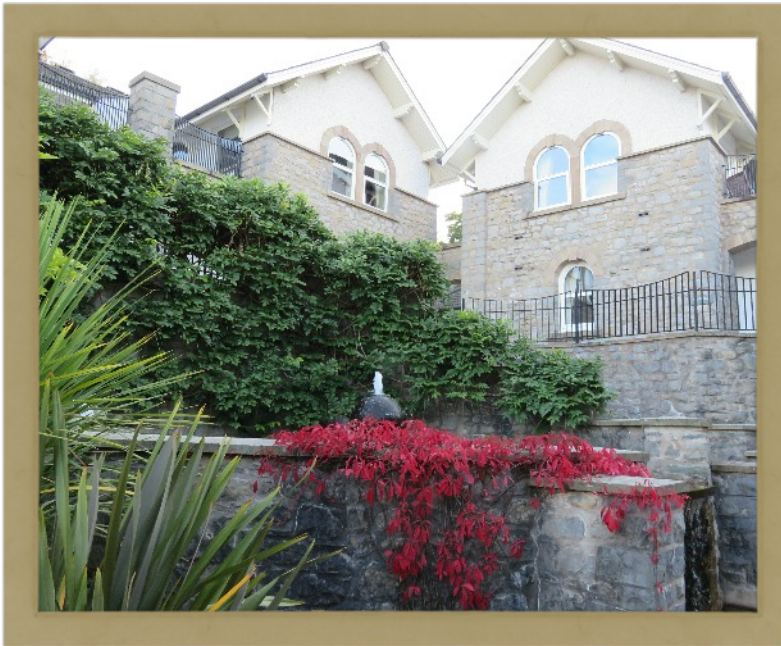


Underscar Owners' Club Ltd- Newsletter October 2016



AGM 2017 at Rheged
Becoming a Board member
Meet Marmalade & Sooty
Thank you Mr Taxman
Website and Marketing
Keswick's hidden gems
Manor progress
Gardens and walls

Our Finances have had a boost!

Ian Hedley, Board member, now leads on financial matters and has some surprising news to share.



At our April and July Board meetings we spent time agonising over whether we would have to put up maintenance charges because there is some really important work needed in the cottages to maintain our 5* status.

Currently we put 17.5% of our club's income into the reserve fund, but realistically that needs to be at or above 22.5% for the long term. This is the money we keep protected for major refurbishment work and high cost repairs, such as bathrooms and boilers. We were looking at an increase of about £40 per owner week.

But two years ago Robert, one of our owners, introduced us to an expert who conducts independent rate reviews. He established that by challenging our current assessment we were due a rate reduction of £22,000 per annum. **WOW!**

Further good news was that this could be backdated. In August we received the rebate from previous years -as a lump sum of £121,000. **Double WOW!!**

THANK YOU MR TAXMAN! Thank you Robert!

Competing with that refurbishment priority we now aim to purchase outright the Air Source Heat Pumps [ASHP]. We can do this now we are a company limited by guarantee. All unglamorous stuff, but vital to our financial viability.

Our Green credentials

Have you spotted those large steel cupboards outside the back door of the pool hall? They whirr away quietly and

turn Lakeland air into pool heating and under-floor heating for Oxleys, day in day out.

By taking the kit into club ownership we become eligible for the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI): a government grant which currently goes to our lessors. We also cease paying the lease cost. We would hold a maintenance contract with the supplier instead.

Eureka! So this year we have been able to limit the maintenance charge increase just to a level to cover staff wage increases (we KNOW they deserve it!)

Alongside that, with our Bank's support, we are planning to purchase the ASHP system, and still put money to reserves for our refurbishment works. **Treble WOW!!!**

Where does the rest of your management fee go?

One of the delights of arriving at Underscar for your week's holiday break is knowing that your cottage will be clean and fresh, and everything in the leisure club in tip-top order. (And if its not - you know that you only have to ask the maintenance team and they will do everything they can to put it right).

That's where our site agents come in. The FML team discretely provide cleaning, laundry, consumables, on-site reception, security and maintenance - all done by delightful people who are always friendly and welcoming. They run the bistro and beauty spa, and keep the leisure club in excellent order for us. Then of course there are the usual Rates, TV, VAT and Insurance to cover. In other words they do all the practical things so we owners and guests don't need to think about it.

That's a real luxury! Your Underscar holiday cottage frees you from all these mundane concerns.

All you have to do is turn up and enjoy every minute!

RED SQUIRREL STORY SACK.



