

Celebrating Our New Website



What better way to celebrate the season of 'springing into action' than with the launch of our new interactive website? The quality of the graphics and photographs and the ease with which we can all access this brilliant new resource will inform and educate us all as we get out and about, exploring our lovely, local environment.

This 'screen shot' of the home page will encourage all our members and visitors, near and far, to catch up on the latest news and to share in the work of the BCA online. Have no fears though the good old Newsletter is alive and well – a permanent 'hard copy' to keep handy and enjoy in your own time, to share with family and friends over coffee!

News from Our Woods

If you go down to Corbar Wood today you're sure of a big surprise!



Elegy for a Fallen Beech

by Trevor Donald

During a stormy night last December the oldest tree in our woods crashed down, leaving a stump about six feet tall and a prostrate trunk about 100 feet long with a diameter of about four feet. Our veteran beech had been growing, maturing, and then declining into old age beside the main path through Corbar Wood for about 250 years. Many thousand residents, visitors and workers must have passed close by and, especially in the last few decades, stopped to admire its knotted textures and rich decay that was providing a habitat for a complex biodiversity. Most of its great trunk will be left where it fell to continue its necessary role in the ongoing cycle of regeneration: a healthy wood has as much 'dead' timber as living trees. In a recent 'Country Diary' in the Guardian, Buxton born-and-bred naturalist Mark Cocker was musing on the very much older ancient oaks in Savernake Forest in Wiltshire. Some were probably growing before 1066. He was trying to define why so many of us find them so moving and fascinating. 'Is it because they contain all our post-Norman history in one stump? Or is it our time-lapse reflections on all those billions of other organisms that have lived and flourished in their complex embrace over the past millennium? Could it also be that they turn death into a sort of living process?' We hope to install a thin slice of the trunk at the Visitor Centre with an explanatory caption about how trees grow and ask visiting children to try to count the rings. I hope our now fallen old friend would approve.

The Rings of Tree!



Even our 'Fallen Beech' was a handsome young fellow decades before John Carr designed the Crescent and was already 50 when Jane Austen chose to place her most famous character in our beautiful home county and wrote, '... I think could live my whole life in Derbyshire,' *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). When it celebrated its 100th year around 1863 the Midland Railway and the Stockport, Disley and Whaley Bridge Railway opened within two weeks of each other with fan windows to match. Thankfully one window is still gratefully preserved today.



Photo by Ben Brooksbank 1963

At 150 years of age our tree stood proudly as we plunged into World War One and Edwardians, like Vera Brittain used Sir Joseph Paxton's planned 'Swiss Walks' in Corbar Woods for relaxation and recuperation after harrowing days, nursing the wounded in the Royal Devonshire Hospital.

As 'the beech' reached 200 years Buxton was struggling in the sixties. Ridiculous Plans to replace the land in front of the Palace Hotel with a huge roundabout were thwarted by a new group of civically aware Buxtonians. For more details we all await Olive Middleton's forthcoming book about the first 50 years of the BCA.

A new wave of 'Civics' joined BCA as our beech reached 225 years. Concerns over a huge coal-

fired chimney drew in new dedicated members like Hilary Lawrence, who spent the next 25 years scrutinising planning applications on our behalf.

Now as the old beech shows its rings of time to us we need to play our part in the future of this unique town. The best time to plant a tree was 25 years ago the second best time is now!

Bluebells in Corbar Woods - ready to put on a show and banish the winter blues!



Photo by Simon Fussell

Spotlight on Sherbrook Wood

by Alan Walker



Straddling the lower end of Fernydale, Sherbrook wood at the bottom of Harpur Hill Road is one of BCA's smaller woods at just eight acres.

This wood was one of the original plantations passed to our ownership from the Chatsworth estate in 1970 along with Grin Low and Corbar. Sherbrook shares a similar history with Grin Low. The boundary with both woods is just a few hundred yards apart separated by Fern Lane. There is plenty of evidence of limestone quarrying and lime burning from the 18th century and the remains of a lime-burner's house is now occupied by a large family of badgers.

