

# Why Did We Save Grin Low Tower aka Solomon's Temple?



*Solomon's Temple in the snow by Linda Rolland*

Buxton is fortunate in its inheritance of historic buildings set in beautiful countryside. The price of keeping them is constant vigilance and our Civic Association is one of Buxton's 'watchdogs'. The aims of BCA are exemplified in its relationship with one of Buxton's high spots – Solomon's Temple.

## Civics and Celebrity

The Buxton Advertiser of January 1987 (below right) showed a large picture of the fenced off tower. The tower was in danger of collapse and £20,000 was needed for repairs. The Countryside Commission and County Council set aside money but there was a shortfall of £7,500. The Civic Association had to act quickly! Repair work began in late July 1987. Children from four local schools were photographed as they raised £1,700 towards the appeal. Local pubs raised money 'over the bar'. Buxton-born star Tim Brooke-Taylor returned to help raise cash to stop Grin Tower from being demolished. 'One of his first and most exciting memories is of walking through Grin Wood, climbing the spiral staircase of Solomon's Temple and taking in

the view stretching from Mam Tor to Axe Edge.'

It has long been recognised that locals and tourists are attracted by a focal point to walk to and connect with. There has been a Temple or Tower on Grin Low Hill for 150 years. It is recorded in William Adam's book Gem of the Peak in 1838. He said 'it forms a conspicuous and interesting object from Buxton'. It was built to 'afford occupation to the unemployed of Buxton'. Croston's guide of 1865 stated it was 'built to resemble at a distance a ruined tower.' But by the end of the century it 'had succumbed to wind and became a mere heap of stones.' (W.M. Turner) Amongst these remains an ancient Bronze Age barrow was discovered and some of the finds are displayed at Poole's Cavern and in Buxton Museum.

## Planners' Dreams

In 1894 a committee had been formed with the intention of building a replacement. Aware of its attraction for tourists the new tower was designed with a

powerful telescope, stained glass windows, doors and a flagpole. A sum of £150 was required. When the Foundation stone was laid on 4 June 1896, "...flags were flying and upon a pole was affixed a coloured sketch of the proposed tower. In the rear stood Fairfield Band whose Colonel Sidebottom asserted that, 'it would not only be a place of shelter but where they could partake of "... the cup that cheers but not inebriates"' and 'provide yet another source of attraction and so benefit the resident of Buxton.'

Vandalism took away the stained glass windows, oak door and flag pole and by 1985 the temple was in a dangerous state and it had to be closed to the public and a fence placed around. During the 1970s it became officially owned by Derbyshire County Council and the neighbouring woodland had been donated to Buxton and District Civic Association in the 1960s. By 1987 it was once again time for an appeal and the intervention of local Buxtonians united by the Civic Association saved Solomon's Temple.

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\*Buxton Civic Association chairman Jerome 1988 (right) and county councillor Arthur Robinson with the cheque for £7,500 from the appeal which has helped to save Solomon's Temple, Buxton. Surrounding the tower, on which repair work is scheduled to start later this month, are children from Fairfield Infants School, Peppercorn Primary, Buxton Infants' and Sledge Primary, who between them raised £1,700 towards the Civic Association appeal.

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The spirit engendered by the need to preserve what is important to Buxton as a destination for tourists and a beautiful place to live is encapsulated in the renewing of this treasured icon. Let us hope that the current members of the BCA are aware of this important gift that has been placed in their hands to watch over.

### Working with the Community

Today we continue to raise awareness of planning issues that will affect the future of our unique town. We are currently being invited to take part in consultation to help to shape the future of Buxton. We should all take up the invitation and give our views individually as well as through BCA.

