



The Garden Wall

Leases

Win lunch for two

AGM 2 April 2017 at Rheged

Becoming a Board member

Keswick's ups and downs for the kids.

Manor progress

Squirrel stories

That Wall!

The owner of the Manor succeeded in getting planning consent for a new garden wall across the south face of our site, despite our vigorous objections. But we did manage to persuade him to reduce the height and set it much further away from the cottage front doors.

The 53m run of stone-faced wall will now sit 4.8m away from our frontages. The planning consent conditions require that it should never obstruct our views from the main habitable rooms. The post and string marks it's line across the lawns towards the tower.



We are in discussions about the practicalities, but are talking about whether the start of construction can be after the summer holidays.

That would mean that part of the build time would overlap with our maintenance weeks and so reduce the number of guests affected during the build.

We are already thinking with our site agents FML about how best to landscape our side of the wall to provide additional amenity for owners in that area. It will include a new path into the woodland.

Leases

These are now top of the Board's agenda. We have asked our solicitors to advise us about what is now enforceable in light of all the changes that have occurred.

The existing set of five leases are confusing. They were drawn up when the Manor was a hotel owned by the original developers - back before 2009! At that time the hotel owners were eager for Underscar guests to roam across the hotel grounds and come to eat in the restaurant. That openness came to an abrupt halt when Mr Mineev bought the Manor and built the car park wall.

The present owner's representatives have now agreed to work with us on restructuring our leases in order to give clarity for the future. That will be in everyone's interests. Our Chairman, in consultation with our Trustees, is leading a small group to specify what we are now looking for, helped by ex-chairmen with relevant legal qualifications - a formidable team! We plan to commission a land law specialist to ensure we arrive at a water-tight lease arrangement that robustly secures our future rights !

There is light at the end of this tunnel!

Money matters

The AGM is approaching fast and owners will see the first set of audited accounts for UOCL under it's new business structure.

We were an unincorporated body (as Underscar Owners' Club) and are now a Company Limited by Guarantee.

The change is improving our ability to manage our affairs more efficiently.

- *All Vat we pay can be offset against the VAT we raise on the Management fees.*
- *We are able to take on a loan.*
- *Money we invest in major refurbishment and replacement goes into a capital account.*
- *We now operate a depreciation account for high value items (eg bathroom refits)*
- *Refurbishment items of a low value and short life are charged to the profit and loss account (eg replacement towel sets).*
- *We do not pay tax on any profits from Mutual Trading*
- *Any losses can be offset against future non-mutual trading profit.*

So when you receive the annual accounts to consider look out for the note from Ian Hedley. He leads on Finance for the Board and explains why they are so different from earlier years.



Signs of Spring???

It may only be February but there are already real signs of spring .

We had snow on the fell tops in week 5, yet the snowdrops were well underway and all the bushes in our garden pots were plump with fat buds.



We glimpsed the sun breaking through the morning mist and headed to Caldbeck Fell to relish the big expanse of hill and sky.

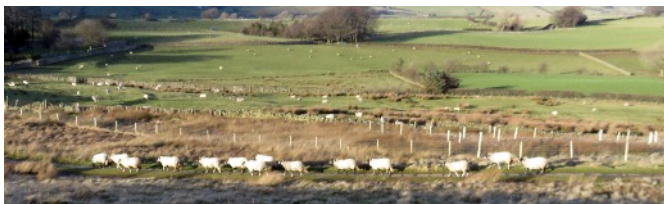
The daffodils nestling in the banks looked just hours away from flowering too!

Last autumn there was a great crop of crab apples in the hedgerows, and they are still dropping to ground to provide a frosty treat for small mammals.



South of Caldbeck we watched an eager line of round-bellied sheep heading down off the fell-side and into the lambing barns.

Not long to wait now.



Its Half-term week! Some Ups and Downs

The Northern Lake district is a great place to bring the kids - especially those who love the great outdoors.

Can you recall the first real mountain you climbed, or your first set of 'proper' boots? Once you have the bug few people lose the urge to reach for the top! Click on the link below for some great ideas.

<http://www.keswick.org/explore/lakes-mountains/mountains-195/familywalks>

Last February we climbed Skiddaw and met two 3-generation families on top above the clouds - sometimes it takes a Grandad to show the next generation a thing or two.



Lower down in Keswick town we have spotted

Ghost Walks are now on offer in Keswick for adults and children over 10. Click on www.lakelandhauntings.co.uk/ for the details

Did you know that Thirlmere was originally two smaller lakes which were amalgamated into one large reservoir in 1889, thanks to the industrial revolution hitting Manchester and the demand of more water for the cotton mills. The villages of Armboth and Wythburn (except the church) were lost in the process.