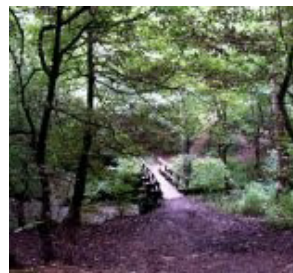
Planting probably took place at the same time as Grinlow and evidence of this is in the huge beech trees found within the wood, dating from around 1820. The tree species are predominately beech, ash and sycamore with some fine scots pines planted in the early 20th century. Plantings

from the 1970s have introduced whitebeam, alder, yew, holly and rowan amongst others.

One of the wood's main features is the seasonal stream which issues from valley floor springs. Gathering a strong flow, the water disappears beneath Harpur Hill Road and emerges alongside Duke's Drive before plunging into the depths of Lovers' Leap gorge to join the River Wye. The high lime content of this water betrays its source from the discarded lime-workings of Stanley Moor, but nevertheless hosts a myriad of invertebrates, amphibians and small fish.

Access to the wood is either from Harpur Hill Road or Fern Lane or a path from Trent Avenue by Harpur Hill Primary School and via a portion of the wood owned by Derbyshire Country Council; an example of the complex boundaries which our woodlands sometimes share. Although there are no formal designated public rights of way through Sherbrook, the wood is very well visited with a popular short cut from Harpur Hill to Buxton Community School and connections to open land for dog walkers and ramblers. New housing estates including the Templemore development which extends to the wood's quarry edge boundary has significantly increased the woodland usage.

In 2012 BCA embarked on a project to improve access with several hundred yards of upgraded pathways expertly constructed by Oakleaf Landscapes and aggregate donated by Tarmac Ltd. The bridge across the seasonal stream was rebuilt and replacement gateway access points installed. The Ring of Trees walk passes through here.



Sherbrook in summer.

Photo from The Ring of Trees

Inevitably the high use by visitors leads to some conflicts. We have a larger littering problem here than in other woods with occasional fly tipping. BCA volunteers assist with keeping on top of littering here as elsewhere. Large scale tree felling due to the proximity of new housing was necessary in 2013. However robust agreements with the developers have provided for future replanting and rejuvenation of this area of the wood.

Take a springtime stroll through Sherbrook as the wood anemones and celandines begin to carpet the woodland floor.

Members' News

Making Links with Friends of Buxton Museum.

In November Mike Monaghan and Olive Middleton gave a talk to the Friends of Buxton Museum about BCA. They were asked about the woodlands and from this the seeds of an idea have grown into learning more about our trees. Another loyal BCA member, Angela Wills, is working on a walk in Grin Low identifying the main trees, and printing some easy hand-outs.

Catch Up on Club Nights

Over the winter we have enjoyed two fascinating talks at the Café @ the Cavern. The first was by our very own Alan Walker. In the November talk, 'My life Underground', he revealed that, although not a spy, he has never been afraid of getting into a tight spot anywhere in the world!



Alan started caving at Buxton College at 14 and trained in the craft of caving skills at Whitehall Outdoor centre in the 1970s. He has explored many of the great and deepest cave systems in France and Spain and, as a member of the 1989 Royal Geographical Society sponsored China Caves Expedition, he explored over 40 km of some of the world's largest caverns. In 1990s on the Caucasus Mountains Arabika Reconnaissance Expedition, to locate the potential for the world's deepest cave, he had an unexpected flight in a Russian Army helicopter. He has now 'settled down' – restful hobbies include membership of Derbyshire Cave Rescue!



Alan Walker on a raft exploring a cave in China.

The January Club night continued the theme of brave volunteers. This time Roger Bennett celebrated 50 years of the Mountain Rescue. His talk, The History of Mountain Rescue in the Peak District explained that it was established in the 1960s after three disasters, including the infamous Four Inns Walk tragedy. Whilst police and ambulance crews are always on standby the Mountain Rescue team is trained to deal specifically with the unexpected events caused by the unpredictable nature of the great outdoors.

Originally called Mountaineering Rescue – which explains the name as there are no mountains in the Peak District – members know their way on Kinder in the dark. They use specially designed equipment, especially stretchers that have evolved over the last fifty years of unique rescues. They are called out about 250 times a year to help ... 'with any medical emergency that can happen to you outside in the Peak District!' The number of calls has increased with the popularity of the great outdoors and extreme sports like mountain biking. The members that attended made donations to Buxton Mountain Rescue and a collecting box is always on the café counter at Poole's Cavern.

