



# grampian speleological group NEWSLETTER



No. 148

October 2011

## Progress in Applecross

Since the last Newsletter, progress has been spasmodic in Flood Resurgence No 2 – or, as it is now called, ‘The Cave of True Wonders’. That has been translated into Gaelic as ‘Uamh nam Fìor Iongantais’ though there are dissenting voices and another opinion is being sought. David, Ritchie and Toby variously pushed sections of the lower streamway adding perhaps another 50 metres and meeting a troglodite eel face to face. The total length is now conservatively estimated at 500 metres and it is front runner for this year J’Rat Digging Award.(see page 3)



Rosemary holding the microphone as Ritchie is interviewed by BBC Alba

BJ

BBC Alba filmed there in late August. As the BBC’s Gaelic channel they really wanted Gaelic speakers to interview, but the GSG has none. Fortunately Bob and Rosemary Jones through their contacts found two volunteers from the Gaelic medium primary school in Inverness who were keen to see the cave. The two - Anne McLaren and Morag-Ann Macleod were kitted out by Bob and Rosemary, appeared to enjoy their trip and were appropriately enthusiastic during their interviews. I say interviews because it was transmitted on BBC Alba with their responses in Gaelic and on BBC Scotland News with their interview in English. The interviewer wasn’t heard – she didn’t speak Gaelic!

The BBC’s Landward programme also wanted to film there as part of a series of items on caves. So far it has been too wet for them. They are also filming in Smoo Cave, have participated in a rescue exercise with SCRO and Oban MRT, and plan carol singing in a Fife Cave. The first of the series with SCRO should be transmitted on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> November at 7:00pm on BBC2.

## Hidden Earth 2011

The GSG took its Jubilee exhibition to Monmouth Leisure Centre in September for this year’s National Caving Conference. There was a good representation from the GSG with 16 members there at one time or another, though only four from Scotland. There were some great presentations. I attended the set on cave formation and dating including one by GSG member Trevor Faulkner on ‘What we know we don’t know about speleogenesis’. One message was that cave formation can take many thousands of years to generate a 1cm conduit, but from there only take another 1000 years to give a 2m diameter phreatic tube. Another very useful talk by ‘Footleg’ Fretwell on ‘Panoramic Cave Photography’ told us just what hardware and software we needed to generate perfect panoramas and how to overcome the typical lighting and movement problems that inevitably arise. I would have gone to more talks, but the GSG stand was already being left unattended far too long.

We did sell quite a few Decades in the Dark and some other GSG publications, but that was more than compensated by Goon’s raid on the BCRA stand to fill gaps in the GSG



Fraser, Torin and Kate Stephens at the GSG stand, Hidden Earth 2011

IY

Library collection plus our other purchases. Just opposite our stand Andy Sparrow of caveclimb.com was selling off ex-hire overalls at £10 each: slightly tatty perhaps, but better than those I see many members wearing. When they appeared on the Sunday I immediately selected three of different sizes for the GSG store to loan to prospective members.

There was a general consensus that this was an excellent conference and one of the best ever. Everything appeared to go smoothly, and Les Williams the Conference Manager and all his helpers, including Fraser Simpson, have earned the admiration of the caving community for the results of all their hard work.

And thanks to Kate and Fraser Stephens for providing accommodation and curry.

Ivan

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## **CAG – a new BCRA SIG**

The British Cave Research Association has just gained another Special Interest Group - the Cave Archaeology Group. It was launched in October 2011 to “promote interest and understanding of archaeology in and around caves” to everyone who visits or explores caves and may find archaeological or paleontological material. The CAG succeeds the Upland Caves Network, a two-year limited lifetime discussion group of experts and interested parties that was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council - <http://www.uplandcavesnetwork.org/default.htm>.

To quote from the BCRA announcement:-

“The group hopes to enlist support and interest from anyone who spends leisure or professional time in caves, or who require a 'first stop' point of contact for advice, information, or other help with finds of potential archaeological material in caves. It is hoped that group activities will be developed over time to include guided site visits, lectures, and the dissemination of information on cave archaeology projects. The success of CAG will depend largely on the level of interest and support shown by those with an interest in cave archaeology, who are also invited to come forward with their own suggestions regarding the development of the group.

