

*ISSUE 42*

*SUMMER 2020*

# SEEKER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE GEOCACHING ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN

**FINDING YOUR  
GEOCACHING  
MOJO**

**HOW TO CREATE  
AN EARTHCACHE:  
TIPS AND TRICKS**





# SEEKER **42** IN THIS ISSUE...

**Cover:** Start Point lighthouse, near GCI0WT. Courtesy of Griff Grof.

**Above:** View towards the Vale of Evesham, GCI1AKGY. Courtesy of Griff Grof.



The **Geocaching Association of Great Britain** is the leading UK Geocaching body, recognised by and acting on behalf of geocachers. The Association was established in 2003 to provide a national organisation that represented geocaching, and to serve as a UK point of contact for geocachers, landowners, the media and others with an interest in geocaching. Find us online at [www.gagb.org.uk](http://www.gagb.org.uk).

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# Meet the Committee



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*sharant*  
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# Chair's Message



I hope you are all well and hopefully starting to go geocaching again. Last week would have been Piratemanía and the Annual UK Mega event in Sussex, such a shame we all couldn't be there meeting all our friends but hopefully we can make next year's Megas even more memorable.

In this summer's edition we have an article on finding your caching mojo to get you back into geocaching after the lockdown.

This issue we are showcasing EarthCaches, a love or hate geocache type. We speak with one of the UK EarthCache Reviewers on their pet hates as an EarthCache reviewer and then an article on how to create an EarthCache. Hopefully this will encourage you all to love them and set more EarthCaches for us all to find.

Sometimes muggles and the police spot us whilst geocaching, so we have a great article on law enforcement interaction whilst geocaching.

We have some articles on your geocaching music playlist, Islay's nine distilleries, and my celebratory birthday cache.

This issue also contains an obituary for Steve Bolam (Madyokel), who was a much-loved member of the UK geocaching community.

Enjoy the rest of the summer and stay safe.

**Sharon Reid**  
*GAGB Chair*



# NEWS ROUND-UP

## GAGB CITO Week Postponed

Due to the current situation, and the uncertain future, the Committee have decided to postpone the GAGB's annual September CITO Week.

We are hoping that it will be able to take place in spring 2021 instead. However, this is subject to change. An update will be provided nearer the time.



## Mega Event Updates

Piratemanía will be back on July 29th 2021 with an extra day (Monday August 2nd) - add it to your diary!

The Geolympix is now officially postponed, but the team hope that the event can still be held later in 2020. The full announcement can be read [here](#).

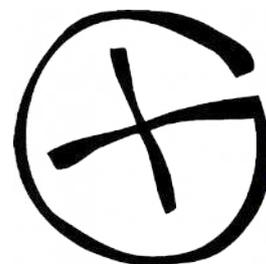


## Maintenance Sweeps

The UK reviewers have announced that they will start looking at geocaches that have been disabled for a long time and/or have low health scores from this Sunday (Aug 16th). So, make sure that you maintain your caches ASAP or (if you are isolating) post a new note on your cache page(s) to keep the reviewers updated.



# SEARCHING FOR MY MOJO BACK TO CACHING!



BY MAATTMOO

Don't say it. Just not that word. We have all been doing what we can to avoid it but as the world starts on its journey back to some sort of normality so does Geocaching. For many of us the lockdown caused a complete stop. And now how do we get back going? Here are my steps to get back into the game...

## DO THE CACHES YOU ENJOY

Start looking at the map again for caches you enjoy. For me it was Virtuals and EarthCaches to start as I wanted to be cautious at first. I love the history and interesting facts you learn from them. Then I moved on to a few traditionals which were nearby and then a small series. Build up from afresh. Remember how you first got started. Start off slowly and build up gradually.

## DON'T GIVE UP

Set yourself small goals or targets, like maybe hitting your next milestone, whether that is 100, 500, or 5000. Keep your target small and achievable so you get the great feeling when you reach it. Make a plan of what caches you intend to look for and stick to your plan. I have set myself one day a week to go out caching, for the first month, no matter what else happens I am going out. Just don't give up on your targets.

## MIND YOUR INNER VOICE

Remember to congratulate yourself. Talk yourself up on the positives. My first series I went searching for I struggled to find some, I got hung up by the ones I couldn't find. I wanted to give up but the car was still several caches away. I had to pass them, so I might as



*An enjoyable cache*

well look for them. And I found them! Afterwards as I was logging all the ones I had found, I remembered to say well done to myself for finding so many and that felt good. I wanted to go out again for another walk rather than dwell on the DNFs.

## SUPPORT

Chat with friends and family about your hobby. Talk to people you know love this game too. At the moment I have only been out once with just one other person, so if like me you can't go out as a group, keep talking to your friends. They can help you keep on track and they can help suggest new targets too.

## **NEW CACHES**

Try placing a new cache. Hide a new cache for the rest of the community to enjoy. I had taken time during lockdown to sort out my cupboards and found more empty geocaches than I thought I had, (much less than my husband claimed though). I have used most of them to maintain my previous hides. But also a new couple are on the way too. It feels rewarding watching the first logs come in on your new hide even if you've hidden many before.

