



Geograph Newsletter 18

November 2022

Welcome to the latest Newsletter

This is the first newsletter to follow on directly from our bi-monthly Board meetings, the most recent of which was held over Zoom on 16th November. Your Board is aware that communications with the Members leave room for improvement, and the issuing of more regular Newsletters, with information about the recent meeting, is one way we have decided to address this. It's a longer read than the old style Newsletters were, as we have decided to include the text of reports prepared for the meeting. We hope you find these useful and of interest.

Fundraising and Costs

Advertising

The meeting received a report from David Martin on the recent advertising consultation survey: a statistical summary and full text responses had been circulated to all trustees.

Firstly, many thanks to those who took part in the consultation survey. There were 40 responses, all from Company members or registered users. Many responses included detailed and constructive comments, although the latter ranged across topics broader than just advertising. These have all been noted, but did not display any consistent new themes.

The key consultation findings are that 65% felt that they had been unaffected by the advertising trial and 35% had noticed ads, but it had not negatively impacted on their use of the site. This is primarily because almost all adverts have been displayed to external site visitors (i.e. not logged in) who come to the site primarily through web searches. 80% of respondents supported continuation of advertising, while a further 15% supported continuation subject to some (unfortunately mutually incompatible!) conditions – not everyone answered that question. 95% of respondents supported continued experimentation to increase revenue.

Several respondents had actively experimented with different scenarios,

logging out and viewing the site from different devices and locations. Free-text responses included detailed suggestions about the placement and selection of advertisements, but these are not under our direct control and each user will experience advertising slightly differently. Geograph (as a publisher) subscribes to an advertising provider (Infolinks.com) and is able to set some basic parameters, including on which of our pages ads are displayed and whether the experience differs once users are logged in. The provider's algorithms then determine ad selection (from their panel of advertisers), while the user's device and browser play a major part in determining placement and appearance.

Advertising revenue is generated from micropayments based on both ad views and clicks, calculated in US dollars and paid monthly in arrears, so future income cannot be precisely estimated. Present levels looks likely to provide a continuous income stream of around £1700 per annum. Once set up, this requires minimal input and is adaptive to site usage levels, and is therefore seen as a very worthwhile contribution to our overall revenue. In light of the consultation responses, the trustees have agreed to undertake further analysis of updated site usage statistics to identify additional ways in which the Infolinks income could be increased, without impairing site functionality.

Calendar

After some technical issues, that have now been resolved, Alan Murray-Rust has reported that the calendars should be leaving the printers in the coming days. There may of course be a delay in receiving them owing to the postal workers' strike.

Appeal

Michael Dibb, our Treasurer, reported an excellent response to the latest appeal. It yielded nearly £5000 in one-off donations, and a further £100 per month in Direct Debits. A heartfelt thank you to everyone who made a donation, and to everyone who continues to do so regularly, helping ensure Geograph's viability.

Movement for Good – a possible source of a grant

Stephen Craven has alerted us to a possible source of funding – but we need to nominate Geograph Project to try to get this. He says:

It's basically a sort of annual free raffle for funding open to any English charitable organisation - the more people who vote for a particular charity, the more chance we will get one of the £1000 grants, which are unrestricted. If this can be shared on our social media we can encourage people to vote for us.

To nominate us, you can search by charity number (1145621)

Link: <https://movementforgood.com/>

Education

The Board is aware of how important and central to the ethos of the Geograph Project Education is, and that this remit needs to be improved and expanded.

David Martin presented a report on recent meetings held with the education teams at the Royal Geographical Society and Ordnance Survey.

At each meeting David provided a quick overview of Geograph, focusing on the Board's desire to update our education strategy and reinvigorate the educational benefits of the project, but that we can't just do this from within our own contacts and are therefore keen to reach out to people like themselves and explore how we can work with them.

They were all already aware of Geograph but, prompted by our recent contact had also taken a closer look at our main and schools sites - and were really impressed by the size and richness of the image database.

RGS are well-networked with other organizations involved in supporting Geography education and were able to see how Geograph imagery could easily be worked into some of their CPD resources. RGS work with various resource authors and could readily see that more use could be made of Geograph images. They are very willing to promote Geograph to their teacher network (2000+ receive regular mailings). They run a CPD programme for Geography teachers, typically 30-60 minute online training opportunities, organized about a term in advance.

