# SEEKER

The Magazine of the Geocaching Association of Great Britain

CACHING ON THE EDGE OF SCOTLAND

**The Outer Hebrides** 

CHURCH MICROS: ARE

THEY FOR YOU?

**SECRET SANTA 2012** 



## SEEKER

#### Meet the Committee

So that you know who we are, here's the 2011-2012 Committee:



Dave Edwards (The Wombles) Chairman

> Jen Harley (Maple Leaf) Secretary



Colin Bracher (The Wobbly Club)



Pau (Pal

Paul Burroughes (Palujia)

Cass Flowers (\*geocass\*)



8

Terry Marsh (countrymatters)

Lilian Maund (Mollyjak)



#### Issue No. 11: November 2012

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## The Geocaching Association of Great Britain (GAGB)

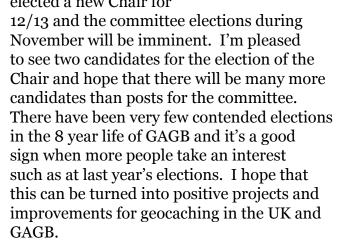
is the leading UK Geocaching body, recognised by and acting on behalf of cachers. The association was established in 2004 to provide a voice for its members in the United Kingdom with the aim of establishing good geocaching practices, providing a focal point for public liaison, and supporting the growth and enjoyment of Geocaching within the UK.

Find us on www.gagb.org.uk

Cover picture: Struan Cottage, North Uist © Terry Marsh 2012

## Message from the CHAIRMAN

GAGB elections are upon us. By the time you read this we will probably have elected a new Chair for



There have been many ideas for GAGB over the years and this has been the best year so far in delivering on those ideas. You are reading one of them - Seeker - which is a really high quality and successful product thanks mostly to Terry, our Editor, and the work of the committee in writing articles / contributing photos, which fill most of the pages. GAGB has been represented at all four Mega events this year including stands at two, ran an amazingly successful CITO near Bristol, in addition to committee members at lots of other events. There are even more geocaching retailers offering discounts to our members and the number of Landowner agreements has jumped up again with a total of 91 landowners having agreements in place and just 27 denying permission. Whilst our Twitter followers have grown steadily through the year, we have an astonishing 844 Facebook members which appears to be growing ever faster every time I check.

I'm proud of the progress that we've made this year; this is the opportunity for anyone willing to make a big contribution to geocaching to come forwards.

## From the EDITOR'S DESK

Terry (Countrymatters)

It's that time of year again...PressieFest is upon us.

My wife asked me one year what I wanted as a present. I said 'A BMW'; she got me a DVD – she's never been any good with letters! These



days I've moderated my requests: this year I'll settle for a Nikon D800, or a top-of-the-range GPS that stores all the caches within a 100-mile radius, then goes out by itself, finds them, signs the log in my name, and comes home, increasing my tally, all without leaving the comfort of my desk.

But we seldom get what we want; I just think it's some ruse to hold us forever in anticipation.

For all of September and some of October, I've been touring the Scottish islands: Mull, Skye and the Outer Hebrides. I had hoped to make it to St Kilda, where Simply Paul has thoughtfully placed a cache, but 6-metre waves and a 4-metre boat didn't seem quite so appealing up close. But I was pleased with the caches I found, and write about it in this issue, although being a geocacher in such a remote location must be very frustrating...hardly any new caches, unless you place them yourself, or someone comes along and persuades you to maintain caches they place, as I've done on the Isle of Skye. Quite a contrast with my home situation, where I can count nigh on 1,000 caches within a 10km radius of my home. Just as well it's not about the numbers, then! It's quality that counts, and that's why I introduced a regular feature on Memorable Caches. So far, they've all been provided by members of the Committee, but I'd welcome contributions from other members, too. Tell me about your most memorable cache or series of caches; send me a high res photo or two; that'll do.

Meanwhile, may I take this opportunity to wish goodwill to all geocachers, everywhere.

