



A BRIEF HISTORY AND EXPLANATION OF GEOCACHING





A Brief History of the start of Geocaching

GPS, or Global Positioning System, was developed by the US Department of Defence. This satellite navigation system was intended for military use and therefore the signals were scrambled, limiting accuracy for civilian use to about 100 meters. On May 1st 2000, President Clinton announced that this scrambling, known as Selective Availability (SA), would be turned off. Civilians were then able to enjoy accuracy on the order of 10 meters.

On May 3, 2000, Dave Ulmer proposed a way to celebrate the demise of SA. He hid a bucket of trinkets in the woods outside Portland, Oregon and announced its location in a posting made to the USENET newsgroup sci.geo.satellite-nav. This announcement is remarkable for laying out the essence of the hobby that is still in place today. It's all there. The container. The trinkets. The log book. The rule of take something, leave something, sign the logbook. Dave Ulmer invented geocaching in one fell swoop in that newsgroup posting.

Within a day, the original stash had been found. Within days, more stashes had been hidden in California, Kansas, and Illinois. Within a month, a stash had been hidden as far away as Australia. The hobby was fast on its way to being a worldwide phenomenon.



How Geocaching Works

A Geocacher will go to a location, which has usually some special interest or beauty. This is often one of their favourite places to visit. At the location they will hide a small waterproof box, containing a few varied bits and pieces, a logbook and a pen or pencil.

Using their GPS receiver, the Cacher records the coordinates of their cache, and on returning home logs its existence on one of the geocache listing web sites.

Another Cacher will see the listing on the website about the cache, enter the coordinates into their GPS receiver, and go in search of it.

When they hopefully find the cache, the Cacher may take something and swap something in return. But most important of all make an entry in the log book.

On returning home, the Cacher should log onto the website were they found the cache, and log a found/ not found on the cache page, also any comments they have about the cache or their hunt for it. These logs are important to the cache hider, as part of their reward for hiding the cache, they can also highlight any problems to the cache hider, allowing them to go and rectify the problem.

To keep the game going, seekers should also become hidiers.

The Geocache Listing Site



"The Groundspeak Geocaching Logo is a trademark of Groundspeak, Inc. Used with permission."

To list or log a find, a cacher must first visit a Geocaching Listing Site. Whilst there are several sites the main one is Geocaching.com. Whilst being located in the US, this site lists caches placed globally. It also provides a forum section, which allows geocachers from all over the world to discuss all aspects of geocaching. From hiding and placing, to technical issues and experiences whilst geocaching.

Geocaching.com has a set of guidelines, which a cache must meet to be listed on the site. This includes restrictions on the way a cache is placed and the contents. The aim of the site is to keep geocaching both family friendly, and environmentally friendly.

To this aim caches are not allowed to be placed in such a way, as to require any form of digging for them. Should also be placed in such a way, as to avoid having a serious impact on the environment.

Proscribed items in caches include guns, knives, food, drinks and drugs and medications, also cigarette lighters. This is not a definite list, and cachers are asked to use their common sense.

Caches prohibited by Geocaching.com are included in the following list.

- a: containers which have been buried, and require some sort of tool to retrieve.
- b: caches placed near active railway lines (exceptions will be made were there is a physical barrier between the cache and railway tracks, i.e. boundary fences.
- c: on or near military installations.
- d: whilst on vacation, unless arrangements have been made with someone local for cache maintenance.
- e: Caches of a commercial nature, i.e. caches used to promote a business or service.
- f: caches used for solicitations for Religious, Political or Social agendas.

Geocaching is intended to be a fun pastime!



Cache In Trash Out (CITO)

The Environmental Side of Geocaching

What is CITO, this quote from the CITO page on Geocaching.com explains the idea. [“It's simple! When out geocaching make sure to take a trash bag with you and pick up whatever trash you find along the way.”](#)

The Cache In Trash Out ideal first came about in the autumn of 2000. And has led to the creation of its own forum on Geocaching.com, where all aspects of CITO can be discussed. From organised events, to experiences whilst CITO'ing when out geocaching.

April 26th 2003 was a very important day, as it was the date of the very first International Cache In Trash out Day, sponsored by Magellan part of the Thales Navigation Group. This was organised to encourage geocachers all over the world, to either organise or take part in a CITO event, or just to go out and do some trash collection in a local area. Due to the success of the day it is planned to make it an annual event.



Geocaching Association of Great Britain

Initially set up by a group of experienced geocachers, due to what they saw as a need for an association to represent the geocaching community in the UK on a national level, to enhance geocaching in the UK, and allow it to progress.

The aims of the association are stated below.

To establish elected officers and representatives. The key purpose of the GAGB is to enhance geocaching and to progress it as activity within Great Britain and Northern Ireland by:

- liaising with local and national land-owning bodies, agreeing mutually beneficial guidelines so that caching on their land is approved and encouraged.

- helping all associates to enjoy the activity without falling foul of the civil and criminal laws of the land.

- establishing good caching practices by accepting advice from land, environmental, archaeological and historical bodies.

- acting as intermediaries and be the first point of call for all interested parties in Great Britain.

- ensuring that the positive educational, environmental and recreational aspects of geocaching are properly represented.

- helping new members of the geocaching community when they begin.