BCA Wins Environmental Quality Mark - EQM



BCA Wins Environmental Quality Mark - EQM
The EQM award recognises:

- Support for the local economy
- Protection of the global environment
- Enhancement of the local environment
- Investment in people and communities
- Opportunities to celebrate what is special about the Peak District National Park

Mike Monaghan, Director with responsibility for Environmental Policy at Buxton Civic Association was interviewed on High Peak Radio as a result. Here is an extract from the transcript of the interview. A full transcript is available on the website.

'Now clearly central to our Association is care for the environment. We care for this wonderful cave and the woodlands and ensure that they can be enjoyed by people today and that they are passed onto the next generation to enjoy and care for. Grin Low wood is a Site of Special Scientific Interest because of its flower glades. The cave is an SSSI because of some of its unique features and the bats that roost there.

We have established an environmental policy and carry out an annual review which covers amongst other things, where we buy our food and source products from the shop, how we can be more energy efficient, the reduction in the use of harmful chemicals in any cleaning processes that we undertake and our management of the woodlands and the cave. We have switched to LED lighting in the cave, which has saved considerably on our energy usage as well as generating less heat thus reducing our environmental impact on the cave.

As part of the award process our staff assembled a summary of the things that we do. When you see the list set out you realise it's much more than you think, but of course there are always more things that we can do. We are running a complicated business: we have the cave, the woods, the café, the visitor centre, car parking and the educational side to the business, so it was a wide ranging list of items to submit. The body that runs the EQM was very pleased to be able to make the award to larger business.

They were very positive about the access that we have afforded to visitors including those with disabilities. We have taken steps to improve accessibility and this is an ongoing project and of course we have to balance accessibility with ensuring that we preserve the environment.'

Dates For Your Diary



Sunday 11th May 2.00pm at the Café @ the Cavern

Guided Walk in Grin Woods to learn how to identify different species of trees.

It is advisable to bring water proofs and stout walking boots as the paths may be muddy in places.

AGM Monday 23rd June 7.00 for 7.30 at Poole's Cavern Visitor Centre

If you cannot be present, please use your Proxy vote, post it or ask a friend hand it in.

The Festival Fringe 9th -27th July

Poole's Cavern will once again become the stage for hosting the London based Butterfly Theatre. We are breaking with the Shakespeare tradition this year for an adaptation of Bram Stoker's DRACULA.

The New Buxton Family Festival

will run from 1-17th August. We will be organising events over this period including a Family Fun Run. Our website will feature up to date events.

Cavern News

Picnic in the Country Park with a hamper from our café. We provide everything for a ready-made picnic from our café for you to take with you into Grin Low woods and beyond. When the weather is right just seize the day and enjoy the great outdoors.



Woods Volunteers -

Forget the gym now the spring is here. What better place for healthy exercise than out in the woods, learning new crafts, meeting new people and assisting with the monumental task of helping nature to recover from the wet windy winter? Repairs are needed to walls, steps and paths. Volunteers meet at Poole's Cavern on the last Monday of each month at 9.30 until 12.



Dog Friendly -

Why not nominate the Café @ the Cavern as dog friendly? The Kennel Club is looking for the top 100 places in the UK that truly welcome our four legged friends. Visit www.openfordogs.org.uk and nominate us as a great inclusive place for dogs.

Café is a venue to hire. If you are looking for a suitable space for a 'get together' remember the café is available to hire.



Birds, Butterflies and Bats Count

After our involvement in the RSPB Great Garden Birdwatch this winter, which some members enjoyed from the comfort of the Café, we will be participating in the Butterfly Count for Butterfly Conservation from 19th July – 10th August. P.S. Peter Stacey reported that a rare white letter hair streak butterfly can be seen in Buxton. Also a recent bat survey found two myotis bats – that makes a fifth species to be found here at the cavern.

BCA in Town – well, the Gardens!

We will have our regular stall, every third Thursday at the Farmers' Market at the Pavilion Gardens, so if you are around drop in and pay us a visit.



Spring Clean up Letter from Buxton Town Team

Dear BCA,

Buxton Town Team are working with High Peak Borough Council to carry out a major clean-up of the town centre, collecting litter, cleaning off dirty signs and utility boxes, removing old cable ties and string from lamp posts and so on. We are hoping that Buxton Civic Association will be able to help. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

*All the best,
Janet and Tina
Big Buxton Spring Clean*



Spring Fair on May 3rd -

Come and visit our stall and experience the world of creepy crawlies that have come down from the woods for the day.