### Why save the 'Serps'?

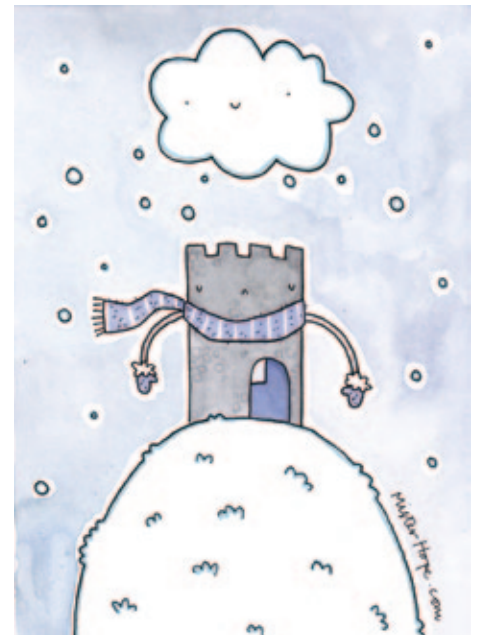
It would be so good if BCA could

encourage High Peak Borough Council to develop their logo from 'working for the community' to 'working with the community'.

Proposals to build three houses in the Serpentine, with resulting detriment to a valued community facility, are a case in point. It has to be assumed that these proposals are based on a rational judgement by the Council but it has proved very difficult engaging with them. They initially wanted to make their planning decision before the closing date for comments.

Other things have also made it difficult to contribute to the Serpentine Proposals which have just been withdrawn – but for how long? The proposals might be driven by the need for a 'cash strapped' Council to gain revenue even at cost to our heritage – it is not clear - but if cards are

put as openly as possible on the table then the creativity of the community is able to be tapped and a great idea may emerge.



*Illustration: Solomon's Temple by misterhope@hotmail.co.uk*

## Competition – Celebrating Solly's

We are organising a competition to celebrate 25 years since Solomon's Temple was saved.

Have you ever tried to work out how many different places the tower can be spotted around town?

We would like you to represent Solomon's Temple (Solly's) in a way that shows its importance to you and the town. Take any interesting angle and draw, paint, photograph, or use sculpture or poetry.

The competition is open to all ages and the closing date is Monday 25 March 2013. Entries will be displayed in our Exhibition Room.

Full details will be available from Poole's Cavern from 23 October.

## Can you help?

**Christmas stock up** Poole's Cavern shop has gifts for all ages and throughout December our warm and welcoming café will be serving festive mince pies.

**Icon's of Buxton** Suggestions are welcome for articles on Buxton's treasures safeguarded by BCA? Ideas so far include the Octagon, the Crescent, Victorian lamps and woodlands.

**Open gardens** Could we organise an open gardens week to promote more hidden gems of Buxton and raise funds?

**Information plaques** Numbered plaques are useful when touring towns to find out more and follow. Are you interested in this idea as a new project?

**Guided walks** Do you have time to organise walks for pleasure or as a fundraiser whilst the festival season is in full swing?

**Book swap** Do you have any good quality books to donate to our scheme? Please bring your books to the café and choose one of our pre-owned books to read.

**Working groups** Join the monthly work group in the woods. Meet at 9.30 at Poole's Cavern on the last Monday of each month.

**Tell your friends about us** Remember copies of the newsletter are available on our website too.

**Contact us** For further information about our Woodlands, Planning, and Environment groups, or to get involved in any of our projects, please contact BCA at Poole's Cavern.

## Cavern News

### Buxton Festival Fringe 2012 - A Midsummer Night's Dream in Poole's Cavern



Following last year's award-winning and sell-out hit *Macbeth*, Butterfly returned to Poole's Cavern with renowned composer Helen Chadwick, to produce an hour-long version of Shakespeare's comedy in an extraordinary setting.

Follow fleeing lovers into an underground Fairie Kingdom where harmonies resonate through the rocks, magic lights up the dark and mischief reigns supreme!

"And we fairies that do run  
By the triple Hecate's team  
From the presence of the sun,  
Following darkness like a dream,  
Now are frolic!"

Butterfly Beautiful theatre company are a London-based group who draw young and talented performers from the top London theatre schools. It has been a tremendous pleasure to work with them at this year's sell-out event.

Over nine evenings and 27 performances more than 1,000 festival goers were treated to Shakespeare's magical comedy, superbly adapted to compliment this unique natural stage. Puck and Oberon appeared and disappeared as if by magic into the cavern darkness and Titania led her dancing and singing fairy lights, followed by the enchanted audience through the beautifully lit caverns.

