



geograph
photograph every grid square!

Geograph Newsletter 29

November 2024



Welcome to the latest Newsletter

The lights of Diwali, the colours of the fireworks on Bonfire Night, and the realisation that Christmas is creeping up on us once more all make it clear that we are in the month of November. But what a lovely time of year to go out and take photos! Catch the colour of the beech trees, or the mist on the river, or the city lights, or whatever takes your fancy, but get out there and grab some photos.

We have a lot of important information in this bumper issue, so please do read on. As ever, please don't hesitate to have your say on the Geograph Forum or by contacting the trustees.

From David Martin, Chair of Geograph

As we near the end of 2024 I am taking this opportunity to update members on various matters from the Board – and of course to wish you all a peaceful and Happy Christmas and New Year! I've divided the following into "Cabinet Reshuffles", "Budget News" and "Birthday Honours", but promise you no other political references...

Cabinet reshuffles

It is now over 6 months since the sudden death of our Secretary and Treasurer Michael Dibb and the trustees have undertaken a huge amount of work to take over all his responsibilities. One of our main challenges has been the unique and complex methods of updating the registrations of trustees and company directors used by the many organizations that we deal with. These are still not

all complete, which has necessarily delayed us in various ways – for example in being able to reclaim this year’s Gift Aid payments. We continue to progress, sometimes discovering new quirks as another subscription comes up for renewal, and I am massively grateful to Mark Anderson and Richard Rogerson especially, who have taken on the newly separated roles of Secretary and Treasurer, essentially without any handover notes. Please be assured that we are now seeking to ensure that more than one person is registered to act for us in all important matters and that we are reviewing and updating the documentation of all our processes as far as possible.

Now that we have had time to take stock, we are actively seeking to recruit one or two new Trustees. The Charity Trustees are also the Company Directors and have collective responsibility for the running of the Charity and Company. We meet as a board – usually virtually – around six times each year, in addition to correspondence and some subgroup meetings in between. If you think you might have relevant skills (especially financial, business or education) and would be interested to join us, do please get in touch directly with myself and I’d be happy to explain more about how we work and explore whether this could be something for you.

Budget news

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will see a summary financial report from our new Treasurer. I am extremely grateful to all those whose support Geograph through their donations, both regular and occasional. We have a very simple economy, with most of our income from regular donors and almost all our expenditure being the web hosting and support services that are essential to maintaining the site. These are supplemented by fundraising activities such as advertising on the website and calendar sales and we continue to seek new avenues to supplement that income, but there are next to no external funders willing to pay charities’ core recurrent costs. We regularly review the maze of web hosting price structures and deals to ensure these services are purchased as economically as possible (while not overdoing it and noticeably impacting website performance!) Earlier this year we were privileged to receive a legacy of £10k. As we have got to grips with the 2024 finances and are now able to reasonably project income and outgoings for the whole year, it is clear that although we currently have cash reserves, there is an emerging trend that our regular income (and the associated Gift Aid reclaims) are starting to fall behind regular outgoings. Inevitably, we lose some regular donors over time and others understandably find their own finances stretched after several years of high inflation, but we also experience our own form of “fiscal drag” whereby regular donations that have remained the same for several years are simply worth less in terms of 2024 costs. If you are a regular user of the site and don’t currently contribute financially, or if you are able to make a small increase in your regular giving, or indeed if you give regularly but don’t currently use Gift Aid, do please get in touch with Richard. One-off donations can always be made via the Donate page <https://www.geograph.org.uk/help/donate> on the Geograph website.

Birthday honours

In 2025 we shall be celebrating Geograph’s 20th Birthday. Barry advises that the “official” birthday will be 12 March (which we are now calling “Geograph Day”), but there doesn’t seem any reason not to mark the event throughout

the year! We are keen to use this opportunity wherever possible to build and extend the Geograph community.

Summer meet - in response to feedback from previous attendees, we would particularly encourage Members to attend the 2025 Annual Meeting, which will be framed as a social occasion incorporating speakers, guided tours and the AGM, and is planned to be held at the University of Bradford – provisionally in the second half of May, due to the availability of their meeting space.

Confirmation of dates and further practical details will follow via the website and member emails, but we are hoping for a bumper turnout for this main 20th anniversary event.

Anniversary outings - if you are a frequent user of the website, you will likely be aware of others who submit photographs in your region but whom you have never met. We are encouraging you to suggest an anniversary outing in 2025 by simply choosing a day that you intend to go out with your camera to an interesting location and advertise it via the Geograph Events page

<https://www.geograph.org.uk/events/> inviting others to join you. Depending on your tastes, that could be anything from a walk around some ancient city walls to a country ramble, and might begin or end at a favourite pub or coffee shop, but it need be nothing more than you would enjoy doing anyway, regardless whether anyone comes along. Do give an indication of the distance/duration and terrain in the description! If you are going on an anniversary outing, then why not invite a friend to bring their camera as well – share the enjoyment of Geograph and maybe even encourage them to join? We will be creating a new shared description for images from these events, so that we can identify and showcase the collection at the end of the year. Keep an eye on the events page for anything going on in your area and let the organizer know if you're planning to attend.

