



grampian speleological group NEWSLETTER



No. 164

June 2016



Laurie and Elda Jane.
Photo by Julian Warren

Baby!

Dave Warren is a grandad. Elda Jane Warren was born Tuesday 24 February 2016 at 20.04, weighing 4.1 kg (9lb). Mother and baby doing well. Congratulations to Julian and Laurie Warren.

Ivan Young

Two Skye Caves

Two historic caves (Leitir Fura Cave at NG 7310 1580 and Rudhan Dunain Cave at NG 3995 1625) were pointed out firstly by Trevor Faulkner who found them mentioned in the Quaternary Research Association Field Guide then additional information was supplied by Steven Birch who confirmed that both caves had been investigated by archaeologists if not by any cavers (other than Steve himself). Although Rudhan Dunain Cave was already noted in the GSG database and Leitir Fura Cave has had a brief mention in GSG NL 144, information on both caves was relatively sparse. Steve carried out some investigation in Rudhan Dunain Cave in the 1990s cutting a small sondage through the spoil heap from Lindsey Scott's 1930s excavation (Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (Volume 68, 1934b, pp. 200-23)). Publication of Roger Miket and Martin Wildgoose's 1996 excavation report on Leitir Fura Cave may occur sometime soon.

Trevor Faulkner/Steven Birch

Two Caves in the Western Isles

Toby Speight in the course of a six day solo sea kayaking trip to the Western Isles, on Sunday 22 May visited the small cave on the eastern slopes of Eabhal, Uist a Tuath (NF 905597) last visited by Dan Harries in 2004 (GSG Bull. 4.2.2.). Toby confirmed Dan's impression that there was little here worth seeing. The cave is about 5 m long sloping up at 45 degrees to meet the roof. The entrance is approximately 5 m high and 2 m wide, north facing. Interesting only to a collector of birdshit.

On the following Tuesday 24 May, Toby visited the sea cave at Uisinis, Uibhist a Deas (NF 872 351) tucked in at the foot of a 50 m vertical cliff near the lighthouse. The 5 m high cave forks a few metres in from the drip line. The left hand branch can be paddled for 30 m and the right for about half that. Both branches are around 5 m wide. This cave has since been identified as Uamh Dubh an Sgogaich (translated as the Dark Cave of the Foolish).

Toby Speight / John Crae

GSG SRT Training

After a week of excellent sunny weather, the afternoon of Wednesday 11th May seemed to continue that theme until I drove east to Loanhead. From bright sun in the west of Edinburgh a real Scottish haar awaited and for a time rain seemed likely, but never really materialized. I arrived in the car park at about 6:30 pm where Derek Pettigio's car announced that he had arrived and was probably rigging ropes under and down from the viaduct. At the far end of the bridge he had rigged several routes and the club SRT kits waited for those wanting to learn. Soon we had about a dozen GSG members and potential members rigging more ropes and practicing ascending, descending, and passing re-belays and deviations of varying difficulty. One extreme deviation was definitely not for the novice, or even the

experienced. Nicola, a lapsed caver for fifteen years, was reacquainting herself with her old, though still shiny, SRT gear and was encouraged to try passing that deviation by Ross. After 15 minutes she retired defeated and Ross later admitted that he probably wouldn't have succeeded either!

Further SRT sessions will be run on the first Wednesday of each month provided enough interest is shown in them. Contact GSG Meets Secretary Andy Morgan for details.

Ivan Young

A second evening of SRT practice, in reasonable weather at the bridge at Bilston Glen in June, was less well attended with Derek again collecting the gear and rigging the bridge. Two less practiced GSG members (Edit Nagy-Orban and Mark Stanford) received individual training from Ivan and Derek. Gear was collected at the end of the evening by Andy Peggie. Both times the practice area was rigged at the south (Bilston Wood) end of the Bridge.

Ivan Young / John Crae

Caving in the Abode of the Clouds – Meghalaya 2016

The 2016 Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Expedition took place between the 1st and 24th of February 2016, with a short (one week) Pre-Expedition returning to the Jaintia Hills District in order to continue exploration in the Seilkan area and the main (two and a half weeks) expedition in the West Khasi Hills in the Mawsynram/Mawlongbna Area. Overall the 2016 Expedition extended four known caves and explored 33 new caves to map 18.2 kilometres of new cave passage.



Shay Doherty in Barry's Back Passage (a significant short cut)
Photo by Lisset de Graaw

This year, the now traditionally International Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Expedition Team comprised of 27 cavers at its peak drawn from Austria, Germany, India, Ireland, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Switzerland and the UK. As in previous years there was a sizable Grampian member contingent (The GSG being something of a significant element to Meghalaya expedition since 2000) with the club being represented by: Thomas Arbenz, Simon Brooks, David Cooke, Brian Kharpran Daly, Barry Lawton, Hugh Penney and Mark Tringham

The 6-day pre-expedition (February 1st to 6th) in the Jaintia Hills saw a 9 strong team based in the village of Sielkan where activities were focused on the stunning Pielklieng-Sielkan Pouk River Cave. Arguably one of Meghalaya's finest caves, initially explored in 1998 and 1999 by Simon Brooks, Fraser Simpson and German and Swiss caving colleagues, with further extensions found in 2003 and 2007. With the Pre-expedition base being in a small bamboo hut in the middle of the village of Sielkan the main achievements of pre-expedition were:

- **Pielklieng-Sielkan Pouk**, - India's 6th longest cave and arguably Meghalaya's most stunning river cave was extended from 12,598 m to 13,332 m by the exploration of several leads, some of which remained from 1999. This added a further 743 m of new passage to the system and more importantly concluding several open leads. Many photographs and video footage were also taken in the cave in preparation for a future publication of 'Cave Pearls of Meghalaya, vol. 4'.
- **Sakwa Area**, - Whilst in Sielkan a short reconnaissance was made by Simon and Brian to the nearby area surrounding Sakwa Village where two small caves were explored and other entrances recorded. These will be the focus of a return visit in 2017.

The pre-expedition team returned to Shillong where there numbers were swelled by those that were joining the main expedition and a larger team then headed into the West Khasi Hills and the Mawsynram/Mawlongbna area where between 8th to 24th February the main expedition took place. The West Khasi Hills and particularly the Mawsynram Area was one of the areas to be visited during the initial Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Project Expedition in 1992. Since that time the West Khasi Hills and particularly the Mawsynram Area have received further visits in 1994, 1995, and 2010 and particularly in 2012 when it was a main expedition area. Unlike the majority of Meghalaya the caves in this area are formed in the Sandstone and not the Limestone. Nonetheless these caves included some significant systems such as Krem Dam (1992/1994) with its 20/25m dia entrance passage and 2,000 m length, Krem Jynnaiw (1994/2012) with 1,596 m length and Krem Mawphun (2010/2012) another impressive river cave with 2,540 m of mapped passage.

