

# Geograph Newsletter 13

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News from around the table

## **Christine**

Geograph is an interesting mixture of generalists and specialists. Many (perhaps most) of our members and contributors have specialist knowledge and expertise, but many (perhaps most) of our website users have a general interest in the images they look at, not a specialist one.

The Board is one of the specialist groups within Geograph. Board members function both as Trustees of the charity and Directors of the company. The Board is responsible for developing and implementing Geograph's strategy, and also for managing the company. One focus for the Board at the moment is finding out the costs of migrating our data to Cloud storage. We know that our database will be more resilient and sustainable on the Cloud, but we do not yet know what the costs of moving it there will be.

On a personal note, I continue to take and upload photos wherever my travels take me, particularly for squares that have fewer photos, or some early industrial heritage.

## **Mark**

Since the last newsletter, I've been responding to privacy requests as usual. The ICO recently published some updated guidance on cookies so this is a good time to check our own use of cookies and update the information provided to site users. I'll also be reviewing the site's Terms of Use, as I'd rather have our privacy policy as a stand alone document but didn't feel that was achievable when I was getting us ready for GDPR.

Apart from that, it was great to catch up with other Geographers at the AGM in Glasgow while also learning more about a city that I last visited 30 years ago.

## **Michael**

Since the last newsletter I have been involved in the change over from BT's MyDonate to Virgin Money Giving. I have compiled the annual accounts for 2018 and filed them with HMR&C, Companies House and the Charity

Commissioners.

I also compiled the documentation required for the Annual General Meeting, and attended the very well organized AGM in Glasgow.

## **Robin**

Since the last newsletter I've been closely involved in discussions that, for example, (1) resulted in a cheating and abusive contributor being banned for a year following consultation with moderators; (2) helped clarify the issues around photos taken while allegedly trespassing; (3) resulted in the setting up of a useful email discussion group for moderators (new members always welcome). I've asked dumb questions [*no such thing!* - ed.] in the Technical group and have always had answers that have enlightened me and I hope the rest of the board in turn.

I've tried to promote the objective of a new or redesigned schools' site that will offer curated geographical content for download by teachers and students. It will be a good and appropriate way of fulfilling the charity's educational ambitions. Ruth and I have reviewed our options for funding: colleagues have agreed our recommendation to explore commercial sponsorship, and to research crowdfunding for specific projects. I've helped maintain Geograph's presence on social media, mainly Twitter <@geograph\_bi>. I've repurposed my own Instagram account <geographeye> to showcase great content from across Geograph (when I remember). We are intent on making a greater success of our social media presence. My first and only visit to Glasgow was in the late 1980s, for a landscape design study weekend and I loved it. Come the recent AGM and I fell in love with the city all over again. Discovering and recording places is at the heart of Geograph.

My fellow trustees will know that I've decided to step down at Christmas. By then I'll have been privileged to serve as a director for nine years. Life is short but my health is under control and I have a huge backlog. It's time to change course and spend more time with my photographs, and a growing family. I shall miss the meetings with congenial colleagues and the involvement in Geograph business but I shall be contributing to the site and the project in other ways.

## **Barry**

Other than the AGM, and the general ticking over of small issues, the main activity has been preparing for Geograph's move to Cloud hosting, with the rest of the technical team. This includes a review of the current technology with a mind to what we have, what we don't need, and what parts are worth upgrading, and liaising with our technology partner Tiger Computing on preparing the design for the new infrastructure. I'll give you a bit of background to all this.

Geograph has since 2006 been hosted on our own servers, housed in a

commercial datacentre. While this has offered incredible value for money, it uses significant resources of time, effort and money, in that we have to design, build, and maintain the physical servers, on a roughly 5 year cycle. This includes the ad-hoc replacing of components as they wear out, and dealing with outages caused by other issues.

However, in recent years "Cloud" computing has progressed significantly, in that renting computing and storage services is much more affordable and accessible.

So we are making efforts to reduce the maintenance burden, and ultimately work towards more resilient hosting - because using the Cloud, if a server fails, you just ditch it and rent a new one, and fixing the underlying computer(s) is someone else's problem. Long term this should also save money, as it will allow greater flexibility, and ultimately agility, to optimize using new technology.

This is also a good time to overhaul the technology used to power the site, much of which was designed in 2005/2006, using now obsolete software versions. So we need to evaluate what components are worth replacing with more modern versions. So rather than just 'moving the existing system to the Cloud', we aim to build a new infrastructure for the next 15-20 years.

## **Stephen**

Although I don't have a formal role on the Board, with several years experience as a moderator I aim to represent the views of moderators to the Board. After a couple of people stepped down recently we have 30 people undertaking initial image moderations, and a further six who only deal with suggestions (tickets). Those of us who joined the online group have regular discussions about aspects of moderation, to try and reach agreement (not that we always find a consensus). We have recently issued a survey to all moderators to find out their views on the suggestions system, with a view to making the process easier.

It's easy to see that the trustees and moderators are acting in the role of charity volunteers, but everyone involved with the project is just that, including all those who contribute images. Volunteers for any charity are ideally placed to promote it. Something we can all do is spread the word by encouraging other people to use our site to find images or learn about their area, or even to join us as a volunteer.

Linda and I enjoyed the 2019 AGM in Glasgow, a city we hadn't been to for many years. As always the fellowship, illustrated talks and guided tours were fascinating. We followed it up with a holiday in other parts of Scotland. Now I have a nice big collection of photos to go through, including many examples of "Oor Wullie"! If that's a mystery to you, look up [www.geograph.org.uk/snippet/19715](http://www.geograph.org.uk/snippet/19715)

## **Ruth**

Well, to me has fallen the task of bringing you this latest edition of the Board's occasional Newsletter, and a bumper issue it is too. Thank you to my colleagues on the Board for your insightful contributions; Barry's extended article in particular has helped me to understand the issues surrounding the technology we use, and the need for a clear and future-proof way forward.

As for me, I am continuing to work with Robin on developing some sort of fundraising strategy, and also learning more about how we could maximise the potential in using Social Media both as a marketing tool and to aid fundraising. All ideas welcome – see link at the bottom for feedback.

I think I speak for all who were there when I say that the AGM in Glasgow was excellent. It was not only well organised, but extremely interesting and enjoyable, and the weather was glorious. Thanks to all involved!

Like Stephen, I have a whole host of photos to upload as a result of a holiday in my beloved Shetland Isles just before the AGM. I just need a rainy day...

Please do get in touch with us with any comments or suggestions. The address is [trustees@geograph.org.uk](mailto:trustees@geograph.org.uk) or you can comment in the Forum.

### **Photo credit:**

The Gilbert Scott Building, Glasgow University – venue for the 2019 Geograph AGM

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The directors of the company and trustees of the charity are: Mark Anderson, Stephen Craven, Michael Dibb (Treasurer and Company Secretary), Peter Facey, Barry Hunter, Christine Johnstone (Chair), Ruth Sharville and Robin Stott.