



grampian speleological group  
**NEWSLETTER**



No. 172

June 2019

**'Minor' UNCABAC Breakthrough**

Following years of digging work by Stu Lindsay and others (mainly members of the Mendip Migrations), between Thursday 25th and Saturday 27th April 2019, a digging team consisting of Julian Walford, John Crae, Pete Glanvill, Derek Guy, Derek Pettiglio, Will Samson and Stu Lindsay broke through into a section of mature cave passage. The actual breakthrough occurred on Friday 26th April when the dig face below Skeleton Chamber - being pushed (the previous day and on other occasions) by Julian - was enlarged by John, Pete, Will and both Derek's. Near the end of the day, Derek Pettiglio inserted himself upside-down into the narrow slot and after removing a few more bags of sand, rocks and gravel pushed through on his back.

With some further enlargement of the connecting squeeze, the breakthrough chamber was entered by John and Derek Guy (Will Samson, a fairly large chap, could not fit through the squeeze). The difference between the low crawls of the dug passage and the mature 'system' is amazing. Visible from the breakthrough was a downstream rift passage (heading roughly towards the Allt nan Uamh valley and ANUSC) and above 2 m high step with a trickling waterfall, an upstream phreatic tube 3 m wide, 2 m high heading into the hillside and curving out of sight.

That night messages were sent to previous diggers of UNCABAC and a somewhat heated debate followed on the ethics of cave exploration. Should the new section of cave be pushed by the team who made the breakthrough or should exploration wait until the earlier diggers had a chance to join the team? Good points were made on both sides.

The earlier diggers deserved the right to see their efforts vindicated but on the other hand given the distances involved – travelling from Mendip and elsewhere – this was likely to cause a lengthy delay. Eventually it was decided that initially the minimum would be done to secure the breakthrough chamber and to allow access to it by Stu Lindsay. The visible sections would also be photographed in their pristine condition by Pete Glanville.

On Saturday, a revised digging team (Julian, John, Pete, Stu, Derek Guy, Will Samson, and Verne Freeman) headed back up the hill and after Julian and John had lowered the floor of the squeeze by another 200 mm. 1.2 m planks were used to span areas of mud floor as a temporary measure to allow better access to the upstream and downstream passages. On the arrival of Stu, the decision was taken that the easily accessible downstream passage would be explored. This proved to be 26 m of high rift passage, rising at the downstream end to about 8 m high with a rubble blocked hole at the top, with a couple of low short side passages at low level and a tube leading to some tight cross rifts. One of the low side passages is blocked with mud and boulders and may be diggable.

More planks were eventually used to bridge across the mud floor at the waterfall and Stu ventured along the visible passage to the bend where he reported the passage apparently blocked by a large pile of breakdown.

At the time of writing, surveying of this section of the cave was continuing. It is preferred for now that visitors to the cave should remain limited (contacting Stu Lindsay before attempting to access the cave as there are measures in place to protect the cave from flooding) and those who do visit remember that the entrance passages remain an active dig parts of which require further shoring to make them safe.

**John Crae**

### **Ledbeg Cave**

With high temperatures and water levels extremely low on Friday 19th April 2019, Martin Hayes and John Crae entered the seldom visited Ledbeg Cave. First surveyed by Peter Kellock in 1972, this low wet cave is recorded as having a 10 m length.

With John in the standing height aven just within the entrance Martin explored the extents of the largely flooded cave and discovered a wide if low chamber in addition to the entrance and side passage shown on the 1972 survey.



Martin Hayes in Ledbeg Cave. JC

While others have entered the cave since 1972 no survey had been made of the larger cave. Accordingly, on Saturday 20th April, Martin and John joined by Andy Morgan surveyed both the old and 'new' sections of the cave. A full description will be included in a future GSG Bulletin. Contributions from anyone who has visited in the intervening years will be gratefully received.