- The Cave Archaeology Group's web site is <http://cag.bcra.org.uk>
- John Howard is the Group's co-ordinator. Contact details are at <http://bcra.org.uk/contact.html#f>
- Information about BCRA's SIGs is at <http://bcra.org.uk/sig>”

The web site includes an area for slideshows of relevant activities so we may send a selection of images from the recovery of the bear and other bones from Claonaite Seven.

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## **MCR 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> November Mendip Cave Rescue is celebrating 75 years of rescuing cavers from caves since the Mendip Rescue Organisation (its name until February 2008) was founded in 1936. It is the second oldest cave rescue organisation in the world: only the CRO are older, by one year. GSG, SCRO and all Scottish cavers have an additional incentive to attend – see the next item.

### **Friday evening: Hunter's Lodge**

8pm onwards                      Rescue videos in the long room at the Hunters including, but not limited to, Sleets Gill and Full Moon over Eastwater

### **Saturday am: Village Hall**

10.00am to 12.30pm              Kit Displays and Workshops including Stretcher Packaging, Hot Air kit, Communications, refreshments Available

12:30pm to 2pm:                      Village Hall - Lunch Break:    Bar Open - Soup and Rolls available

### **Saturday pm: Village Hall, Top Green and Swildon's Hole**

2pm to 6pm                              Climbing wall available for Pitch Hauling exercise, Speleo Olympics course for 'rescue race' type event, Displays / Videos in Village Hall, Underground Rescue Practice in Swildon's Hole. Refreshments Available

6pm to 6.30pm                          Break

6.30pm onwards                        Bar Open: Hot and Cold Food available

7.30pm to 8.30pm	Short Talk on History of MRO/MCR followed by Auction of Caving related Items
8.30pm to 9.30pm	J'Rat Digging Award
9.30pm to Late	Stomp.

Check for updates on the MCR website: <http://www.mendipcaverescue.org/>

## **The 2011 J'Rat Digging Award**

The J'Rat Digging Award is an annual award to the club finding and surveying the most passage in Mendip or Scotland during the previous 12 month period from 1<sup>st</sup> November to 31<sup>st</sup> October. This is the third year it has been awarded with the first two going to the Wessex and UBSS for their discoveries in Charterhouse Cave. This year Scotland is amazingly the front runner with Flood Resurgence No 2 (now named Uamh nam Fìor Iongantais or Cave of True Wonders). The 500m of passage found there is reported to be well ahead of the competition. Charterhouse appeared to be in the lead, but some of their passage, though surveyed during the last year, was discovered earlier so cannot be counted. There are less than three weeks to go, so expectations are rising. Several Scottish members intend to travel down to Mendip for the MCR event and we hope that at least some of the original explorers will be there.

The full rules for the award were published in GSG Newsletter no. 141 p11 (Dec 2009)

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## **Caving**

### **Assynt – Site Condition Monitoring**

The reports on the Assynt caves for SNH have been completed and that for the main caves was accepted and the final payment made to the GSG in late September. The report was 84 pages long and the accompanying database of photographs and surveys comprised 754 files totalling 360MB. Looking at the number of cave visits (7) and the number of hours spent processing photographs and writing the report (well over 200) I think SNH got excellent value for their money.

The last Newsletter mentioned that SNH were also going to ask us to report on the Bone Caves for both their Quaternary sediment content and their Pleistocene Vertebrata ie bones. That resulted in an addition to the original contract and Tim Lawson and I managed most of the field work one weekend in August while I tidied up some loose ends in September by ducking out of the second half of the SCRO exercise. This work also covered Bear Cave and since a good survey didn't exist one had to be produced. The GSG DistoX made short work of that and simpler surveys of some of the other unsurveyed Bone Caves. We also needed an improved survey of Connecting Passage in Bone Cave with its unauthorised dig that had added a pit in the floor since the 1996 survey.

Tim did most of the writing for this shorter report which came to 47 pages with 320 images and surveys adding up to 568MB. That includes scans of photographs taken by Alex Scott in 2002. These proved very useful allowing us to see where changes had occurred over the intervening nine years. As well as the inevitable disturbance caused by footfall, several boulders in inner Reindeer Cave and one in Badger Cave had been moved though there was no evidence of any digging. While recording all eight Bone Cave sites, Tim found several bones including the skull of a bird of prey in number 5. These are now with the National Museum of Scotland.

