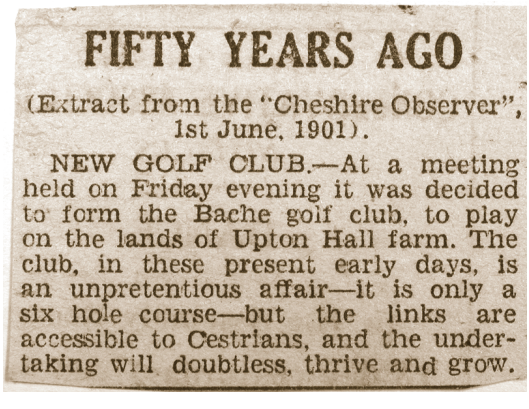
Chapter 14
Leisure Activities

It is surprising how many activities there are in Upton; the residents are obviously an interested and interesting population. On the following pages is information on groups, both past and present. Without doubt there are many more activities that are not covered here and as things are learnt of them they will be added to the growing collection of Leisure Group information. The groups listed are in chronological order.

Bache Golf Club

The Bache Golf Club came into being on 24th May 1901 with a 6 hole course on land owned by Mr Ithell, a farmer, of Upton Hall. The land was adjacent to, and just north of the County Asylum. The club's stay there was short and in 1902 it moved to the Bache Hall Estate which was centred on Bache Hall. The Hall and land was then tenanted by Major MacGillicuddy, an Irish landowner, who was one of the founders of the Club.

Records show that in 1909 the men's entrance fee and subscriptions were both set at two guineas and the ladies at one guinea. This is the earliest reference to a ladies section at the club. Green fees at that time were 1/- per day; the Hon Secretary's fee was £25 and the auditor's was 2 guineas.



FIFTY YEARS AGO

(Extract from the "Cheshire Observer", 1st June, 1901).

NEW GOLF CLUB.—At a meeting held on Friday evening it was decided to form the Bache golf club, to play on the lands of Upton Hall farm. The club, in these present early days, is an unpretentious affair—it is only a six hole course—but the links are accessible to Cestrians, and the undertaking will doubtless, thrive and grow.

In 1910 when Major MacGillicuddy was elected President of the Golf Club rumours were circulating that the Bache Hall Estate was to be sold to the Asylum Committee. He thought a sale was unlikely but promised he would do all he could to protect the interests of the club. Fears of a sale became justified when a proposed sale was advertised to be on 8th June 1910. The club was naturally perturbed and set up a sub committee to watch developments. There followed much negotiating and activity about where would be suitable for a new golf course. Early in 1911 the first reviews of possible sites commenced; these sites included areas in Lache Lane; Butterbache Farm, Huntington; Eaton Road, Eccleston; and land in Bumpers Lane, off Sealand Road which was the preferred site. Unfortunately hopes for this site were dashed when the Medical Officer for Health in Chester declared that under the Public Health Act "*No concourse of people numbering 150*

could be held within half a mile of a smallpox hospital", at that time Sealand House (now the Mulberry Centre) was such a hospital. Following this declaration the sub committee had to start their search for land anew.

In July 1911 the sub-committee reported that negotiations with Butterbache Farm had started again and at a subsequent meeting with them, mention was made of a site at Brewers Hall Farm, Curzon Park. It was suggested that the committee walk over the site.

A special meeting was convened for 25th July 1911 and the committee reported that the site had been thoroughly inspected. The total acreage was 107.5, part being under Lord Howe and part under Great Western Railway Company (G.W.R.) at a total rent of £188 per annum. The Chairman stated that he had knowledge of 'certain gentlemen' who were desirous of taking the land to use as a private golf course, and they wished to assist the Bache Golf Club. The minutes of the meeting noted that '*The suggestion did not meet with approval'*. The sub-committee entered into negotiations with Lord Howe and were granted a lease of 14 years at £200 per annum, for the 25 acres of G.W.R land which they believed they could purchase for £60 per acre. However early in 1912 Lord Howe stated his intention to sell his land, although he expected to get £5000 on the open market, he would let the Bache Golf Club have it for £4000. Following negotiations a price of £3750 was accepted and on March 20th the sale was agreed.