Both teams' assessment is that our current schools site is too fussy and complicated to really help teachers or pupils get into the image database and find what they need - the old-fashioned style template and large number of items on the page are out of step with modern educational resources, which will discourage those used to a Google search bar. However, they all agree that the underlying image database with all the rich locations, tagging and descriptions are great. For the longer term, a very simple schools site which puts image search up front would be far more usable and easier to pitch, as would example resources. Geograph images are directly linked into the web interface to the OS Digimap for Schools service, which permits a user to go to a location and search for nearby images.

Some specific suggestions for ways forward were then discussed. Please contact David or any Board member if you would like to read the full report including these suggestions.

It was recommended that we also talk with the Geographical Association who are probably most active in creation of resources for Geography teachers, but noted that educational book publishers and even some large academy chains are active in this field too.

Communication

A message was received from a Geograph member proposing a crowdfunding campaign to archive the site to preserve it in the worst-case scenario of the project being wound up. After discussion, it was agreed this was not necessary

at this time because the site is constantly changing, and images are already being transferred to the Internet Archive. Board Member Mark Anderson oversees all the archiving – and he explains his approach here.

The ideal archiving solution for us would be:

- 1. Able to cope with the size of Geograph's collection*
- 2. Easy to update as the collection grows*
- 3. Low or minimal cost*
- 4. Easy to access*

Our current preferred solution is the Internet Archive project aka the Wayback Machine. This scores highly across all 4 of our criteria and is completely free so the only input from our side is the time and effort needed to archive pages. Therefore, I don't think that crowd-funding is needed. I am managing to keep on top of new submissions (image ID 7,340,000 is the latest I have archived) and I also find time to check some of the older contributions in case any have been missed (currently at image ID 2,973,000 and counting backwards). I have noticed that some contributors are adding their own images to the Internet Archive soon after they are moderated and this helps to share the load so thank you!

A second suggestion for a 20-year anniversary fundraising campaign was noted: one outcome could be the school site noted above or a redesign of the landing page for the main site to modernise its appearance.

Media

The long-awaited article for *The People's Friend* was in the September edition. Unfortunately, the journalist I (Ruth) was working with was not told exactly when it would be used, so couldn't tip me off. However, we have permission to share the article among Geograph Members (and my thanks for this to those at *The People's Friend*) so I have attached it at the end of this Newsletter.

Operational issues

Barry will meet somebody from Amazon to try to negotiate a reduction in the cost of site-hosting fees. Some users had noted a slow response time but in general things are pretty quiet, including the forums. The longer-term requirement to make the site more mobile and tablet friendly was noted.

Contact us

As ever we value comments and suggestions, whether on the "Trustees" section of the Forum, or direct to us by email to trustees@geograph.org.uk

Image credit

Ossian's Hall, Hermitage Bridge and the Braan River

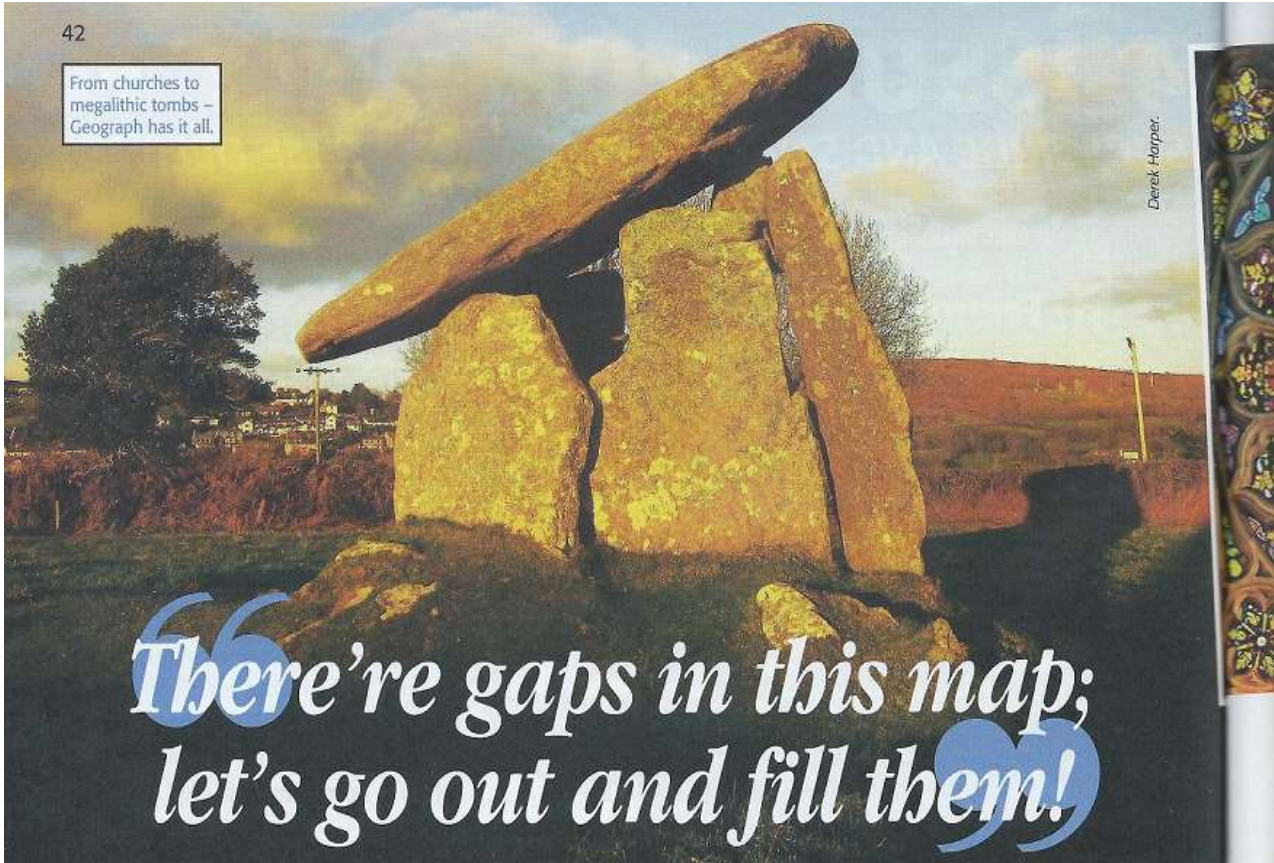
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The directors of the company and trustees of the charity are:

