

Upwood and Raveley Community Allotment Association (URCAA) and Upwood Community Orchard

Update for Trustees, March 2016

We have continued to make progress with our stated plans for the allotments. Our main aim, and greatest continuing challenge, is to acquire and keep new plot holders. We have varied the plot sizes to provide opportunities for people with different needs/time available and, as such, hope that the allotments can be an enjoyable and manageable activity for everyone. For 2016, we will look to focus our efforts on a recruitment drive. At the 2015 Allotment AGM we welcomed Trevor Brown to the committee in order to represent issues from the Great Raveley allotment plots.

The 2016 AGM will take place at the end of March/beginning of April (date tbc) where we will confirm the Associations plans for 2016.

Activity over 2015 - allotments

With the successful installation of the barrier gates and continued hedge planting, the security of the Upwood site has been improved. We have received two sets of hedging trees from the Woodland Trust, and are just finishing (weather permitting) the Huntingdon road stretch with a mix of Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elder, Dog Rose and Hazel.

Four water troughs, funded through the community chest fund, have been purchased and placed for water storage on the Upwood site. This is our first step in a more long term ambition to have a water supply across this site.

Members carried out a litter pick of the ditches around the Upwood allotment site to enable the ditch clearing organised by the Parish Council. The spoil from the ditches has been held on the Community Plot, where we will gradually sort through the material and then reuse any suitable soil for projects.

On the 21st June, we opened the allotments for the first time as part of the Upwood Open Gardens. We also managed to host two prize winning scarecrows!

We have invested in weed suppressant material and spent time trying to clear plots ready for prospective new allotmenters. As always, nature doesn't necessarily agree with our plans!

We have had some issues with dog fouling on the allotments so we have followed up with signage and, hopefully, this will not be such an issue this year. We welcome dog walkers and the community on the main track of the allotment but, as with everywhere, owners need to clear up after their pets.

Activity over 2015 - community orchard

We have now installed the donated bench and have created and planted up three raised beds with lavender and spring bulbs. Still a work in progress but hopefully it will become a quiet corner for villagers to enjoy the orchard. We have also planted hedging to help delineate the orchard area on the western edge.

We have lost one tree across the first year, when the graft failed. This will be replaced this Spring but otherwise the trees seem to be progressing well. Following another successful fund raising Quiz, we will look to expand the orchard planting, and hopefully will have sufficient funds to keep the area mown.

We are keen to get people involved in the Orchard as it starts to develop. People do not need to be plot holders – this is a Community Orchard for the village, and support can vary from weeding to coming up with fund raising ideas. There is a job to be done to meet anyone's ability or amount of free time and we are hoping to encourage local people to take an interest in the orchard.

Ali Miles, Liz Carter, Carl Dowdell, Julia Evans, Trevor Brown (URCAA committee)

BUSINESS PLAN FOR THE UPWOOD & RAVELEY COMMUNITY ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION (URCAA).

The Upwood & Raveley Community Allotments Association was formed in 2012 with its own constitution and a management committee comprising of the 3 key positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer . URCAA has taken over the everyday running of the allotment plots situated in Upwood (Meadow Road site) and Great Raveley (junction with Raveley & Huntingdon Road) with guidance from the Allotment Trustees who report to the Charities Commission.

URCAA is responsible for:

- rent collection
- rule enforcement
- elements of ground maintenance to the internal boundaries of the site

Maintenance to the external boundaries of the site fall to the Upwood Parish Council.

The Upwood site currently consists of 28 full plots split into a range of sizes to meet the varying needs of the community, included in this is a communal plot as well as a community orchard. The site is divided roughly in half with one half of the land being rented for hay production.

The Raveley allotment site consists of 5 defined plots and a block of land which is rented for crop production.

The URCAA Group's mission statement is to provide a community-managed resource for the purpose of self-sustainment and crop production for local residents and aims to achieve this by:

- Providing plots which local people can hire at a reasonable annual rent.
- Providing basic facilities on site including water, parking and a communal area for storage.
- Create a social group that shares a common interest in growing vegetables, crops or flowers.
- Encourage community schemes that utilise the site for all groups.

CURRENT SITUATION

- 26 of the available 28 plots are actively cultivated or managed by allotment holders at Upwood leaving 1 large plot to be divided up this spring and 2 x ½ plot without a tenant.
- The Raveley site has a half vacant plot
- Currently there is not a waiting list for plots.
- The Upwood site is flanked by natural hedgerow on two sides with a restricted-access track running through the site, leading to two secure points of entry onto the site.
- There is a parking area opposite the plots at the Meadow road entrance, together with a standpipe tap for the hand watering of crops.
- There are a number of personal tool stores, small sheds and water containers on site, for equipment storage and rainwater harvesting.

PLANS FOR THE NEXT YEAR

Short Term Objectives.

1) General Maintenance

The vacant plots are being resized and cleared with a view to encourage uptake by new members asap. There is an ongoing need to help clear plots that remain or become vacant throughout the year. Whilst much of this can be done through self-help, URCAA have now invested in weed suppressant membrane to reduce overall maintenance requirements. We are also investigating the use of green manures. Plot holders have the opportunity to spray their plots for a reasonable cost by renting out a backpack sprayer and weed killer. We arrange for the grass track through the Upwood plots to be cut regularly throughout the growing season.