A special General Meeting of the club was held on 27th March 1912 at Clemences Café, Northgate Street. The meeting resolved that a) the sum of £4,500 (£3,750 purchase price + £750 course preparation) be raised by £2500 mortgage and £2000 from members. b) A company, to be known as *'The Brewers Hall Estate Company'* should be formed to buy the land and let it to the Golf Club Committee.



The original Pavilion

At a meeting on 23rd September 1912 it was decided '*To play the final match on the Bache course on Saturday 5th October 1912 between teams chosen from*

members over 40 and members under 40'. 'The winning team to provide supper on the night of the match and the losing team to provide liquid refreshment'.

The move from Bache Hall to Brewers Hall Farm went ahead during the winter of 1912/13. In January Mr A Hornby resigned as Secretary of the Bache Golf Club and Mr Edward Andrews was appointed with an honorarium of £20 per annum. Mr F Small was appointed House Secretary with an honorarium of £15 per annum.

Following a meeting in February 1913 the club adopted the title of Curzon Park Golf Club. Most of the portable assets were moved to the new site in early 1913 - including the pavilion, where it gave good service for many years.

Football

Upton St Mary's Football Club successfully applied for membership of the Chester & District Football League for the 1910/11 season. Their first recorded match was against Buckley Old Boys on 3rd September 1910. They showed up well in their first season and on 5th November 1910 much to the delight of their supporters they beat Ellesmere Port Vics 3 -1 in a closely contested match, at Upton, to go top of the division. However this proved short lived and by the end of the season the club handed in their resignation from the league and disbanded.

In 1919 Upton St Mary's Football Club was reformed and applied once again to join the League. Interest in the football team was considerable. The committee had been strengthened by the addition of three new committee members and it was hoped that the playing strength of the club would also be strengthened as several members has been demobbed after service in the forces during the First World War. However a series of defeats left the club third from the bottom of Division 2. The report of one game in the Chester Chronicle highlighted the problems '*What is the matter at Upton? Pull yourselves together. Petty differences do not lend themselves to unity. It is only the combined efforts of players and committee that brings success. We shall be pleased to learn about your rehabilitation'* This very public rebuke seems to have had the desired effect. In their next game Upton St Mary's beat local rivals Christleton 3-0.

For the next few seasons St Mary's was in and out of the league until the end of the 1930/31 season when they resigned and disappeared from the football map altogether.

The idea of Upton Athletic initially came into being in the mid 1940s on the Community Playing Fields at the top of Heath Road which was known locally as Frost's Field (or Chemistry Pits). Mr Gordon Beck, a Chester estate agent, who lived in Endsleigh Gardens, and whose son played football with a group of others, presented them with a football kit – blue shirts, white shorts and blue socks and Upton Juniors was created. They played matches against similar teams as themselves from the surrounding area and it was people like Cyril Wheelton, Jim McDougall, Jim Watts and Eddie Roberts provided the serious direction and purpose which began to take Upton Juniors forward.

Upton Juniors, made a successful application to join the Chester Amateur Soccer Association League (known locally as the C.A.S.A. League) and they began the 1949-50 football season in Division 4 of the C.A.S.A. League which catered for teams under the age of 15.

The team began the season playing its home games on a field on Wealstone Lane, where the Library and the Medical Centre stand today. The land was owned by Mr Ben Roberts who had a small holding in Wealstone Lane. He allowed goalposts to be kept in his sheds and used to mow the pitch with a mowing machine pulled by a tractor Most of the time the team arrived at Wealstone Lane changed ready to play but from time to time it was arranged that they would change in the Village Hall and walk down to the Wealstone Lane pitch from there. On those occasions the team felt like a proper football team with its own changing facilities. Their first game on 10th September 1949 was against the Y.M.C.A. when the home team had a resounding 9 - 2 success. It was a marvellous start to the season but Upton Juniors found it difficult playing against well established sides. They won just four more games to finish tenth in the league.



c1948
E Cook, J Paddock, E Leach, K Ravenscroft, K Wheelton, G Gaskell
B Jones, P Webster, J Dentith, D Gaskill, M Sidwell.