Families with young children visiting Underscar will love the new Red Squirrel Story Sack, which may be borrowed from the Underscar reception desk.

A story sack is a large cloth bag containing books, games and other supporting materials to stimulate language activities and make reading a memorable and enjoyable experience for young children. Also, as an added bonus, I hope children will learn to love and appreciate the wonderful red squirrels of Underscar.

Use of the red squirrel puppet in the sack will become I am sure as popular as Oxley. The book called 'HAZEL-NUT BREAKFAST', contains photos of the red squirrels which I took in August 2016.

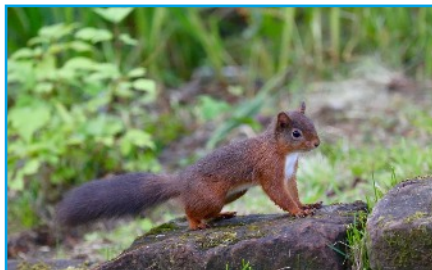
Thank you Maria!

Squirrel News

Maria Blakeley, one of our owners, is a keen naturalist and photographer. You can follow her work at

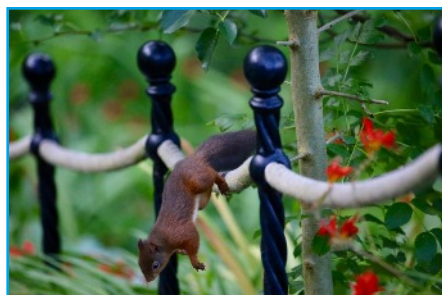
hazelmariablakeley.blogspot.com.

During her two week stay in August this year she studied the antics of 'Marmalade' and 'Sooty', and has shared her observations.



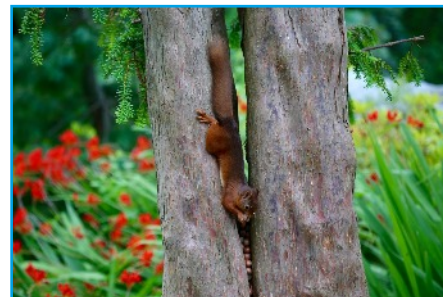
Sooty would always travel up to the feeder using the low stone wall to the side of the woodland walk.

But his balance wasn't as good as he hoped on the ropes.



Marmalade always came from a different direction in the mornings.

She liked to creep around the back of the trees to reach hazelnuts I had carefully placed.



Her skills in retrieving hazelnuts over the two week observation period were brilliant.

No matter where I hid the nuts she discovered them.

Our Squirrel colony couldn't have a better advocate!

Website and Marketing developments

James Moore is the Board member who has led on the design and implementation of our website. He now works with our partners on our marketing outreach.

We know that some of our current owners want to sell and move on - for entirely understandable reasons. The Board recognise that our best way of keeping Underscar as a vibrant, committed community of owners is to improve our public profile and take a fresh approach to marketing.

How best to reach out to a new generation of people who love the Lakes? How best to identify folks who relish the outdoors and could come to love our delightful Underscar holiday settlement as much as we do?



Here James tells us what he is up to on our behalf:-

"Every two weeks, I use Skype for a conference call with Guy and Jenni, our account team at Creation, our marketing agency based in Manchester. Matt Hartnett, FML's marketing manager also joins us by dialling in from Ambleside.

We start with our agreed schedule of work, review website use, identify content improvements and consider feedback from owners. We also talk through progress on our marketing plans exchanging new ideas. It's been great to finalise the redesign of the Underscar brochure.

We chose Creation to design and implement a replacement for our out-of-date website. Updating the look and feel and a lot of the content was necessary because it no

longer adequately reflected our brand. Since launching the site in July 2015 Creation have maintained it with responsibility for software updates, regular backups, security updates and occasional bug fixes, so that it works 24 hours per day 365 days a year.

The new website <https://underscar.co.uk> is central to our marketing, and Creation has the expertise we need to make the most of it. During the early summer we tested some advertising ideas on Facebook for both rentals and sales.

We are now using what we learned in planning a much larger three month campaign using social media, adverts in three magazines, and email newsletters - amongst other things.

Before the campaign starts we'll be changing some of the existing website content and creating some new pages, both specifically to support the campaign. So the conference calls are likely to become weekly and my inbox will get busier"

The Board appreciates how much time and effort James has put in to this area of our responsibility: something we have only been able to work on this way since buying out the original developer in 2013, selling some 'stock' units in the owners' auction to generate start-up funds, and then becoming a company limited by guarantee.