## In the beginning...

#### Steve (sadexploration) explains his Church Micro series



Oddly enough the concept for this series emerged after finding a drive by cache in Cornwall. Having set a number of long complicated multi caches, the idea of some quick easy to maintain caches appealed. During the journey home we noticed the amazing diversity of churches we have across the country and realised we had the

There were plenty of good looking and interesting churches around my area in Surrey without caches so naturally I had the pick of the best ones. The first one (GC17878) went live on 7 November 2007. When placed, all of mine had hand-

perfect subject for such

a series.

In the beginning...there was Church Micro 1, the nearest church to where I live, and I can just about see the spire from my window.

made micro churches as souvenirs placed in them and usually each time I replace a log book or pass by I drop in some new ones; so keep a look out for them.

My preferred way of hiding 'Church micros' was magnetic and before long my hides were becoming so predictable that two of them were found before they were published, one of

Although the series is called 'Church Micro' I encourage cachers to place as large a

which was found twice!





cache as possible. It's just that 'Church 2.5 Lt clip top box' didn't quite roll off the tongue as well.

I hoped that if I numbered them it may encourage others to do the same so with around

45 church caches placed I added the note about expanding the series to all of my cache pages.

It wasn't long before some replies started rolling in, first locally from Woking Wonders and then from various cachers around Sussex and Essex. This area now has church micros in abundance.

Having taken off in the south-east, it's nice to now have requests from much further afield

from hundreds of different cachers, some of whom are very enthusiastic. I know Poshrule has over a hundred CMs up his way. There have also been a fair few requests from other countries as well, but it's hard enough to keep track of the existing ones, so I'm sticking to the UK only. Many have been

An extra dimension was added to the series when 'Bashful' designed a church micro stats page and a league table appeared, and when you look at the names and finds you can see there are a lot of cachers actively hunting them down.

The stats page gets its information from a bookmark list created by Andy33 and knowing both these cachers well I'm fully aware of the huge amount of effort needed

to keep them as up to date as possible. So I must say a very big thank you to Bernard (Bashful) and Andy (33) for doing this.

The series has taken me to some stunning churches, and I must have seen most varieties by now including tin roofs, thatched roofs, wooden spires, ruins, immaculate church grounds and many memorials to well-known people.

I have really enjoyed starting

this series and some of the feedback and stories I get makes it all the more worthwhile.

Naturally any cache placed near a church doesn't have to be linked to the series but if you do fancy placing one and expanding the series, which we believe is now the largest numbered series in the world (unless you know better), then drop me a line and a number will be heading your way.

So a little plug for the series and its minimal list of rules. A little bit of information about the church on the cache page is always nice but not essential. The cache can be of any type, it doesn't have to be a micro (the bigger the better) where possible.

Any cache placed within or close to a church boundary will need permission before your reviewer can publish it.

The only information I need from you to start with is the name of the village/town and the Church name which I can then add to my list, and that's it. I will then send the number and format for the cache title and the paragraph about expanding the series which can be copied to the bottom of your cache page.

placed by cachers at their local churches where they have their own memories, some fond, some sad. One cacher asked for an extra hint to one of mine as he was getting married in the church and wanted to grab it before he went down the aisle.

From reading all the found logs, CM1 gets lots of visits from cachers keen to find the original, CM1000 is also one that attracts attention and has been the 1000th find for many cachers to make it a landmark. I think

landmark. I think the main reason they have caught on so well is they are generally placed at a 'point of interest', which, after all, is what Geocaching is all about, and more often than not you can find somewhere to park as well.



Wednesday 7th November will be the 5th anniversary of the first-placed Church Micro cache. So, in way of celebration and just for fun, why not try and find a Church Micro cache on that day.

Happy Hunting Steve Sadexploration



#### Geocachers' Secret Santa: The Beginnings

#### Santa's Little Helpers (Mandy and Jaki) confess all

n 2006 I regularly went caching, and attended many events, up in Scotland. I was a member of the Geofrees forum, and it was during this time that I decided to start a Geocachers' Secret Santa. I asked the forum's administration team if I could open a thread about the idea and they gave me the go-ahead.

That first year there were 34 teams playing. I think it was 33 Scots and me, so I was probably a Not-So Secret Santa! We played from the Geofrees forum for the first two years but then, as more people who were not forum members wanted to play, we decided we needed a place of our own.