The car park at Wythburn church provides a good start point for the trek up Helvellyn from the Thirlmere side. They say it has to be done at least once in your life?

Back at ground level the Rheged centre is hosting

Professor Pumpernickel's Mind-Bending Science Show

'Pumpernickel is on a mission to inspire our future inventors, explorers, life savers and super heroes. If you like fire, explosions and mind bending magic, you will love Pumpernickel'.



Click [here](#) for Rheged centre to find the details.

Cyclists and Valley walkers beware

Many of us use the old railway line path between Keswick and Threlkeld as a favourite sheltered and accessible walk. Its part of the coast to coast cycle route too! But following the big storms of December 2015 some of the bridges are still down or unsafe to use.

You can view a short video clip (click [here](#)), giving the latest update on the railway path with Cath Johnson, Area Ranger from the National Park Authority.

She explains that following the floods in December 2015, the Keswick to Threlkeld Railway path suffered serious damage. Two of the old railway bridges that cross the River Greta, and around 200 metres of the path surface were washed away.



One of the remaining railway bridges (Rawsome Bridge) was left severely damaged and at risk of collapse. She says that

'We have since reopened half of the route, including the raised boardwalk so walkers and cyclists can now enjoy a popular one kilometre section of the path. But in the interest of public safety we have closed off all damaged and missing bridges in the remaining half of the route'.

There is an alternative cycle route available via Castlerigg.

So You can't cycle through to Threlkeld yet!

Review our Articles:- and win Dinner for 2!

Owners have a very special love for Underscar, and all it has to offer. Since becoming a Company Limited by Guarantee in 2015 the Board has worked on defining our Member relationships more clearly.

One key step in becoming a company was the adoption of Articles of Association (AofA). We compiled a workable set at the outset but they needed clarification and improvement to ensure they fairly reflect how we now do business.

There are now two documents on our website.

1. Comparing AofA adopted Aug 2015 with new AofA
2. Fair copy of AoA Proposed for adoption at AGM 2017

Please go to our owners area on the website and follow the links to look for yourself before the formal voting papers are issued next month. Your input is important! Go to

<https://underscar.co.uk/members/owners-home/>

The final draft recommended for adoption has been developed by a consultative group of owners, with input from our Trustees and finally our solicitors.

Every owner who does consider the articles will be entered in a prize draw - result to be announced at the AGM!

**£30 Dinner
for Two at
Oxley's
awaits you.**



Make sure you are 'in the know'

Red Squirrel News

Many of us have come to appreciate how much one of our owners, Maria, has done to promote our daily encounters with our red squirrel colony.

Maria has provided her latest report

'During our November visit I was drawn back to the woodland walk.

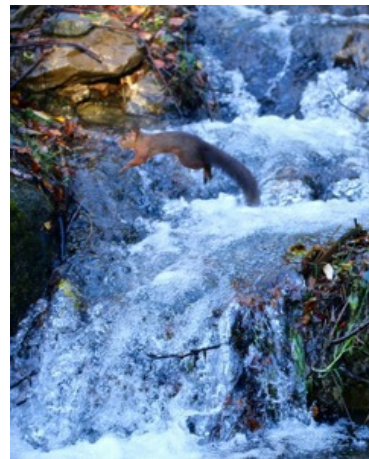


In August Michael, estate manager for the Manor had given me permission to leave a new feeding box and a set of deer antlers attached to a tree positioned as you make your way to the pagoda.

The Red Squirrel enjoys gnawing away at deer antlers in order to obtain a source of calcium. The female reds will benefit especially from this

calcium source when they are rearing young in January/February. In the Lake District naturally they would perhaps come by these lying on the ground once shed by the deer.

A good way to explore a wood is to walk slowly and quietly through it, looking around as you go, and keeping to the paths. When you find a convenient sheltered spot, sit there quietly for a while and look out for animals passing by.



Good luck with your spotting everyone.

Children's new activity bag

Maria tells me that she has just finished putting together a 'Woodland Story Activity Bag'. It will be left at reception for families to take and use. She says:-

'This bag contains a tree house containing 6 finger puppets. I am hoping that the adults in the family will enjoy playing with these as much as the youngsters.

All the finger puppets can be used alongside a book entitled 'Squirrels Busy Day'. The bag also contains a 'Woodland Life Spotter's Guide.' This spotter's guide can be used alongside a leaf identification swatch.