Martin Hayes in the new Traligill Sink. JC

### **Lower Traligill Flood Sink, Upper Sinks**

The low water levels on Friday 19th April, also allowed an exploration of the shakeholes in the Traligill Valley under extremely dry conditions. A surprise awaited above the 'waterfall' near Lower Traligill Flood Sink. A new sink had opened. A new sink had opened up roughly opposite Inclined Rift Cave.

This hole, next to the similar inlet found last year, was cut into the loose gravelly soil of the bank of the river and took the whole flow from the admittedly much reduced stream. It seems likely that water in normal conditions will soon cause a further collapse of the bank and the new sink will eventually be blocked by silt. At present, however, the water disappears into a small hole in loose boulders.

The opportunity was taken on Saturday 20th April, when there was still no water in the streambed below this sink, to investigate and enlarge the sink immediately above the waterfall. This was pushed to a depth of 3 m before the loose boulders forming one side of the hole became too unstable.

Diverting the reduced stream and poking at the flooded 'harbour' sink just upstream caused the pond in this sink to disappear into a tiny gurgling hole with no new risings appearing. This suggests that the surface stream is now disappearing into a void some distance below with an underground connection to the subterranean Traligill River.

**John Crae, Martin Hayes**

## **Notes from the Web**

**A chance discovery in a cave in Crimea suggests that early Europeans around 1.5 million years ago lived alongside some of the largest birds ever to live on Earth.**

First ever Cave Bird?

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-7184557/Bird-three-times-size-ostrich-lived-Europe-two-million-years-ago-study-suggests.html>

## **SCRO News**

Scottish Mountain Rescue (which we are a member of) are creating a new website. They are looking for pictures to go on the website. It'll be good to see SCRO included. If you have any good pics of SCRO in action, then please contact [Elsie@scottishmountainrescue.org](mailto:Elsie@scottishmountainrescue.org)

**Andy Morgan**

## **A Quarry (and Cave) to call my own**

Since I started caving in 1970 with one of the first caves I visited being Reads Cavern in Higher Kiln Quarry, Buckfastleigh, Devon, then as now, under the custodianship of the William Pengelly Cave Studies Trust, I have had a fancy to have my own Quarry and Cave. In January of this year this 'fancy' became a reality when I finally completed and secured the purchase of a small quarry known as 'The Parish Quarry in Bradwell Dale' complete with its own little cave 'Bradwell Parish Cave'.