Mark Anderson, Sebastian Ballard, Stephen Craven, Michael Dibb (Treasurer and Company Secretary), Bill Harrison, Barry Hunter, Christine Johnstone, David Martin (Chair) and Ruth Sharville.

From churches to megalithic tombs – Geograph has it all.



Derek Harper.

*There're gaps in this map;
let's go out and fill them!*

"If I can learn to upload pictures, anyone can!"



Mike Parker.

Percy Tomos.

Honorary Geograph patron Mike Parker is an award-winning author and broadcaster, whose books about the UK include "Map Addict" and "On The Red Hill".

When the site was launched, one of the founders wrote, "Has anyone stopped to think about what a huge project this is?"

It's probably just as well they didn't! The images include scanned historical photographs and contemporary digital ones.

There are plenty of squares in the more remote parts of Scotland and the Republic of Ireland still to be photographed.

Geograph has grown to be one of the most important and accessible archives on the internet.

As a writer about these islands, I've used it so much. If I can learn to upload pictures, anyone can!

It's also a community – there are blogs, discussion boards, tips and hints, games and competitions, polls and all manner of participation.

We hope that even more people get involved!

Ali Henderson meets the map maestros capturing every corner of the UK on film.

WHO knew there was an organisation that actually snapped and archived every part of Great Britain and Ireland? The Geograph project, founded in 2005, does exactly that.

More than 13,000 volunteer photographers have contributed seven million images since then. From churches and cathedrals to roads, fields, pubs and even the odd megalithic tomb, nothing is out of bounds.

Geograph's mission is to make available to the public, via an open source website, images of every kilometre grid square on the map in Britain and Ireland.

Retired tourism officer Anne Burgess has been involved with the site since it began.

"I got my first camera when I was eight," she



Anne Burgess.

Hazel Milne.

explains. "I've always taken photographs.

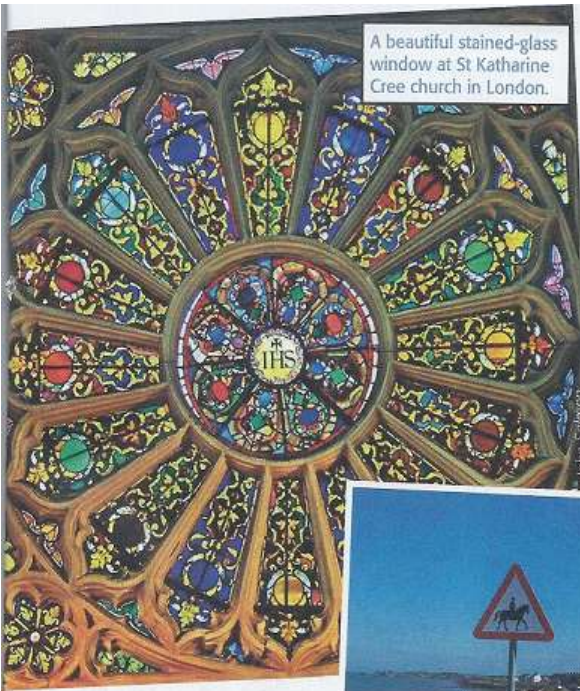
"I like landscapes and stuff like that, but there didn't seem to be an awful lot to do with them.