## **ADVENTURE LABS**

Have you tried the Adventure Lab app yet? I love Labs, and have done more labs this month than I had for the whole of last year. Labs are a great way of learning something about your local areas and one adventure is usually five labs, meaning 5 finds! Think of them as online Virtuals where you find out some info and input your answer right at the location rather than searching for a physical cache in each location. Some Adventure Labs also have a bonus "real" cache too which is another find added to your growing find total.



*You could start with Virtual caches*

## **KEEP UP TO DATE**

Log your finds and send your EarthCache and Virtual answers. Don't leave them for another day. Keeping up to date is great self motivation. You can recount your day and happy positive logs will make you feel great about your finds. Remember to thank the Cache Owner for their efforts. Be positive and kind in your logs, it will make you and the cache owner happy.

## **END WITH A REWARD**

And finally, remember to reward yourself. Whether it is a new Geocoin, or new Caching Kit. Or even just a bar of chocolate that you don't normally allow yourself. Reward yourself and tell yourself "This is for..." I have purchased myself some fun items from the upcoming Megas (London Calling and Lincolnshire Mega 2021) and a bunch of trackables ready to set off to race when we can finally organise the next caching meet.

## **UNTIL THEN, KEEP CACHING AND KEEP REWARDING YOURSELF.**



*Views on a caching walk*

# The Pet Hates of an EarthCache Reviewer

Have you ever wondered what EarthCache reviewers are (and are not) looking for? Seeker asked the UK's longest-standing Geoaware, GeoawareUK2, who shared his list of pet hates with us...

-  An inability by the cacher to read the EarthCache Guidelines.
-  Not writing EarthCache correctly - it does have an uppercase C in the middle!
-  A cacher will often see an EarthCache as an easy option. It isn't, either for the author or the reviewer
-  What is the earth science lesson? Is it correct? Is it a direct copy from some website (not allowed)? Is it copied from another EC (not allowed)? The CO needs to write their own earth science lesson and not just copy somebody else's intellectual material. Wikipedia is not always correct!
-  Are the logging tasks helping to teach something related to the topic? This will mean that the tasks will require thought from the cacher. E.g. Observe, Describe and Explain. A measuring task is a pretty low-level task. E.g. The height of a cliff does not teach you anything. No other cliff is going to be the same height. It could prove you are there but it does little else, so would have to be in addition to other good logging tasks. Similarly, a photograph, to prove the cacher was there, can only be in addition to other good logging tasks.
-  Statues, paving slabs, rocks used for sea defence ... are all building stone EarthCaches. The EC must be more than a generic cache about the rock type - there must be something very specific about the example being looked at.

Check out the next page for some specific tips and tricks on how to create your own perfect EarthCache that will satisfy both the reviewer and the cachers who visit it!

# CREATING AN EARTHCACHE

## TIPS AND TRICKS

BY RICHT2000



**Creating an EarthCache can be a daunting prospect. The rules for EarthCaches are subtly different to physical geocaches as each EarthCache must educate the visitor about an Earth Science lesson. This article will provide the reader with some of these rules along with some do's and don'ts about Earth Cache placement.**

### WHO SETS THE RULES?

The rules around setting Earth Caches are set out by the Geological Society of America via their Geosociety.org website. The website lists the rules and procedures that the Earth Cache owner must follow.

### THE LESSON

The main role for the EarthCache owner is to provide an educational "lesson" and associated on-site tasks.

The lesson must involve some aspect of Earth Science. This can include any aspect of geological materials such as rocks, minerals, fossils and soils. It can include geological processes, landforms and geological phenomena. The lesson should be focussed

on a single aspect of Earth Science.

The lesson takes the form of text and graphical information on the EarthCache page. Typically, the lesson forms the upper part of the EarthCache listing. Below the "lesson" should be a series of one or more tasks that the EarthCache visitor must perform to confirm they have read and understood the lesson.

### THE TASKS

The tasks must not assume any prior Earth Science knowledge. All information required to answer the tasks should be provided in the listing via the lesson and onsite viewing. No online research should be required to answer the tasks and you shouldn't need a Masters in Geology to complete the tasks (but I certainly find it helps).

Tasks like "Describe the colour / crystal size / layers of rock at the given location" are more acceptable than "Describe Granite" which can be answered via Google. The reviewer is looking for tasks that are specific to that location. Photo requirements can help the geocacher prove they were at the given

location. The EarthCache owner can mandate that the geocacher must provide a photo. Photos did use to be an optional task; many still are but they are now allowed to be mandatory. However, they cannot be the only task. The EarthCache Owner must provide the answers to the tasks to the reviewer as part of the review process via a reviewer note. This is to ensure that the logging requirements are of sufficient quality to be published.

### **WHERE CAN I PLACE EARTH CACHES?**

As with all other types of geocache, landowner permission is required. The GAGB holds a large database of landowner agreements which may help the EarthCache setter to get the permission required for the proposed EarthCache. Often, the EarthCache reviewer will demand to see the details of the permission if the location is inside a SSSI, AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) or similar nature reserve.

There is no proximity rule for EarthCaches so they can be placed next to or near physical

geocaches. Multiple EarthCaches at a single site are allowed provided they each provide a different lesson.

