

**Santa's Grotto**

Weekends in December 7th and 8th, 14th and 15th, 21st and 22nd and 23rd and 24th. 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? If you are available to help on any of these dates, especially as the central attraction! Alan would be very grateful so please let him know as soon as possible.

Remember the Café area and schoolroom are both available to hire. Please contact Simon Fussell at Poole's Cavern for more details.

**What Can I Do To Help?**

1. David Pritchard has asked for more volunteers for the Woodlands Volunteer Group – especially necessary in the autumn when the SSSI glades need clearing.

2. Christmas Stock Up.

Visit Poole's Cavern shop and purchase gifts for all ages ... and don't forget that throughout December we have our warm and welcoming Café serving festive mince pies.

3. Tell your friends about us.

Remember copies of the newsletter are available on our website too.

5. Do you have any good quality books you could donate to our book swapping scheme? Please bring your books to the café and choose one of our pre-owned books to read.

6. Help at the monthly work group in the woods. Meet at 9.30am Poole's Cavern, on the last Monday of each month.

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**Buxton Civic Association**

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**Wonderful Woodlands**

*Corbar Woods by Simon Fussell*

The Buxton Civic Association is very proud of its responsibility for many of the woods that circle the town and when walking the Ring of Trees, our circular walk through Buxton's woodlands, their diversity should be celebrated. In this issue we have highlighted Corbar Woods and Shay Lodge Wood our marvellous resource for health and well-being in all seasons.

**Corbar Woods**

By Trevor Donald

Look at any 19th century print of the Crescent, such as the fine display in No6 Café or those frequently shown in the Art Gallery, and you will see a massively enlarged Corbar Hill in the background covered on its western side with trees. Corbar Wood, 54 acres – just

over half the area of Grin Low Wood, is our only semi-natural ancient woodland, mentioned in a woodland inventory of about 500 years ago and possessing some of the signs of very old woodland: a magnificent area of bluebells which grow best in woodland and take centuries to spread; a vestigial and possibly mediaeval boundary ditch to protect the valuable coppiced trees; and the remains of a white coal pit, dug to provide super-dried coppice branches which could create the higher temperatures than charcoal which were needed for smelting lead. In the early Victorian period when Buxton was being developed by the 6th Duke of Devonshire as a spa resort for the increasingly prosperous and numerous middle classes Corbar Wood was developed as a visitor attraction by laying out broad walks, rustic bridges, seats, shelters, and viewpoints, probably supervised by Sir Joseph Paxton, the Duke's head gardener, engineer and architect. Nothing remains of the pretty rustic bridges and summer houses, and to get the views you have to walk higher up to Corbar Cross, erected by

Buxton Catholics in 1950 to mark the Jubilee Year. Considering the popularity of the 'Swiss Walks' and the Victorian fascination with the developing art of photography, remarkably few photographs of the Corbar Walks, bridges and arbours survive among the large collection of historic photographs in the Buxton Art Gallery and Museum. The layout of the Victorian walks survives but over many decades their surfaces have been badly eroded and there is poor natural drainage as the rock beneath is impermeable gritstone. The annual autumnal leaf litter has built up and after rain and snow creates a potentially hazardous quagmire. Walkers naturally avoid these patches and so broaden the paths and extend the slippery areas. Over the last few years BCA has made a determined effort, mainly by Mike Monaghan and Alan Walker, and with valuable advice from Phil Beh-Mycock, to rebuild the surfaces of at least the public rights of way (also on the 'Ring of Trees' guided walk). Local quarries, Tarmac, Lhoist and Omya have provided many tons of aggregate and to High Peak Borough

Council has made grants to employ a skilled professional path builder, Martin Wragg (Oak Tree Landscapes). After a few seasons the surface of the paths blends in with the woodland floor and has certainly made walking through this beautiful wood a much more agreeable experience. Some repaired paths are now even accessible to wheelchair users and buggies. We are very grateful to all who have made these improvements possible. The flora and fauna of Corbar cannot compete with the rich variety you can find in Grin Low Wood, especially the limestone loving flowers in the glades there: Corbar is no SSSI, but it has its own beauties. In May the bluebells in the far western part of the wood are a sight to behold, and the eroded old quarries below them provide dramatic contours – and challenges to local children to scramble up or slide down. There are some splendid veteran beeches, ancient yews and a few gnarled oaks. If you haven't explored Corbar Wood yet, do spare a few hours to get to know it: you will find it very rewarding.