We will have a Lucky Dip and microscopes to view prepared slides of insects and seeds etc.

The new website – www.buxtoncivicassociation.org.uk

is up and running. We are really pleased with it, and would love to hear your comments and suggestions. We'd also love to have your photographs of Buxton and if you want to contribute a blog post or article let us know by emailing us at communications@buxtoncivicassociation.org.uk.

The Canopies of Buxton – Update

There has been a great deal of interest in this project. In a meeting held in November with Adrian Brown of Vision Buxton, and Roddy McLean of the Buxton Town Team it was felt that the idea was appropriate and would fit well within the overall plans for the town.

HPBC is due to consult on a proposal for Spring Gardens and it was suggested that the three organisations approach the Council together to promote the benefits of this idea.

It was suggested that a proportion of the canopies could be restored to act as a catalyst and exemplar. Vision Buxton's board has indicated that they are keen to progress the tri-part approach.

The Crescent – Better than Bath -

Members are regularly writing to the local press about the Crescent and it is vital that High Peak Borough Council and Derbyshire County Council continue to be pressed about the funding issues over John Carr's famous Grade I listed landmark, built for the Fifth Duke of Devonshire between 1780 and 1789.

To experience what we strive for in Buxton, a visit to York's Fairfax House, also designed by John Carr, is highly recommended. It has been beautifully restored and is jealously guarded by the York Civic Trust.

Every part of the restoration has been lovingly executed and it is a celebration of the 'best Regency town house in the country'.

How amazing it would be if our own Crescent was treated with the same loving care, especially as it is described by the Royal Institution of British Architects as being, "more richly decorated and altogether more complex" than the Royal Crescent in Bath. We must voice our concerns over our Crescent at every opportunity.

Children's Activities in our Woods -

Many of our school visits take advantage of the woodland paths to Solomon's Temple and follow the interpretation trail which ties in the story of the hillside geology and industry with the cavern story.

We are planning a sculpture trail for which Simon Fussell, our Business Manager, is seeking funding and it is planned to involve local schools with creating themes for the sculptures.

High Peak Community Arts have funding to develop some story telling activities with a woodland theme. We will be working with Gordon McKellan of Creeping Toad Story Telling and hope to involve pupils from local schools. A wood sculptor plans to create up to six woodland and cavern themed totem pole type sculptures to be placed around the picnic area.

We are fully committed to bring the woodlands educational potential to the local community and visiting schools.

Hilary Lawrence



A long-standing member of the Board of Directors of BCA Hilary has decided to step down as Vice-Chairman and Chair of the Planning Committee. Hilary has been very active. She became interested in local planning issues soon after coming to Buxton in 1981 when the proposal to build a coal fired chimney at the Community School was approved despite strong local opposition.

Hilary has been supportive of our management of the woods with her involvement in the Woodwatch Group. In 2000 they supervised the rebuilding of the steps from the car park to the main path in Grin Low Wood, a major improvement needing grants from WREN (Waste Recycling Environmental) and the

Bingham Trust, negotiating the donation of aggregate from Tilcon South Ltd. The work was carried out by Martin Wragg of Oaktree Landscapes. This was our first major project of the new century and its success set the pattern for many later projects.

Examples of her commitment to BCA include helping to restart the regular publication of the BCA newsletter in 2003, along with Trevor Donald and Mike Clements, organising social events for members and prospective members in the Palace Hotel in 2004 and 2011 and the annual summer outing of the East Midlands Association of Civic Societies in Buxton, which included tours of the Opera House and the Dome.

Being Vice-Chairman of BCA since 2009 has involved Hilary in much administrative work and attendance at many BCA meetings and representing BCA at other organisations in Buxton. Her long experience of ensuring that good resolutions are translated into action will be much missed.

Buxton Civic Association

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

Board Members:

Chair: Paul Dinsdale

Vice Chair: Mike Monaghan

Secretary: Martin Wragg

Treasurer: Brian Shawcross

Planning: Tim Middleton & Owen Longden

Woodlands: Peter Phillipson

Community & Membership: Mike Wilde

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