

Urswick Tarn Association
Outline Implementation Plan
Maintenance and Conservation Activities

Covering the period
September 2009 to September 2011

To be reviewed September 2010

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Photographs by Ray Wilson
Following a site visit by several committee members of
Urswick Tarn Association on Friday 11th September 2009

28th September 2009

Introduction

This Outline Implementation Plan is provided to aid in the communication of the undertakings of Urswick Tarn Association and to ensure that maintenance and conservation works undertaken by the Association are identified wherever possible prior to being undertaken to comply with the requirements within the current Parish Council lease.

The reference document for the management of Urswick Tarn is prepared by Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CWT). All works proposed are consistent with the management objectives established in the CWT Management plan.

This plan has been produced to identify those elements of work which the committee have assessed as being required within the next 12 – 24 month period to comply with the Management Plan. This Outline Implementation Plan will therefore need to be updated at least annually as works progress, with copies being presented to the Parish Council.

Due to the natural dependencies associated with weather and water levels, it is not possible to identify a specific dated schedule for undertaking any of the work or indeed to specifically identify in which order the works will be undertaken, rather this document identifies what work could reasonably be expected to be undertaken over the period covered by the plan.

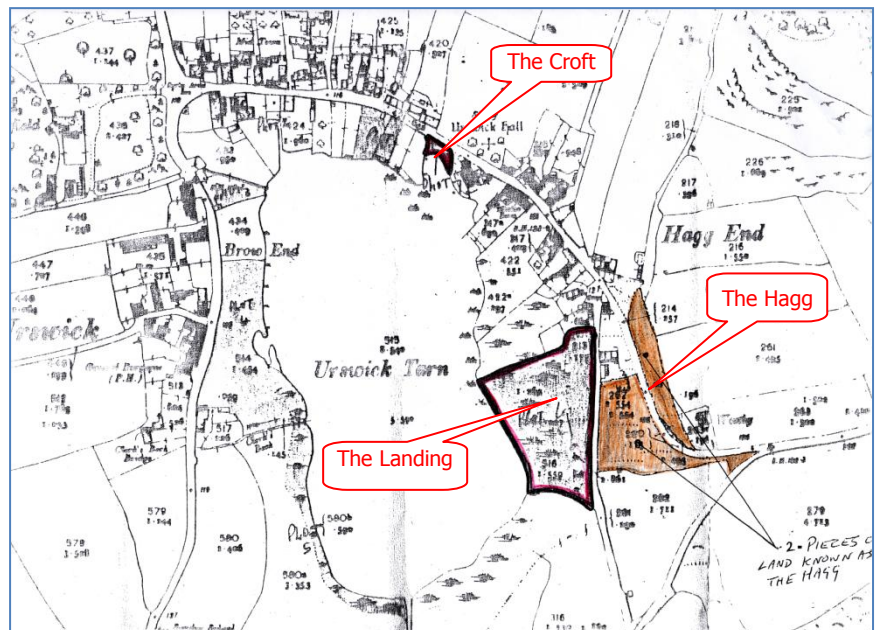
From time to time, due to damage, disease or in the interests of safety, certain works may need to be undertaken which are outside those scoped within this Outline Implementation Plan, on such occasions, this work will be undertaken and reported at the next Parish Council Meeting.

The areas managed by Urswick Tarn Association are as indicated on the map below and comprise four distinct areas, the Tarn itself, the Hagg, the Landing and an area by the Croft.

The Hagg comprises two pieces of land adjacent to the road from Great Urswick to Birkrigg. It is categorised as an area of open grassland habitat.

The Landing comprises an area of grassland and open woodland growing on top of a former refuse tip which has been soiled over, an area of fen to the north west which alternates between submerged and terrestrial states and a further low lying area to the south often known as the boat house area which was previously open to the tarn but has in recent times become silted up and overgrown.

The Croft comprises a small piece of land verging the tarn with an area of reed fen opening out to the tarn. It also contains the only public access point for the launching of boats.