The main expedition looked like it was going to falter with many of our initial 'Hot Leads' being concluded within the first couple of days. However, close liaison with the local villages (who by now understood what we were looking for) and local reconnaissance work saw the situation quickly improving with some surprising results. Resulting in achievements of the 27 strong team in the West Khasi Hills in the Mawsynram/Mawlongbna area being:

- **Krem Puri.** – This complex and intricate maze cave was explored for 8,269 m to become the Indian sub-continent's longest sandstone cave and the 3rd longest Sandstone cave in the world (Ref Caverbob's website). It may be the World's longest sandstone cave as the other longer systems are in quartzite which is a metamorphosed sandstone and essentially a different rock. The jury is still out, but regardless of this it proved to be a very fine and interesting cave. It now also ranks as the Indian subcontinent's 8th longest cave. When the expedition concluded it was far from finished with well in excess of 50 open leads (something for future years!). All in all a surveyor's dream, or nightmare, depending on your point of view.
- **Krem Lum Shken.** – A fine stream cave, formed in sandstone with many side passages was explored and surveyed to a length of 3,424 m. Frequently looking like it was about to conclude it kept opening up and kept Mark Tringham and team busy for well over a week
- **Krem Pamski,** - Initially explored for 458 m during a short reconnaissance visit in 2015 this fine stream cave was extended to a length of 1,189 m and concluded..
- Other significant finds were **Plang Mawsyrpat** (616m), **Krem Lew Long** (550 m), and **Krem Tylong Kobah 1 & 2** (502 m).
- **Krem Mawphun,** explored for 2,267m in 2010/2012 was extended to 2,546 m in length and to the impressive Krem Dam another 184 m of passage was added.

Working alongside the exploration, team members in partnership with zoologists from India continued with the ongoing bio-speleological observations adding to the knowledge of bats and bat roosts in Meghalaya caves. In 9 of the caves explored hibernating bats were found including 2 important bat colonies one of *Hipposideros cineraceus* and another of *Hipposideros armiger/lankadiva*.

To date (April 2016) the whereabouts of over 1,620 caves and cave locations are known in Meghalaya of which 1,003 have been explored or partially explored to yield in excess of 455 kilometres of surveyed cave passage, with much more still waiting to be discovered.

Much of the cave that has been explored and mapped in Meghalaya over the last 24 years consists of impressive river cave mixed with massive and often richly decorated relic passage along with magnificent clean washed shafts. These are formed both in the limestone and sandstone with some significant systems now being found in the latter. Together they create cave systems equal in size and beauty to those found elsewhere in the world, maintaining Meghalaya's status on the world-caving map as a significant caving region.

In the achievement of the above the Caving in the Abode of the Clouds Project is indebted to the help and support it has received from: The Meghalaya Adventurers Association (Shillong), the Government of India Tourist Office (East and North East India) Kolkata; the Meghalaya State Tourism Department; Officials and Government Departments within Meghalaya, The Grampian Speleological Group (for each year supporting the production of the Meghalaya Calendar); and, most importantly, the People of Meghalaya. The later whom always make us so welcome and each year turn up more and more fine cave.

Simon Brooks and Thomas Arbenz

Indian Sub-Continent Longest/Deepest Limestone Caves – March 2016.

Longest

	Cave Name	Country/Region	Length
1	Krem LIAT PRAH/UM IM/LABBIT M / RUBONG	India, Meghalaya	30,397 m
2	Krem TYNGHENG/DIENGJEM	India, Meghalaya	22,078 m
3	Krem KOTSATI/UMLAWAN	India, Meghalaya	21,530 m
4	Krem UMTHLOO-SYNRANG LABBIT	India, Meghalaya	18,181 m
5	Synrang PAMIANG	India, Meghalaya	14,157 m
6	PIELKLIENG-SIELKAN POUK	India, Meghalaya	13,331 m
7	Krem SHRIEH	India, Meghalaya	8,862 m
8.	Krem PURI (Wahmaw Lyngdier)	India, Meghalaya	8,269 m
9	Krem LABIT KSEH	India, Meghalaya	7,499 m
10	Krem KHUNG	India, Meghalaya	7,34 9m

Deepest (Glacier Ice Caves omitted)

	Cave Name	Country/Region	Vertical Range/Depth
1	Synrang PAMIANG	India, Meghalaya	317 m (+4 m/-313 m)
2	Krem KOTSATI	India, Meghalaya	215 m (+6 m/-209 m)
3	Krem UMJASEW	India, Meghalaya	197 m (-197 m)
4	Krem UMTHLOO	India, Meghalaya	188 m (-188 m)
5	PIELKHLIENG-SIELKAN POUK	India, Meghalaya	180 m (-180 m)
6	PAKAW PUK	India, Meghalaya	170 m (-170 m)
7	Krem SHRIEH	India, Meghalaya	169 m (-169 m)
8	Krem RISANG	India, Meghalaya	154 m (-154 m)
9	Krem WAH SER	India, Meghalaya	145 m (-145 m)
10	Krem SHIEN KHLIEH	India, Meghalaya	143 m (-143 m)

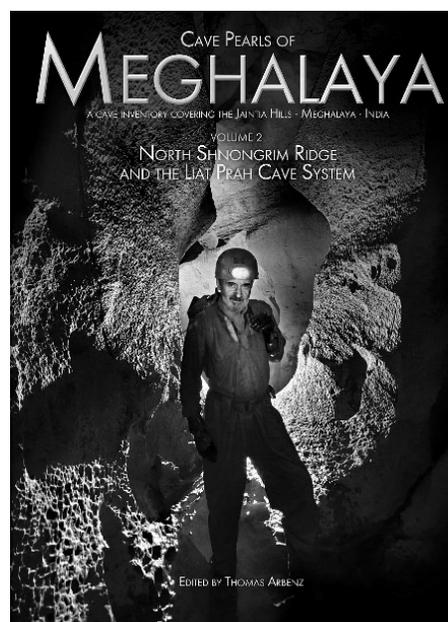
March 2016

Cave Pearls of Meghalaya Vol. 2

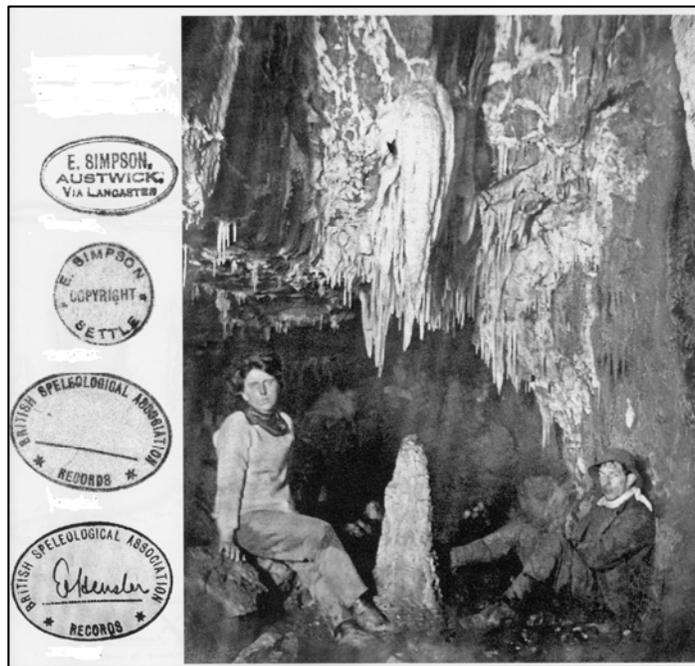
The second of this three volume series is now available. This hardback volume covers the northern part of the Shnongrim Ridge and the Liat Prah Cave System in 344 A4 pages in full colour. This is almost 40% larger than volume 1 accounting for the increased price. While Volume 1 had reports from the 2010 to 2012 expeditions, this volume contains those for 2005 to 2009 with 2000 to 2004 left for volume 3 which will cover the south part of the Ridge. This does mean that only when Volume 3 is published will you be able to read the full story of the exploration of the ridge. This volume has taken Thomas three years to research and collate so I'd tentatively predict that Volume 3 might arrive in 2019.