## Shay Lodge Wood



Stile to Shay Lodge Wood

If you ever wanted a wood for a perfect setting for Winnie the Pooh then here's a perfect candidate. The winding path and impressive mature trees are pure, peaceful 'storybook'. The exceptional views from the edge of the wood down towards Bishop's Lane and Buxton itself make a local so proud of Derbyshire's unique beauty. For a short walk from The Duke pub in Burbage go down Nursery Lane (opposite



Ring of Trees is a 10 mile/16km walk round Buxton passing through many of the woodlands which surround the town. This guide also describes links to the walk from the town centre and from Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre; using these links, the route can be completed as three shorter circular walks, each of about 3-4 miles/5-6km.



Map of The Ring Wood Trees

the pub and at the side of the churchyard). This becomes Bishop's Lane. Walk down this beautiful straight lane, unusually lined with hedgerows, and take the left turning up a steep hill, to Plex Farm. Plex Farm was the home of Ivor Morten or 'Fella Morten', Fellow of the Royal Zoological Society, Chair of the Peak District National Park and the Board of Buxton Civic Association. Go left through Plex farm yard, between the barns, heading straight for the wood ahead. Cross two stiles, following the field edge, to reach Shay Lodge Wood where you will see the BCA sign near the stile. Follow the path through the wood and across fields to the farm. Pass the farm, keeping to the farm track and you will emerge onto Macclesfield Old Road. Turning left here will take you down to Burbage. At Burbage lights you turn left towards The Duke. For a longer walk you could continue with the route described in our circular walk book, 'Ring of Trees.'

# Cavern News

## Poole's Cavern Buxton Festival Fringe Events 2013

### Hamlet in Poole's Cavern

Once again we had a very successful visit from the talented Butterfly Theatre who performed in our own underground theatre. The Acapella Vocals added to the eerie darkness and prepared the stage for a ghost to appear! For just over an hour this professional and experienced cast led capacity audiences through the shadowy cave to hear their favourite quotes and share the play's action packed final scene. Butterfly Theatre thanked the wonderful cavern staff and can't wait to be back next year.



Hamlet

## Another Challenging Year

Poole's Cavern is doing well despite these difficult times. On the back of the Jubilee and the Olympics when the whole world seemed focussed on Britain, the question was this year what could we do to top that. Well we started off with a dreadful spring; remember the cold Easter with the car park under three feet of snow?



But ... it's been a really good year with lots of school visits and high visitor numbers. Caves have been promoted nationally through the Cool Caves hash tag with the English Tourist Board. The idea was to chill out in blistering heat – remember those days? We must send out a huge thank you to all the cavern staff. Five star Recommendations have been scored on Trip Advisor and that's because we have a great cave and friendly staff.

We now have planning consent for the toilet for the disabled which will include a baby change facility. This new toilet block is for use when the Visitor Centre is closed.

## Members' Events

### Date For Your Diary

#### Halloween Pumpkins and Bats

26th October – 3rd November (half term) plus competitions and free lollies! The cavern will be decorated with pumpkin lanterns. Can you count them all? The café will provide delicious themed soup and spooky biscuits.

#### Wine Tasting Evening.

Saturday 16th November The café has been hired for a charity wine tasting evening in aid of the Fistula Foundation in Sierra Leone. The charity offers surgery that restores women to health, improves self-esteem and helps people towards an independent future. There will be live music and a buffet. All welcome. Please phone Patty Hoskin 01298 72217 for tickets and more information.