Whilst in the main, reference will be made to grasslands management and to trees that are to be felled or otherwise cropped or pruned, some new planting is also envisaged to enhance those locations where sunlight will more easily allow growth to take place in the underlying vegetation and, with time, will enable diversity in both grass and floral species and the resultant fauna.

In varying degrees the terrestrial subject areas are populated by a variety of tree species, some of which were intentionally planted. The mature trees have additionally seeded or have propagated by other means what are now younger trees with the result that a progressive increase in the tree population has occurred, changing the nature of the habitat.

Whilst the presence of trees is welcomed by Urswick Tarn Association, it is necessary to control their numbers and their impact on the underlying vegetation.

A further consideration for these areas is their visual amenity, particularly from the elevated viewpoints off the road to Birkrigg which traverses The Hagg. The vista from this position presents the village north of the General Burgoyne in an attractive setting consisting of the tarn and surrounding rural landscape. This too therefore needs to be accounted for in the ongoing programme of tree management.

For ease of reference, work will be generally categorised into the above discrete areas managed for the Parish Council by the Tarn Association.

The Hagg

a) The area of The Hagg to the top side of the road from Great Urswick to Birkrigg

This area is intended as an area of grassland habitat and grassland species are to be encouraged.

As can be seen in this photograph, it is currently developing into a rough habitat of brambles and early woodland.

Self seeded trees, mainly sycamore, currently on the area are to be felled and removed. Work will continue to remove brambles. Whilst grassland is the primary habitat of interest, it is proposed that a small number of quality species trees will be planted on the uppermost verge where their impact on the grassland will be minimal but their visual impact will be to enhance the rising ground when viewed from the village.



It is anticipated that the Parish Council will aid with the control of private venture planting on this and other parts of the site, and prevent possessory title claims to the small area of Crown Land where this section joins the inhabited area at Warren Croft.

b) The area of The Hagg to the lower side of the road from Great Urswick to Birkrigg



This area is intended as an area of grassland with an open wooded area on the south margin.

Over the years through self seeding, planting by third parties and limited management action, the area has become progressively close wooded to the point where the tree canopy now limits light and severely restricts the growth of underlying vegetation as can be seen on this photograph.

It is proposed that the area of grassland be managed in a similar way to that mentioned above through the removal of self seeded saplings and better management of patches of brambles and scrub.

The wooded area will be progressively returned to a more open state through the removal of

several larger trees and coppicing of others to ensure that the canopy does not block out the light required for the plant life underneath to thrive.

The following work is currently proposed to the wooded area along the southern margin.

A large cherry tree will be removed but its regeneration to a lower height through coppicing of its root suckers will be encouraged. Several other smaller trees will be similarly coppiced.

The sycamores at the bottom corner as shown on this photograph will be removed and will not be allowed to regenerate. This should largely alleviate the problem with lack of sufficient light from their canopies.



Coupled with the intended grassland management activity this will encourage species diversity in both flora and accompanying fauna in this area.



Neither the young oak on the left nor the maples on its right were planted by either the Parish Council or Urswick Tarn Association.

Although both of these trees are relatively young, they are already beginning to shade out one of the better areas of grassland. This will only get worse if the trees are to remain. It is therefore proposed that they are also removed.

The group of trees shown in the photograph below, which were neither planted by the Parish Council nor the Tarn Association have over the last few years grown very rapidly and now almost completely obscure the otherwise attractive view of the north of Great Urswick from the road ascending the Hagg, in particular, severely impinging on the view that was once available from the seat located just below the road.



It is therefore proposed to fell the trees indicated, thinning others as may be required to thus re-open the view from the seat.

It is further proposed that the hawthorn tree to the right of the group, which is native to the area and a source of food and cover for birdlife, will be retained in a more compact habit.