In the 1950-51 football season Upton Juniors, now in Division 3 continued to progress. Thanks to Cyril Wheelton and Jim Watts the team had developed to such an extent that they went through the 1951-52 season winning every match

and the league. '*Mr Wheelton was very strict; he would remind the team that under no circumstances argue with the referee, if the referee's decision was disputed a player could end up being sent off for dissent and that would mean playing with a man short'*. In 1952 the all conquering Upton Juniors reached the final of the C.A.S.A. League Cup.

The season 1961-62 was, from the opening day's fixtures on 26th August, a catalogue of misfortune, calamity and disaster for Upton Athletic. The club had problems arising from the uncertainty over the date that the new playing field at Wealstone Lane would be ready and a growing inability to raise a team to meet its commitments in the Chester & District League. Players became disgruntled and disillusioned. The result was that these players left the club to play for other teams. In the August, just before the start of the 1962-63 football season, Upton Athletic informed the Chester & District League that the club was unable to carry on in Section B and as a consequence they were tendering their resignation from the league. Sadly the dream that had first surfaced on Frost's Field in Heath Lane in the 1940s was now no more than a set of statistics consigned to history.



Upton Athletic 1958 -59 with Manager Cyril Wheelton
S Worrall, B Williams, R Purvis; B Ducworth; E Woodcock; K Wheelton..
T Johnson; R Pleavin; N Jones; R Bradley; T Woodcock.

Following the demise of Upton Athletic the next football club to emerge was Upton Athletic Association Football Club. Founded in 1962 the idea came from the Parish Church Youth Club leader Arthur Formistone and the Rev Perris Williams a curate at the Church of the Holy Ascension. *"Before a match we used to change in the garage of the house on the corner of Wealstone Lane and Weston*

Grove. The house was owned by the father of John Iles who played for the team…..it was really quite convenient!!"

Mr Denham, Mike Denham's father, managed to get hold of a large wooden hut which he thought would be ideal for the teams to change in. It was rumoured that the hut was one which was surplus to requirements on the Dale Camp. Approaches were made to the Chester City Council who agreed to provide a base for the hut, which was then duly installed.

"The hut was a huge improvement on the rather cramped conditions of Mr Iles garage and further more it was actually on the Wealstone Lane playing field. The hut was also useful as it served as a storage depot, between matches, for the goalposts, the goal nets, the line marking machine, the bags of lime for the line marking machine etc. As a result the hut acquired a unique atmosphere all of its own".

The exploits of the team had come to the attention of the selectors of the Chester FA Youth Team. Ken Hughes and Peter Futcher were selected for the team which enjoyed a run to the semi finals of the Cheshire FA Youth Cup. The team's success also attracted the attention of those scouting for league clubs.

Gareth Hughes and Stuart Crawford were invited to trials at Arsenal Football Club in London. They spent a fortnight rubbing shoulders with many of the club's international stars but at the end of the fortnight they were, according to Stuart Crawford, *"Thanked for coming to Arsenal for trials and wished the very best in their future careers…and that was it".* Graham Futcher, who played for the Chester & District Youth team in the 1968-69 season, became the first player from Upton AA to sign for a League club, when he signed for Chester.

On 28th April 1973 the club played from its new home at the recently opened Pavilion on the Wealstone Lane playing fields. The move by Upton AA to establish its base at the new Pavilion was at the instigation of Reg Bedford who played for Upton AA and was a youth worker at Upton Youth Club. However, to meet the higher standards of playing and changing facilities demanded by the West Cheshire League, the club moved again to the County Officers Sports Club, in Plas Newton Lane.

The first of Upton AA Football Club's annual Sportsman's Dinners was held on the 25th February 1989 to coincide with the club's 25th anniversary year. The former Manchester United manager Tommy Docherty was the guest speaker and for the eighth year running a pre-season friendly match with Manchester United was organised, for 11th August 1989, to take place in Upton. It was a gesture of friendship from the Old Trafford club that they agreed to play the game in Upton to mark the 25th anniversary.

In 2002, forty years after the club was founded, Dave Iles, John Iles, Reg Bedford, Jimmy Dutton, Mike Denham, Derek Johnson, Chris Nevett, Graham Nevett, John Williams and Ian Caveney (players from the early years) rolled back time under the watchful eye of referee David Berry to take part in a commemorative 5 a side football match.