In 2008 I started a blog, to give the Secret Santa a dedicated space all to itself. This turned out to be a very bad idea as I was now the only person who could change the players' threads and upload their photos! I received literally hundreds of emails with these personal requests. This went on for two years and during that time we had between 60 and 80 players. Geocaching was growing each year as a hobby, and naturally so were the number of Secret

Santa players.



The next year I had the mad idea to also run a 'Doggy Secret Santa' (yes, we send presents to Geocaching dogs as well). It was only for a laugh really, but it took off! We now have 15 to 20

Geocaching Canines who send presents to each other every year. We even have a teddy bear called Callie who is part of The Fuzzy Bears team who also send presents!

In 2010 the Secret Santa had its best update so far. Jaki (of 'Middleleaze Moles') sent me an email asking if I would like her to make a forum where the players could update their own threads and upload their own photos, and of course I gratefully accepted. Boy was I glad I did because that year we had 92 Geocaching teams playing! Jaki does all the techy stuff on the forums while I am now just the secretary replying to emails, and this arrangement has been

working well for us so far.

Of course the real stars of the Secret Santa are the players. There are people who have played every year since the beginning, and of course new players who join every year. We have players from the Highlands of Scotland all the way through to Devon, Wales and Ireland (players must be from the UK). We even have GAGB committee members who have played regularly for years (but will they admit to it?)

Many of our more experienced teams get upset when another team does not receive a present (sadly, as in real life, there are people who do not play fair and receive a gift but do not send one). Last year I mentioned to another player that one of the regular teams had not received a present, and almost immediately I was sent an email asking for their address. Within a few days they had received a fabulous present!

We have another team who have played for

all six years we've been active, and yet did not receive a gift last year. Her words to me were, "It is better to send than to receive". Again, these are the real stars of the game. I



have not had a cross word to say to anyone involved over the years, and receive a lot of emails telling me people do enjoy playing. We even have some nutters (Cough\*\*House of Boo\*\*Cough) who have had their name down since November 2011 returning to play again in December 2012, and they are not the only ones making a comeback.

The best part of the whole game for me is definitely seeing the photos of the gifts people have received.

If you would like more information about our Geocachers Secret Santa, and would perhaps like to join, please take a look at our forum (at http://secretsanta2010.myfreeforum.org/index.php).

### Attaching nanos to BT property

Recently British Telecom contacted Groundspeak (who own geocaching. com) after an engineer had found a couple of caches inside phone boxes. BT said whilst they didn't want to discourage geocaching, their engineers would remove any containers they found, and asked that no more be placed.

After discussion with Groundspeak, the UK reviewers have decided that no more caches will be published which are in or attached to phone boxes. Any active caches currently in place won't be archived, but we would ask owners to move them to a new location as soon as possible to avoid them being removed. Caches that subsequently go missing or are in need of maintenance must be archived rather than replaced or repaired.

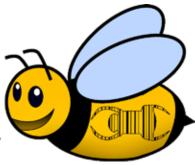
Please note that this applies only to phone boxes (of any type) operated by British Telecom and not to any operated by other telecommunications companies such Kingston Upon Hull Telecom, Manx Telecom, Jersey Telecom or Cable & Wireless (Guernsey). Nor does it apply to any of the old 'red' phone boxes that are out of use and may be owned and maintained as attractions by local councils or parish councils. For these normal permission would apply.

Date for your diary

The next Annual UK
Mega Event is being held
in the West Midlands on
Saturday,
3rd August 2013.
www.mega2013.co.uk

#### Tracking Tee-Bees





Like lots of meets up and down the country, at our Kent meets we were recording a list of trackables, which would then get emailed to everyone who was at the meet. This was a slow process, as the person doing it had to first type the list, check the codes and then email the list out to everyone.

Then I had an idea, I thought this one was a particularly good one. So I thought I would give it a go. The idea this time? A site to record a list of trackables that attended my Kent event in January. It would cut out the requirement for the list to be emailed round to everyone who attended.

Unfortunately I had the idea only a few days before the meet, so progress was quick and the result was not the prettiest thing in the world, but most importantly it worked. The plan was to just test it with a few people, needless to say in the end I think everyone who was at the meet 'tested' it. The feedback was really positive and people were saying how useful they found it so I decided to take it a bit further.