#### Club Night 7pm Poole's Cavern Café

Thursday 21st November My Life Underground – A talk by Alan Walker. This will be an opportunity for members of the Civic Association to share in Alan's enthusiasm for the cave and his experiences of caving all over (or is it under?) the world.

I know that it is his intention to continue to spend time in Buxton, but I suspect that in the near future, a great deal of time may be spent in St David's establishing his new household, and in finding a new home for his pride and joy, "Bonnie Mae". All his colleagues in BCA wish him and Pam the very best of health and happiness in the gradual transition into retirement, and we look forward to seeing him at every opportunity when he does return in the future.

## WAITROSE – helping BCA to protect and preserve Buxton's unique heritage and landscapes.

A huge thank you to Olive Middleton for putting BCA forward for a community award. We received almost 50% of the available green tokens and a cheque for £469. Olive was asked by Dan Hopkinson, Manager at Waitrose, to write a few words to help customers to make their community choice and she did us proud. "Buxton Civic Association is a charity that was established in 1968 and its principal role is to protect and preserve Buxton's unique and wonderful heritage of fine architecture and its natural and formal landscape settings, for the benefit of the local community and visitors to the area. The association is responsible for the upkeep and management of over 200 acres of prime woodland around the town and also purchased Poole's Cavern in the nineteen seventies. The association requires funds to be able to carry on with the great work that they do and are also in the process of producing a booklet to chart their history."



## A New Campaign

As the old Buxton Water Plant is being removed due to concerns over vandalism it is important to keep a close eye on the press. The photograph, taken from Holker Road, reveals what effect such a large and prominent site has on our town. Nestle has assured the Council that there is 'going to be more flexibility in relation to the land.' (Buxton Advertiser 31/01/13). The consultation period ended in April and the formal representations are now due so we must check [www.highpeak.gov.uk](http://www.highpeak.gov.uk) to see updates on preferred options.



*Bring back the Canopies?*

These old photographs of Buxton with its beautiful canopies show what a practical solution the Victorians had to our special climate. They enjoyed healthy fresh air, without the inconvenience of being soaked through between visits to independent and individual shops. What a wonderful idea for the future.



*Buxton Canopies*



## Why Not Take Your Favourite Four Legged Friend Too?

By Mel Stevens

The woodlands of Buxton offer infinite opportunities for dog-walks to suit everyone. There are eight woods to choose from with a variety of terrain, paths and environments to explore and enjoy. As the seasons and foliage (and, yes, also the weather) changes the views and experience is forever new so each day's dog-walk is different. The Ring of Trees is a circular walk through many of the woodlands which surround Buxton. It can be completed as a 10 mile (16km) walk, or taken in three shorter sections so you (and your dog, of course) can take your time and explore each of the woods. The route is waymarked with these signs.



A booklet with full route directions, suggested inter-links and local information is available at Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre. If you prefer a more relaxed approach, just choose a wood and take your (or a friend's) dog to visit it; they are all within easy reach of town and each have their own character for you to discover and enjoy.

## Looks Good and Does You Good

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 Devil's Scabious in 'the Glade' on the ash mounds. This purple flower belongs to the teasel family and is frequently visited by the bees and butterflies for nectar. (PAGE 41) From a guide to the 'Wild Flowers of Grin Low Country Park' by June and Lyn Noble.



*Devil's Scabious*

# Introducing Our New Business Manager

## An interview with Simon Fussell.

### What are your main priorities for our charity?

There are, I think, four key objectives.

Firstly to increase awareness of the Buxton Civic Association and its importance as a guardian of the town heritage and its surrounding woodlands. This raised interest will generate more members - which is my second key objective. Thirdly we must maximise the potential of Poole's Cavern and the Country Park as major attractions in the town and fourthly look at ways to develop new business opportunities and to generate the revenue required for BCA to fulfil its responsibilities to the town. I would encourage people to see Poole's Cavern and the Country Park as a whole day out experience, incorporating the existing cave, Go Ape, and Country Park and additional attractions such as Country Craft days with Wild Food foraging, Flint Knapping and Falconry displays.