Even the worst rain for years and a large and noisy cavern river didn't perturb the actors, who adapted the performance to match the changing cavern acoustics. We very much look forward to working with Butterfly Theatre next year when we hope to bring more underground Shakespeare to the Festival Fringe. The *Tempest* gets a popular vote so far.

The cast from 'Butterfly' sent us their personal thoughts about our extraordinary venue.

"To perform on a stage millions of years in the making was a truly unique experience and one that we really did cherish. As a cast we had to match our performances to the grandeur of Poole's Cavern. It is such an amazing space and allowed us to take the show right up to them, around them and through them which was a joy. Bringing theatre to the local community in this unique style was – we hope – a breath of fresh air and with the wonderful cavern staff and eager audiences we can't wait to come back next year."

Ed Hulme - Butterfly Theatre

### Dates For Your Diary

**Halloween Pumpkins and Bats**  
**27 October – 2 November (half term)**  
Plus competitions and free lollies!

**Terror Tours 31 October**  
Distraction Theatre Company will be performing evening theatricals – not for the under 12s.

**Santa's Grotto (weekends)**  
**1, 2, 8, 9, 15, 16 December**  
Bookings taken from November. We use the new lighting system to create a colourful theatrical grotto. There are pre-booked and timed entries so why not plan this in with your Christmas shopping?

### Why We Love Dog Walkers

Dog walkers are so welcome in the woods because they help us all to enjoy the woods. They are encouraged to report any problems at the Cavern, especially litter and vandalism. Dogs are welcome at the café and water and complimentary dog biscuits are offered.

Remember – parking is free for all members at Poole's Cavern.





# BCA AGM 18 June 2012 - Chairman's Report

Paul Dinsdale

This has been a year of prudent consolidation for the Association's business activities. Sound management by Alan Walker and his team, close financial monitoring by our Treasurer, Brian Shawcross, Gift Aid, parking fees, and a significant contribution by GoApe all helped. At last we have reliable and improving income streams and can make modest investments in our estate and promote events and publications from a sound financial footing.

Peter Phillipson and the Woodland Committee have overseen further major path improvement projects, with support from local quarries, continue to negotiate with the developer of the Templemore estate to protect BCA's long-term interests in Sherbrook Wood and to monitor proposals by Peak Cycle Trails on their proposed route through Grin Low Wood.

Hilary Lawrence and the Planning Group have monitored and commented on Planning Applications and issues of local importance, and participated in the Portas Pilot bid and the proposed new "Town Team". Alistair Rogerson, Community and Membership leader, urgently needs help on his Committee arranging events for members. We extend a warm welcome to Alyson Phillips who will edit the Newsletter from now on and thank Trevor Donald for all he has done.

Our Corporate Affairs Committee, lead by Hilary, deals with the administration of the Association and our Development Director Bill

Preece is undertaking a management review covering the future role of BCA and how we can best tailor our resources to meet our goals.

A high point of the year was the publication of another book, this time featuring the diverse range of wild flowers to be found in Grin Wood. Compiled by June and Lyn Noble and edited by Olive Middleton, it is well researched and written, with superb photography by Lyn. Olive has also volunteered to write a history of the Association to mark our Golden Jubilee in 2017, using our archives currently being catalogued by Lindsay Rolland.

Another project under consideration involves extending the capacity of the café on to a covered decking area, allowing staff to serve up to 50% more customers at times of peak summer demand, and acting as a shelter against inclement weather.

One sad note, we record the passing of retired BCA Director and Chairman of our Corporate Affairs Committee, Mark Sisson. BCA Directors attended his funeral and we send our sympathies to Mark's family.

## Conflicts of interest

When members find that projects in which the Association is involved may be perceived as impacting on their own personal situation I urge all parties to behave with mutual courtesy and respect. BCA's staff and volunteers do not

deserve to suffer abuse in letters, in newspaper articles or online, nor should the Association's goals and decisions be wilfully misrepresented in public to one individual's supposed personal advantage. The Board has the authority to require the resignation of any member who deliberately abuses other members or employees, or materially misrepresents the Association in the furtherance of a personal agenda.

