BCA gathers data about the age distribution of its membership. I have now collected year of birth for over 90% of GSG members. It would be helpful if the remaining 10% could email their year of birth to me to forward to the BCA. Note that this does not have the same security implications that would arise if you revealed your full date of birth.

**Ivan Young**  
**GSG Membership Secretary & Treasurer**

## Publications

*Now Available: Sutherland Hut Logs, Taigh nam Famh Log no 12 (for 2017) Now obtainable, £2 per copy plus post*  
**Goon**

Cave Pearls of Meghalaya Volumes 1 plus 2 special offer - £40 plus postage for the set.

**Contact Ivan**

## **Elphin Caving Centre**

Confirmed Taigh nam Famh Bookings (contact Hut Warden Pete Dowswell or Deputy Hut Warden Imogen Furlong for latest information)

*If you intend booking accommodation please check with Imo Furlong.*

Hut fees are £8 per night for non-members and £4 for GSG and for clubs where we have reciprocal rights at their huts. These are the BEC, WCC, BPC, RRPC and Craven. Camping is permitted at any time, but a reduced rate of £4 applies only when the hut is full. Day fees are £2 for members and £4 for non-members.

If you want to stay in the hut, please contact Imogen Furlong who is responsible for hut bookings (Tel. Home: - 07532 388474. E-mail: - [imo.furlong@gmail.com](mailto:imo.furlong@gmail.com)) – to check if there will be space. For any other hut related issues contact the Hut Warden – Pete Dowswell. (Tel. Home: - 01463 229250, e-mail: - [hutbookings@gsg.org.uk](mailto:hutbookings@gsg.org.uk)).

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### **REMINDERS**

- 1. Inform the membership secretary (Ivan Young) of any changes of address or contact details, check what appears on the GSG web server and send any corrections to Ivan.**
  - 2. Send news items to Bob Sommerville for the Newsletter, longer items to Alan Jeffreys for the Bulletin. If in doubt send to both.**
  - 3. Borrowed kit should be returned clean and dry. If possible, record the length of time lamps are in use (do not recharge lamps before returning them). Do not allow lamps to remain in wet bags.**
  - 4. Consider standing for election to the GSG Committee at the AGM, attending committee meetings as an ordinary member or shadowing a committee post (acting as deputy committee member and becoming familiar with the duties of one or more of the committee posts).**
  - 5. Digital versions of all Bulletins, Newsletters and other official communications can be downloaded from the GSG website as an alternative to paper (saving the GSG money on both postage and publication costs).**
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