

# Underscar Owners' Club Ltd- Newsletter February 2016



AGM 2016 report

Can't come? - some alternatives

Thanks to DAE - special offer for swaps

Sales and Marketing

Squirrel Ranger

Oxleys treats

Outings and adventures

You donated £2,500!

**The 2016 AGM** was held at Acton Trussell once again this year, and was well supported with 74 people present.



Our Chairman, Peter Allen, explained that this meeting marked the closing AGM for the owners club in its old guise, and the fresh start for the Club which now operates as a company limited by guarantee.

Minutes of the meeting will be posted in the owners part of our website as soon as they are approved by the Board. Questions about the accounts were dealt with by John Huntington.

After the formal part of the meeting Ian Hedley and James Moore gave a presentation about how they plan to develop the sales and marketing opportunities in 2016, working with FML who continue to support the sales process through the Heart of the Lakes shop in Keswick. Guy Parker, from our web designers Creation, also explained how the system was working, and how it could now be used to assist with future marketing approaches.

Other issues raised at the meeting covered:-

Our relationship with the new owner of the Manor: - which Peter described as good; discussions were underway regarding revision to our leases.

How the Board now decided on its refurbishment priorities: - which Janice explained was on the basis of advice from FML about where the greatest need has arisen each year. Owners asked about the colour scheme being used to redecorate and were pleased to hear that we are sticking to the existing colour schemes.

An owner asked whether the Board was willing to consider a scheme running elsewhere to help an elderly owner whose children did not wish to inherit, when they were unable to sell

readily:- Ian said he would look at the alternative scheme mentioned, but felt the greatest priority was getting a fertile market which improved people's prospects of selling.

The Board was asked about whether our marketing would be enhanced if we joined sites like Tripadvisor. James and Guy are considering a range of social media approaches with FML.



## **Building work at the Manor - it's all progress!**

We hear that work is progressing well. Scaffolding is needed again around the new kitchen area; and our on-site team are doing all they can to minimise any disruption to guests during their stay. But it will soon be completed.

Fresh planting is now planned in the area immediately in front of cottages Beckstones (23), High Spy (24), Seatoller (25) and Littledale (26).

We are so pleased to see the loving care that is going into this work on our doortep. It is progressing quickly too.

Peter reminded owners that we are not entitled to enter the private parts of the manor gardens but that we are free to use the paths in the woods and the path across in front of the lower units.

## **Sales and Marketing**

Board members James Moore and Ian Hedley are leading a new initiative with FML to stimulate more sales, including re-sales, during 2016.

“It’s time to reach out to new markets now our company is properly established and our website is up and running”.

At the AGM Ian talked about the range of cottages for sale now and how they are distributed through the year. Overall 20% of the cottages are for sale - although it’s nearer 30% among the one-bed cottages. There is a concentration of weeks for sale in weeks 1 to 12, although there are cottages available throughout the year. On owner re-sales the commission is divided between our agents FML and the club to support future marketing.

So the focus of our new campaign is to start with highlighting one bed cottages. These were among the first sold when we launched in 1998, so there are naturally more owners in this group ready to sell on.



Since 2013, when we bought over the stock from the original developers we have developed a clear idea of current market values. In broad terms we have kept value remarkably well. Nowadays sales typically succeed

where the offer is around half of the year 2000 asking price.

So a typical sale last year of a 2-bed cottage in mid-season fetched between £8000 and £9000. Naturally a 3-bed cottage in school holiday times fetches rather more!

In practice there is often scope for a little negotiation when we have a buyer who really appreciates what Underscar offers, and is keen to join the owners’ club. We are delighted to welcome new committed owners to the Underscar family.

James shared his ideas for how we can open up new market opportunities, and use our website and other media to improve the profile of Underscar in a crowded market place. Who are our buyers of the future, and what will they look for? “Dinkies” perhaps [double income - no kids] or the newly retired? Three generation families seeking a rural retreat? We need to build a clear picture.



We can challenge people’s thinking about what GOOD time ownership really offers; and illustrate why Underscar is so exceptional. The Keswick locality is a hidden gem. It’s a setting that has much to offer specific interest groups - be they mountain bikers, fell runners, landscape artists, or hedonists seeking peace, a view and an exceptional spa.