Ivan

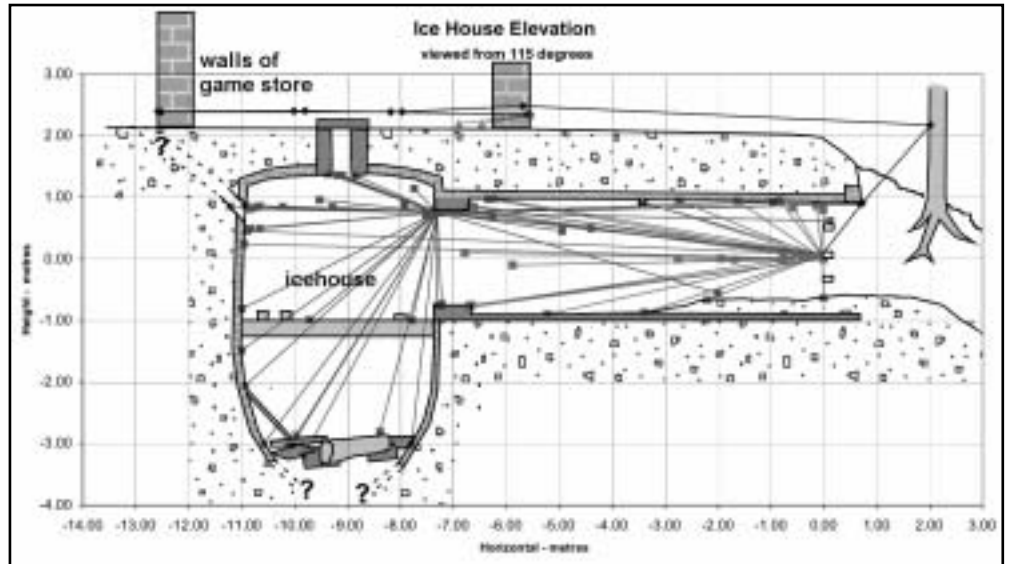
### **Lawfield Mine**

Mark Stanford has continued his Tuesday evening digging trips to trace the route of the drainage channel from the mine. He and his friends have managed to move many of the larger boulders away from the channel and he was considering using a petrol powered pump to flush sand and pebbles away with sea water. With daylight failing ever earlier activity may switch to the weekends.

### **Mavisbank Ice House**

Andy Peggie and I joined John Crae on what was an official Historic Scotland trip to look at an underground icehouse in the grounds of the ruined Mavisbank House at Loanhead. It lies under a game larder and is entered through a 7m long brick-lined tunnel. HS were insistent that it was not to be entered by their employees until assessed and given a clean bill of health. Andy and I looked over the

plywood barrier erected in the entrance and decided it was perfectly safe for cavers. I had a GSG DistoX with me so we made a quick survey of what we could see of the icehouse and the Game Larder. That building is directly above the icehouse with a communicating circular hole in its floor.



Elevation of Mavisbank icehouse with all the DistoX's measured legs shown.

The circular brick-lined icehouse is about 3.5m in diameter and

had remnants of a floor at the level of the tunnel and dropped at least another 2m, tapering as it went, to a presumed drain at the bottom under a layer of tiles, tree trunks, timbers and other debris. A chute at the far side was undoubtedly the entry point for snow and ice, but no sign remains of it on the surface.

The icehouse survey shown above was produced by feeding the DistoX results into Excel. One day I'll have to find the time to download and learn how to use a proper cave surveying program.

Ivan

## 2011/12 Meets and Events

### 2011

Oct	23	Derbyshire	Titan through trip with Ralph Johnson of Crewe Caving Club
	29	Assynt	GSG Annual Dinner, Caledonian Hotel, Ullapool
Nov	12/13	Appin	
	19	Mendip	MCR 75 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations and 2011 J'Rat Digging Award
	26/27	Yorkshire	Rift Pot/Washfold Pot
Dec	10/11	Yorkshire	Death's head-Big Meanie
2012	30-> Jan 2	Assynt	New Year
Jan	21	Assynt	GSG Burns Supper
	28/29	Yorkshire	Sleets Gill/Outsleets Beck
Mar	17/18	Yorkshire	Gingling Hole. This is a harder trip.
Apr	26->	Assynt	2012 Mendip Migration
	-> 7 May		
	28-29	Yorkshire	Lancaster Hole, plan to do two trips, one easy, one longer (e.g. through to Wretched Rabbit)
May	26/27	Yorkshire	Diccan Pot. Fairly hard trip plus Founder's Day descent of Alum Pot on rope ladders – easier trip, plus Upper and Lower Long Churn and other easier caves.
June	23	Assynt	GSG Midsummer BBQ
	30-1 July	Yorkshire	Little Hull Pot