Volume 2 costs £35 while Volume 1 is still on sale at £26. Postage and packing is £4 for each within the UK. Pay by cheque or on-line into the GSG bank account. UK orders can be emailed to:-

megbooksales@gsgroup.demon.co.uk



DIGITIZING THE ELI SIMPSON ARCHIVE



Cymmie and Emma Mitchell in East Passage, GG, 1904 - and a variety of his document stamps.

Britain's first national caving organisation, the British Speleological Association, ruled over by a monarchy in the form of Eli Simpson ('Cymmie'), was based at Settle in the Dales. Cymmie maintained a large series of hard cover file books into which he glued typed reports, newspaper cuttings, photographs and a host of other cave-related documents which cover a period from 1900 to his death in 1962.

This fabulous resource was handed over to BGS in Nottingham on permanent deposit by Dave Judson some twenty years ago, before BCRA had the chance to even index the volumes. Since then efforts have been made to raise funding to digitize the whole archive without success.

Now a breakthrough! (and an opportunity for the GSG to assist the BCRA librarians; not an easy task with the library being based in Derbyshire). Below is the text of an email received from BGS in Scotland, now based at the Heriot Watt campus near Edinburgh. Any interested parties please contact Goon for further details.

"You are probably aware of this amazing cave science archive. It's on permanent deposit to BGS for safekeeping from the BCRA. After many years of trying, getting funding for its digitization has been elusive so I'm setting up a digitization programme using 'volunteers' here in BGS Edinburgh to capture and deliver the items on the web.

Over the past 15 years or so, we have undertaken a number of major projects using volunteers. The set-up is based with our professional Digital Imaging Team with all the latest capture equipment and imaging workflows. I wondered whether any of your members who are based locally would be interested in helping out. No experience is necessary and they would gain a huge insight into the imaging process as well as be working on one of the most amazing cave related archives anywhere! If you know of anyone who would be interested or have any thoughts on how to get interested volunteers I would be very interested to hear from you.

Robert P. McIntosh (rpm@bgs.ac.uk)

Goon

The start point for background info on the collection is the BCRA website page:

<http://archives.bcra.org.uk/?dir=simpson>

This BCRA site also has a sample volume captured some time back - and a link to a catalogue compiled by a volunteer.

<http://archives.bgs.ac.uk/CalmView/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=BCRA>

The archive consists of c 100 screw pillar bound volumes (like the BCRA). The task for the volunteers will be:

1. Take a volume at a time, unscrew the volume
2. Capture images using a high resolution digital camera on a copy stand, a page at a time, maintaining the page order.
3. After capture, the pages should be placed back into the volume
4. Post processing will involve a bit of light Photoshop work, mostly cropping.

Full training will be given by the BGS Digital Imaging Team.

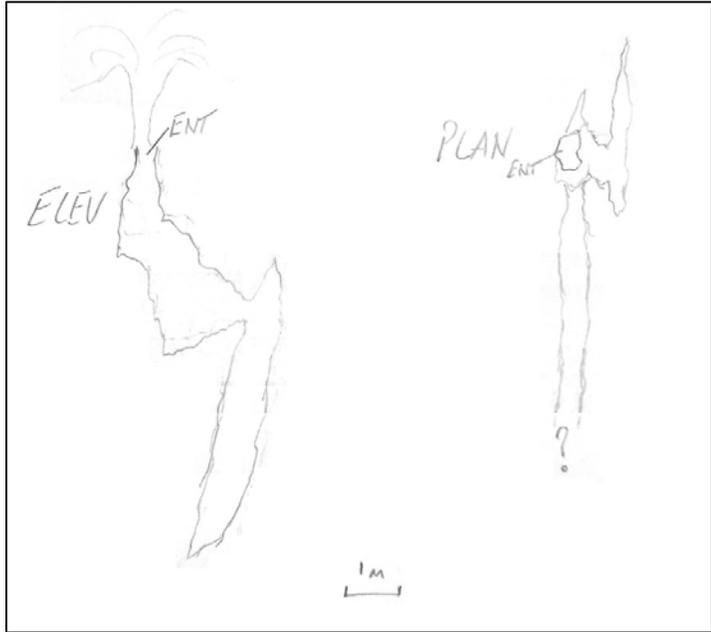
The key task and initial focus is to get all 100 volumes captured and delivered as high resolution zoomable page images. There may be follow on/additional tasks looking at indexing the collection in more detail. This will be greatly enhanced by having the images available.

BGS also have Eli Simpson's photographic negative collection. A volunteer task will be to capture the images, again using a hi-res camera-based system. Some transcription work is needed of the captions on the negative envelopes.

Robert MacIntosh (BGS)

Pushing the 'Pit of Dis Pare'

A small group of adventurers (Roger Galloway, Annie Audsley, Derek Pettiglio, Andrew Morgan and latterly Amber Macleod) wandered over to Appin on Saturday 4th June to attempt some engineering on the small cave discovered by Amber Macleod. Dropping 5 m to the offending boulder, the SCRO drill was used to drill holes into the rock barring the way in preparation for a snapper. Unfortunately the drilling was over-enthusiastic and drilled through the boulder, melting the drill bit. An experiment followed with both ends of the through hole being plugged with wood and paper at one end and the normal paper at the other. Annie did the honours with the bang wire and drill battery and "Bang!!!". After a bit of time to let the air clear, Roger went down to have a look, did a bit of hammering then came back up to say it had been successful but only a very small person could get through. I went down to have a look and decided it was probably doable and so pushed through and found myself in a continuation of what was above. I free-climbed down to the floor some 3-4 m. The passage was a rift that was too tight upstream and closed down too tight downstream for the first 1 m but opened out to a possible 6 m of wider horizontal passage. I could not see further. The top of the downstream rift is too tight to enter but it is wider at the base and with some persuasion may go.



Sketch survey by Derek Pettiglio

Derek Pettiglio

Tikka's Travels

This is primarily for the more northern GSG members.

Stuart Lindsay is looking for some assistance in July when he, with others, plan to bob down the west coast of Scotland as part of the crew on a circum-UK yacht trip raising money for charity. Stuart, Barry, along with Rowan, Danny and Steve - the captain are on from Kinlochbervie to Kyle of Lochalsh. He will be leaving the yacht at a different port than he joined so is looking for help at one end or the other to complete the circuit. Contact Stuart if you think you can help or you want more information. Now read on...