"Somebody said they'd found this website interesting, so I had a look and thought I could contribute to that," she says.

"You could use photographs you'd taken in previous years.

"Then I thought – there're gaps in this map; let's go out and fill them!"

"To start with, you looked



A beautiful stained-glass window at St Katharine Cree church in London.

John Schirren



The attention to detail within Geograph is fascinating.

Ross Griffiths

for a good square on the map that had no photographs in it.

"You went out and got yourself into that good square and took some photographs.

"These days, most accessible squares have been done, so it's a matter of adding to what's there.

"So if I go out for a walk I take my camera and make sure I take a photo of every square that I go through!"

Anne, who has submitted 42,093 photographs, enthuses about all the best things about Geograph.

"Probably the best thing initially was that it got me out walking and cycling.

"I've learned a huge amount about the local area – about things that were rather a closed book to me before."

Geograph seems such a source of knowledge. Anyone can log in and peruse images.

"I do enjoy seeing other people's pictures, and also finding out where the gaps are," Anne enthuses.

"Say I'm thinking of going to Aberdeen, I might look at the map and see what there is in the way of squares that haven't got photographs.

"Obviously Aberdeen's well covered, but there might be some little places outside that are well

worth photographing.

"Different people see things from different angles and show them in diverse ways, which is fascinating."

The attention to detail within Geograph is impressive.

Anne is particularly interested in creating content for the Sea of Stones, a collection that documents changes of the sea.

"I look at Spey Bay, where the changes are quite dramatic.

"The sea is coming well in from where it actually was, and you can see it because the World War Two defences are actually being washed away.

"I've been making a positive attempt to document that," she explains.

"The other day I actually got a couple of shots of tank traps that used to be standing upright, and now are falling down the beach as the sea's encroaching."

Meeting up with other



Ruth Sherville.

"Geograph was a match made in heaven for me!"

Ruth Sherville is a trustee and contributor to the site.

I joined in 2007 as a result of my involvement with a now defunct site called Church Crawlers. Some of the photographers linked their photos to Geograph, so I investigated.

Being a geography and geology graduate, and one who enjoys maps and photography, it was a match made in heaven for me!

I enjoy sharing my photos – it seems a shame to keep them to myself and it's lovely when someone contacts you and says they'd like to use one. I've had pictures used in all sorts of publication, including "BBC History" magazine, several websites and some books.

Geograph initially helped me to get to know the local area a lot better a few years after we initially moved here, when I was keen on getting "first Geographs" – being the first person to upload a photo for a particular square on the map.

Latterly, as a trustee, I have had the chance to learn more about how the project works, what its value is and why it is worthwhile. I have made a new set of friends and acquaintances as a result.

And, as we say on the home page, it helps me get out more! I take my camera for a walk (where others might take their dog!) and take photos of places I have never been to. I get a chance to indulge my instinct to "collect" new map squares as I go, without actually acquiring any stuff!

contributors is always something to look forward to.

"We have a meeting every year, often in places I never would have gone, like Southampton, Wakefield, Sheffield.

"Nobody would ever think of going to Wakefield, but it was really interesting, with lots of good buildings, the river, the canal and things like that!" she explains.

There are touching moments, too.

"We get e-mails from people from all over the place. They say things like, 'You photographed my great-granny's croft.'

"Even if it's falling down, that gives you a nice warm glow."

Geograph may primarily sound like it's a niche site for geography fanatics, but Anne reveals that

involvement generally includes a fair amount of physical activity.

"I've walked the whole Moray coast from Findhorn to Fraserburgh," she muses.

"Apart from an exceptionally tough couple of miles around Pennan that I haven't done.

"I've done the fishwives' walk from Keith to Buckie, and put that up on the site, too. It's around fourteen miles."

Anne mentions in passing that tomorrow will be her seventy-fifth birthday.

Given that she looks decades younger, it's clear that Geograph is not only an increasingly valuable record of our times, but it keeps its contributors fit, too! ■

Visit geograph.org.uk to browse the Geograph site.