There are many new marketing tools available in this internet age that can extend the reach of our marketing at relatively modest cost. Our challenge now is to identify the right communication channels to target interested

people. Our web designers and FML are helping us in this area.

Finally Guy Parker from our web designers Creation demonstrated how the website is now operating; its scope for further development, and how we can work together on developing our reach into new markets. He is expert in utilising the reach of social media, and explained ways we can now develop to promote our presence worldwide.

***2016 looks to be quite a year in the making!***

## **Keswick says thank you!**

***Around £2,500 has been donated by our owners to the Keswick flood appeal following last December’s floods through the town.***

We all watched - hearts in mouth - as the December floods cut through Keswick town. But have you been tracking what has happened since?

The town is already back on its feet and open for business! It’s promoting a spring and summer packed with activities and attractions.

***What resilient people Cumbrians are!***



Keep up to date at [www.keswick.org](http://www.keswick.org)

The current advice (as of end January 2016) is that

- Check your route to Keswick as the A591 at Thirlmere is closed due to flood damage.
- Businesses either side of the closure are open as normal.
- Visitors from the South should access Keswick via M6 J40 and not via J36 and the A591.
- Booths is partially open with a smaller but comprehensive range of everyday items. It plans to fully re-open in February.
- Theatre by the Lake is operational
- Almost all the other attractions, shops, restaurants and cafes are open for business, including Hope Park. The Pencil museum will be closed for longer.
- Bridges are closed on the railway cycle/footpath between Keswick and Threlkeld so there is currently no through route on this path.

## We are in Range!

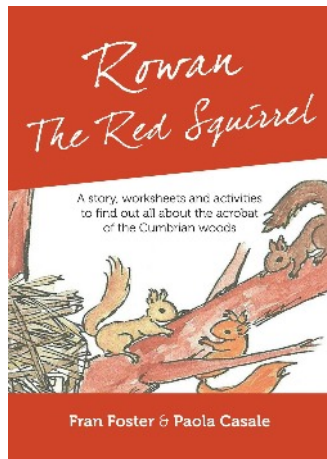
Fran Foster is a Red Squirrel Ranger involved in red squirrel conservation within the Whinlatter Red Squirrel stronghold, centred on Bassenthwaite Lake.



She includes the Underscar Estate in her patch.

Look out for her book called **'Rowan the Red Squirrel'**, all about this acrobat of the Cumbrian woods. Engaging reading for any 8 - 12 year old!

Maria Blakeley has kindly acquired some copies for us to borrow from Oxley's reception - complete with activity sheets. Or you can buy your own copy to keep.



Our toy squirrel "Oxley" is ready and waiting for another young visitor to borrow him for the day and write up his next adventure.

And for evidence of the agility of real live squirrels - look at our [website blog](#) - they are remarkable!

## Staying in- a new indulgence at Oxleys

I think that afternoon tea is a re-discovered pleasure. And our chefs in the Bistro know how to present it well!

Oxleys tea includes lots of homemade sweet and savoury treats. Please give the bistro 24 hours notice of your plans.

So if you feel you would like a treat - whether hard earned from a day on the hills, or just because you feel worth it, come and enjoy!

It's getting very popular with owners and our visitors. It is proving to be a good addition to the range of meals and bar services that our Bistro offers. And have you heard ..



..... Valentine's Day is round the corner! Oxley's Bistro is promoting a special menu. Click [here](#) and see the menu.

## Spa Treats

Whatever the weather there is always the opportunity to chill out and be pampered [in our spa](#). Our team



specialise in NEOM treatments guaranteed to make you feel better in body and soul. There's a new range too! MMMMM.....

## Going out

**Paddle boarding on Derwent water** - it's the latest new craze that is sweeping the country.



Find out more from The Lodore Boat Landings, Derwentwater, 01768892105 with information from [lakedistrictpaddleboarding.co.uk](http://lakedistrictpaddleboarding.co.uk)

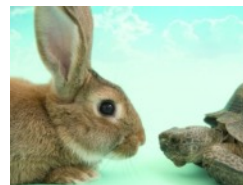
## Is Horse Racing your thing?

[Carlisle racecourse](#) says "10th February is our first fixture in the 2016 racing calendar. Come along and join us for 7 great national hunt jumps races".