As time went on we started doing more, the site began adding more and more little features to help out the person making the list. Firstly was checking trackable codes were valid on Geocaching.com as this saved the person writing the list a lot of work. Then we started collecting more information about trackables and showing off some statistics. As time went on we approached the summer which only means one thing, Mega Events! A few changes were made to the site: the result? A part of the site which anyone could add trackables to. As time went on a bit of a decision was made to move away from the long-winded way we recorded information about trackables to a slightly more legit way, using the API.

Initially only validating trackables and retrieving extra information was done through the API. But then something caught my eye, the ability to Create Trackable Logs. Well this was too good an opportunity to miss and something was developed that used it, there were a few teething problems (Sorry Lardy-Bloke!) but I continued to work on it and got those sorted out. Going forward I have a few ideas in my head. But it's not really about what I want to add, it's about what the people that use it want, and I'm always open to suggestions!

Tee-Bees is currently used mainly in the South East of England. But I don't see why it should stop there, let's get more people using it. There is no reason for someone to be stuck with the hassle of making a list at the event having to type it up and then sharing it with everyone.

If you want to try out "Tee-Bees" at your event just visit teebees.co.uk and the best bit is that it's absolutely free!



### Caching on the edge of Scotland

drive there. For me, based in Lancashire, it's not too bad; I can reach the Uig (Skye)

Countrymatters (Terry Marsh) visits

the Outer Hebrides



## MEMORABLE CACHES

Cass Flowers (\*geocass\*) goes underground





It's easy to walk around the area of Bathampton blissfully unaware that there are hundreds of kilometers of underground chambers and intricate passageways right beneath your feet. Once the entrances to the vast underground systems are found, however, you can expect a real adventure into what feels like an amazing new world which is certainly not for the faint-hearted. This is the reward for solving BareClawz's Below Above Geocache puzzles.

The series of five D5/T5 caches takes you tunnelling through several of the old Bathstone quarries and stepping back in time to discover old mining relics, tools, and graffiti left by the miners. There are also many unique features and characteristics of the individual quarries.

The quarries in the area were producing stone as far back as the 18th century. When exploring them with modern day high-lumen torches and taking pictures using cameras with powerful flashes it's easy to forget that the miners had just candle light or the light from home-made oil burners to use while working down in the tunnels. The work was all manual, with the blocks of stone being sawn by hand. Some quarries in the area were modernised with a rail system, but others used horse and cart to transport the cut stone up out of the quarries.

As there's obviously no way of using a GPS underground, the only way to find your way through the miles of passageways to the geocaches is by following directions given in the deciphered route instructions and climbing through gaps, sliding through the mud, clambering over piles of waste stone, carefully navigating rock falls and meandering through what feels like a real maze most of the time! With one of the quarries containing over 90km of passageways it's extremely easy to get lost if you are not paying full attention when exploring.

My first journey into the quarries was as a twosome to attempt 'The White Bird' (GC2GAKA) and 'The Fallen Monarch' (GC2GAMT) which are perhaps the easiest caches in the series to start with. I'll admit to getting us a bit lost and many hours underground ended in two DNF's. After more studying of the route, a survey map of the quarries, and sheer determination we returned the following day for another attempt. This time it ended in the success of two cache finds as well as being treated to seeing many interesting mining relics and graffiti. It was mind blowing. We waited for a second trip to the area to attempt the other 3 caches in the series. This time around we were kindly accompanied by BareClawz and two other caching friends, Foxscout and The Black Rabbit (Safety in numbers!). We visited the previous two caches again as well as attempting the harder 'Mind The Trains' (GC2GT74), 'Multi 1' (GC2GW7W) and the mighty 'Multi 2' (GC2K97V) which saw us spending around 3½ hours underground for just one cache! Our time underground flew by and at times we even forgot that we were in the quarries to find the caches as we were so captivated by what could be seen inside. Perhaps the most impressive and famous sight was the light shining down through "The Cathedral" on the way to 'Multi 2'. This unusual sight was formed because it was worked by hand and hauled through the vertical shaft between 1830 to 1850 as the surrounding quarry owners wouldn't allow access to the stone via their workings. This left the chamber at around 40ft wide, 200ft long, and 80-90ft high!

