

**BCA Annual General Meeting** The AGM will be held on Monday 11 June at the Visitor Centre, Poole's Cavern, at 7.30pm. Full details will be sent to members in advance.

## Grinlow Woods

Members will be aware that PCL (Peak Cycle Links) have proposed routing the trail linking the Monsal and High Peak trails through the western end of Grinlow woods. Opposition has been voiced by some residents of Holmfield and Green Lane. BCA think the route will be of considerable benefit to residents and visitors, giving easier access to the trails for cyclists and walkers. The trail would be appropriately surfaced to enable wheelchair users to visit, which currently they cannot do.

Agreement was given following detailed archaeological and ecological surveys by specialist advisers and following consultation with local authority tree officers. Natural England considered it unlikely to "affect the species-rich woodland glades" or "cause significant damage to the special interest of the SSSI" and had "no objection in principle".

Our experience of path improvement is that it results in better protection for the woods as people are far more likely to stay on a well surfaced path. We are confident the special character of the woods will not be adversely affected by the development and that improving access is fully in accord with BCA's objects.

## Sherbrook Woods

Persimmon Homes are developing a housing estate off Harpur Hill Road, which shares a boundary with Sherbrook Woods. Some of our mature beech trees are unstable and will constitute a potential danger to nearby houses. Following advice from specialist tree consultants, and in agreement with Persimmon and the Local Authority, BCA has concluded the only solution is to fell the relevant trees. We would stress that BCA would not have been doing this work except for the housing development.

One positive outcome is that ten metres of land on the edge of the woods next to the development will be planted with a wide variety of shrubs and low growing trees. As they mature they will provide a much more varied habitat for plants and wildlife, resulting in an overall improvement to the ecology of Sherbrook Wood.

Meanwhile the main path through Sherbrook Wood, from Harpur Hill Road to Fern Road, is to be improved similar to the recent work in Corbar. The footbridge will also be strengthened. These works are part of our ongoing programme of improvement to our woods to provide safe access and enhance the protection of the habitats.

We are again grateful for the generous help given by Lomas Distribution Ltd. for providing half-price transport and by Tarmac Central Ltd. who have agreed to provide the stone free of charge.

## Volunteers Required! by David Pritchard

Fancy some healthy exercise, having some fun and helping maintain the Association's woodlands? Then why not volunteer for the Woodland Working Group?

The group meets on the last Monday morning of the month, or on an alternative Monday if the last Monday is a Bank Holiday, at 9.30am at Poole's Cavern. Most of the group's work is carried out in Grin Wood, but on occasions work is also undertaken in one of the other woods maintained by the Association. The work is not over strenuous and does not involve the use of power tools.

A typical morning's work might involve assisting with the clearing of grass cuttings from the glades or the cutting back of saplings on the glade edges. Other work has included clearing paths and drainage channels and cutting back foliage encroaching on paths. We usually finish by midday.

Tools (pruning saws, loppers, spades, etc) are provided, but you do need to come suitably dressed and be prepared to get dirty.

For further information on the work of the group, contact David on 01298 77258.



# The Origins of the Buxton Civic Association

by Olive Middleton

[This is a shortened version of Olive's original text which will be published on the BCA website.]

The Association was born of a feeling of desperation among residents in the early 1960s as historic buildings and the beautiful natural environment became ever more threatened by the ravages of time and by a council that seemed keen on modernization whatever the cost. The newly established Civic Trust gave the lead in showing what could be done to save old buildings and enhance the character of towns and villages.

My late husband, Arthur Middleton, and I had come to Buxton in 1963 and had got to know well-established local worthies such as Henry Hartley, Ivor Morton and Henry Douglas, and we came to the conclusion that Buxton must have its own Civic Association prepared to fight for the conservation of our town. Some of the causes for alarm in the mid-1960s were: a proposal to run a casino in the Pavilion Gardens, opposed by Henry Hartley up to the High Court and finally quashed by the minister in September 1966; the severe disrepair of the Tea House, shelters, grottos, and bridges in the gardens; the proposal to sell or lease the gardens to Flamingo Park, a private zoo in Yorkshire; a consultant's report advising that the Octagon should be demolished; and the demolition of the verandah fronting the Thermal Baths.

In December 1967 the Advertiser reported that 'The interest that has been aroused by the Gardens question may be one reason why a local Civic Society may be formed in the new year', and in June 1967 the Buxton Civic Association was established and a public meeting was held in the Pump Room with Arthur Middleton as Chairman. The first newsletter was published in September 1967 edited by Stella Worrall. In August Stella and I (with eight small children between us) organized a clean-up of the River Wye in Ashwood Park and removed three tons of old iron and debris.

Our first newsletters record our early activities and campaigns: garden parties, photographic exhibitions, children's competitions, a grand pram jamboree, a float in the Wells Dressing procession, a children's Christmas Party, a tennis tournament, a November bonfire, a Nature Trail, a youth orchestra concert, a lecture by Professor Pevsner, a badminton evening etc.

In 1968 we became a limited company and registered charity in connection with the purchase of Poole's Cavern, which had been closed for some years, and the donation of woodlands by the Chatsworth

Estate. We were also concerned about the state of the Crescent, the threat to demolish most of Buxton's Victorian lamp standards, especially those on Broad Walk, and the proposal to build a huge roundabout outside the Palace Hotel for the new relief road which would have involved building a two metre high retaining wall just outside the shops around Clowes' Chemists. Our members spent a weekend with orange tapes and posts marking out the full extent of this road work: the scheme was dropped!