Here's the new meets list. As before it would be great if anyone is willing to organise a club caving trip, and I can send off for any permits required. Also let me know of any caves you'd like to visit. Contact me with your suggestions at 07942 985305 (mobile), 0131 535 3119 (work), or email at ross.davidson@sac.ac.uk

### Co Clare Trip

The idea of a trip to Co. Clare was floated by some while we were in Slovenia. A few people are keen to do this next year, but in order to get as many along as possible it seems a good idea to give folk a choice of dates. The options are 9-11 March, the Easter weekend 6-9 April, or 28-29 April. Let me know if you're interested in coming along, and which of those date(s) you can make.

## Jura 2012

Whilst in Slovenia we met a Belgian caver, Luc Funcken, who enjoyed our company so much he offered us accommodation in his farmhouse in the French Jura. This is a classic caving area which I believe the club has visited previously\* and features a great variety of caves with something for every taste and ability. Surely it would be churlish to turn down such an offer!

Register interest (this is not binding!) by filling in the 'doodle' poll at:

<http://www.doodle.com/696932hkk8gqqfq5>

This will give us a provisional idea of when people would like/be able to go, but I'll probably reissue the poll closer to the time offering a choice of the dates that proved most popular the first time round.

Ross Davidson

\* Previous GSG trip in September 2002 see GSG Bull 4<sup>th</sup> Series 1 (4) pp 33-44 March 2003 and several members joined a Wessex trip in 2004. GSG Bull 4<sup>th</sup> Series 2 (4) pp 15-17 October 2005.

## Tam's Appin Trip

I'm organising an Appin trip on the 12th and 13th of November to visit as many of the 150m+ caves as time will permit. Some of us are staying over on the Fri and Sat night at Glencoe YHA and at the red squirrel campsite just down the road, and I'm sure the Clachaig inn will provide beer for the occasion.

If anyone would like to join us for the event or to pop over for day trips, please could you let me know, so I can arrange a meeting up place etc.

Any suggestions as to where to focus our efforts digging wise would be most welcome- I'm not actually intending this to be a digging trip, but who knows what we'll actually end up doing.

Tam

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## Membership News

### **New Addresses**

Gareth Dennis,

1/6 Savile Place, Edinburgh, EH9 3EB Tel home:- 0131 668 2726,  
mobile:- 07951 918236, email:- garethaliddennis@gmail.com

Sophie May,

Flat 4, 6 Moorfield Road, West Didsbury, Manchester, M20 2UY  
mobile:- 07773 026251, email:- Sophie.Frances.May@gmail.com

Sebastien Rider,

Flat 2F2, 29 Millar Crescent, Edinburgh, Midlothian, EH10 5HN  
mobile:- 07876 470358, email:- seb\_rider@yahoo.co.uk

Mark Brown,

358 School Road, Sheffield, S10 1GR

### **Other Changes**

Kathy Murgatroyd,

kjmurgatroyd@btinternet.com



**Sophie May** – Has abandoned Edinburgh for Manchester. Now she has the full set of caving kit she'll be looking for cavers in Manchester to help her reach meets in Yorkshire. She was recently in Georgia for three weeks, didn't manage any real caving, but did visit Sataplia show cave

**Inverness Pub Night** - GSG members living in or near Inverness meet on the first Wednesday of the month in the Fluke Inn, Culcabock Road, Inverness IV2 3XQ. All members are welcome. Contact Bob & Rosemary Jones to check for time and date. (Tel: 01463 236284)

**Edinburgh Pub Evenings** – Every Tuesday evening GSG members gather in the Cumberland Bar in Cumberland Street. Most arrive from 8:30 onwards, but several,

who work in town and live some distance away, appear earlier. Others might prefer to do the same. If that applies to you let us know and we can advertise an earlier start time.