Paul and Ron Futcher

The Futcher family home was, and still is, in Upton. Whilst at Upton Secondary School both boys were selected to play for the Chester Schools under 15's and the Cheshire County football teams. In 1972 both Paul and Ron were nominated for the Chester Observer sponsored 'Chester Schoolboy Footballer of the Year'. It really was no surprise that the two Upton boys signed apprenticeship forms for their home town football club.

As Ron and Paul made their league debuts for Chester City in the 1973-74 season, their promise was recognized by Luton Town FC manager Harry Haslam. In August 1974 he signed Paul for £100,000, a record British transfer fee for a seventeen year old. Later in the summer Harry came back to Chester to sign Ron, so re-uniting the twins.



Paul & Ron at their league debut with Chester City

In the summer of 1978 their continuing development on the football field saw them sign for Manchester City for a total transfer fee of £425,000.

Upton Junior Football Club

In 1993 Upton United Junior Football Team's first official match was against local rivals Upton Villa, a club based at the Dale Camp. This match is memorable for one thing, the weather. Monsoon would be a good description. During the season of 1994 the team started to use the field at Upton Manor School to hold their practices and matches.

The move to Upton Manor coincided with the purchase of their first set of portable goal posts and nets. Every Saturday morning an army of parents would move the goals from the school store, across the pitch and struggle with the jig-saw-like contraption. During 1999-2000 the Under 14's played at Chester's home ground in Bumpers Lane, the Deva Stadium, when they were in the Subsidiary Cup Final. Since 1998 the club had grown at some pace with boys and girls playing in both the Chester and Ellesmere Port Leagues with teams ranging from under 6 through to under 17 years of age.

2002 was a significant year for the club with the merger of Upton United & Upton Villa to form Upton Junior Football Club. Their base is currently at The Dale Camp, where they meet every Saturday during school term 10 - 12 noon and the club has established itself as one of the major centres in Chester for football with nearly 270 children playing for the club.

The Bache Bowling Club.

The Bache Bowling Club came into being in 1912, shortly after the Northgate Brewery built a bowling green in Mill Lane behind their Egerton Arms public house. Some of the directors of the brewery were among the first members of the newly formed club, which leased the green from the brewery for an annual rent of 1/-. In those early days the green was accessible through a small orchard, which made it a wonderful setting. Some years later the orchard was forfeited to make room for a car park.



Not much is known about the early life of the club except that it was a thriving and popular one. In 1949 the membership stood at 38, 1954 saw them join the Chester and District Bowling League and by 1963 when membership was 42 they supported an 'A' and 'B' team; subscriptions at that time were £1.15.0. and club rules stated that '*The club shall consist of not more than 65 members'*. It was also in the 60s that they were promoted to the top division of the league.

However things were to change. In the early 1980s the Greenhall Whitley Brewery (formerly Northgate Brewery) announced their intention to close the green to create a beer garden. At a committee meeting held in March 1983 it was agreed that the club secretary would arrange a meeting with the brewery manager as soon as possible and an alternative venue for their matches should be looked for. The next committee meeting announced that the brewery would allow the club to carry on using the green for the rest of that season, while planning permission was applied for.

In October of that year hopes were raised when the planning application for the car park and beer garden was refused by the City Council. However, the brewery informed the club that the Bowling Green would be required for its own use and so, notice to quit was given on 17th October 1983. With hopes of retaining the green dashed once and for all, the club's priority was to find another location. The tenancy agreement was due to end on 1st May 1984 so until that time the club still had exclusive use of the Mill Lane green. At a meeting with brewery representatives, it was agreed that after 1st May the club would still be able to use the green on Mondays and Thursdays for their league matches but for any 'social bowling' agreement must be sought from the landlord. It was agreed that the bowling club would maintain the green for a period of 12 months and there would be no charge made for the club using it.