Ivan

Action for Children benefits from a large number of groups and individuals that blossomed under the Tikka's Travels' umbrella since the initial "I think I will raise some money for Action for children by sailing anti clockwise around the UK, anyone fancy a go?" late in 2014, after a group of us cavers had been on an evening underground exploration trip. The plans got bigger and bigger, now around "50 volunteers" are involved, who will crew, changing over in groups of 3 or 4 on each Saturday of the 11 legs having raised a minimum of £100 to do so. It is a very real experience for all of us taking part and is full of potentially fantastic experiences as well as very real dangers. The UK has some very strong tides, in the summer strong winds and mist is not uncommon, not least around the top of Scotland.

Since the initial decision was made, Tikka's Travels has grown into a larger group of events, with Martin Torbett cycling round the coastline of the UK, Anthony Pointon (Steve's brother) and friends doing a cycle ride down from Edinburgh to Stoke, two Navy ladies walking across the highest mountains in Scotland and a number of other events to promote Tikka's Travels and Action for Children. December 2015, Danny Burnett was able to arrange a meeting and introduce Steve Pointon, the captain and Shelagh Hillier an Action for Children representative to Michael Eavis of the famous Glastonbury Festival. The result, AFC would get more presence in the Children's Field area and that there would be advertising for Action for Children on the Festival's big stage screens between acts, possibly showing Steve, Karen, Harry and the crew. And on the final leg Jeanne Socrates who is an around the globe solo sailor, has done so three times, and is joining the crew.

So, the inspiration came because of Harry, who Steve and Kaz adopted when he was 6 having had a difficult start in life, "We were delighted to have been able to offer him a loving and caring home that he needs. We would like to see

all children in our country have a better chance in life which is why we chose Action for Children. It's a national charity that is passionate about helping vulnerable children and young people and we hope to raise a lot of money and raise awareness of the great work they do".

The web site is TIKKA'S TRAVELS with in excess of £8000 raised. GSG via Mendip Migration is £30 so far.

The website states it is the family doing it, but it is not just them .Steve is on board for 12 weeks his wife and Harry are doing odd legs along with "crew" who have donated a minimum of £100 toward the experience ... fancy a leg from Kyle of Lochalsh onward is going begging!

My sailing experience is 48 hours! Stranraer? There might just be a spot.

Information for donations will follow.... at the moment some GSG members are taking part in the around GB charity event. The leg in question is Kinlochbervie to Kyle of Lochalsh scheduled for 2nd July to 9th the wind and sea conditions of the previous 1200 miles or so dictating exact times. Before we can finalise travel, it would be nice to have the knowledge/ help/potential help of parking/lifts revolving around Inverness, Kyle of Lochalsh.

One plan, of many, is to get to Kinlochbervie via hut, and the person completing their leg from Wick takes our car to Inverness or Kyle of Lochalsh... but there may be other options.

StuL

LINKS Tikka's Travels and ...: <http://rodan62.blogspot.com/>

You tube ..tap in Tikka's Travels and you will find quite a bit, also other social media sites, apps"find ship" and "vessel finder" .. type in TIKKA see where she is in real time... almost!

TIKKA'S TRAVELS

UK SAILING CHALLENGE 2016

WAYS TO DONATE to TIKKA'S fundraising ..

BACS (BANK TRANSFER) sort code .. 20-13- 42

Account number .. 40715220 ..

ref . . TIKKA and name example TIKKAJOESMITH.

VIA <http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/team/StuartBarryTikkasTravels>

VIA a SPONSORSHIP FORM OR IN THE BUCKET ON THE BOAT

Help us give back a future to a vulnerable or neglected child.

<><><> All monies raised goes to ACTION FOR CHILDREN <><><><>

Thanks in advance for supporting Action for children via Tikka's Travels

Stuart and Barry

Cleaning up abandoned digs

As part of on-going conservation efforts, the Council of Northern Caving Clubs (CNCC) is planning to get more involved in the clean-up of abandoned surface digs. They would like to hear about any abandoned surface digs or untidy cave entrances where work to restore the surface to a tidy state may be required. In particular, they are keen to hear about any such sites on Ingleborough (all sides), as this will be the first area of attention. However, they would welcome details of any sites across our region.

Perhaps you have been out walking and spotted a messy abandoned dig with old dig buckets, scaffolding, rotten boarding etc.? Or maybe you stumbled upon one while looking for a different cave? Maybe you know of some shakeholes full of rubbish? Alternatively, does your club perhaps have some old abandoned digs that you never quite got round to tidying up properly (you can consider this a kind of amnesty).

If you have any information please get in touch with our Conservation Officer, Kay Easton:

Conservation@cncc.org.uk

Matt Ewles

Secretary, Council of Northern Caving Clubs

GSG Yorkshire Dales weekend, 14-16 March 2016

Five GSG members (Ross Davidson, Chris Playfoot, Helena Mundzjana, Tam Barton and Peter Dennis) gathered at the Dump (Bradford Pothole Club, Brackenbottom, Horton in Ribblesdale) on Friday evening. A permit to descend Stream Passage Pot into Gaping Gill had been arranged for Saturday but once gathered, it appeared all but Peter had explored Gaping Gill on recent Yorkshire trips. Chris suggested Black Shiver on the Allotment and all agreed that offered an excellent alternative.

Assembling in the layby above Hill Inn after breakfast, once a little fettling was completed of new helmets and lights, purchased by Tam and Helena, we set off confident that Chris' eTrek GPS would find the entrance at the base of the Ingleborough escarpment. The long walk did reach the pit, with the streambed adjacent to the entrance slot. The joyful recognition that the first obstacle was a flat out crawl in meltwater from the Ingleborough snow fields, followed by the first pitch, did not dampen our spirits. As we progressed, rigging was trickier for Chris but then we began to encounter other cavers, most of whom were above the main pitch on their climb out. The wait for the de-rigging of the main pitch was not too long, the time broken by chats with the remaining two ascending cavers and some impromptu pitch head dancing to keep warm! There were doubts whether 90 m of rope would span both pitches from the Eagle's Nest, given the length used in the re-belay on the perched boulders. The uncertainty for Chris on the lower half of the 56 m pitch was presumably resolved when he unpacked the rest of the rope from the tackle sack and saw the knot hit the deck. It was a fantastic, grand descent with only the cold shower bath of the landing zone as a distraction. In all Black Shiver was a really impressive and sporting cave. Ross' safety line was used for the final short drop and the (thin) spare enabled everyone to descend to the last chamber from the duck and the continuation of the streamway. The final section of streamway was followed to the terminal sump. The ascent, with awkward pitch head exits and heavy, wet ropes in tow, increased the sense of achievement once everyone finally chimneyed out of the hole beyond the crawl in the stream.

The one fly in the ointment, was that Chris's GPS was missing from the hanger over the first rope bag (after its rope was used up to descent Blood Pot and Black Dub). It was perhaps unwittingly bundled into a rope bag by a tired de-rigger in the other party. Hence, we had a fog bound walk out, based on memory and a line walk, which was relatively successful once my suggestions for directions were ignored.