## THE CLUB LIBRARY

I would like to generate some interest in the library within the membership. At present most inquiries for material or information come from people outside the caving community; for example, recently ROSPA asked for a copy of the 1960 Water Safety Booklet because they were revising their literature on the subject, but didn't have a copy in their own library!

I fully appreciate that trawling through the Internet will elicit specific information, but browsing publications often reveals subjects you were not looking for, but would still find interesting.

One way of approaching this might be to supply a summary of interesting topics in recent acquisitions which members might be tempted to borrow (but not hang onto for an extended period of time!) This list only cites new issues. Students of caving history will find a mass of fascinating material in the library. You only have to ask.

Here are a very few to whet your appetite:

*P. Monk (Ed) (2011) Shuttleworth Pot into Witches Cave II.* An account, with survey and photographs, of a new, excavated entrance into the furthest downstream passages of the Leck Fell system west of Gour Hall in Pippikin Pot. All pitches are P-hangered, culminating in an 18 metre drop into Witches Cave II.

*J. Corrin and P. Smith. Matienzo, 50 Years of Speleology (2010).* A superbly produced account of British and Spanish explorations in this ever-popular destination. In full colour and with accompanying DVD and sheet map.

*Craven Pothole Club, Record: No. 102.* Description of a new entrance into Craftsman's Pot (near Bull Pot, Kingsdale). No. 103. New explorations in Black Shiver Pot and an article about the 'Lost Caverns of Greenhow Hill'.

*South Wales Caving Club, Newsletter No. 127.* A description of the Verneau through trip in the Jura; visits to the Vercors, the Berger and Belize.

*BEC Belfry Bulletin.* No. 538. Hallowe'en Rift (possible back door to Wookey?) Ice shafts in Greenland; a Statistical History of the BEC. No. 539. Caine Hill Dig; Upper Flood Swallet extensions; gear review-Petzl Duo Headlight.

*UBSS Proceedings Vol.25 No.2.* Expedition to Montenegro; cave notes on County Clare; Gazetteer of Vertebrate Remains from Yorkshire Caves.

DVD: Giant's Hole. Derbyshire (2005); 'Shout' Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation (2004) Both enjoyable videos made by local caver Ralph Johnston, the first depicting a typical trip through the cave and the second a compilation from practice rescues over one year, including a short film on Sidetrack Cave, 'rediscovered' in 2002.

I have only highlighted some of the contents of all these publications and shall in future contribute a similar summary in every newsletter if there is support for it.

Goon



Mark Lonnen supervising at the top of the 'advanced' tree

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### SRT Training – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September

The day started wet, but fortunately relented before the event began at 3pm at Jackie and George Sutherland's Newton Cottage. Mark had pre-selected two trees, and he and Ivan rigged a simple drop on the 'beginners' tree and three ropes with rebelay and deviations on the much higher 'advanced' tree. It then stopped raining.

A total of twenty enjoyed a fine afternoon either bobbing around on ropes or watching the activity. George fired up their BBQ to cook everyone's sausages while Jackie provided salads and Andy Peggie took the opportunity to sell almost all the remaining stock of the GSG Brain Wrecker Jubilee Ale. A halt was called at about 7pm and all the ropes taken down, Then the ladders came back out for Roger to re-ascend the taller tree to recover two slings he'd left dangling at the very top! It was very useful day with several members progressing rapidly under Mark's tuition. Many thanks to Jackie and George for providing the trees and the BBQ.

## Elphin Caving Centre

**Confirmed Taigh nam Famh Bookings** (contact Hut Warden for latest information)

Date (nights)		Group	Size
Oct	28/29	GSG Annual Dinner	full
Nov	11/12	CMSC	8
	18->22	GFMD	8
Dec	2/3	Dundee Rucksacks	12
	9/10	GSG Xmas party	full
	30->	GSG New Year	full
'12 Jan	->2		
	20/21	GSG Burns Supper	full
	27/28	IMC Burns Supper	full
Apr	26->	Mendip Migration	full
May	->7		
	11->18	Craven	12
	19->25	Croyden	12
Jun	22/23	GSG Midsummer BBQ	full

Hut fees are £5.00 per night for non-members and £2.50 for GSG, Bradford and BEC members. Reduced to £3.00 and £2.00 for children, students, the unemployed and OAPs. Camping is at a reduced rate of £2.00 only when the hut is full. Day fees are £1.00 for members and £2.00 for non-members.