I've since visited the caches yet again with other caching friends, just for the adventure. I may be slightly biased, but I'll happily say that the Below Above series are the best caches that I've ever visited and worthy contenders for being some of the best caches in the country. So forget wading through ankle-biting brambles, and shoulder-high brambles for film canisters thrown in the hedge, and instead consider scrambling over rocks and crawling through mud, because I can guarantee the Below Aboves will be a caching experience that you'll never forget!!!!

## GAGB CHAIRMAN ELECTIONS: NOMINEES' STATEMENTS



Nominee: Jen Harley 'Maple Leaf'

I have been a GAGB committee member for the past 2 years and currently hold the position of Secretary. I was nominated in the Chairman elections last year, but declined as I felt I didn't have enough committee experience at that time. However, this year I feel that I am now in the position to take on the Chairman role.

Since joining the committee, a lot of progress has been made including the regular newsletter 'Seeker' and an active Facebook group—we are even trying to 'Tweet' more. I am proud to have been involved with and instigated some of the changes and certainly play an active role. However, having said that, I know there are still areas that the current committee have talked about, and that UK cachers want, that need to be progressed – the main ones being the website and updating of the guidelines.

I would really like the GAGB to be a name familiar to all UK and Irish cachers, from all listing sites - not just Geocaching.com, and

to become the first port of call when needing help or advice. I believe that the profile of the GAGB is gradually being raised and having stalls at the Geolympix and the NorthWest Mega events this summer has certainly helped spread the word. I want everyone to realise that the organisation is here to help and support UK cachers and that we are not the 'bad guys' as so often portrayed.

I have been caching since 2005 and have been an active member of the GAGB forums for the majority of that time. As well as hosting a few local events, I was Chairman of the committee for the UK's second Mega Event held in Weston-super-Mare in 2009 and am pleased to see that some of the ideas I instigated there have followed through in the subsequent UK Mega events.

I live on the edge of the Mendip Hills in Somerset, but travel all over the UK and Ireland with my job, which gives me the opportunity to attend various events and meet cachers around the country as well as being helpful in filling in my counties map – just the Shetland Islands and Western Isles to go now!

When time permits, I prefer finding caches that involve a walk of a few miles leading to a viewpoint or an interesting feature rather than a 'cache & dash' or number chasing. I tend to set myself 'personal caching targets' and this summer I completed my D/T grid – primarily for The Somerset Well Rounded Cacher Challenge and I am working towards completing the LQ challenge series and the Jasmer challenge.

The past two years on the committee have gone quickly and I would very much like to be given the opportunity to take on the role of Chairman, continue with projects already started, instigate and help with new ones. The GAGB is there for all UK & Irish cachers and I would like the other listing sites to have more involvement with the GAGB and even have a regular section in the Seeker magazine. However, to achieve this I require an enthusiastic and pro-active team to be elected onto the committee to work with me.

Jen (Maple Leaf)



Nominee: Roderick Parks 'Sandvika'

Who 'owns' Geocaching? In my view, it is all of us, the geocachers who make up our Geocaching community. We all contribute our endeavours to our community, for the benefit of our fellow members. It's all about give and take, with the capacity to bring out the best in us.

Who represents our Geocaching community in the UK? GAGB. I don't believe there is any other contender! I feel disappointment that GAGB seems to fall short of being at the heart of Geocaching in the UK. It feels rather like a project that kicked off to meet a specific need, namely landowner consent, but has not yet developed to anywhere close to its full potential. This is not a criticism of anyone or anything: GAGB is just not there yet.

When I stood for election to the committee in 2008, it was through sincere desire to help take GAGB to the next level. Unfortunately, my aspirations barely started to be fulfilled when I lost my job and by mid-

2009 I was dealing with the corrosive effects of unemployment on my nearest and dearest. Out of necessity I stopped caching and ceased to be an active member of the committee. With no improvement in my circumstances, I did not stand for re-election in 2009.

I've now been back in work for several years and my situation has normalised. I know I'm ready to give this a proper go now. Although GAGB has improved significantly, and "Seeker" magazine is an outstanding production to be proud of, my feeling is that our still-young Geocaching community has grown rapidly over the past four years whereas GAGB has not matched the pace and has lost ground. I believe GAGB stands at a juncture where either it can reinvent itself and seize the opportunity to become the focal point of our Geocaching community in UK, or else it will become marginalised and irrelevant to an increasing majority of our community.