Many EarthCaches take you to a single location of geological interest. You can have an EarthCache with multiple stages with multiple tasks. The stages should be linked to the single EarthCache lesson.

EarthCaches can be placed in locations that are temporarily visited by the EarthCache owner (on holiday for example). The EarthCache owner must have visited the location less than 2 months ago. Note: The cache page and all tasks must be in the local language.

Ensure that the visitors to your EarthCache are safe. Do not ask them to visit any locations or do any tasks that may put them in danger.

### **THE REVIEW**

Like geocaches, each EarthCache must be reviewed before it is approved to be



*The Punchbowl EarthCache, The Blorenge, S. Wales (GC426ZB)*

published. EarthCaches in the UK are reviewed by a couple of specialist reviewers. These reviewers will check the content of the Earth Cache. They will check the lesson, the tasks and many other aspects of the cache listing for quality. The reviewer prefers to see tasks and questions that are specific to that site or location that cannot be answered in a general manner. You should not be able to sit at home and answer all the questions from your armchair.

### **MY CACHE IS PUBLISHED. NOW WHAT?**

You can wait for the logs and answers to your tasks to roll in. In my experience, most of the time, you will find geocachers will log your geocache at a similar time to sending in the tasks.

You should reply to the geocachers to confirm their answers are correct.

One of the joys of owning an EarthCache is reading people's interpretation and view of the location you have taken them to.

If geocachers have answered questions incorrectly, then you should work with them to help them understand their mistakes.

If a geocacher logs a find on your EarthCache without sending the answers, then the usual approach is to wait for a reasonable amount of time (7-10 days or so) and then follow it up with a friendly email or message to remind them to send in their answers.

Hopefully this article has been able to give a few hints and tips about how to create an EarthCache.



*GC1ZTTD. Photo: Griff Grof*



*GC2EX3G. Photo: Griff Grof*



*GC2BX09 Photo: Border Caz*

# Your

# Geocaching Playlist



A while ago, we asked for suggestions for your Geocaching playlist. We had lots of suggestions, and some of you did a great job of thinking outside the box (as a break from searching for the box). So, in no particular order, here is your Geocaching playlist:

**Still haven't found what I'm looking for**

*U2*



**I should be so mucky**

*Kylie Minogue*



**I would walk 500 miles (when you end up walking a lot further than you planned!)**

*The Proclaimers*



**Ain't No Mountain High Enough (to keep me from finding a cache)**

*Marvin Gaye and Tammi Terrell*



**I just can't get enough**

*Depeche Mode*



**Little boxes**

*Pete Seeger*



**Complicated (for those tricky hides or impossible puzzles)**

*Avril Lavigne*



**Call it off (when you give up on a cache and declare a DNF)**

*Tegan and Sara*



**Hunting High and Low**

*Aha*



**There it is**

*Shalamar*



**Don't give up**

*Peter Gabriel*



**Another one bites the dust...**

*Queen*



**Fool on a hill**

*The Beatles*



**The long and winding road**

*The Beatles*



**Searching**  
*China Black*



**Finally found**  
*The honeyz*



**Hard Days Night (long day out ending  
with a night cache).**

*The Beatles*



**Train to nowhere (for REALLY  
SideTracked caches)**

*Savoy Brown*



**Mud, mud, glorious mud**  
*Flanders and Swann*



**The Sign**  
*Ace of base*



**One Way Or Another (I'm gonna find ya,  
I'm gonna get ya, get ya, get ya, get ya)**

*Blondie*



**Anything by The Travel Bugs or Buggy  
Travels and the Ammo Boxes.**



**Anything**  
*Johnny G O Cash*



**Hallelujah (success song!)**  
*KD Lang*



**Stressed Out**  
*Twenty One Pilots*



**That's why I'm crying**  
*The Ivy League*



**Place your hands**  
*Reef*



**You Showed Me**  
*Lightning Seeds*



**And last, but definitely not least . . .**



**The Seeker**  
*The Who*



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Two years to go - will we be ready? Of course we will. Will we be able to put on a great show for you all? Well, that's partly up to you - you can help us.

- Become a Founder Member - vital support right when we need it at the start
- Get a commemorative mug - GAGB & Mega 2022, whichever way you look at it!
- Caching supplies - we also have lanyards and camo bags

Of course we'll add more to this shop over time - but help us out right now by wiping us out of stock. Make our volunteer team work for their, uh, time? Well, make them work anyway - they'll love it!