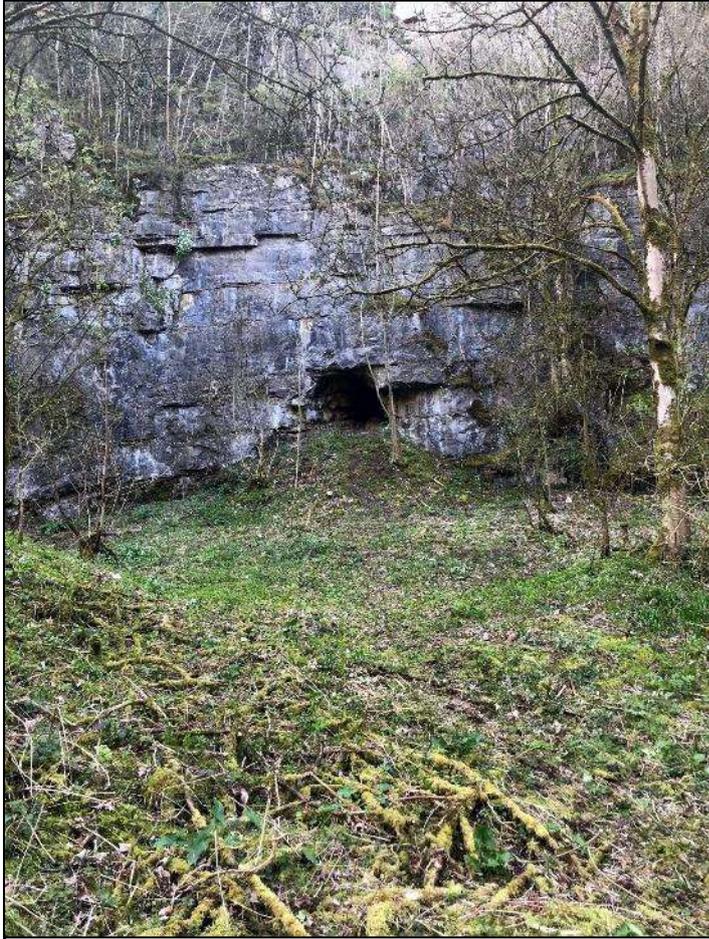


Photo Simon Brooks

The Quarry which lies just outside of the village of Bradwell in the Peak District, on the right as you head up Bradwell Dale itself, is of about 3 acres + in size and is adjacent to another Quarry known as Mortons Quarry which contain a mine/cave known as Bertons Pingles Pipe. The Parish Quarry in Bradwell was, under the Hope and Bradwell Enclosures Award of 1819, awarded by the Enclosures Commissioners to Bradwell Vestry (which proceeded Bradwell Parish Council).

The purpose of the Quarry being to provide a supply of stone, to repair and construct new roads, within the Parish and over the last 93 years Bradwell Parish Council have exercised control over the Quarry. In more recent years the Quarry was seen as something of a liability to the Parish Council, incurring costs yet providing little benefit and in September 2015 a notice appeared in the Parish Council Newsletter (and on UK Caving) that the Council

was going to offer it up for sale for a guide price of £5,000.

Shortly after this I made arrangements to view the quarry and on a bright autumn morning with the sun shining and the Jackdaws squawking in the trees and on the quarry face, I was reminded of Higher Kiln Quarry and in January 2017 I sent a seal bid into the Parish Council. My offer was accepted and over the next 20 months negotiations with solicitors, neighbours, the Parish Council and the Land Registry finally secured the quarry and cave as my own.

The quarry lies within the Bradwell Dale SSSI and contains: the remains of an old building, presumably an old bang or tool store, the old Bradwell Village Tip last used in 1950's and occasionally dug by persons unknown for old bottles and jars, some bolted climbing routes on one of the faces, Bradwell Parish Cave and a few other minor holes and a spring. Bradwell Parish Cave is some 40m in length having been dug a little by the TSG in the 1970's and by the late Anthony Revell for a short period in the 1980's. It ends in a calcite choke and could be dug further.

Over the next year I plan to thin out the small trees and ground vegetation (weeds) and remove some of the non-native larger trees to let a bit more light in, as well as fence the boundary and repair the old building/store.

And you never know I might even tempt some Derbyshire (or even Scottish) cavers to re-start digging in Bradwell Parish Cave providing the don't upset the landowner or make a mess!

**Simon Brooks**

## Vale: Colin Coventry

It is almost un-necessary to ask anyone who has passed through the village of Durness on the north coast of Scotland what they remember about the place – everyone: tourist, caver, resident – will say ‘Colin the Caveman’.



Colin Coventry at Loch Borrallie Cave - Photo Colin's camera

For the past 30 years Colin self-employed himself as guide to Smoo Cave, providing an inflatable boat to carry visitor across the 2nd Chamber lake into the furthest reaches of the system. His skill at preaching the speleological word in several languages in his own inimitable style made him a byword throughout the world. He appeared on TV (once ‘protecting’ Bear Grylls no less) and featured in many radio broadcasts and magazine articles.

All this fails to encapsulate one of earth's great characters. This irrepressible, whisky drinking, repartee delivering giant amongst eccentrics was a member of the GSG, the SCRO, Assynt MR and the Coastguard Service and proudly gave willingly of his time and expertise to all of them. During his colourful life he had travelled, and worked, in many foreign countries from India to Israel, Romania to South Africa, before settling in Durness to care for Smoo, his special darlin'.