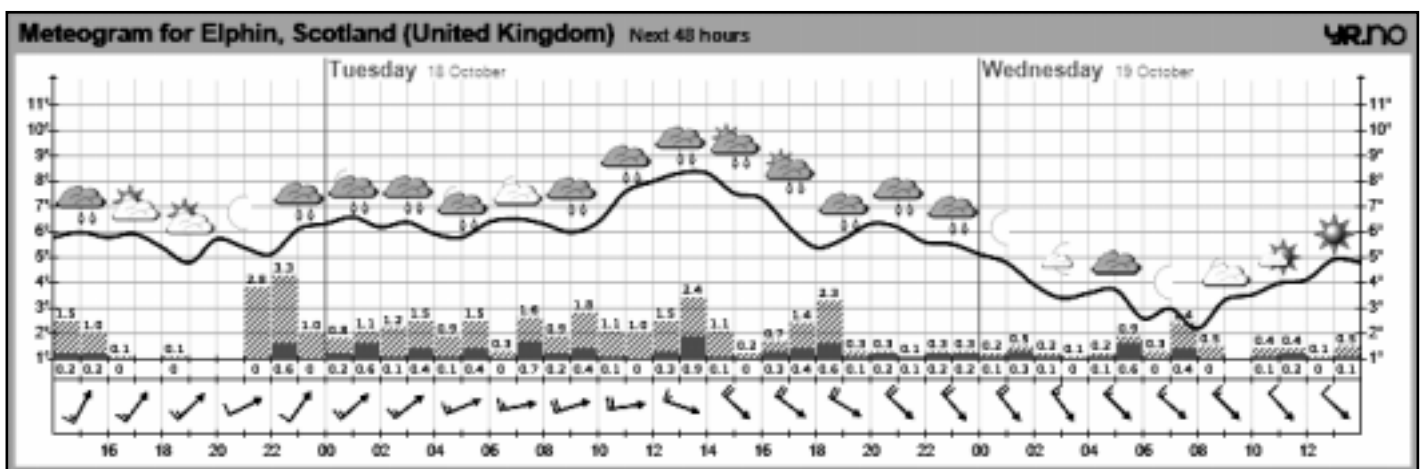
If you want to stay in the hut please contact the Hut Warden - Peter Dowswell - to check if there will be space (Tel home:- 01463 229250, email:- hutbookings@gsg.org.uk).

Xmas, Burns and Midsummer events are planned. Time has also been set aside for New Year and the 2012 Mendip Migration. Please confirm attendance and dates as soon as possible to Peter.

## Internet Caving

**Weather Forecasts** – Cavers are more interested in weather forecasts than most folk and especially so if they are in a cave with a proclivity to flood at the slightest excuse. Thanks to Peter Dowswell for pointing out the Norwegian Meteorological Institute website at <http://www.yr.no/>. It isn't restricted to Norway and gives far more detailed forecasts for Scotland than the UK Met Office.

Go to [http://www.yr.no/place/United\\_Kingdom/Scotland/](http://www.yr.no/place/United_Kingdom/Scotland/), type in a Scottish place name then select 'Hour by hour' That graphs the next 48 hours with temperature, wind, and maximum and minimum rainfall estimates for each hour. You can get individual forecasts for anywhere in Scotland. I asked for Elphin then Inchnadamph and though very similar there were differences between the two, and much larger differences when I then asked for Ullapool. I've used it a couple of times recently and was impressed. It matched reality well and I appreciated the max/min limits on rainfall as that allowed me to make my own decisions rather than guess how pessimistic the Met Office were being.



Main graph is temperature, bar charts are max and min rainfall in mm/hr, arrows are wind speed and direction.