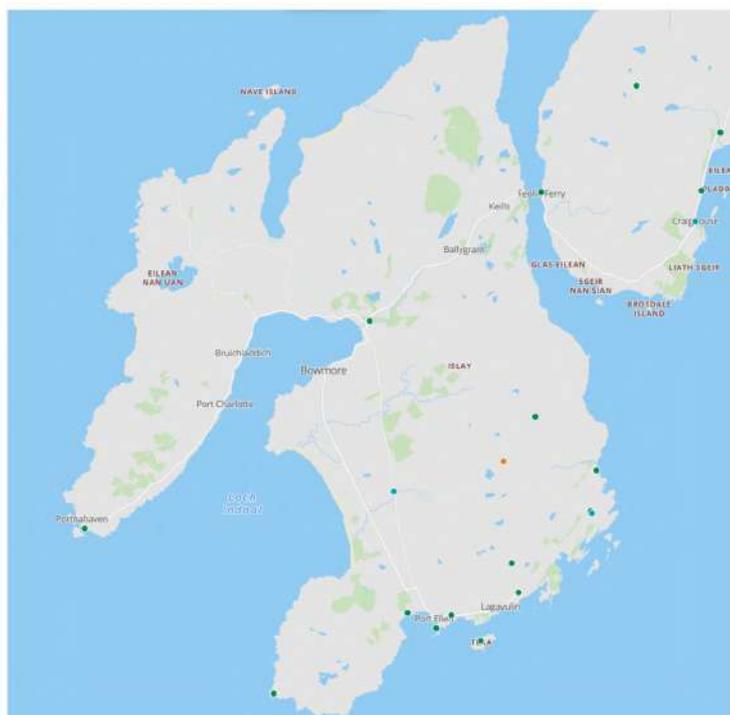
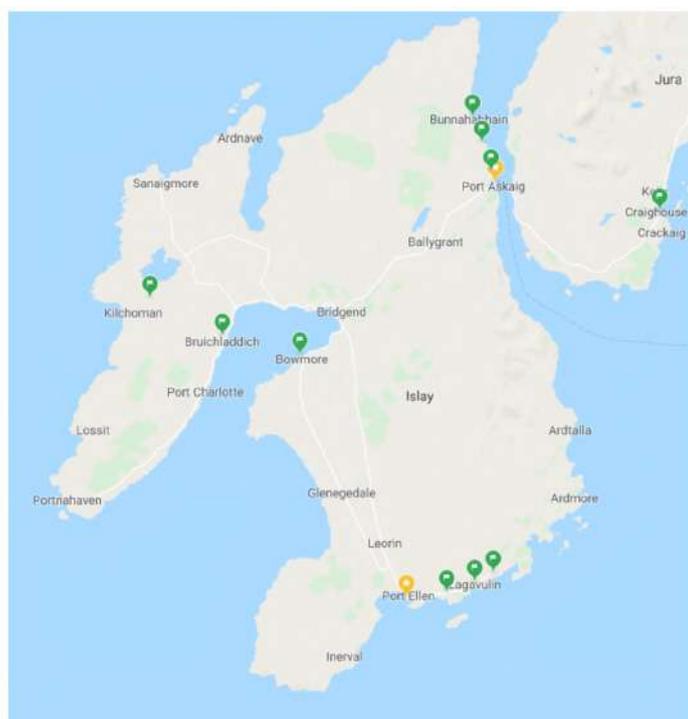
Come and join our gang on [Facebook](#), follow our [tweets](#), and come visit our [new online shop](#) - launched on August 8th, 2020 to remind us all what we'd be doing if it weren't for this darned necessary lockdown thing.

# Islay's Nine Distilleries

By Ant Reid, of sharant



Grab a bike, get on a boat, and go visit nine of the best places for Whisky in the world! Is Whisky not your thing? Then while others are in the distillery, why not get in a bit of geocaching while they imbibe? This article discusses some of the best distilleries and which geocaches on the island are must-do locations.



*Distilleries on the left, geocaches on the right. Which map is for you?*

## Practicalities

You'll arrive at one of the two ferry ports - Port Ellen in the south, or Port Askaig in the north. The best place to stay is probably Bowmore, as it's central, has the widest choice of shops & eateries, and the widest range of places to stay. Port Ellen and Port Charlotte also have accommodation, and there are AirBnBs, campsites, and such like scattered all over. Interestingly, the Youth Hostel in Port Charlotte is actually in a former distillery (closed 1929), so seriously consider that to build on the whisky theme!

**Distances:** Port Charlotte is a 30-min drive or a 90-min cycle ride from Port Ellen, so if you are planning on tasting whiskys and then journeying home, plan your accommodation well. A wobbly bike ride back to Bowmore seems reasonable from anywhere, but if you are staying at one of the ends, you'd better have a plan for safe cycling over longer distances...

**Tips:** Take several small (25ml) sealable glass containers to allow you to take home whisky samples if offered - most will supply their own mini bottles, but some don't. And you'll

need a sharpie to label them!

## Season

Avoid August, as many distilleries have an annual shut-down - for maintenance and to allow the natural water to sort itself out. Also, that's maximum midge season - if you go then, take either Smidge or Avon's Skin-so-soft, and consider applying two coats (20 mins apart) if midges are a problem for you, maybe more if you are cycling through clouds of the evil blighters.

## Drinking and Driving

Just don't do it. The limit in Scotland is so low that I recommend that you don't drive a car after even one whisky - in theory the limit is one, but that's to handle 'natural' blood chemistry and the effect of any drugs in your system, so my advice is just don't have any, if you are driving. All tours and tasters will let you take home samples, so you can designate a driver, who can 'catch up' on the tastes later.

The law in Scotland about cycling while 'under the influence' is less definite. Well, it's definitely against the law to be drunk while cycling, but the focus is on whether you are being a danger to yourself or others - and unless you are classed as 'cycling furiously', the most likely outcome is a fine at most. Use judgment and take advice from anyone and everyone around you, and if you need to rest up a bit, just do so - the countryside is amazing and well worth looking at while you sip some water and allow the 'effects' to calm down a bit... about 1 hour's rest per unit of alcohol should get you past the 'furious' stage.