To achieve these aims, the Association's elected officers will initially be:

- Negotiating with major owners of publicly accessible land in Great Britain for a positive approach to geocaching.
- Seeking positive and appropriate publicity opportunities for the promotion of geocaching.
- Maintaining a page of links to websites containing information on environmental, legal and other topics of interest to cachers.
- Developing a definitive set of geocaching guidelines specific to Great Britain.
- developing a reference system to summarise laws and other issues which impact geocaching in Great Britain.



Geocaching and Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council was the first local authority, and major land owner in the UK, to officially recognise Geocaching as “a great way of getting families and others out into the countryside, and also as a valuable educational resource.”

On the 19th of July 2003 Hampshire County Council, with members of the geocaching community, held what was the first organised geocaching event in the UK, officially recognised by any major land owner, and open to members of the non-geocaching community. At Farley Mount Country Park.

Working with the geocaching community. HCC produced a set of guidelines for the placement of geocaches on land owned or managed by HCC. These guidelines have been officially adopted by the Geocaching Association of Great Britain.

Exploring the Countryside with GPS

Cache placement guidelines

DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR GEOCACHING ON LAND OWNED/MANAGED BY HCC COUNTRYSIDE SERVICE. The following guidelines have been developed by Countryside Rangers, Rights of Way Officers, and members of the Geocaching Community. Geocaching is a very new pursuit, and these guidelines are published in draft form in order to ensure that the activity can progress in harmony with the many other interests and legal constraints involved in the countryside. We are pleased that Groundspeak, the US owners of geocaching.com, have stated "We truly commend Hampshire County Council on being the first land owning/managing authority to take such a progressive step".

Ensure the cache container is clearly marked, stating that the content is harmless and giving the placer's e-mail address or other contact method. Only items that would be deemed safe and acceptable for an unaccompanied child to find should be placed in the cache.

No cache may be placed in such a way as to risk damage or disturbance to any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Protect our heritage.

When placing a cache on a Right of Way, the onus is on the placer to seek the permission of the landowner.

No items of food or drink of any kind should be placed in the cache.

Caches must not be buried, and holes must not be dug in order to place a cache.

Caches must not be hidden in animal holes or runs.

Cache containers must not be placed inside a polythene bag.

Fences should never be crossed when placing or seeking a cache.

No caches should be of a commercial nature, either in location or content.

After placing a cache on countryside sites, the site Ranger must be informed to ensure that the cache does not compromise the management of the site.

Maintenance of the cache is the responsibility of the placer.

When leaving the cache site, after finding or hiding a cache, there must be no visual sign of disturbance.

For reasons of safety and security Hampshire County Council discourage geocaching on their land during the hours of darkness.

Please do not bring geocaching into disrepute, never drive your car anywhere other than on the highways and byways, and always park sensibly in approved places only.

The information in this guide was obtained from the following web sites, or from links on these sites.

www.geocaching.com

www.gagb.org.uk

www.hants.gov.uk/geocaching/index.html

The following is a useful resources website for UK geocachers

www.geocacheuk.com

www.geocache.co.uk

Geocaching News



With the permission of CADW, the UK's first CITO Event took place at Flint Castle, Flintshire, Wales. July 2004. With a get-together featuring a buffet after the Event.



The Coed-Y-Mynydd district of Comisiwn Coedwigaeth Cymru (Forestry Commission Wales), held a Geocaching Event. Linked to Cotswold Outdoors, Tent Show at Betws-Y-Coed, on the May 29th, 30th and 31st 2004. Members of the Geocaching community attended and acted as Shepherds, helping to introduce members of the public to Geocaching.

The guidelines agreed with this organisation are as follows:

Guidelines for setting up Geocaches on Forestry Commission Land on Coed y Mynydd Forest District

The following guidelines are published in draft form in order to ensure that the activity can progress in harmony with the many other interests and legal constraints involved in the forest.

* Ensure the cache container is clearly marked, stating that the content is harmless and giving the placer's e-mail address or other contact method. Only items that would be deemed safe and acceptable for an unaccompanied child to find should be placed in the cache.

* No cache may be placed in such a way as to risk damage or disturbance to any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Protect

our heritage.

- * No items of food or drink of any kind should be placed in the cache.
- * No lighters, matches or flammable objects should be placed in the cache.
- * Caches must not be buried, and holes must not be dug in order to place a cache.
- * Caches must not be hidden in animal holes or runs.
- * Fences & walls should never be damaged when placing or seeking a cache, and should be crossed by a gate or stile.
- * Before placing a cache, the Local Area Manager (or Recreation Ranger) must be contacted to ensure that the management of the site does not compromise the cache.
- * Maintenance of the cache is the responsibility of the placer.
- * When leaving the cache site, after finding or hiding a cache, there must be no visual sign of disturbance.
- * All Forestry Commission Byelaws must be obeyed.
- * While there is open access through most of the forest on foot, cycle or horse, no vehicle access is permitted off the public highway. Always park sensibly, avoiding blocking forest entrances, and remembering that many forest roads are used by large articulated lorries who require significant space to manouver.
- * Forestry Operations can be dangerous, and caches should be temporarily closed on request where operations will create a hazard to cachers. The local area manager / recreation ranger will advise on the period of closure, and potential alternative cache locations if appropriate. All warning signs must be obeyed.