During his sojourn in the north, he discovered several caves near his home, including Uamh nan Cathan-Aodaich [Web cave], Loch Borrallie Cave – where he discovered important palaeontological remains – and Cave of the Kyle, revealed after a storm washed away sand blocking the entrance. Following examination of huge shakeholes behind Smoo itself, and assessing the drainage around Durness, he began to tackle a dig beneath the massive stalagmite slope at the rear of Smoo's main chamber, beavering away during the winter season when business was slack. He was always convinced a monster cave awaited discovery ‘just a few meters further on in the dig.’

This large than life personality fell ill just before Christmas 2018 and, to the stunned amazement of us all, was diagnosed with cancer to which he succumbed in January 2019. He was just 61 years old.

There will never be another Colin. That were a mold impossible to replicate. His infectious merriment, that enticing, leering grin, the never-ending line of young lady friends, these will echo in our hearts now that he is gone. Not just the caving world, but the whole world, will miss Colin the Caveman.

**Goon**

## **Robert Ian Midgley 1948 to 2019**



Ian Midgley photo Ivan Young

My friend and ex GSG member has passed away at the age of 70

Ian had suffered internal injuries in a fall from scaffolding when building his house. Some years later, after a series of operations he was making good progress, but had to go for a small operation. He suffered a small stroke, followed next morning by a larger one, from which he did not recover.

Ian and I started potholing in 1962, we went into Pan Holes, a rift cave on the moors near my home town of Bingley.

When we reached the cave end, we saw a man with a faulty lamp, he had removed his helmet Ian was using a carbide lamp and leaned forward to offer assistance, immediately setting the man's hair on fire. He was not pleased!! We later went to the BPC winch meet at Gaping Gill and camped for a week.

In 1969 Ian moved from his home town of Shipley to Evanton to become a game keeper. On one of his journeys south, we decided to go to the 1.5 km long Scoska cave in Littondale.

We had to dig through the snow to enter the cave.

On reaching the crawl, my wet suit zip broke, when we reached the end of the crawling section my ex mine lamp failed. We decided to return to the entrance. en route we collected my ammo box, we discovered that it had leaked and now contained soggy sandwiches. As we warmed up on the journey home, I asked Ian, 'Why do we do this?' he replied " For pleasure " Ahhhh.

**Preston White**

### **ARCHIVE BEQUESTS**

On a recent visit to the Craven PC library, I was deeply impressed by the amount of priceless historical material, especially photographs, that former and deceased members had bequeathed to the club. It occurs to me a similar system should be considered by ourselves.

Personal caving logs, photographs, even publications collected, are all valuable sources of historical information but, all too often during house clearances relatives who have no interest or appreciation of caving just dump this kind of material without giving it a second thought. Consider how much simpler it would have been if Fraser Simpson had provided such a written document regarding his photographic archive.

It may seem morbid to think about wills and bequests, but it comes to us all in the end, and creating a codicil to cover donation of all such documents to the club library would ensure essential information is not lost to posterity. Please think about this matter (and don't walk under a bus before you have!)

**Alan Jeffreys**

## Caving in Romania

### **Pestera Ponoraci to Cioclovina cu Apa through trip**

In January this year Oana and I travelled out to Romania to visit our little cottage in the Cioclovina which is situated in the Northern part of the Lunca Karstic Plateau not far from the city of Hunedoara in SW Romania. The trip had many purposes notably a party for my 59th birthday with caving friends from Romania.

The Ponoraci brook that rises on the plateau above enters the system at Pestera Ponoraci



Decorated Oxbow Cioclovina cu Apa Photo SB

(Ponoraci Cave) sink to flow through the system and emerge at the Impressive Cioclovina cu Apa (Cioclovina with Water) resurgence entrance that lies some 167m lower at a linear distance of some 1,430m away. The cave system itself is around 6.3kms in length and the through trip some 3.5 kms. A short distance from