Its a rapidly changing environment. But an enjoyable challenge too.

Making the most of the Keswick area

Owners - what do you look forward to most when coming to stay for your week or two at Underscar?

The Keswick area is a gem. This small country town has a vibrant market on Saturdays, a remarkable cinema which often shows art-house films, a splendid Theatre by the Lake, delightful artisan shops and art galleries, and VERY GOOD food.

But have you found these hidden delights yet?

- The Lakes Distillery - tours & a good restaurant <https://www.lakesdistillery.com>
- The Thornthwaite Galleries :- fascinating art-work, and good tea <http://www.thornthwaitegallery.co.uk/>
- Threlkeld Mining Museum with underground tours and rail adventures <http://www.threlkeldquarryandminingmuseum.co.uk/>



- Whinlatter Forest centre: England's only true Mountain Forest, home to stunning views, fantastic walks, exhilarating mountain biking, rare wildlife and adventure play.. And squirrels too! <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/whinlatter>

- Keswick Museum: awarded Cumbria museum of the year in 2015 with lots to tell about Wainwright and his books ... and fossils. <http://keswickmuseum.org.uk/>

- Honister Mine and Via Ferrata - just look at their



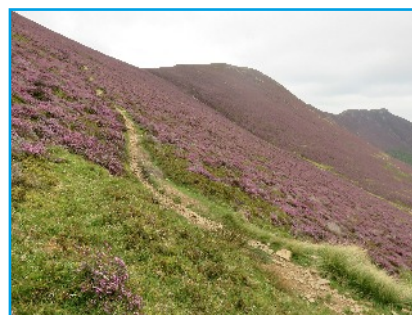
webcam Scary!!! <http://www.honister.com/>

- KMB - Keswick Mountain Bike shop - routes for cycling - with good pubs! Be ambitious and try "Four Season Fred"! <https://www.keswickbikes.co.uk/category/cafes-pubs>

- Castlerigg stone circle <http://www.keswick.org/explore/not-to-miss/castlerigg-stone-circle>



These are just a few of the distractions available if you can tear yourself away from just walking the hills.



But when the light and the heather is as good as this (taken on a September walk from Buttermere village, passing over

the ridge south-west of Causey Pike, through to Braithwaite) you will see why the simple call of the hills is so strong!



Progress at the Manor

Throughout 2016 we have watched Underscar Manor being lovingly brought back to its natural splendour. We hear that the owner Mr Brown is determined to be eating Christmas dinner there this year, and so the restoration team are working flat out to be sure the house is ready.

Most of the interior work has had little effect on us, but owners and visitors to our cottages will have seen

- Elegant new locked gates at the bottom of the drive and below the woods
- Rebuilt boundary walls by the road and behind Grisedale Cottage (14)
- The planted up Damson Orchard
- The new beehives
- The flat roof (soon to be grassed over) of the biomass plant on the old tennis courts
- Preparation work for a Ha-Ha (disguised drop wall) on the bank below the front row.
- New ponds by the woods and near the main gates.



Most important for owners, by October the new wall below the herb garden cottages was finished, with three large stone balls as ornaments above the parapet. It looks very smart.

The light to these downstairs bedrooms is protected, as only espalier trees will now be grown on the Manor side of the wall.

That means that people will have an uninterrupted view down the valley from the upstairs sitting

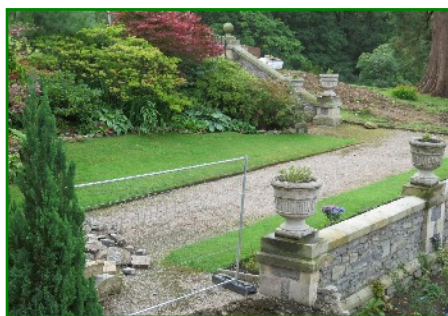
rooms and balconies from now on.

Further planning consents

The planning authority has recently given permission for an outdoor swimming pool to be installed. Your Board made representations before the decision was made because it will be sited extending out away from the smoking tower (above) replacing the existing gravel path on the raised terrace area.

The pool will measure 16.5m in length and 3.5m in width and be lined with local green slate. The existing grass area of the raised terrace will be replaced with sandstone paving flags on all sides of the rectangular pool.

It's an intriguing design, and will look more like a formal pond or water feature than a typical swimming pool. The planners



liked its design and location as part of the formal gardens, and considered that it would not be unduly intrusive when in use.

Let's hope they are right!