## The Future

Only a few years ago, this was a small, failing charity, with an outdated show cave, an embarrassing visitor centre, a falling membership, and heading towards insolvency. Thanks to people who cared, and were prepared to give their time, energy and commitment, all this has been turned around. But who will be running it in five or ten year's time? The next big threat to face the Association is apathy. We have around 350 members at present. Of those, perhaps 20 or 30 are 'active' members. The Association needs you all! BCA is a serious business: it owns a nationally important show cave and a large estate of woodlands. Please, all of you – get out there and join our Committees, join our Board, help in our woodlands – wherever your interests and talents lie, we can use them.

Finally, sincere thanks to all my colleagues on the Board, on our Committees, to our specialist officers and helpers and our volunteers.

## Wild About Flowers

As we look forward to the beautiful colours of Autumn in Grin Woods take the opportunity to visit the Country Park with this beautiful photograph and discover the Saw – Wort . There is a small patch of this uncommon plant is

hidden in 'the Glade'. The purple flower heads are small, growing on tall stems. Look at the lovely patterns on the flower buds. The edges of the leaves have tiny saw-like teeth. (Page 43) From a guide to the Wild Flowers of Grin Low Country Park by June and Lyn Noble.



## Woodland Glades Conservation Continues

By Alan Walker

The botanically important glade areas in Grin Low woods will receive their annual autumn cut this month and I am often asked why we do this to what seems a wild area of natural grassland.

The woodland glade areas are associated with the 17th and 18th century lime burning industry. Waste limestone ash was tipped below each kiln and the highly contaminated and alkaline ground wasn't planted with trees. Slowly the areas were colonised by lime loving species of herbaceous plants and grasses such as Northern Marsh Orchid, Burnet Saxifrage, Globe flower, Mountain Everlasting, Creeping willow and Juniper. Unlike the neighbouring farmland, this unique habitat wasn't grazed or fertilized by animal livestock.

Recognising the Juniper as the only surviving example in Derbyshire, the area of Grin Low was designated as a site of Special Scientific Interest in 1963 by the Nature Conservancy Council (now Natural England). It was re-designated in 1981 under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

Over 15 years ago it was recognised that these valuable areas could be lost without careful management, encroached by rank species of grasses and invasive trees such as Birch and Ash. At the time rabbits grazed the glades but with outbreaks of Myxomatosis an artificial solution became necessary. Since then the glades have been cut annually, a project originally funded by Natural England. The cuttings are raked and removed from the glade to

prevent the thin soil layer from becoming too enriched and able to support invasive species.

In this highly labour intensive time our woodland volunteers are invaluable, assisting with grass clearing and cutting back saplings on the glade edges.

We have now brought eight or so glades back to a good condition - around seven acres of the 100 acres of Grin Low Wood - and hope to enlarge some of these areas further. Funding is currently unavailable for this project, which makes volunteer help even more important. If anyone has a few hours to spare in September and October please contact Alan at Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre on 01298 26978.

## Using the Past to Look Forward Welcome to our new archivist - Lindsay Rolland

As the 50th anniversary of the Association is fast approaching it's time to get our archives in order.

Lindsay Rolland has a Masters in librarianship and has kindly volunteered to attempt to make our archives more 'user friendly'.

Lindsay says, "I'm trying to get a catalogue of everything in the database that can be searched by place, time or event so people can find the source they're looking for. And I'm trying to make it as accessible as possible so you don't need me to work it for you."



## Buxton Civic Association

General Manager: Alan Walker at Poole's Cavern, 01298 26978

### Board Members

Chair: Paul Dinsdale

Vice chair &

Planning: Hilary Lawrence

Secretary: Martin Wragg

Treasurer: Brian Shawcross

Woodlands: Peter Phillipson

Community &

Membership: Alistair Rogerson

Development: Bill Preece

Environment: Mike Monaghan

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Stephen Robinson

Editor: Alyson Phillips

Production: Charlotte Tangye Design

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