Most of the roads on Islay are single track



*Ardbeg stills going out of the roof*

with passing places. Whether in a car or on a bike, be prepared to pull over and perhaps back-up to a place behind you, and remember to be polite (raise a hand!) when someone lets you past :- ) - seriously, everyone waves at you as they pass.

## Nine? Or Eight? Or ten?

One of the distilleries on this list is Ardnahoe, which only started in 2019, but they do tours. Still, perhaps there are only eight proper, running Islay distilleries, not nine? On the other hand Jura is only a hop-and-a-skip away, and they have a fully-functioning welcome centre, so maybe eight-plus-one equals nine? Or ten? I'll leave it up to you to decide which counts and which doesn't...

## Fourteen? Fifteen? Twenty? Is that all?

In the summer of 2020 I counted just fourteen geocaches on Islay, plus five more in southern Jura nearby, and one hard-to-get-to boat geocache on the islet of Texa. Most of them are in brilliant locations - so it is definitely not 'all about the numbers' here.

## Port Ellen - Peat and smoke

The three distilleries near to Port Ellen have, arguably, the strongest reputation for strong flavours. This generally comes from the peat fires, but also the water itself (yes the flavour comes through the distillation process). Ask to try the 'spirit' to taste the 'raw' flavour prior to it lying in casks. These three are all in a line along a single-track road, which has a safe path all the way back to Port Ellen. If that's where you are staying, you can have a great couple of days exploring all three (and the nearby maltings) without any transport worries. You can also use the public bus (450 or 451) to get from Port Ellen back to any of the other main towns on the island, or cycle along the less-used B8016. I suggest bikes so

you can collect the eight geocaches between Port Ellen and Claggan Bay.

## Ardbeg

They have a great visitor experience, with photo opportunities, a pretentious café, and a wide range of different tours and tasting options. Even the £5 mini tour is well worth doing, and they are rightly proud of their equipment, casks, and location. They underwent an expansion in 2019, so are now even better. A lad took us around - he was local and really knew his stuff, responding well to questions and adding extra info along the way. Besides the geocache that is right here, they also have quite a range of whiskies, so likely there will be something for you in their range. They also have one of the widest ranges of merchandise on the island, if that's your thing. While your friends are choosing which ones to buy (or dream of buying), I'm sure you - dedicated geocacher that you are - will be trudging 2km across peat and heather to the Solam Plague Village to get a cache, right?



*Claggan Bay - a fantastic and isolated beach*



*Kildalton view*

## Lagavulin

This place has a more low-key approach to visitors. It's quite atmospheric to go into the main shop, which is exactly like a porch of an Edwardian office with wood detailing and old-fashioned painting. Their bar is a fabulous (dark) hall with comfy chairs and is hard to find in the warren of buildings, and the service is personal. You won't see big coach tours here, and it's the opposite of trendy, which is perfect for some of us. As with all Islay distilleries, the whisky tends to the peatier varieties, although again they do have a range, and some aren't quite as smoky as others. Some - the pricier ones - are very smooth.

## Laphroaig

The ultimate in smoke and peat - in my own opinion too much so, but I know many good people who love this stuff, so it's worth a taste (or three). They have the widest range of tours I saw on the island, so check it out beforehand on their website to make sure you get what you want and turn up at the right time. Their five-hour picnic-peat-and-peek tour (called "Water to Whisky") is perhaps the best experience for those of you who like this whisky - but if you are booking

it for a friend, do make sure they like at least some of the stuff first! If you brought a kayak you can use the landing platform here to head over to get the boat cache on Texa - but make sure you know what you are doing - tides and currents are sometimes tricky around the islands, and phone signals are not great!

The three geocaches are farther along the road beyond the distilleries - head for Kildalton Cross for a couple, and then the brilliant Claggan Bay, where there's a geocache as well as a calm mostly sandy beach. Best by bike but there is space to pull a car off the narrow road, too.

## Port Askaig

There's nothing at Port Askaig except a ferry landing, a pub, and a shop - not even a geocache. But nearby there are three distilleries. These are not as easy to get between as with Port Ellen - designate a driver or run the risk with cycling while tipsy up hills and near cliff edges, I know which I'd do - but all three are in the area.

## Caol Ila

Due to reopen soon. A sister to Lagavulin,

the taste is smoother and more commercial, and the location is more rugged and (I think) more evocative of the Hebrides. With lovely views over to Jura, this is a good choice for a visit early in the day. The whisky can be bought widely in shops, so have a taste before you go visit (you can try it at Lagavulin too), so you can focus on the rarer stuff.

## Ardnahoe

Who knows what this will eventually taste like, eh? But they claim to have a fantastic collection of Scotch, and Hunter Laing do know their stuff so a visit, tour, and tasting session should prove to be highly educational, and a great contrast to those other distilleries who place more emphasis on their heritage.

## Bunnahabhain

Good luck pronouncing this one, or in fact any of their range. If you get one or two

syllables right, well done, close enough! This place, romantically located at the very end of a winding road, and again overlooking Jura as well as the northern tip of Islay, is a fantastic location, and the place is almost completely set up as a working plant - from rough-and-ready parking to slapped-together signage, you know that the whisky itself comes first.