2) Security

Security has been dramatically improved with the recent installation of 2 padlocked gates at both entrances. With a further successful application to the Woodlands Trust, URCAA is extending the hedging along the Huntingdon Road to complete the hedgerow at the top of the current hayfield.

3) Strengthening the association.

As a group, URCAA committee members now stands at five, including a representative from the Raveleys site. There is always a need to recruit additional members to share some of the everyday site management and to drive forward future projects. URCAA would look to engage the wider membership in projects. A key project for 2016, will be the recruitment of new plot holders.

4) Publicity.

Whilst we are managing the vacant plots, with natural turnover and some downsizing, there is always a need to attract new interest in the allotments. We will increase work to publicise plot availability in 2016 until such time as a waiting list is generated. Publicity through village newsletter, website publicity and potentially local free newspapers, will be ongoing.

5) Social events.

The committee intend to hold at least one social event in the year, to raise the Group's profile as well as engender a community spirit. (Ongoing maintenance, such as ditch clearance & hedge trimming, will be done on a self-help basis.) This year's event (tbc) will be discussed at the Association's AGM

6) Community Orchard Project.

The Orchard will continue to be maintained, and if funds allow we will, expand the tree planting and complete the hedging along the bottom edge.

7) Water provision.

We have placed the four water troughs at the Upwood site and a 1000 litre water container at the Gt Raveley site. Over 2016 we will look at innovative ways to fill them as we work towards a long term aim of providing access to water for all plots.

Long Term Objectives.

8) Plumbed Water Supplies.

A successful application to the Community Chest included funds to help improve water storage for both sites. The long term aim is to have mains fed containers strategically placed around the sites so that we can attract more plot holders.

9) Sensory Garden Project.

There is the opportunity to establish a community sensory and easy access garden for use by all members of the community. Interest may also be provided through willow structures or gazebos. With a network of paths, raised planting beds and seating areas, all ages can contribute to the maintenance, layout, planting and upkeep of the area. With close proximity to the care home and footpath access, it could be seen as an opportunity for residents to grow plants on a small scale, as well as establish an area for relaxation.

10) Primary School Project

Previous mention has been made about offering one of the plots as a community plot for use by the local primary school. A volunteer would be needed to start up the project and offer seeds to grow easy return produce. School parties, under adult guidance, would cultivate these areas, fitting in with natural history and green studies within the school curriculum.

11) Communal Hut.

There is a long term aspiration to raise money to purchase a communal hut. As well as funds for the hut, additional funds will be needed to:

Provide shelving and storage cupboards so that allotment holders can store implements etc. Offer some portable heating and lighting; provide a couple of tables and some chairs to shelter from inclement weather.

Estimated cost: TBD

FINANCE

Allotment rents are now collected and managed by URCAA and retained for future investment, it is hoped that there is enough income to manage the site on a day to day basis with a small surplus generated for site improvements. URCAA should build up a reserve from fund raising events and maintain approximately £300 in reserve, for ongoing maintenance.

All projects are dependent on fund raising, sponsorship and annual allotment rents collected by URCAA.

RISK ANALYSIS

The main risks that the URCAA committee have identified are:

- The Site's personal liability is now included within the Parish Council's existing cover, however the risk remains due to unauthorised entry by dog walkers and ramblers.
- Reduction in the number of plot-holders - there is a risk of interest in the allotment scene decreasing and further plot holders not coming forward.
- Adverse weather - severe weather could damage the site and the growing potential of the plants and vegetables, most notably drought, flooding and wind damage can dishearten plot holders and see a decline in allotment usage and funds to support the site.

UPWOOD COMMUNITY ORCHARD



Summary for Parish Council – 9th May 2016

A second fund-raising quiz was held in October 2015. It was very well supported and we raised a little over £350.00 (exact amount is in URCAA accounts).

We have had one tree from the original plantings die. The East of England Orchard Project have very kindly replaced this tree free of charge.

We have planted a further 10 trees this March, 2 plums, 2 quinces, 2 pears, 2 apples and 2 crab apples.

Of the 10 new trees 2 have already been sponsored, 8 are remaining and we'll continue to advertise the availability of trees to sponsor.

We have arranged for the orchard site to be rolled and then routine mowing will begin this spring. A stone-picking session was held on Sunday 3rd April with a couple of extra volunteers helping out – and very much appreciated.

Hedging on the bottom boundary of the orchard has been completed using the free Woodland Trust plants. It is intended to plant a similar hedge on the boundary between the orchard and the grass track of the allotments.

With thanks to Liz and Ali the raised beds either side of the wooden bench have been successfully planted with lavender and 'tete-a-tete' daffodils and are already creating a lovely spot to sit!

Land at the bottom corner of the site next to the t-junction of the grass tracks is always boggy as water naturally collects here so we now have a small wildlife pond to use this tricky corner more purposefully.

The 'Friends of the Community Orchard' idea is off to a shaky start. The 1st request in the February newsletter didn't bring any volunteers but we will try again. We have had help – e.g. the stone-clearing – but will continue to work at getting a few volunteers we can call on for specific help from time to time.