And more to come?

Because the Manor is listed, virtually everything requires formal planning consent. We are advised that next up may be proposals for a walled vegetable garden to the south of our front row. We will keep checking! Until we see the formal plans it is hard to know exactly where the boundaries might be, or whether we owners will be affected.

Our Gardens



They were looking splendid in September this year. Since Mike took over full-time from Jim, he has done some fresh planting, has been pruning very effectively, and generally keeping things in tip-top condition.

We have had longstanding problems with a leak from the central water feature. The FML team have now found a simple and effective solution to by-pass the problem without having to dig up part of the miniature canal, and so we are back to making good use of our natural spring water.



Of course now our site is coming up to its 18th birthday we are seeing our shrubs and trees mature beautifully, framing our cottages from every angle.

So even when the mountains and hills are shrouded in mist we still have our glorious central courtyard to enjoy.

It's been a particularly good year for roses, and earlier this year the smell

from the wisteria draped over railings was intoxicating.

It's all possible because we have created a south orientated micro-climate in the courtyard. Its snug enough to sit outdoors until really late in the year because of the all-round wind protection.

No wonder our red squirrels like to come in to the feeders to visit us.



Alex Parsons - Why I joined the Underscar Board

As an owner and member of Underscar Owners Club Ltd I decided to volunteer for the Board after attending the EGM in 2015 and hearing Peter Allen's call for new Board members.

My wife Shelagh and I have been part of Underscar since 2005 and always enjoy our time there, so I thought it was time to try and give a little back and help to work to keep Underscar special.

I was invited along to a Board meeting to see if I liked the set up (and if they could cope with me).

I found the Board to be friendly and informal, with a common desire to do the very best for Underscar and its owners. Suffice to say all went well and I started to get involved, initially by helping to review the Heat Pump project.

Since then I have found my work on the Board to be interesting and rewarding. There is plenty going on at the moment, especially with the switch to a Limited Company, the work at the Manor and the need to develop a comprehensive refurbishment programme for the next few years.

While I have specific experience in various areas, such as project and risk management, I don't feel that there is any requirement to have a specific set of skills if you would like to join the Board and help.

The key requirement is an ability to make things happen and a wish to maintain Underscar as a special place for its owners. Janice has an information sheet for anyone interested, and is always happy to discuss possibilities with any interested owner. Contact her at janice.lawson@underscar.co.uk.



Please come and give us a try. We don't bite (except for the occasional biscuit).

The AGM - First for Underscar Owners Club Ltd

At the Rheged Centre, Penrith on Sunday 2 April 2017

Please put the date in your diary.

It's a change of approach for us, in part responding to the request in the 2014 owner's survey that we consider a northern location for the AGM.

Do you go to Underscar in week 13 or week 14?

We have chosen a location near to Underscar so people changing over that weekend can consider attending. Its just off the M6 on the A66, so easily accessible from north and south.

Rheged has the largest 3D cinema around, an art gallery with changing art, craft and photography exhibitions, three cafes featuring local produce including lamb and beef from their farm, indoor and outdoor play, pottery painting and a full programme of exciting children's events. Its all under one grass covered roof. This means that if some of your

group want to come to the AGM, and others want to explore the centre, there is plenty of scope for an interesting day for everyone.



What happens at the AGM?

There is of course some formal business to attend to, such as approving the year's accounts, and considering any propositions on the current Articles of Association.

A year on from the decision to become a Company Limited by Guarantee there are some proposals that your Board want to make in accord with commitments made in August 2015. We want to make our constitutional arrangements as clear and straightforward as we can.

Once that necessary business is done the meeting then gives opportunity for a good conversation between owners and the Board about future plan and prospects. So much has happened over the last couple of years. Your views matter.

You know we do all we can to keep owners informed on the website and by means of this newsletter - but we benefit greatly from hearing from owners in person. The meeting is an ideal way to share any concerns and get questions answered where we can.

We looking forward to meeting as many owners as can join us ***Save the Date: Sunday 2 April 2017***

Note from your editor - Barbara Hedley

I have had great fun compiling this newsletter in recent years and it has been a labour of love. But as the longest serving member of the Board it is my time to stand down from my overall role, which has included maintaining good communications with all owners. I hope some other owners will come forward to take my place.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed. It all helps to keep the newsletter fresh and interesting for a variety of readerships.

I have greatly enjoyed working with fellow owners on the Board, as well as our colleagues from FML.

Together we have achieved much to keeping Underscar special. It's a magical place!