An exchange trip of Hunt Pot and Shrapnel Pot was a good Sunday option since the party could walk to the entrance from the weekend base in bright sunshine. The rigging of the parallel pots (Hunt Pot by Chris and Shrapnel with use of the angle iron bars, old spits and hangers by Peter) would then allow a sporting exchange trip for the day, connected as they are by a rift and short wall, from the penultimate pitch in Shrapnel. In Shrapnel, 4-5 more slings and krabs would have enabled deviations to avoid rope rub in the sharp flaked upper rift (Broken Pitch). There was an easier and more enjoyable descent on the lower pitches, ending with a grotty pit at the base that was shedding rubble. Ross and Peter then ascended to the shelf above and the rift traverse and descent to the short wall that linked to Hunt Pot. Tam was already waiting there as Ross rigged the pitch, his calls were heard on the approach. The news was that the waterfall was barely passable for an ascent of Hunt Pot because of a missed deviation. Fortunately, Helena had heard warning calls and although not audible had understood not to descend into the worst section of water. At the Shrapnel link, the decision was made that everyone should exit via Shrapnel and with Hunt later de-rigged more safely from above. The exit from the head of Broken Pitch was awkward and tight and required care given the lack of space against the chest to reach and disconnect the chest jammer. Some toe holds allowed a push through the narrow rift onto safer ground, after the long cows-tail and foot jammer were attached to the rope that connected to the belay.

Peter Dennis

Skye and Applecross visit April 2016

While on a walk up the hill at Torrin (14/4/2016) not that far from Boulder and Vampire pots I found a small hole with a small stream of water falling into it and lower down sinking into a limestone gravel hole of about 40 cm square at NG 58543 20792. I didn't want to start trying to make the hole bigger until one of the local cavers had a look. This hole isn't far from a known resurgence at NG 58535 20743 which eventually produces the water from Boulder/Vampire pots. I wondered what route this water took to arrive at this resurgence so walked back up the valley where I spotted a small hole 20 cm x 45 cm at NG 58507 20762. On looking into this hole, I saw it was the open part of a larger collapse around a cube metre of clay and small stones. I could see holes entering and leaving the bottom of this hole caused by higher levels of floodwater than in normal times heading in up and down directions. Uphill again, I next came to a much larger collapse about 3 m long with a large hole and passage visible on the downhill side (still just in clay and small stones). It was certainly enterable but didn't look wise to do so. I could see 4-5 metres into this mud tube and reckon it goes all the way to the small hole already mentioned. The upper end of this collapse hides the route of the water downhill but it can be seen that water has been escaping around the fallen clay, so a quick dig should reveal it. Further uphill another resurgence and accompanying sink beside a large round boulder (NG 58465 20809), revealing again the route of the water. Just 4 m away on the other side of a tractor track is a shallow pool of standing water and bull-rushes alongside a small hole where water sinks when rainwater raises the level of the pool. No more signs of holes anywhere reasonably close until further up the hill.

Point 1: The tractor track route runs between these two upper points and then goes on to run across what must still be the route of the "clay tube" running between the upper and lower grid references mentioned, therefore at some time soon it is likely the driver of said vehicle may fall into a fairly large hole with potential injury, if local cavers know the farmer involved they might want to make sure he is aware of this potential event.

Point 2: While there was reasonable amount of water coming from the resurgence mentioned there was no sight or sound of it at all in either the small hole or in the larger mud tube in the lower end of the collapse, therefore there might be a real possibility of a lower level water route within real limestone below the level of the mud tube that might be worth following up?

As I was already so far north on Skye, I decided to have a few days at Applecross. After arrival at the camping site I walked up the dry river bed looking for any new changes to the local landscape which sadly I could not spot. Then I gave closer attention to an area I had already noted and reported back to the GSG that might be a route to potential passage (probably recorded about two years ago at location NG 71774 43786). When I first looked at this point of an ancient waterfall it just “looked cavey” especially with a large area of unsafe collapse on the cliff bank on the left hand side (looking downstream). There are also hanging boulders there that would make the collapse unsafe to dig and clear out, however the evidence says there is clearly a void under here of some sort.

When I originally spotted this I didn't have much digging equipment with me, but still spent a bit of time removing boulders and smaller stones from the bottom of the old waterfall but even after this it still did not look like much. This time around I was equipped with an old fairly small car tyre lever and a small folding shovel so on this first day (15/4/2016) I spent a few hours clearing more boulders and smaller stones from the same area. In a fairly short time I was digging in mix of silt and mostly smaller stones and managed to dig down about 200 mm. The following day, I went back again with a longer 80 cm long crowbar and continued digging and removing silt and small stones. The digging itself was fairly easily as the material was not hard packed but was made difficult by the lack of digging space under the lip of the old Waterfall. The deeper it goes the harder access gets. I dug down about 40 cm to 50 cm and removed a larger boulder from the hole to a point where lack of space makes digging hard going. What is needed is to enlarge the working area to make access easier to the deepening hole which continues downwards and backwards under the lip of the old waterfall at an angle of approximately 40-60 degrees. Although hard going I still managed before leaving to push my crowbar down a further 50-60 cm or so into the silt and stones at the bottom and back of the dig. While this doesn't prove anything conclusive, it still looks hopeful for continuing downwards and backwards underneath what looks like a large solid limestone slab in the riverbed heading upstream. I left a piece of tree branch in the hole made by my crowbar. To continue the dig, much larger boulders (quite large in some particular cases) perched on both sides of the dig need to be cleared. It may require some sort of winch to move them safely. After these are removed, I can start clearing the other smaller boulders from under my feet in front of the hole and increase the size of the dig which hopefully will make digging deeper much easier.

I have checked in “Caves of Applecross and Kishorn” and no part of the recorded survey in there of “Cave of the Liar” overlaps or is that close to this particular dig site.

Alex Latta

Two Digs on Skye

On Saturday 2 April, Mike Todd and David Morrison went for a walk in the woods, first taking a look at David's dig at the daylight showing rift at Parnassus Cave. They enlarged this but still could not enter. They then moved on to another of David's digs, 30 m uphill from CG 23. After some digging and hammering they entered a new cave. It gives 10 m+ of low crawl to a section of high rift passage which could be pushed. Returning on Sunday with Dave Mills, They surveyed the cave and dye tested from CG 23 getting dye after about 10 minutes.

David Morrison

Mendip Migration 2016

Beginning with a quick trip by StuL, Duncan B and Barry H to UNCABAC (21/4/2016) to take up stuff. A lot of movement noted in surface boulders. 15 loads removed. Gravel washed in to left but to right clearer. Duncan digging in 'Cherry Pit' broke through into new passage.

Mike, Lee and Esther made tourist trip down Rana (21/4/2016) then Lee and Esther visited Smoo (22/4/2016) and Colin's new find at Cape Wrath Ferry.

StuL, Duncan B, Barry H and Mike W moved 40 skip loads from left side of UNCABAC to get back to 2015 position. Floor of Cherry pit soft mud and cobble (no solid floor yet).

Snapper onslaught at T junction of UNCABAC by StuL Barry L and Jo M (23/4/2016) left junction quite spacious. 40 loads removed. Further work needed to clear floor.

Mike Waterworth and Derek Pettiglio digging (25/4/2016) in Icecream Parlour (off Tibetsi in Claonaite) continued solo by Derek (26/4/2016).