### How else do you aim to put BCA on the local map?

Based on some conversations that I had running the successful stall, with BCA members, at the Spring Fair and the Charity Bazaar many local people are not

aware that the Woodlands surrounding Buxton are owned and maintained by the Civic Association for the public. There is a vague assumption that the woods are owned by High Peak Borough Council or some other public body. So there is a need to raise awareness of the Civic Association and the work it has done, continues to do and will need to do in the future.

Some future projects include:

#### A NEW WEBSITE:

We have plans to develop and launch a new website for BCA that will pull together the Civic Association, the Cavern and the Country Park under one consistent brand. The new website will enable members and non-members to have up to date information about their charity. It will be easier for members to comment on and raise issues.

#### OTHER WAYS TO KEEP IN TOUCH:

We plan to place a series of panels in the Cafe to explain the work that the Civic Association has done in the past, is doing in the present, and will need to continue to do in the future. Again this is about making people aware that the Buxton Civic Association is behind the cavern and the country park.

#### BUILD ON OUR LINKS WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS:

This is both to get the schools to use the woods and the cave as part of their curriculum activities but also to raise awareness about the work that the Buxton Civic Association does. Buxton Community School are interested in getting involved. In addition we will have a competition open to all local schools across the school age range to produce a painting or piece of poetry or prose that involves the Country Park in some way. This will, increase awareness of and raise the profile of the Civic Association and give the opportunity to explain what we do to a wider audience and to attract the interest of the younger generation. The plan is to announce the competition in the autumn with the judging to take place in the early summer.

#### RSPB LINKS:

We aim to get a survey carried out of the woodland birds. As well as being able to produce a guide book similar to the excellent one on wild flowers that was written by June Noble, it will provide us with a benchmark of species which we can use to promote a range of educational activities with schools and members of the public. For example the siting of species specific nest boxes in addition to the

ones we already have, could enable us to set up nest cams and show the results on a screen in the cafe, "bringing the woods inside" in effect. Again this provides positive news stories as well as creating additional interest in the woods and the cafe.

#### CORPORATE LINKS:

Another project is to develop a corporate membership for the Civic Association and to look at ways of gaining corporate sponsorship to help defray some of the enormous costs faced when managing and maintaining woodlands. We would also welcome the range of additional skills and expertise that companies may have to offer.

#### FINALLY:

...How about an Ambassador for the Civic Association? We have had a number of suggestions but more are welcome, so if you know of anyone famous or well-known who shares the values of the Civic Association and who might be interested then contact Poole's Cavern or email:

**communications@buxtoncivicassociation.org.uk**

where all ideas and suggestions are extremely welcome.



Our New Business Manager Simon Fussell

# He Moved us Forward and Now he's Moving on

Paul Dinsdale

Chair - Buxton Civic Association

Development Director Bill Preece has resigned from the BCA Board, in view of his forthcoming retirement to his home city of St David's. The Association is hugely in his debt for all of the hard graft, inspiration and sound advice that he has contributed in twelve years on the Board.

Not only that, but our entire redevelopment programme was largely based on colleagues' trust in his cool and impartial judgement and his wealth of commercial experience - it would have been difficult to gain approval for the scale of investment required without the confidence which his support inspired in others. Highly regarded on a much broader stage, of course, his Directorship of DDEP and his high-level contacts in EMDA certainly didn't do the Association any harm, either!

Over his years on the Board, Bill became adept at sourcing various substantial grants that have been crucial in underpinning the projects that have resulted in our growth and financial stability today.

Bill was an obvious choice to undertake our recent Management Review - a task that he carried out with typical efficiency, enthusiasm and professionalism.

On a personal level, I too am largely in Bill's debt, for all the years of support and good advice, particularly since I became Chairman. Those exhortations to "keep a cool head", to "never let the sun set on your anger", and, perhaps the most irritating of all, "If you haven't done it, you haven't done it", have, hopefully, made some impression on me - although Bill may sadly regard it as very much a work still in progress!