The new system continued, satisfactorily, until May 1989 when once again the Brewery applied for planning permission to build an extension to the pub. This time the extension was to be a 28 bedroom unit. Although, as before, the application was refused, in October 1990 the brewery wrote to the club informing them that the green would be closing at the end of the month. Again the other local bowling clubs were approached to look into the possibility of sharing facilities. Fortunately Upton Parish Council was willing to allow extra use of the Green on Wealstone Lane so negotiations were entered into, with the Royal British Legion, who also used it.

An amicable arrangement was reached and although they had to drop down to one team only, The Bache Bowling Club had found a new home and to date continue to play in the Chester and District Bowling League.

Guiding in Upton



Monica Sparling

The 1st Upton Brownie pack was started by Miss Monica Sparling (daughter of the first Vicar of Upton) in 1919 and has never closed. Guides started just a month later.

After Miss Sparling, Guiding in Upton became almost synonymous with the Joseph family. Kay Joseph assisted Monica with the Brownies and it was only natural that she took over in 1929 following Monica's death. During the 39 - 45 war, although Guides did much collecting of waste paper, rose hips etc. the company in Upton closed for a while due to difficulty in recruitment. In 1945 the movement started up again with just 3 guides and Alix Joseph as captain. Rangers, the senior section, started in

1956 and Rainbows, the most junior section, more recently in 1987. There are now 3 Guide Companies, 4 (+ 1 in Mollington) Brownie Packs, 2 groups of Rainbows and 1 Ranger Unit.

The Joseph connection with the Guiding movement only died with Alix's death in February 2000. However its continuity is assured as the dedicated leaders at all levels maintain the spirit of the movement with selfless care. Meeting places have included the Vicarage attic, a classroom at St Mary's School and the Scout Hut. The Scouts had an ex-army hut from Moston and Guides were to have another but it was rather decrepit, the ends didn't fit very well and it finally blew down in a gale!

Finally in 1956, thanks to the good offices of Canon Wheldon Williams, guiding in Upton was able to take over the Men's Institute building on the corner of Caughall Road. It had been used as a Civil Defence headquarters and was in a frightful condition. After 2 years of hard work by Guides, parents and all and sundry, it was officially opened in 1958. In 1964 the camp room was added. Since then it has had some excellent refurbishment including a new kitchen. Adequate heating was installed, as members froze for many winters and there were no such things as thermal underwear then. The garden/play area was developed as a memorial to Kay Joseph in 1972.

Camps have been many and varied in rain, wind and sunshine, with wonderful hospitality from our hosts. There have been visits from cows, sows and piglets, a pack of hounds and countless dogs. The sight of guides leaving Upton in a furniture van packed to overflowing was common in Upton for many years until furniture vans were no longer considered desirable transport.



Leaving for camp in the furniture van

Guides have camped at home and abroad, including U.S.A., Mexico and the Far East and have enjoyed hospitality within families as well as attending International Camps.

They have also helped to make the new County Standard which replaced the old one as Cheshire Guiding became so large that it had to be divided and much work was done at Wakefield Grange (Alix Joseph's school). There have been numerous pageants for which costumes were made and the Trefoil Guild, which is for retired or non-active Guides, has made many panels for display; one of which, representing Chester, is on display in Guide Headquarters.

Cricket

The Cricket Club was originally formed by Mr Horace Whaley, Mr Len Wright and Mr Harry Griffiths who had the unstinting support of Rev. W Sparling.

The first field they were able to use was on the site, owned by Mr Fred Davies that is now Endsleigh Gardens. Len was generous enough to pay for the construction of a pavilion and each Friday evening an attempt was made to mow the grass in the small area where the wickets were due to be pitched and the larger weeds and thistles were cut, but the outfield remained untouched except by cows; the fielders not only had to watch out for prominent tussocks but for large cowpats generously distributed around the pitch! Indeed, it was not unknown for fielders to have to run round a cow when taking a catch, for though the herd was shooed away when matches began, it usually tended to drift back.

After tentative beginnings in 1923, The Rev. W Sparling accepted the position of Chairman, and, subsequently, President and along with Horace Whaley, Len Wright and Harry Griffiths the club players consisted of young Upton men; Sam Broster; Harry Venebles; Tom Garner the lanky wicket keeper, Peter Snelson the slow bowler and Walter Woodward a fiery and erratic demon bowler. Upton Cricket Club had a full fixture list for 1924.