The shop experience is again low-key but very enthusiastic and knowledgeable - they are rightly proud of their product. The Oloroso was especially nice, if you are okay with sweet whiskies, and they had several peaty or smoky varieties too.

There are plenty of walking opportunities north of here, too - head north for the Grim Grotto cache while the rest of your party settle in at the distillery and watch your progress. I'm sure you'll all meet up again back at the Bunnahabhain shop before it shuts...



*Bunnahabhain*



*Finnlaggan lake*

## Bowmore

Pronounced boe-MOOR, apparently, our visit here was the most professional in appearance, yet the least informative in detail. This seems to be one for the coach tours and mainstream tourists, and perhaps that is understandable, though it's perfectly possible that a more expensive tour would have played out differently. In addition we only sampled the readily-available range of whiskies you can get in any store, so we didn't get any new insights into the rarer bottles on offer at the Distillery. The whisky is nice, of course, and the experience was good - the location is so photogenic - so don't knock this one off your list, but it wasn't our favourite one.

Note that very nearby there is a small Whisky Shop - with a very wide range of reasonably-priced rare whiskies. Maybe pop-in with your card and see what tickles your fancy? Also nearby is the earth cache 'the 4th element' - very important to do this cache as it explains just why peat is so important in whisky. Don't miss it.

## Bruichladdich

The trendy place. We couldn't figure out how to buy an educational tasting session here, but the system is that you can taste any of the whiskies that you want, except not the ones over £200 a bottle. So, that kinda worked for us, but it was more guesswork than educated decision-making. Using that method, Ant decided that the £126 Octomore 9.2 was a very nice whisky, but unjustifiably expensive, so an Octomore T-shirt (and a third free taste) was acquired instead.

The nearest café seemed to us to be the hotel



*Bowmore barrels*

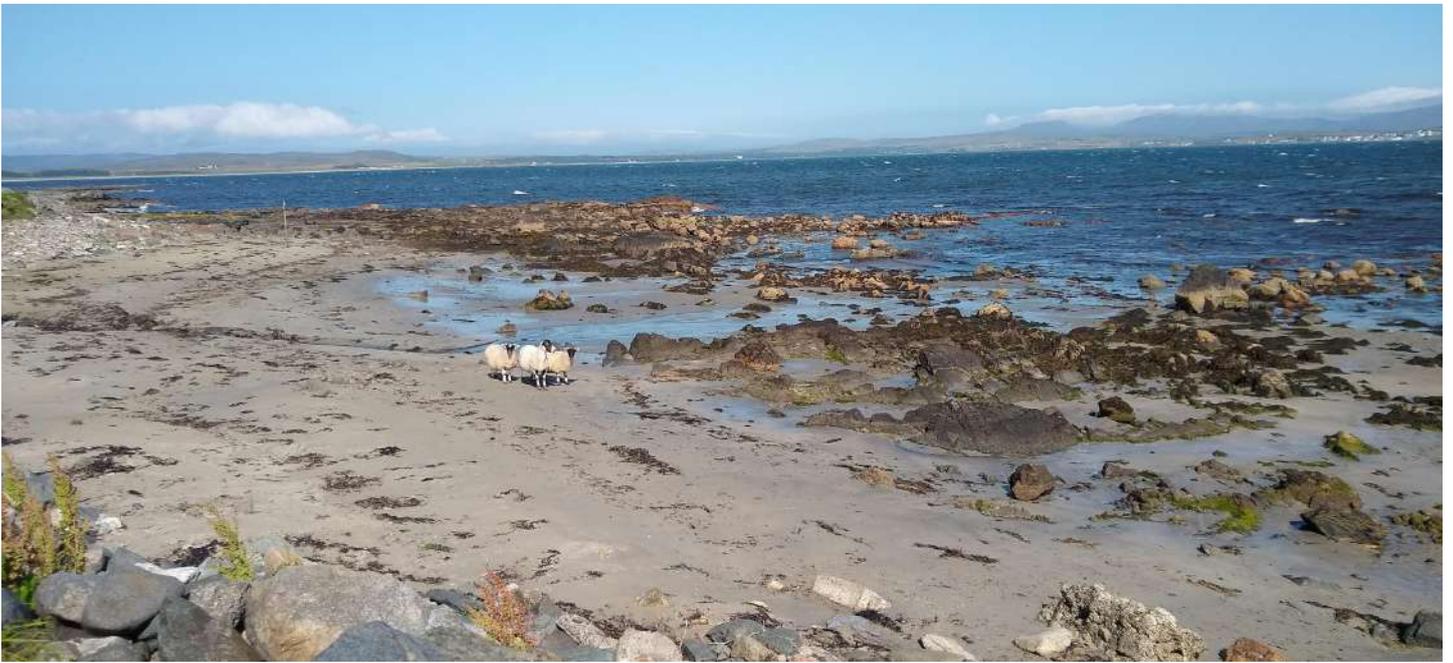


*Bowmore outside*

in Port Charlotte, which has a terrace at the rear and a well-stocked bar, too. Nice views across to Bowmore, and of course an opportunity to swim in warm weather or watch the beach sheep instead. Head farther down the road to Port Wemyss for the most westerly geocache on Islay, and stop in at Port Charlotte on your way back - where there is a hotel with a sea terrace. The youth hostel is also here, and it is in the former distillery.