Some management of the hawthorn's size and spread will be periodically undertaken to enable its containment. It is recognised that trees on the adjacent bordering Crown Land are outside the control of the Tarn Association.

The Landing

The four photographs below are taken from adjacent to the car park on the Landing looking to the tree covered areas to the northwest and west.



The management objective for this area is to allow natural regeneration to encourage under storey habitat and to create temporary open areas to increase 'edge'. Due to the thin soils in this area, trees should not be allowed to become over tall. To this end, recent work, the results of which can be seen above, has included long overdue thinning out of trees which were growing too closely together and thus casting deep shade or growing too tall.



Work still to be undertaken in this area will reduce the height of some of the trees to ensure views from the Hagg above remain open. Some of the trees will require limbs to be removed to thin and balance as indicated on the Alder tree in the photograph to the left.

The severely unbalanced shape of the flowering cherry on the right is a direct result of allowing neighbouring trees in this area to grow uncontrolled. This tree which has a profusion of flowers in the spring, has also now grown almost to the load bearing capabilities of the ground on which it stands which coupled with the imbalanced shape



could lead to it toppling in severe wind if something is not done. Work will be undertaken to try to correct the shape and balance.

The grassland on the Landings will be managed in much the same way as the Hagg. Grass will be cut in a wide swath along the path to the tarn edge to allow continued pedestrian access and recreation. Areas of nettles and brambles will be controlled on a rotation basis thereby allowing areas of cover for birds, butterflies and other insects. This should alleviate areas becoming totally unmanageable. The damaged tree adjacent to the car park will be felled and removed. Current pathways cut in the grass and between the trees will be maintained.

As can be seen on the photograph on the right, within the fen area (reed bed), willows and other encroaching scrub which have colonised and grown profusely over the past few years will require to be removed in accordance with the Management Plan to ensure the continued existence and health of the reed bed.

Branches from felled trees will be used to form a 'dead hedge' along the edge of what was once the refuse tip to restrict pedestrian access to the reed beds to maintain the area for nesting and breeding wildlife and fish.



Along the area where the catwalk previously stood, work will be required from time to time to maintain access for anglers and keep the fishing pegs serviceable. As in the past this work may require the occasional localised cutting back of reeds and refurbishment of banking.

Along the southern boundary, in the area commonly known as the 'boat house' area, bounded by the field hedge, the once reed fen has over the years become largely dry due to the colonisation of willows and alders. Recent work has removed many of the willows which has allowed more light to enter and has encouraged fen-type vegetation to grow. Trees and scrub will continue to be controlled in this area to further encourage its return to reed bed.

Opportunity may also be taken to mechanically lower the ground level of this fen area by approximately 150mm average, to a level which would normally be at or just below the normal height of the tarn, with some areas or channels which are slightly deeper. This will allow the ingress of water from the tarn and provide a further breeding area for fish and insects etc and generally benefit the marginal vegetation and diversity. Any spoil resulting from this activity will be largely organic and will be placed on the existing embankment. Similar to the edge of the other main reed bed, branches from felled trees will be used to form a dead hedge to restrict unnecessary access.



The adjacent photograph looking across this fen area indicates a large alder tree, the largest tree of its type in the area, which over the years has been subject to varying degrees of pollarding. Its trunk has now however been badly riven into several sections by weather, age rot and insects.

The branches on these sections are now sufficiently large that they creak in strong winds and threaten to tear the tree apart.

To endeavour to save the tree, the only option will be to severely reduce the size of some of these branches. A drastic measure but one which will help ensure the trees longer term survival.

The Croft

The principal work in the area of the Croft will be similar to that needed in the reed bed in the removal of colonising willows and other scrub and maintenance of the 'willow reef' to ensure that it does not become rooted.

This area has the only public access for boats to the tarn which will be kept clear and accessible for the launch and recovery of boats.

Also in this area is a further fishing peg which is currently in need of some consolidation and maintenance. If the opportunity arises this work will be undertaken, water levels permitting.