Early start to digging at UNCABAC (12.30, 27/4/2016) due to threat of bad weather. Total 121 loads removed by StuL, Duncan B, Barry H, Barry L, Jo Molner and Mike W (233 for whole week). Chamber below Cherry Pit now fairly loose. 1st U-tube a lot longer and further passage cleared of offending corners. Way on seen bending right.

StuL also studying water levels in Elephant Trap and downstream risings (27/4/2016).

StuL and Cookie spent a couple of hours (28/4/2016) removing some large rocks from entrance to 'Hole in the Wall'. Spring rising from west side of gravel floor above stream level.

Continuing snow storms (28/4/2016), minor injuries and illness most opted out of UNCABAC and went for various walks.

First visit this year to Campbell's Cave (28/4/2016) by Eddy, Nick and Norman to carry gear and assess state of play. Full kibbles awaiting removal partly buried by surface wash in. Trays and buckets stacked in 'Cold Hands' chamber. Slab fallen from roof of chamber and parallel bars separated. Wooden winch drum serviceable but replacement ready to fit. Rods pushed down sump 5 m hit obstruction but brush added lifted end and met no resistance.

South fork of UNCABAC, 'Perinium Series' surveyed by Duncan and Cookie (29/4/2016). Barry, Jo, Stu and Cookie improved access. North side down dip made larger but not yet to natural width. Inconsistent draughting. Mini flood pulse raised snapper smoke from lower levels which had disappeared 10 minutes earlier. 10 more loads removed and 12 bags filled at dig. Extremely wet and muddy. Sketch survey made by John Crae (on brief visit) to be compared to measured survey.

StuL again studying water levels in Elephant Trap and downstream risings (29/4/2016).

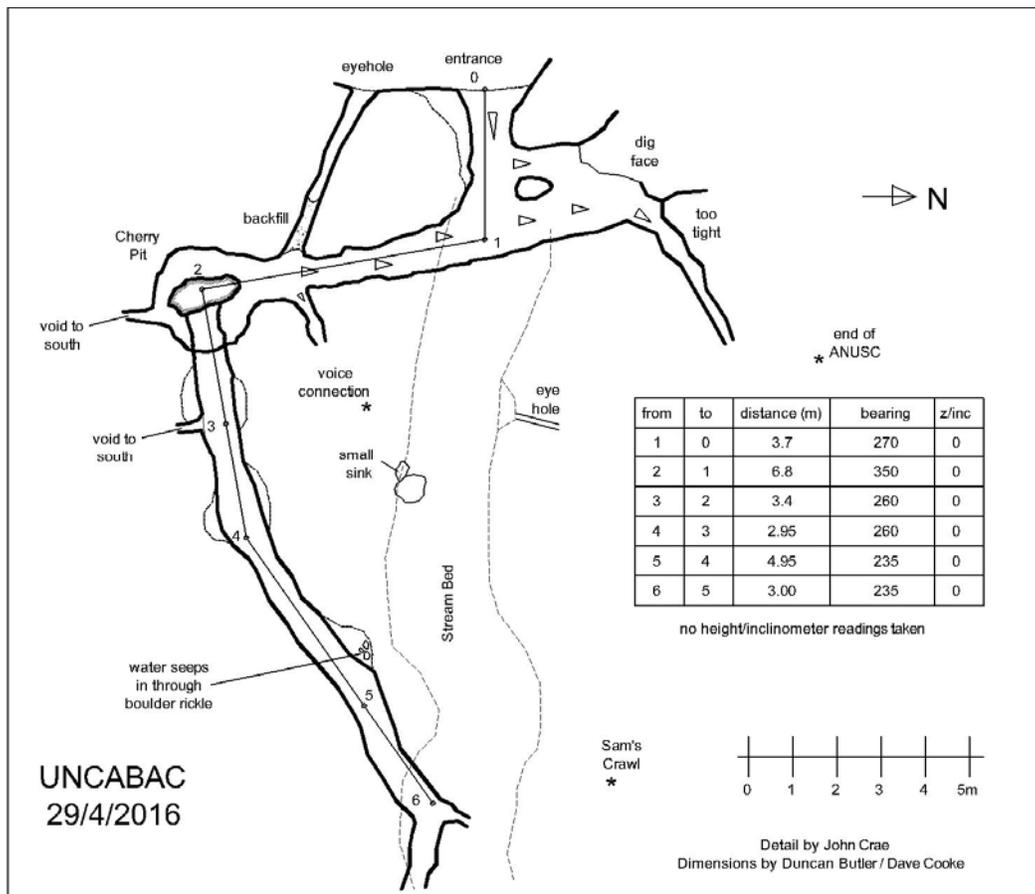
Early afternoon start at Campbell's Cave (29/4/2016). Erected winch tower, found wheelbarrow tyre flat (removed for replacement), removed 48 kibbles (all the prefilled ones and a lot of washed in spoil). Manual carry of buckets to spoil heap. Lower wooden winch replaced with shiny new metal one.

Bag haul at UNCABAC (30/4/2016) by StuL, Barry, Jo, Duncan B and Dave (Cookie) Cooke. Amount varied from 15 kg to 20 kg. 54 loads removed. Spoil mostly mix of topsoil and more sandy pea gravel.

Dig at Campbell's Cave (1/5/2016), StuL, Norman, Nick, Eddie, Dave 'Cookie', Andy Morgan and John Crae. Stuart's first visit since 2004. 66 kibbles removed. A lot of washed in material removed from below flume. Parallel bars reassembled. 6 x M12 holes drilled above sump in 'Cold Hands'. Scaffold lowered. Altered to release bracing struts from lower end (from ladder platform) avoiding gymnastics at high level. Site tidied.

StuL again studying water levels in Elephant Trap and downstream risings (1/5/2016).

Stu L / Norman Flux / John Crae





Duncan marks the estimated length of UNCABAC. Photo by John Crae

ANUSC and UNCABAC

Excavations in UNCABAC continue on two fronts and the total length of passage discovered has now reached 40 m. Stuart Lindsey continues to push downwards along the main bedding plane just out of daylight to the left of the entrance (facing upstream). This, at present about 3 m long, seems the most likely route toward the downstream end of ANUSC with water running away into a narrow tube to the right of the dig face, however excavation is awkward in the tight rift making progress slow. To the right of the entrance at the upper end of the bedding plane rift, Duncan Butler continues to excavate at a slightly lower level dropping about 1.5 m down the Cherry Pit before following a silt sided dig (along what appears to be a lower bedding plane) extending under and just to the south of the surface streambed. The dip of the rock runs contrary to the surface ground level dropping perhaps another 1.5 m along the 15 m passage. As the sides and floor of the passage are silt and gravel, it may be possible with more diggers to widen the route in search of side passages.

John Crae / Duncan Butler / StuL

Walking Through Time

Peter Dowswell and Bob Jones accompanied Goon on his visit to Assynt for the filming Walking through Time for Channel 4. There was a certain impression of Goon in declaiming mode with presenter Dr. Tori Herridge discussing cave formation in relation to the catastrophic destruction of a chalk land-bridge 450,000 years ago.