Thank you to everyone for all the help and support we receive – the orchard is progressing nicely.

Upwood & The Raveleys Local History Group – Annual Parish Report

2015/16 year has been a very period as the History Group delivered some great evenings of local and national historical events.

The programme committee provided us with informative presentations and had to be extremely flexible in adapting to changing presenters. We also developed the 'I'll show you mine if you show me Yours' evening that was a success and highlighted the depth of history within our own families as well as in the village. We also held our annual lunch again at Ramsey Golf Club.

We also organised trips to the Cambridge Botanical Gardens and the nationally recognised Must Farm. Each visit was engaging and informative, but without efforts from willing volunteers, these visits cannot organise themselves and we will be missing out as a group.

The Must Farm trip went down as the most exciting trip this group has ever been involved in. It was an absolute privilege for us to be the first members of the public to see the first whole Bronze Age wheel ever found in the UK at Must Farm alongside the world's press. As visiting members we kept quiet about what we saw and did not 'Twitter' any pictures before the national news.

As we look forward to 2016/17, there are issues and tasks we have to take on. We need volunteers to run the small posts within the group. The average age of the group is steadily rising and there is a need to encourage some younger members of the village to keep us moving forward.

There is also a need to finance the electronic village archive. This is currently held within the Cambridge Community Archives Network and holds over a 1000 images and documents from the village. This network incurs an annual cost which is not the History Group responsibility however it is required in maintaining Upwood history for the future generations. To do this we will contact the Parish Council to request a grant to cover the network costs to Upwood.



Annual Parish Meeting

2016 Report

Upwood Primary School is a community school striving to forge strong links with the local and wider community. It is the school's vision to maintain and develop these links.

Links With Our Community Which We Value

Manor House

Our strong links with Manor House have been maintained this year as we once again collected toiletries for the residents during October. Pupils delivered the items to the residents after visiting St Peter's Church for a 'Harvest Festival' of their own. Residents are also invited to our annual May Day celebration, which focuses again this year on 'Dances From Around the World'.

St Peter's Church Service

On Monday 14th December, the whole school walked to St Peter's Church in Upwood for a Christmas Service planned by the school. The children performed a variety of songs and poems. We were once again welcomed warmly into the church.

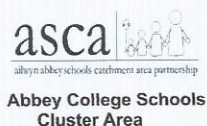
Open the Book

Each Thursday, trained members from St Peter's Church visit Upwood Primary to deliver an assembly called 'Open the Book'. The members use a variety of engaging techniques to deliver stories from the Bible. Our pupils look forward to the assembly each week and we would like to thank the trained members for their continued support.

PTA

We are extremely fortunate at Upwood to have a very high degree of involvement and commitment from our community. The PTA organisation is actively involved in a full programme of educational, social and fund raising activities, for both children and adults, from

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which the school benefits greatly. This year the PTA has continued to organise termly discos, movie nights and tuck shops, as well as the Upwood Ball, which is always a great success.

Charity Work

We believe our pupils gain a great deal from taking part in fundraising events for both our school and national/international charities, as it develops empathy towards others, a sense of community and an understanding of the wider world. We agreed to support the following three charities for this academic year:

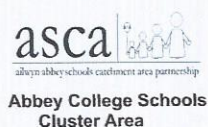
- The Royal National Institute for the Blind;
- Sport Relief;
- The Poppy Appeal.

The Royal National Institute for the Blind supports blind and partially sighted children and adults in the UK. We fundraised for this charity during the latter stages of the Autumn Term, by supporting their 'Wear dots, raise lots' appeal. We raised a fantastic £170.

On Friday 18th March, everybody at Upwood Primary School came together to raise money for Sports Relief. Due to its popularity two years ago, we decided to complete a mile long obstacle course once again. In and out of cones, over hurdles, stepping through hoops and crawling through gates were just some of the obstacles the children had to overcome. We are extremely proud of everyone who took part. Most importantly we managed to raise £521.

We also continued to support the Poppy Appeal. Children were asked to make a voluntary contribution to an appeal box, in exchange for a Poppy pin. Staff felt that it was important to continue with this fundraising event, as it has such great significance in our nation's history.

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Special Events

Catering Workshops

Upwood Primary School pupils will have the opportunity to develop their cookery skills again in May. Each KS1 year group will welcome Carole Youngman and her team ('Cooks on the Move') from Cambridgeshire Catering Service into their classes. Staff at Upwood Primary School consider cookery to be a key part of the curriculum, as it develops independence in later life and can foster an interest in healthy eating. Overall, the aim of the workshops is to give the children a greater understanding of where food comes from and how to create a tasty dish from scratch using healthy ingredients.

With the 'Cooks on the Move' the children will be making cakes and bread and be taught many cookery skills including mixing, kneading and chopping safely. At the end of the session each child will be able to eat their cookery project.

Lastly...a Thank You

As another successful and eventful academic year draws to a close, we would like to thank all those residents of Upwood Village who support us in our endeavours.

S Whitelaw

Mrs S Whitelaw

Head Teacher

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