Anniversary photos – this is a well-established formula of submitting photos around midday on Christmas Day and New Year's Day, but why not make a point of submitting some photos taken around 12th March 2024, Geograph Day? How about planning to revisit some early photographs for the anniversary to show what has changed? One of Geograph's great benefits as an archive is the growing timeline that shows how landscapes and neighbourhoods have changed – again, those images could serve us well in generating external articles and news stories and we'll create a shared description for these.

Raising awareness – the Board is wanting to use the opportunity of the 20th anniversary to re-establish relationships with other cognate organizations with a view to developing both membership and funding, as well as seeking to place some positive news stories. If you are involved in other activities that have some crossover with with Geograph – either our broad educational mission or the photography hobby – please consider whether there is scope for us reaching out to that organization in some way and letting us know.

Other activities - We are working through a longer list of suggestions, which may include an educational photography prize, but which potentially involve partnership with other organizations, so this article will definitely not be the end of the birthday honours list.

David

<https://www.geograph.org.uk/profile/13502>

From our Treasurer, Richard Rogerson

When I wrote a few words in the June newsletter I started by saying I was on an extremely steep learning curve – as we approach the end of our financial year, the curve still seems pretty steep with new challenges still appearing. However, just to confirm what I also said in June – accounting records are being updated and no payments have been missed.

At the recent Board meeting I shared a spreadsheet showing income and expenditure for the first 9 months of 2024 – this is summarised below.

	Nine Months end 30/9/24	Nine Months end 30/9/23
Income - Donations, inc. Gift Aid	£27045	£16236
- Advertising	£596	£1717
- Interest	£914	£478
Expenditure - Website Operation	£15437	£18712
- Administration	£1144	£924
- Financial	£227	£2365
Net Income	£11746	(£3030)

A few short observations on the above:

- Donations – This includes the legacy of £10k as well as a separate one-off donation of £1k
- Financial expenditure at this point in 2023 was higher due to depreciation of equipment, which is no longer on our balance sheet.
- Advertising revenue is down (a trend that is common across the charity sector), but we are benefiting from the current favourable interest rates.
- Barry constantly seeks best deals for website hosting, so this month we have paid £5k for a 'buy two years, get a third free' (£5k) deal which is not included in the above expenditure. This will affect the end of year net income figure but will be beneficial in the following years.

We were able to benefit from the deal described above as we do have a reasonable level of cash reserves. However, as David has noted in the 'Budget News', it is clear that regular outgoings are now exceeding the income we receive from donations and other sources.

Richard

From our IT expert, Barry Hunter

Calling all AI enthusiasts! We're hosting a competition on Kaggle to see if AI can automatically suggest tags for Geograph photos. We've provided a dataset to get started: <https://www.kaggle.com/competitions/predict-geographic->

[context-from-landscape-photos/](#). Building and training custom image classification models takes effort, so this is an experiment to see what's possible.

[In my ignorance, I asked Barry for a bit more information about Kaggle, <https://www.kaggle.com/> as one who had never heard of it. So in case you're asking, it's an online community for AI research. It won't mean much to you unless you're involved in the field. They let you host informal 'challenges' to build new algorithms. ED]

Calendar 2025

Your calendars should be with you this month. Please get in touch with Alan Murray-Rust if you haven't received your order by 30th November. We don't have an absolute final figure for the money raised this year, but it's in the region of £750. Thank you to Alan for all his work, and to everyone who submitted an order.

Out and about a bit further - Geographing Germany

Have you had a look at Geograph Deutschland recently? There's a link on our home page. It's our sister site and uses the same basic software as us. It's bilingual – you can search and submit in either English or German. Or sometimes both!

The site is not as full of images as ours. There are just over 250,000 compared with our 7,000,000+ and only 17% of the possible squares have been photographed. But you can search a wide variety of topics – from Abenddämmerung <https://geo.hlipp.de/photo/177866> to Zunftbaum <https://geo.hlipp.de/photo/95208> .

Contact us

We always value comments and suggestions, whether on the "Trustees" section of the Forum at <https://www.geograph.org.uk/discuss/index.php?action=vtopic&forum=22> or direct to us by email: trustees@geograph.org.uk

Image credit

2014 Diwali lights along the Leicester Golden Mile

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The directors of the company and trustees of the charity are: Mark Anderson (Company Secretary), Sebastian Ballard, Stephen Craven, Bill Harrison, Barry Hunter (Treasury team), Christine Johnstone, David Martin (Chair), Richard Rogerson (Treasury team), and Ruth Sharville.