## Assynt News

**Altnacealgach Inn for sale** – Mike and Katie are selling the Alt and moving east. Katie is joining a veterinary practise in Tain where she'll become reacquainted with 'days off' and 'holidays', and Mike will probably look for another pub once the Alt is sold. If you can raise £250,000 and have ambitions of pulling pints in a caving area more details can be found at:-

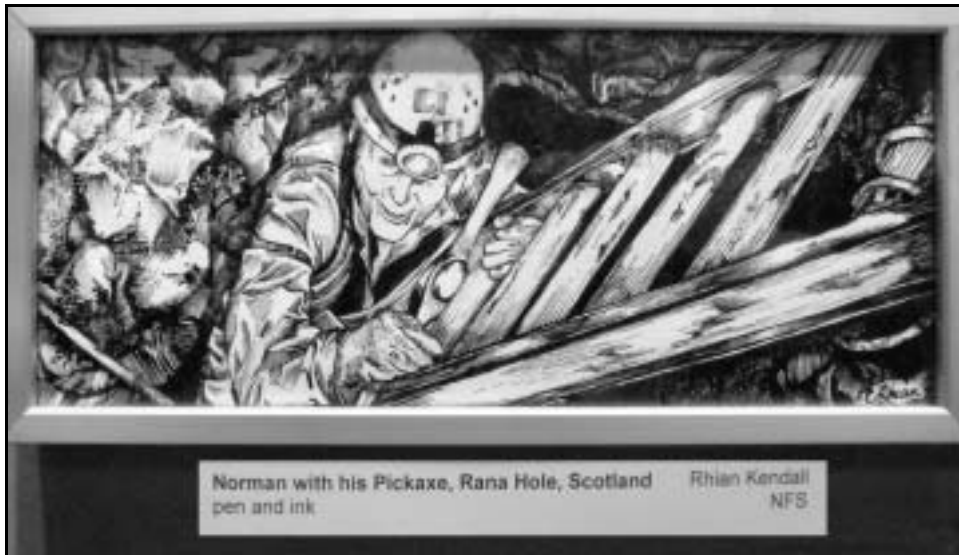
<http://uk.businessesforsale.com/uk/Quintessential-Inn-In-Scottish-Highlands-For-Sale.aspx>

And if your credit rating can stretch a lot further the Alt Motel is still on the market at £495,000 including 25 acres, fishing rights and planning permissions four houses and cottages:

<http://uk.businessesforsale.com/uk/A-Unique-Business-Opportunity-Loch-Borralan-Estate-For-Sale.aspx>

**ELKCAL AGM** – The Elphin Ledmore and Knockan Community Association will be holding their AGM on the 29<sup>th</sup> October at 5pm just before we start gathering in Ullapool for our annual dinner. Details of the food and craft market on 12<sup>th</sup> November and other events can be found on their website at <http://www.elkcal.co.uk/>.

**Peter MacGregor to retire** – For as long as I can remember Peter has been the gamekeeper, and local manager for the Traligill and Allt nan Uamh area, and the GSG's contact with the estate and, latterly, George Vestey. Despite this long association we have not managed to persuade him to join us underground. He retires next year and will be moving away so time is short. Perhaps a concerted effort in the spring might succeed?



Milche and Kirsty Mills visited the Lost to Light exhibition organised by members of the International Society for Spelaeological Art at Buxton Gallery. This runs till the end of October. They found and photographed one item of Scottish and GSG interest – a drawing of Normal Flux in Rana Hole.

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### GSG publications

(prices to non-members in brackets)

Decades in the Dark	£20.00 +£2.00 p&p	De Profundis	£3.00 + £0.58 p&p
Caves of Skye	£6.00 (£8.50)	Caves of Assynt -	£6.00* (£8.50)
Caving Songs of Mendip -	£3.00 (£4.00)	Caves of Schiehallion -	£3.00* (£4.00)
The Southern Highlands -	£1.20 (£1.50)	Appin Cave Guide -	£1.50* (£2.00)
Buddy reading (Caving in Couplets)	£2.00 (£2.50)	Appin Cave Guide Supplement	£2.00 (£2.50)
Caves of Applecross and Kishorn	£4.00 (£6.00)	NAMHO Field Trip Booklets	£2.50 (£4.00) set
Mines in Scotland	£4.00 (£5.00)	GSG Ties -	£5.00

\* out of print - photocopies available

Postage extra - order from:- Alan Jeffreys, 8 Scone Gardens, Edinburgh, EH8 7DQ (0131 661 1123)

or:- Ivan Young, 45 Maitland Road, Kirkliston, West Lothian, EH29 9AP (0131 333 3084)

Please make cheques payable to "G.S.G."

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**Credits:-** Images by Bob Jones, Ivan, Martin Mills, Google and Norwegian Met Institute.