After a visit into the woods I am hoping that families will enjoy delving into the story bag. In Dodd Wood the Red Squirrel Ranger is often present and loves to answer any questions on woodland and woodland animals.

There are some surprise extras in the bag too - a red squirrel soft toy, a red squirrel jigsaw, 6 woodland stencils and drawing pad, a photo book of the Underscar woodland walk and finally, 'That's not my Squirrel' touchy feely book."

You can find the 'WOODLAND STORY BAG' displayed at the Underscar reception desk. You can reserve the bag should you wish to use it during your stay.

My favourite finger puppet is the fox. With your finger fitting into his front paws he can be used in very creative play.

From all of us - a big

THANK YOU

to Maria



Progress on Manor works

We are told that the plasterers are still in the house. Despite his hopes Mr Brown, the new owner, did not get to eat his Christmas Dinner in the Manor House in 2016.

There has been a further planning application for changes to the staff quarters at the back - but as this did not directly affect our amenity we took no action. Work is also being done on the small staff cottage behind our clubhouse.

The lawns to the south west, below the drive to the new gates, now boast an area being prepared for spring planting of the vineyard. Suitable vines for our northern climate have been sourced and will start being productive in about 5 years time. They should thrive on this sheltered south westerly slope.

The wall by the Manor conservatory is finished all but for one ornamental stone ball - which is cracked and being replaced. The ground between the conservatory and the tower is being made ready for planting. Then the area will be cleared of all equipment so that a new bowling green lawn can be laid.



The bee hives up by the lane have settled in, and should be joined by more this spring. With so much fruit planting all around the grounds the bees should be

busy, happy and productive.

What emerges is the sense that Mr Brown wants to restore this lovely old house to the best possible standard and in keeping with its history. However disappointed we are by the new wall to be built south of our upper row, we are all going to have a stunning outlook from our living room balconies over these highly productive areas, which will eventually include the new kitchen garden.

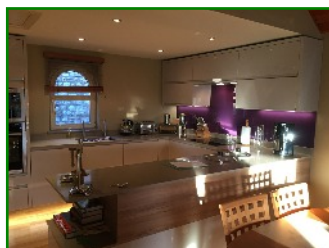
The AGM on 2 April 2017 -Will you be there?

The Rheged centre on the A66 just west of Penrith is hosting us - a place where family members travelling with you could happily have some fun!

The agenda papers will be issued by early March. There will be the usual formalities to deal with at the outset, but when those are complete we have allotted plenty of time to discuss recent events - it has been quite a year!

Most important we want to talk about future refurbishment plans. We have now improved a number of bathrooms and kitchens - but there are more to do! How quickly they get done depends on your management fees: our primary source of income.

Naturally when you come to Underscar you want your cottage to be as good as can be. We take pride in our 5* gold status.



But equally each bathroom takes about £15,000 to refit, and kitchens about £12,000. It's a major investment!

So owners - tell us what matters most to you.

Your Board needs you!

Sunday 2nd April is the first AGM of the new company. As promised at the Special General Meeting that set up Underscar Owners Club Limited, all the current Directors will stand down to allow for an elected Board to lead the company.

Many of the current Directors are willing to stand again, but not all of us, and we need 7 Directors for a full house.

So – are you prepared to put yourself forward?

Coming up:

- Successful renegotiation of our leases with the Manor;
- A programme of refurbishment that will improve all the properties and shared facilities;
- Generating additional income to support the management fee;
- Further improvement of the website and more owner involvement; and
- Doing our best to make Underscar environmentally sustainable.

I can promise you:

- An opportunity to gain skills in getting a quart out of a pint pot;
- Learning more about Company Law than you ever thought you'd need;
- Ditto Health and Safety; and,
- Delegated responsibility for your own area of the Board's work.

You know you'd enjoy it!

Need to know more?

Email me on

Janice.Lawson@btopenworld.com or

phone on 07715565326



Our Marketing

We are generating fresh interest in Underscar through our current advertising campaigns. Our 3 month campaign in Trail, Country Walking and Trail Running Magazines, linked to Bauer's web media networks, has attracted much welcome attention. Show your friends!

From the numbers responding to our competition to come and be our guest, it is clear that a couple of thousand people are already interested. This marketing is designed to reach out to people who are a good match for Underscar, and the numbers are still growing with each edition of the magazines concerned. We are encouraging both renters and prospective owners to think about Underscar as a delightful place that is sympathetic to their hobbies and interests.

We look forward to welcoming some newcomers to Underscar

Newsletter editor: Barbara Hedley UOCL Board (Communications)