Bob Jones

GSG CASC de-registration

The GSG has now been deregistered as a CASC – the confirmation letter from HMRC dated 29 April 2016 cancelled the club's registration as a CASC with effect from 1 April 2016. Ivan has contacted Highland Council and Business Stream regarding our rates and water bills, and let BCA and the other CASC clubs also going the same route know.

Ivan Young



Goon & Dr. Victoria Herridge.
Photo by Bob Jones

Annual Dinner



This year's Annual Dinner is to be held in the Horse and Jockey, Binegar in Somerset (just north of Shepton Mallet). This is a lovely country pub, which can seat 36 in the restaurant area and 40 in the bar, with more at a push. There are no projector or similar facilities. The beer is good, apparently.

It seems that Jake (Graham Johnson) had real problems finding a venue due to the timing of Halloween this year.

There is a chance that the pub will change hands over the summer, which may affect the food choice, but it is expected that any incoming landlords would want to be super nice to the potential boost to their income of such a large event.

The Horse and Jockey is only a few miles from 'The Centre of the Universe' so all the usual caving huts are within reach - the BEC the Wessex and the Shepton - and the MCG aren't that much further. The Internet doesn't mention any rooms at the H&J so those wanting more comfort will need to look elsewhere.

There are 8 holiday cottages to let in Binegar ([Houses in Binegar and Cottages – Holiday Lettings - Holiday Rentals Binegar](#)) and Graham will organise a coach/mini-bus to the Belfry for those that want to stay in Priddy.

Rebecca Johnson/ Ivan Young/ John Crae

Management Committee Meeting

The normal GSG committee meeting was held in Loanhead on Thursday 9 June. Members will be glad to know we have 'plenty of money' and that there are no urgent repairs needed to the Hut.

John Crae

Hut Maintenance

Replacement conservatory door.

Replacement of back door (and adjacent window).

Fitting of door between Tool Shed and Tool Shed extension.

Construction of shelving (for temporary kit storage) in drying room lobby.

Rebuilding of fascia at rear of Tool Shed extension.

Construction of new log store.

Adjustment of gutter and rhones at rear of Tool Shed extension

Painting of the Floor in the main room and kitchen.

Repairs to main room chairs.

Please Note: some of these works will require considerable preparation or disruption to the normal function of the Elphin Caving Centre and will need to be programmed well in advance so not to clash with hut bookings

Spread of mud and vegetation has made some areas of the car park slippery and some cars have had problems getting traction. As a first stage raking to remove mud and moss is needed. Some pothole repairs are needed at the foot of the driveway and resurfacing may be required in the car park.

In addition to hut maintenance it would be appreciated if the redundant / misplaced kit (now stacked in tool shed extension) could be sorted and removed (remaining kit will be disposed of).

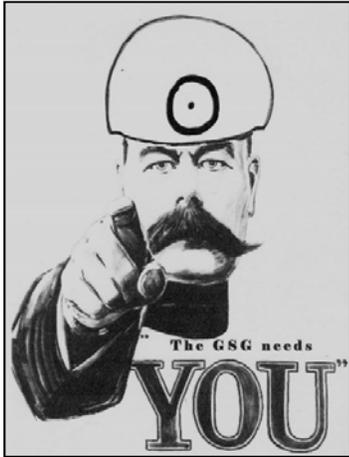
Consideration should also be given to the possible replacement of the sofas in the main room.

Pete Dowswell / Julian Walford / John Crae

Membership News

Although there are currently no new members to report, there are several prospective members who may join in the future. The year-end statistics show 152 members renewing their membership, 5 new members this year (reported in NL 163), 5 thrown out (not responding to reminders) and 6 have moved away, resigned or died.

Ivan Young



THE GSG NEEDS YOU!

There is no denying that overall the membership of the GSG is getting older. We need younger members to generate regular caving activity to ensure a secure future for the Group and its fitness to undertake serious exploration, participation in expeditions and so forth.

One suggestion has been that we create a new committee post: Recruitment/Publicity Officer, to stimulate innovative approaches to younger people, to advertise what we do and attempt to recruit not just one or two individuals, but hopefully small groups to join us and become 'infected' by the caving bug. Although some level of mentoring and training would obviously be required (and assistance with transport), the aim would be to allow such newcomers to form their own team(s) and drive their own activity within the club and, of course, be represented on committee.

Approaches to youth groups, boys' clubs, senior scouts, schools, universities – all might pay off, always bearing in mind relevant legislation and a lack of cave leadership certificates within the membership. Some financial assistance might also be made available to a recruiting officer for advertising copy or other approaches to the public.

Members are asked to consider whether they might be willing to undertake this new role. As a start, perhaps we could all attempt to design a suitable poster advertising Scottish caving, something we have not done for several decades. Some of our current stalwarts were attracted to the GSG by just such a poster so it *can* work.

Goon

Conferences

The British Caving Association (BCA) and the European Speleological Federation (FSE) are proud to present EuroSpeleo 2016: the 5th European Speleological Congress, 13-20th August 2016, a week-long festival of British caving at the Dalesbridge Centre in the Yorkshire Dales. Pre- or post-event camps have been arranged in Derbyshire, the Mendips, South Wales and, for mine enthusiasts, at Nenthead and a winch meet has been arranged at Gaping Gill 17th International Congress of Speleology (ICS), Sydney, Australia, 23-30 July 2017.

GSG Works, Expeditions, Reports

Most of the GSG meets in 2016 went ahead as planned and were generally very successful although a few trips were cancelled or postponed occasionally due to weather mainly due to lack of time with people unfortunately scheduling conflicting events (usually family or non-GSG related)..

Exploration of the Rana/Claonaite system continues. Derek Pettiglio continues to dig in the 'Ice Cream Parlour' off 'Tibesti Chamber'. Exploration and surveying is required in all parts of the cave from Sump 3 to Great Northern Time Machine.

Digging continues at the small sump in Campbell's Cave where a large hauling team (6-8 persons) is needed to remove the spoil from bottom of the main pitch to the surface while also progressing the dig. Smaller groups (3-4 persons) can either progress the dig in the phreatic maze appearing below or remove stacked spoil but as the dig gets further from the entrance it takes more bodies (or much more time) to transfer the kibbles between the hauling stages.

Stu Lindsay and any volunteers will continue his dig at UNCABAC in the Allt nan Uamh streamway below ANUSC. This now has a total passage length of over 40 metres and is known to be within 3 m of one of the side passages off the downstream section of ANUSC (see above).

Still to be visited are the caves at Knockan Lynn and Garret's Lynn, near Kilwinning.

The expedition to the Isle of May planned for August /September 2015 has been postponed until 2017. Toby Speight and Annie Wakeham have been press-ganged into attempting to kayak round the island and examine its sea caves. The preliminary report is now finished and will be submitted to SNH in order to arrange access to the island and to get permission to make a close inspection of the caves. At least one other experienced kayaker will still be needed for the trip when it goes ahead.

Imogen Furlong continues to organise the family weekends, which are popular and great fun.

Booking accommodation in advance when planning Yorkshire trips worked well in 2015, although estimating numbers can be tricky, Andrew Morgan is happy with the attendance and the positive feedback and hopes to continue

this in 2016. On all Scottish trips there is also the potential to have photographs of cave entrances and other significant features included in the cave database.