First meeting Wed 10 Feb 2016, £12.50-£17



## A children's delight at Theatre by the Lake - Tortoise & the Hare - 18 Feb 2016



When Tortoise bravely challenged the speedy Hare to a race, no one ever thought he had a chance of winning. But life is full of surprises.

With their very first visit to Theatre by the Lake, **Northern Ballet** brings this much-loved Aesop's fable to life through beautiful ballet, enchanting live music and charming storytelling. This 40 minute performance is the perfect opportunity for your little ones to experience the magic of theatre and ballet for the first time from a company whose previous children's ballets have been adapted for C-bebies.

## **Swaps at Underscar**

Most of us owners look forward to our usual week(s) at Underscar as priority dates in our diary for the year. But once in a while we just can't get there - so frustrating - yet other commitments sometimes have to trump the visit!

### *Don't despair!*

Go to the members part of our website at <https://underscar.co.uk/members/swaps/> (you may have to log in with your owner's ID). See the list of swaps other people are looking for, and instructions about how to add in your own request. There are already 20 opportunities listed for you to consider; and its growing.

When you have a swap match, Mary and her colleague Amanda at the Keswick office help sort out the practicalities.

### **Happy Hunting!**

**Which cottage would you like to try for a week? Look at our [site map](#) and choose your spot.**



Our friends from DAE, the timeshare holiday exchange company, were able to join us at the AGM. It was good to meet up with Wendy Holey again.

A big THANK YOU to DAE for helping with the costs of ensuring everyone coming to the AGM could be greeted with tea, coffee, and delicious shortbreads.

Wendy was there with lots of ideas to help those of us who can't use our week at Underscar this year. Maybe we should bank our week this year, and go somewhere different, perhaps at a different time of year, in another part of the world.

Its an excellent service - friendly helpful people at the end of a phone - keen to find a good swap for you.

### **Great News from DAE - Wendy says ....**

**Deposit your Underscar week BEFORE  
April 28<sup>th</sup> 2016  
and receive free Gold Advantage  
for a full year**

### **Gold Advantage Is DAE's premium service**

It gives members exclusive access to newly deposited weeks in high demand locations. It also gives you extra discounts and benefits meaning the more holidays you enjoy, the more you save. At a usual cost of £49 per year, Underscar owners can now enjoy a full year of Gold Advantage benefits completely free of charge if you bank your week with DAE.

### **Getting the most out of your DAE membership**

*If you're a member of DAE you'll already know that the FREE membership is the best around. But are you getting the most out of your membership? Here are just a few key points that your membership gives you.*

- **FREE Membership** and low cost exchange fees. Plus we offer ALL members a free holiday request allowing our members to be notified when a holiday is available so you don't have to search continuously.

*"DAE are a great exchange company. Much cheaper than the really big guys and friendly too." Mrs Edwards*

- **Bonus Weeks** are usually customer's weeks that have been deposited into the DAE system. The majority are weeks that haven't been taken as an Exchange. To avoid these going vacant, they become available to members six weeks prior to the check-in date as late availability without the need to use your holiday credit.

*"Great opportunities to get a Bonus Week holiday at a very reasonable price." Mrs Rossiter*

- **Resort Rentals** are a great way of being able to secure a specific location, months in advance without needing to use your holiday credit in some of the most in-demand locations around the world; with discounts of up to 40% off the price compared with booking direct.

*"A brill way of having accommodation worldwide." Ms Shaw*

- **Gold Advantage** allows DAE members to receive a wide range of additional benefits and enhancements for a small annual fee. These benefits include the ability to list an unlimited number of priority holiday requests, giving Gold Advantage customers first choice of newly deposited weeks along with numerous discounts which means that the more you holiday, the more you save!

*"I've used DAE Gold Advantage for many years now and I would not look to any other exchange service. Friendly, helpful staff and a great service." Mr Bruce*

If you would like to learn more about any of the above or how you can make the most of your membership please contact the DAE award winning team now on

+44 (0) 1756 749966 or visit [www.dialanexchange.com](http://www.dialanexchange.com)



Full T&C's available online.

Offer expires 28th April 2016

### **Note from the editor**

Thank you to all the contributors to this edition. If you have comments or suggestions for further articles please contact me, Barbara Hedley on

[Bandihedley@underscar.co.uk](mailto:Bandihedley@underscar.co.uk)

And remember - there is now lots more news and helpful information on our website <https://underscar.co.uk>.