the Ponoraci Entrance the Ponoraci Hall is reached and the first -23m pitch. This was rigged in 'Canyoning Style' by my Romanian friend Gabbi, an interesting technique that avoids the use of deviations and re-belays to remove rub points by allowing 1 to 2m of fresh rope to run through the belays after each caver has descended thereby ensuring that rub points are spread along the length of the rope rather than concentrated in one area. The first pitch is followed by a second of -14m and then a third of -12m to reach the main gallery. From here is pleasant, mostly high canyon style passage to reach the main junction (Marea Confluenta) where another streamway is met (Galeria Marilor Gururi si Plansee). We followed this upstream until the sump was reached. We then retraced our steps back to the junction the resurgence exit. Along the route there is a mixture of more impressive canyon passage, decorated chambers and low ducks. Near to the entrance a very well decorated side passage/oxbow can be followed and eventually the impressive 13m wide by 16m high Cioclovina cu Apa Resurgence Entrance is reached. we feasted and drank into the small hours to celebrate my birthday for the second time!

**Simon Brooks**

## **CNCC Report – for AGM at Hellifield, Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

1. Report from the Webmaster: 350 views of the Scottish cave descriptions have been logged. This reflects increasing interest in Scottish caving and could very well imply increased use of the hut by visiting clubs. There is a need to expand the cave descriptions not already on the CNCC website, by people who have visited them recently. Forward any such to Goon who will convert them to the house style and ensure they are included. Skye and Appin entries are particularly welcome.
2. Birkwith Caves: There is a new owner at High Birkwith Farm. There is now no parking allowed.
3. The Chairman, Andrew Hinde, approached me with a request that we find some way of applying for a monetary grant from CNCC for Scottish projects – archaeology, conservation, path and entrance protection – really anything that can be said to relate to the CNCC mission statement, which is:

“To work to achieve the best possible access to caves.

Establish beneficial relations with landowners and kindred organisations.

To promote safe and responsible caving in parallel with cave and countryside Conservation.

To provide services and information to improve the accessibility of caving.”

4. Reform of BCA was discussed. There will be a move to change the voting system so as to be directly with each individual member, rather than using the club block vote along with individual members in the current ‘two house’ system. This will require GSG members to (a) be informed and (b) respond to voting calls. The recent survey by Hellie Adams only produced a 5% response. If cavers don’t take an interest, it opens the door to minority factions who might be detrimental to caving as a whole. Matt Ewles (CNCC Sec.) is likely to become BCA Sec. in the summer and will push for the voting system change.
5. The BCA Youth and Development Rep. outlined work carried out to attract, not only CHECC organization members, but also address the issue of under 18-year old’s. (BCA membership is free to under 18s).
6. Fixed Aids: There have been several (bad) examples of unilateral fixed aid installation recently. Metal staples in KMC were not stainless steel and have been removed. Two incidents have occurred in Easegill: Stainless steel stemples were fixed in Trident Series. They were cut off by persons unknown, leaving protruding metal spikes. These were ground down and resin covered after the meeting. Another incident, where a climb in Wretched Rabbit had been altered by capping to provide footholds, was also dealt with by putting resin in the fresh hole(s). A flake of rock which had been removed was so shattered it could not be restored.

All such actions should come via CNCC, who will consult with the caver population before any installation. (There is absolutely no evidence that the commercial caving world was involved in any of these incidents).

## An Teachelach Ale Co.

Information received from the Alt and the Inch suggests that the An Teachelach Ale Co. has ceased trading. This has resulted in a 'temporary' lack of real ales on draught at both the Alt and Inch. Until a new supplier can be arranged there are limited supplies of bottled ale.

**John Crae**

## Inchnadamph Hotel Opening Times

The Inchnadamph Hotel is now (as of 1st May) open for the summer. It will no doubt close again in September. It should be noted however that as the hotel is now intermittently being let to groups who hire the whole hotel, the bar may at any particular time be closed to non-residents.