During the next few years, the club prospered, a roller was bought and used energetically before, during and after the match and a committee of ladies led by Emily Griffiths and Mrs Williamson began to provide teas for the players and visitors.

By 1928, the club was going from strength to strength. The arrival of two capable cricketers, Herbert Schofield and Frank Hewitt, the local schoolmaster, enabled Upton to enter the popular Boughton Hall 'knockout' competition. Boughton Hall was the rich, semi-professional club which played a sophisticated standard of cricket and worked hard in popularising the game.

When the cricket pitch land was taken for housing in the late 1920s the club moved to Demage Lane, to a field owned by Sir John Frost, where they stayed for many years. John Crompton, a new recruit to the club, paid for a new pavilion to be erected. This move meant that they could practice several nights a week on a field that was regularly mown and they didn't have to compete with the cows. John Crompton's participation also enhanced the prestige and the finances

of the club. On August Bank Holiday in 1930 and 1931, many people of the village turned up to enjoy full day matches when a large marquee was hired and erected for a festive mid-day lunch and some good cricket was enjoyed. Both days were gloriously sunny and the players in their white flannels made an attractive English scene on the ground which was surrounded by splendid trees.



c1927
Rev. Sparling (centre front) with the team, sitting to his left, Horace Whaley and to his right Len Wright and Harry Griffiths

The improved standards of the Club enabled the team to challenge stronger opponents from further afield, and occasionally, a special away match would be organised and bus hired so that families could also attend. These were enjoyable outings which became wonderful family picnics.

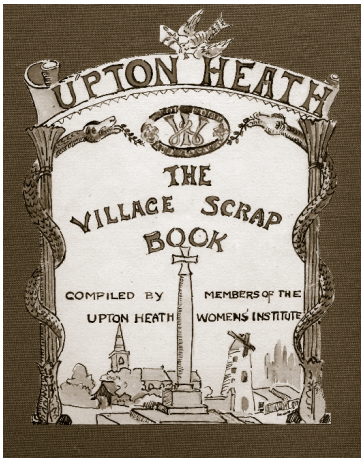
The club continued to prosper until the outbreak of WW2 when, due to the players having other priorities, it disbanded.

The Women's Institutes

Upton Heath WI

On 12th May 1926, the Upton Heath Women's Institute met for the first time in the Chapel schoolroom, under the presidency of Mrs Crompton. From then meetings were held monthly, though the venue was changed in January 1929, to the newly opened Village Hall. Indeed, one of their first community efforts was to help in the raising of funds for the building of the hall. The membership

steadily increased from 48 in 1926 to 220 in 1936. The latter was fixed as the maximum membership.



The Institute has taken part in all the various aspects of Institute work and has a large variety of interests; exhibitions of handicrafts and produce are held from time to time; exchanges of letters and gifts link the Institute with those in New Zealand and Canada. Social events include an annual outing, a birthday party and Christmas festivities. In 1951 the Institute marked its quarter century by having a cloth embroidered for use at meetings. It was made from a hand-woven linen sheet over one hundred years old and donated by a member. To mark the Coronation of King George VI a seat was donated to the village and placed at the junction of Heath Road and Long Lane. The Institute joined in the scheme for planting flowering trees along Heath Road to mark the Festival of Britain. The Choir which took part in the Chester Music Festival in 1951 won the first award for large choirs and received a silver cup.

The war activities of the Institute were very wide in scope including A.R.P., Ambulance, W.V.S., Evacuation Scheme, camouflage nets, fruit canning etc. Of special importance were two activities, the knitting party and the National Savings Group. The former made about 5,000 garments in six years for the Services and children from occupied countries. A penny-a-week scheme, organised to buy wool, realised £213-10-0. The latter, formed in June, 1940, collected £56,887 until its cessation in July, 1946. In addition a market stall was opened in June 1944, and members also undertook the distribution of pies under the Ministry of Food scheme for rural areas. In six years a quarter of a million pies were sold and the total profit of £450 was partly given to charities and partly made available for village and institute needs.