## Kilchoman

Don't forget this one - little known, fairly new, and not located on the coast, it's a unique place (on a farm) and the whisky has a



*Bruichladdich beach*

unique flavour - in fact not to everyone's taste, but the place is somewhat young and maybe Anthony Wills's focus on all-local produce and independence from multi-nationals alone makes this a worthwhile side-trip while you are here. Think low-key Lagavulin and you'll be close to the taste & experience

## Jura

**Practicalities:** Get the ferry from port Askaig.

Five more geocaches! Jura is not Islay, and the whisky is not the same. Their more commercial bottles are comparatively subtle in favour - very unlike any of the Islay whiskies - and all of the tasting emphasises "lightness" and what they called "balance". Think of this as a day off from Islay's style of whisky.

Visiting Jura is a nice thing to do anyway - highly depopulated with challenging hills and just about one road, it makes for a great day out (take a picnic and a flask). Use bikes to get the full experience of the landscape, isolation, and majesty of the island - but don't

forget the last boat back to Islay is around about 6:30pm, unless you've made prior arrangements with the ferry company.

## Round-up

Nine distilleries suggests a week to get the most out of this island - or you can catch just the highlights in as few as three days (and if you have a designated driver) and still get most of the geocaches. Remember that one tour is pretty much the same as another, so except for the extremes of size and history you can skip some tours to avoid them all blending into one memory. Not so the geocaches - they are all unique and memorable, all have their beautiful setting, and each has something to reward you for your effort (and clear head).

There's more to Islay than whisky and geocaches, by the way. Several sets of Standing Stones (check Google maps), the former seat of the lord of the Isles & the MacDonald clan, beaches, a couple of good fish cafés and restaurants, and an austere round church in Bowmore. Just the thing for a mixed group of whiskey tasters,

geocaches, and history buffs, eh?

Across the island, the locations are fantastic - in any weather do take a good camera and

pose for those 'serious' style Victorian shots outside the whitewashed buildings and bonded warehouses, or on the rocks as the Atlantic seeks to 'enhance' your experience...



*Rubber duck TB*

## **Have you considered becoming a GAGB Friend?**

We currently have over 35 GAGB Friends, with at least one in each region of Great Britain (with the exception of North West England, North Wales and Southern Scotland - if you live in any of these areas, please consider signing up!).

GAGB Friends assist the committee in a variety of ways, but becoming a Friend is not a formal commitment - Friends help the committee when they can, in whatever way they can. You could serve as a local point of contact, organise GAGB events, attend events on behalf of the GAGB, help run our stalls,

offer your technical and design skills, and lots more. Friends also receive an early copy of *Seeker* to proofread, and have a shared space (in the form of a private Facebook group and forum) to chat, offer feedback and propose new ideas for the GAGB if they wish.

There are three ways to become a GAGB Friend. You can request to join the official [Facebook group](#) (please answer the questions you are presented with), email [friends@gagb.org.uk](mailto:friends@gagb.org.uk) to express interest, or ask a GAGB [committee member](#) to add you. Please note that you do not have to use Facebook to be a Friend!

We hope to have you on board!

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# Steve Bolam (Madyokel)

By Chris Johnson

Steve Bolam, 56, died suddenly on the 28th July 2020 at his home in Harrogate. His funeral service will be held on Friday 14th August at 3pm at Stonefall Cemetery, Wetherby Road, Harrogate, HG3 1DE.

Unfortunately due to restrictions in place with coronavirus, the service is limited to 20 guests. The family, however would love it if you could join them outside at the cemetery or at the wake afterwards at 4pm at Harrogate Cricket Club, St George's Road, Harrogate, HG2 9BP.

The family would be grateful if as many as possible who knew him in the Geocaching community to be there to celebrate his amazing life but do appreciate that many live quite some distance away. They ask if you are attending, to wear bright colours .

Steve's memorial will also be live streamed via Obitus <http://www.obitus.com> - UN: Vicu6222 PW: 364556

Alas his faithful dog Bella also crossed the rainbow bridge later the same week. He is survived by his wife Maria and daughter Katie.

Steve was a stalwart of the Geocaching community since finding his 1st geocache in January 2005.

Although a qualified Electrical Engineer outside Geocaching which took him all over the UK he dedicated much of his time to enjoyment of others and the organisation of Geocaching Mega events in the UK. He was committee member of the 1st ever Geocaching Mega event held in Harrogate in 2008, a committee



member on the NW Mega Cartmel in 2012 and the Yorkshire Mega again in 2018. He was also a member of the Stakeholders Group and of course a principle Pirateman steering Captain along with Bob Aston who took over the event from Liane and Mark in 2014.

He was one of the very few Geocachers who have attended every UK mega since their conception in 2008.

Steve was a Yorkshire man through and though, born and brought up and schooled in Yorkshire. Having spent time in the SW he returned to his roots when he settled in Harrogate with Maria in 1995.

The geocaching community has lost a unique asset and he will be missed by so many of his Geocaching friends and acquaintances.