The Civic Association carried the fight onto many different fronts, with much help from the then High Peak MP, Peter Jackson, who became our President, and the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire, who became our Patrons. We had to raise funds and by the end of 1969 we had the magnificent (for then) sum of £4,650, raised with much help from the Rotary Club and many individual donations. From this somewhat haphazard start the Association was able to get itself onto a more stable footing for many future campaigns. We young mothers went back to looking after our small children and our own careers.



*Olive clearing rubbish from the Wye, 1967. By kind permission of Buxton Advertiser*

## Urgent: Newsletter Editor Needed

Our present acting editor, Trevor Donald, is standing down after this issue so if any BCA member would like to take over, please contact Trevor on 01298 27946 to find out more.

Some experience of editing school, church, society or business newsletters would help, but it's mostly just common sense. Page design and printing are done by professionals and there are other members who will support you – so give it a try. We need new ideas and initiatives!

## The Floral Delights of Grin Woods

June and Lyn Noble have produced an excellent guide to the wild flowers in Grin Woods, especially in the glades which give to the woods their Site of Special Scientific Interest accreditation and protection.

Lyn provided the superb photographs showing the flowers in their grassy surrounding and June wrote the text, giving clear directions where to find them and lots of interesting information about their names, medicinal use etc.

They are listed in the order they come into flower so the guide can be used easily by children and complete newcomers to the joys of botany, as well as by more experienced botanists.

June and Lyn wish to express their appreciation to Olive Middleton for all her help in getting their book into print.

The book is on sale at Poole's Cavern and the Tourist Information Office, price £2.50. It forms a matching pair with our 'Ring of Trees Walk' guide and the two can be bought at the special price of £3.50.

## A Town Team for Buxton

by Mike Bryant

Members will have been pleased to see in the Buxton Advertiser that Mary Portas had inspired unprecedented collaboration to promote the town's prosperity. At the Vision Buxton Members Meeting on 14 February, Alan Thompson suggested the preparation of a bid to make Buxton a 'Pilot Town', as recommended in the Portas report. A group took up the challenge and met the following evening.

This ad hoc Pilot Group represented individuals as well as BCA, The Buxton Group, Vision Buxton and Transition Buxton. High Peak Borough Council is supporting the move, with Leader, Caitlin Bisknell and an officer participating in all the meetings. The group has been strengthened by the addition of the secretary of Transition Buxton, a representative of Churches Together in Buxton, the widely experienced Tina Heathcote, and Roger Floyd of Say No to Tesco. Although not yet directly represented, the University has now become involved.

Building on valuable comments on the published ten pointers (see [buxtontownteam.org.uk](http://buxtontownteam.org.uk)) a

meeting on 19 March looked in detail at three proposed bases for the final application.

1. The University introduced the idea of collaboration to strengthen trade in the town through workplace learning. Buxton could become 'a learning lab for entrepreneurship, education and training'.
2. Roddie MacLean proposed linking Higher Buxton with Spring Gardens through the promotion of a continuous 'Main Street'. This would be connected to a new Way finder scheme, already under consideration by High Peak Council.
3. Alan Thompson championed building up the town's retail and tourism trading by exploiting Buxton's existing assets: arts, culture and history with the successful festivals and Opera House; spa, health and beauty business, which would be enhanced by the development in The Crescent; and the surrounding Peak District, with a vast capacity for outdoor leisure and sporting activities.

Many common elements were apparent by the conclusion of the discussion, and it was agreed that these should be brought together as the vision to be conveyed in the application for the Portas funding.

In the longer term, the parties involved are resolved to maintain their collaboration and to establish a Town Team to drive forward Buxton's prosperity on a sustainable basis. It is likely this will take the form of a new community interest company but the details of its constitution are yet to be worked out. Once the bid has been submitted, developing the Town Team will be the next stage.



*Arthur Middleton and Stella Zunz leading the campaign to stop the huge roundabout*

# Who's Who at the Visitor Centre

Olive Middleton talks to Paula at the café

**I sat with Paula at a sunny table by the window last week where we could watch at close quarters a wide range of birds and admire the amazing agility of the squirrel population!**

Paula is an enthusiast for the food she cooks and serves and the constant stream of visitors of all ages from differing parts of the country. Immensely concerned to build on the café's success since her arrival in 2007, she is proud of the contribution the café is now making to the funds of BCA, a registered charity, and the part she and her staff of three, Denny, Kate and Steve, make towards the huge task of maintaining both the woods and the cavern for locals and visitors.

Born in Macclesfield to adventurous parents, Paula grew up first in Spain and then, from the age of five, in Florida not returning to the UK until the age of 18. She had already had experience of holding down a job as supervisor at "Jeff's Desserts" in the USA followed by several other posts back in England.

The cafe seats about 34 people inside with many more picnic places outside where the staff serve customers at their tables.

Large school parties also arrive by the coach load, often bringing their own refreshments with them. If the weather is wet, the Seminar Room accommodates the extra visitors. All are made equally welcome and coping with big numbers holds no terrors for Paula.

"Home-made soups, sandwiches and panini are the most popular," says Paula. "Roasted red pepper, butternut squash and tomato soups top a list of about a dozen kinds of soup on offer on different days, according to the fresh vegetables available." Delicious cakes and cream teas along with a wide range of drinks are on offer all day.

"I really enjoy the challenge when we are busy," Paula tells me. "Children's parties – usually for five to twelve year olds – are great fun to do. These can include a tour of the cavern perhaps with a crystal hunt, themed parties with appropriate decorations in the Seminar Room, at modest cost – from £6.50 upwards according to the menu chosen."

Living in Harpur Hill with a husband and no fewer than four dogs – two Shih Tzu named Lexi and Rocky and a pair of Rottweiler, Keesha and Bruno – Paula certainly leads an active life. She is a member of a running club, swims and plays badminton as well!



## 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

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