**John Crae**

## Trips & Expeditions

### **Yorkshire Dave has proposed a meet in the Dolomites**

*I'll be available anywhere between Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> of September and Saturday the 14th of September inclusive. Then for people that only work during week days (strange folk) it could be easier as we could do a Friday to Friday or Saturday to Saturday I'm working the weekend before to get a week off from that weekend I'd have to take blocks off work off which I can't afford.*

*How would that time period suit folk for a Dollies or other Holiday?*

*Am I right in thinking that we usually went about the first week in September?  
Is this still preferable for folk?*

**Yorkshire Dave**

## Romania

Simon Brooks has suggested a potential GSG meet in Romania. Simon has accommodation available:

*It's a small farmstead in the hamlet of Cioclovina some 30 kms from Hunedoara (the nearest large town), the nearest airport is Sibiu (2.5 hrs drive) or Bucharest (6 hrs). It has a small farmhouse, two rooms, one a*



Photo Simon Brooks

*living room and the other a dorm style with 8 bunks, plenty of camping space outside, a large barn and a small out building. 10min walk away is a 1.3kms cave (Cioclovina dry) and 20mins a large 10 kms river cave (Cioclovina Aqua - Essentially Cioclovina with water) and about 80 other caves within 1 hrs walk. Folk are more than welcome to use it, we have excellent relationship with local cavers, caving groups.*

Please contact Simon for further details

## **Hut Maintenance**

Construction of new ventilated wood store (in progress).

Floor cupboards and workbench to be fitted in Tool Shed extension. Design required. The wall cupboards have been fitted to the back wall of the shed. Shelving is to be fitted between the cupboards.

Replacement of door and window at drying room lobby (by joinery contractor). Replacing the bargeboard/soffit at the edge of the roof above has also been suggested.

Replacement of door to conservatory (by joinery contractor).

Box shelving to be fitted in drying room lobby.

Replacement of kitchen cupboards and repositioning/redesign of shelving.

Re-grading of driveway. Concrete surface suggested with cross drain at upper gateway.

Peter Dowswell is looking for local tradesmen to do the work not suitable for DR Leaking roof at gutter above door from kitchen to conservatory, possibly due to blocked gutter to be investigated in dry conditions.

## **2019 Meets List and Events**

July *	7 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt	SCRO joint training with Assynt MRT
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt	SCRO Training, North Scotland
August	3 <sup>rd</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt	Hut Meet.
	24 <sup>th</sup> -26 <sup>th</sup>	South Wales	Cave Fest
September	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	Mendip	BCRC Rescue Conference
	14 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt	SCRO Autumn Exercise
October	5 <sup>th</sup> -6 <sup>th</sup>	Yorkshire Dales	Fairy Holes permit booked on 5th
	26 <sup>th</sup> -27 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt **	Annual Dinner
November	9-16	Assynt	Memorial Meet
December	7 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup>	Assynt	Christmas Dinner
	29 <sup>th</sup> - 2 <sup>nd</sup> Jan	Assynt	New Year

\*Possible Trip to Romania? (see article)

\*\* Will in fact be Durness at the Smoo Cave Hotel

## **GSG Publications**

**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)		
Jim's Festschrift - A Wanderer in Dens and Caves of the Earth	£5.00 + £0.75 p&p	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 Vintage)	£10.00

\* out of print – photocopies available.

AND –	Cave Pearls of Meghalaya – Volume 1	£26.00 or £30.00 with postage.
	Cave Pearls of Meghalaya – Volume 2	£35.00 or £39.00 with postage.

**Alan L. Jeffreys, Recorder**

## **Sutherland Hut Logs**

The latest transcription volume of the Elphin Hut Logs (Vol.13) has been published, covering the year Jan-Dec 2016. These publications allow infrequent visitors to Assynt to be informed of field work there. Copies are available from Goon at £1.50 plus post (all merely to cover production costs).

**Alan Jeffreys**

## **Elphin Caving Centre**

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

*Unfortunately, due to lack of time and several communication failures the hut booking table is not complete. There will undoubtedly be bookings by groups and individuals which have not been included. If you intend booking accommodation please check with Imo Furlong.*

*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](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)).

---

### **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 John Crae 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 alternative to paper (saving the GSG money on both postage and publication costs).**
-