I sincerely wish for GAGB to reinvent itself and become the pre-eminent Geocaching organisation in the UK. With this ambition for GAGB, when presented by Tony with his nomination for me to be Chairman, I realised I had to accept, because it offers me the chance to help make the crucial difference. I don't have the capacity to do this alone, so I invite you all please to vote for me on the understanding that we will chart a new course together and that all of you will have a role to play in helping to achieve new goals.

If elected, I'll need a committee that also seeks this pre-eminence for GAGB and is determined to achieve it. I am sure many of you have a great deal to offer, your enthusiasm, skills and commitment to GAGB will be what drives our reinvention. Don't hesitate to be nominated for the committee! If we have a surplus of candidates and not all can be elected, I will ensure you have opportunities for active participation in other ways.

More about me: I have been caching for 5 years and recently found my 2000th cache: I definitely prefer quality over quantity. I embrace almost the full spectrum of listing sites: OpenCaching.org.uk, TerraCaching, Navicaching, Munzees and even Garmin's OpenCaching. com, to augment the ubiquitous Groundspeak. To my chagrin, I can't yet claim a find on GPSgames.org! I'm a father of four children aged 12 to 21 and an active non-partisan parish councillor. I'm chairman of the Planning Committee and am dealing with the prospect of 2200 new houses being built on my watch, negotiating with developers and planning officers. I've worked in computer software for 28 years, supporting sales for the last 15 years.

Roderick (sandvika)

### Halloween Hides and Creepy Caches -Reincarnated

The Halloween Hides and Creepy Caches Mega Event reported in the last issue of Seeker produced some interesting images, not many of them that looked human, however. Here's a selection of pictures...make your own mind up.





### GAGB Notes...

Check out the GAGB Calendar
for a list of 'Events' and
'Camping Events'.
And keep up to date
with events specifically
in your area by creating
an Instant Notification for 'Events'.

#### Money, money, money

The GAGB can now accept donations and payment via Bank Transfer or cheque.

For further details

email donations@gagb.org.uk.



### The GAGB now has its own cache label.

Actual size: 8.8cm x 5cm. Priced at 60p each; £2.50 for 5 (plus P&P at only 50p for quantities up to 10, and £1 for 10-20.

To order contact DrDick&Vick via their profile, here. Payment to paypal@gagb.org.uk





## Members discounts...



www.ukgeocachers.co.uk

UK geocachers are happy to offer GAGB members a 5% discount on their products. In order to obtain your discount, you need to email UKgeocachers and set up an account, so that the discount is applied to each order.



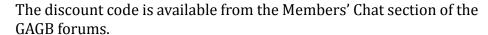
We are pleased to announce the renewal of the **15% discount** from Cotswold Outdoor which was offered last year.

More detail and the discount code are available from the Members' Chat section of the GAGB forums.



**Geotees:** For geocoins, travel bugs, caches and more. We can also have your own coins or tags made for you to your design. Please visit us at www.geotees. co.uk where **GAGB members enjoy a 5% discount**. To get your discount, open an account, then PM or email me (Mongoose39uk) through the GAGB website before you place your order. This only needs to be done once, the discount will then be applied to all future orders.

GeocacheKit are pleased to be able to offer all GAGB members a 5% discount on all items on the website www.geocachekit.co.uk. Including geocoins, trackables, readymade caches and much more.







**Pulse72Geocaching** are happy to offer GAGB members a 10% discount on their wide range of geocaching products – see www.pulse72geocaching.co.uk.

The relevant discount code is available from the Members' Chat section of the GAGB forums.



**Cicerone Press** are pleased to offer GAGB members a **discount of 20%** on **all** Cicerone titles purchased online at www. cicerone.co.uk.

All members need to do to claim the discount is to add the voucher code 'GAGB' on the shopping basket page of the Cicerone website.

**NE GEOCACHING SUPPLIES** are happy to offer GAGB members a 5% discount on their wide range of geocaching products – see www.negeocachingsupplies.co.uk.