2016 Meets List and Events

Jun	11-12	Yorkshire Dales	
	18-19	Assynt	Midsummer Barbecue Weekend
	25	Assynt	Elphin Music Festival
	29	Midlothian	Jeannie Barrie's Cave, Carlops
July	6	Midlothian	SRT Training, Loanhead
	9-10	Assynt	Hut Maintenance
	16-17	Yorkshire Dales	Beginners' Weekend
Aug	31	Arrochar	Fissure Caves
	3	Midlothian	SRT Training, Loanhead
	13-20	Yorkshire	Eurospeleo

Assynt News

Much like the rest of us it seems the Elphin, Ledmore, Knockan Community Association is struggling to keep the Elkcal website up to date so information on the local situation is limited and may be out of date.

30 MPH Limit

Following three serious speed related incidents, proposals were suggested to lower the speed limit in Elphin to 30 mph. It was pointed out at a community council meeting that there was no legal requirement for a 30 mph limit, however Director of Works, William Gilfillan visited Assynt on Tuesday 19th April making a site visit en route to Lochinver meeting with concerned parties at the Elphin Community Hall.

The existing limit is 40 mph but the community's view was that this was regularly ignored by motorists, the current signage was poor and the road markings faded. The Community Services Committee meeting on 28 April agreed in response to the Petition for a 30 mph speed restriction in Elphin, that officers would consider measures to slow traffic travelling through Elphin. Measures being considered include:

- **a reduction of the speed limit to 30 mph**
- installation of a pavement on one side of the road
- replacement of faded road signs
- restoration of road markings
- installation of countdown markers
- resurfacing of road with low noise surface



ELKCAL (Elphin, Ledmore & Knockan Community and Local) EVENTS 2016

Location: Community Hall unless stated otherwise.

Elphin Markets are held on most Wednesdays, May-September.

Elphin Music Festival (general consensus is that this is on 25 June but some sites say 16 July)

A day with a varied musical programme from 13:00 to 23:00. A free afternoon session features local acts and includes a join-in session.

The evening line up (ticket price £10) includes Inverness punky rocksters Rabbit Punch; the excellent Galipaygos; local noise merchants Against All Flags and, the Music Festival is incredibly happy to finally play host to headliners, the amazing Grousebeater Sound System!

Elphin Caving Centre

Confirmed Taigh nam Famh Bookings

(contact Hut Warden Pete Dowswell or Deputy Hut Warden Imogen Furlong for latest information)

Date (nights)		Group	Size
2016			
July	1/2	Carn Dearg	15
	3-7	Campsie	7
	7-10	Dan Harries	4
	8/9	GSG Hut Maintenance	??
	9-11	Roger Marsh	6
August	21-27	Eurospeleo	??
September	2/3	GSG Hut Maintenance	??
	16/17	NCR HW Club	

Note: '??' for GSG/SCRO events means the entire hut has been reserved for members and guests.

Hut fees are £8 per night for non-members and £4 for GSG and BEC members, students, unemployed, children and OAPs. Camping is permitted at any time but the 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) – 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).

REMINDERS

- 1. Inform the club secretary (Suzanne Robinson) of any changes of address or contact details, check what appears on the GSG web server and send any corrections to Suzanne.**
- 2. Send news items to John Crae for the Newsletter (for the present, news items may also still be sent to Ivan Young), 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 alternative to paper (saving the GSG money on both postage and publication costs).**

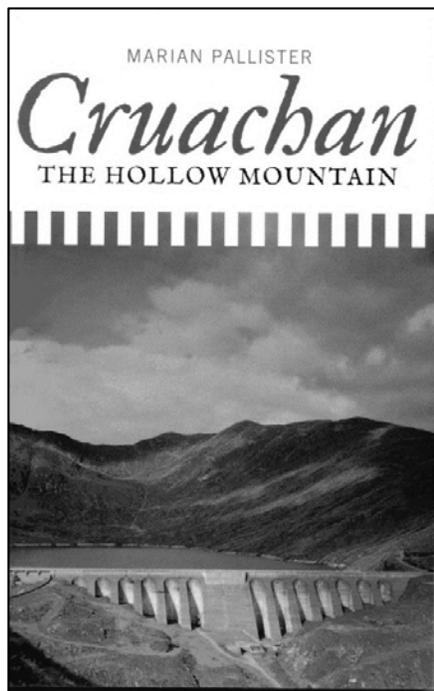
New Newsletter Editor Found

Careful winnowing of the flood of members volunteering to edit the GSG Newsletter has produced a result (1 volunteer so the result was obvious).

In the future, please contact Gwenllian Tawy with any items for inclusion in the Newsletter.

John Crae

Book Review



In the past, we sped along the A65 past Loch Awe and the Cruachan Power Station without giving it a second glance. The man-made underground trip appeared a bit fringe to me. In July 2011, our colonial chums, John and Marj from Canberra, wanted to “Do Scotland” so we arranged an itinerary. John, it has to be said, always does detailed background research. This time, as we drove along the A65 towards Oban, John showed his hand saying just around the next bend on the left is Cruachan, which I would like to visit. We found ourselves touring the visitor centre and then taking the small bus the half mile along the tunnel into the mountain to the vast turbine hall. Not bad value at around £5.00 senior citizens concession and a good diversion on a wet day (which it wasn't).

2015 is the 50th anniversary of the opening of Cruachan and a new book has appeared, 224 pages, published Birlinn, price £9.99 ISBN 978-1-78027-220-7. A very well written social and economic history of the area, concentrating on the 6 year construction period, 1959-1965, which employed up to 3000 men and its effects on the locality and its inhabitants. There is a brief mention on p.135 of a cave on Ben Cruachan which sheltered a murderer. On p. 215, there is comparison with other large cavernous spaces, e.g. Fingal's Cave and Felix Mendelssohn's music. As the Turbine Hall is 125 ft high and 300 ft long, this sheer size warrants its own musical composition, or the “Highland Cathedral” piping tune, written by two German musicians for Highland Games in their own country might be adopted!

Martin Mills

GSG Publications

A last minute decision to alter the formatting of the new ‘Caves of Assynt’ has temporarily delayed publication but it is hoped that this much delayed publication will be available soon.

Copies of Jim Salvona's “A Guide to the Awe-Inspiring Raasay Fissures” are available from Raasay Post Office, or Goon may be persuaded to print a copy on request.

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)
The Southern Highlands	£1.20 (£1.50)	Buddy Reading (Caving in Couplets)	£2.00 (£2.50)
Caves of Applecross and Kishorn	£4.00 (£6.00)	NAMHO Field Booklets	£2.50 (£4.00) set
Mines in Scotland	£4.00 (£5.00)	GSG Ties (Old)	£5.00
		(2012	£10.00
		Vintage)	

* out of print – photocopies available.

AND –	Cave Pearls of Meghalaya – Volume 1	£26.00 or £32.30 with postage.
	Cave Pearls of Meghalaya – Volume 2	£26.00 or £32.30 with postage.

Alan L. Jeffreys, Recorder

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 30840)

Photo credits :- Bob Jones, Julian Warren, Lisset de Graauw, John Crae, Alan Jeffreys, Ivan Young.