We ask you to raise a glass to Steve to thank him for being a part of our Geocaching family and encouraging us to believe in ourselves.

# Law enforcement interaction whilst out caching

By Geocaching Womble

Occasionally when out caching you may be stopped by the police, and there may be a lot of people who do not know what to do in the event of being stopped by a law enforcement agency whilst out in the field. As well as the police, this advice will also help when asked what you are doing by muggles.

Sometimes geocachers may get mistaken for suspicious individuals, or thought to be committing an offence.

If you are approached by any law enforcement or military personnel whilst out caching the following steps should be taken:

1) They should identify themselves as law enforcement and ask you what you are doing.

2) You should calmly explain to them the concept of geocaching which is to use a GPS device to find hidden items and explain that you are geocaching. In most cases this will be enough of an explanation.

3) If they are still insistent on taking things further show them the app or GPS device you are using and / or the cache information.

They may even help you look for the cache!

At all times be polite, helpful and answer any questions posed to in a calm and courteous manner and this will normally be enough.

Good communication is essential for all geocachers and should be regularly practiced by all.

*Write an article for*

# SEEKER

**Email all articles:**

**[editor@gagb.org.uk](mailto:editor@gagb.org.uk)**

# Happy Birthday, Sharon

By JenntheFunkyRanger



Back in February this year, before life as we know it changed more than we could ever have imagined, our very own Sharon (sharant) had a special birthday.

One January evening my Facebook messages went ping – I'd been added to a message thread by Ant (the other half of sharant), who had been using an afternoon with Sharon out of the house to start planning a birthday surprise with Team Smileys. However, he'd had to add me in later on, as Sharon was actually occupied by assisting me plumbing in my dishwasher. It would have all gone wrong from the off if I'd got the message then.

We were challenged with coming up with a creative, challenging puzzle cache for Sharon. Ideas, materials that could be used (a piece of the kitchen cupboard we removed, and the smelly waste pipe didn't make the final cache), but it was GrahamtheGray that really came up trumps with his IT skills, creating a website with questions to be answered either at home, or out in the field, creating a puzzle cache with multiple locations to be visited.

Fast-forward to the beginning of February. We'd all seen each other the week before at an event, and plans had to be whispered in ears to prevent Sharon from overhearing. We

all left with a "See you soon" and a wink, knowing that it would actually be the following weekend, where on Saturday lunchtime me, Manx Rose, Border Caz, GrahamtheGrey, Caslu26, and Railway Folk arrived at sharant HQ. Of course, Sharon being Sharon she'd not only figured out that people were coming over for a birthday party, but who it would be.

After a buffet lunch, Sharon was presented with a web link, and so the challenge started.



*The webpage*

The first question was incredibly easy, and gave her a set of coords, which were misread and resulted in her searching her own kitchen. Once on the right lines, we were able to progress a bit, and jumped into two cars for a trip out to the next stages. Teamwork was definitely needed, though we let the birthday girl put in most of the work, with only a tiny amount of assistance from Graham.

We came unstuck at one location where the mobile signal was poor, but fortunately we were able to have a pit stop at the café there,



*Near the cache site (1)*

grateful for the warmth of the open fire, and their WiFi. Once sorted, it wasn't long until we were finally able to make it to GZ. Although we signed the log, the actual cache wasn't published until several months later, so we had to wait a bit before being able to log it.

This was the end of the main part of the cache surprise, but Team Smileys love socialising, so it was back to sharant's house for cake, curry cooked by Manx Rose, wine, late night puzzle cache solving, 3am spirits (I went to bed on the floor of Ant's study at that point), and the following morning, bleary eyed, we were back round sharant's dining table, where we decided that an excellent

way of blowing off a few cobwebs was, of course, more caching, followed by a pub meal and another open fire.

I hope you enjoyed your surprise caching birthday, Sharon!

The cache that was put out is located in North Staffordshire, where several of Team Smileys live, for anyone in the area that wants to get it, the GC code is GC8MMMZ, SOS – Mission Sharant. Congratulations to Team Zoo (Stones!, JnK Fox and Purplestargiraffe) on FTF, and who realised that teamwork with some members out in the field, and others at home on the computer was a definite advantage.



*Near the cache site (2)*

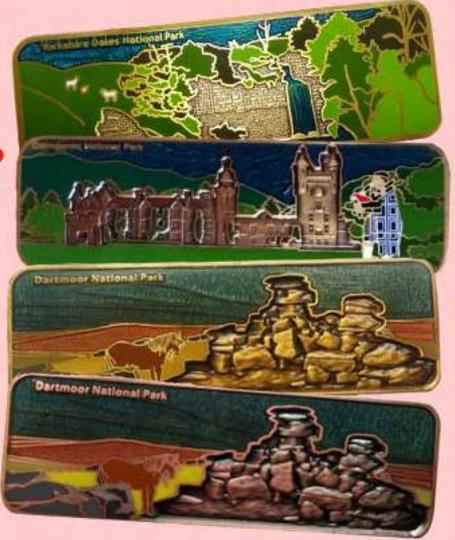
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**Find out the winners of the GAGB's story competition and read the submitted stories!**

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**The GAGB's Annual Report & More**

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