In 1965 the membership stood at 207, of which 5 were founder-members. To celebrate the Institute's golden jubilee, the president Miss M Claxon represented Upton Heath branch at a Royal Garden Party.

This branch of the W I closed some years ago.

Upton Cross WI

Upton Cross WI was formed in 1953 as an offshoot of Upton Heath WI who had capacity membership. In November 2003 Upton Cross WI celebrated its 50th Birthday in true golden style with a dinner & entertainment.

Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month (except August) when a wide range of speakers entertain members with demonstrations or talks. A competition on the theme of the evening is held for which a prize and points

are awarded. Points are added together annually to determine the winners of the two Cups presented at each AGM.

Daffodil bulbs were planted at the Village Hall to celebrate the Queens accession to the throne. Assistance was given at the re-dedication of the Monica Sparling Garden Ceremony in July 2002. Embroidered kneelers have been made for both Parish Church and Chester Cathedral and regular stewarding and flower arranging is done at both venues. Constant assistance is given to ACWW (Associated Country Women of the World). Coins are collected annually for a National donation to be given, to benefit less fortunate people overseas with for example, the building and maintenance of water supplies etc.

Denman College at Marcham in Oxfordshire is the WI's own residential life-long learning centre and Upton Cross offers a bursary each year to enable a member to take up a course of her choice. The 60 strong group is also active in other ways, with a long standing bowling team and rambling section.

In 1965 Miss Willett represented the branch at the Royal Garden Party to celebrate 50 years of the Women's Institute.



Doreen Luke, Mary Thompson, Beryl Parkinson, Wyn Beckett, Helen Bebbington, Josie Coates and Flo Webster

Deva WI

In an endeavour to involve patients at the Deva Hospital a special WI was created there in November 1960. It was quite an exceptional branch because of the fact that most of the members were patients and ran successfully, for many years.

Staffed mainly by local volunteers, who formed a committee, meetings were held on Hospital premises. Doris Harrison was the 1st President and later Betty Tushingham worked tirelessly for years.

In addition to meetings, patients were taken for days out, birthdays were marked and they were given an annual birthday party with some guests being invited. Fashion shows were held at the hospital which were very popular. The Committee Members and some of the patients modelled the clothes from the hospital shop.

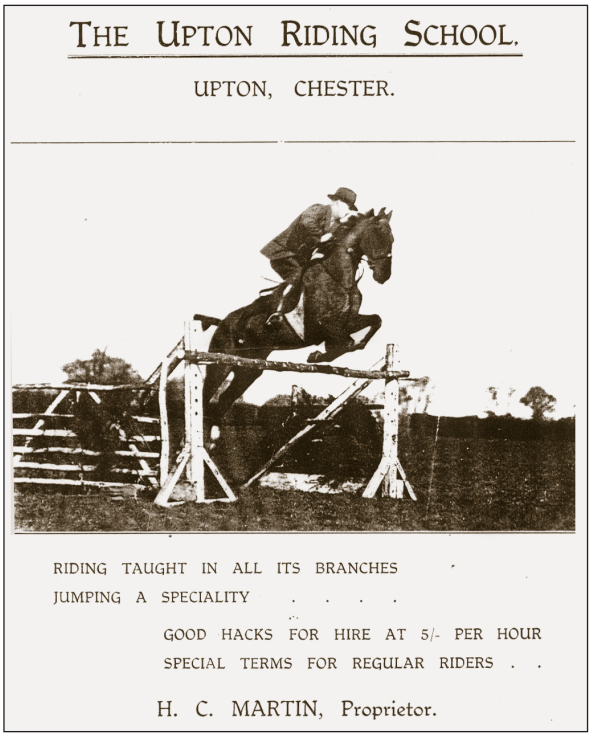
In June 1965 a meeting was held in the gardens of the Manor Hospital, Great Sutton, where they heard of the experiences of their representative at the Royal Garden Party.

Due to hospital constraints this branch of the WI closed some years ago.

Miss Nickson's Riding School

The Riding School was opened in 1932 by Mr H. C. Martin on land that had been part Mr B. C. Roberts' Oakfield Estate. On leaving the zoo area the school then moved to Heath Road, just behind St. Mary's School. In April 1939 the riding school was taken over by Miss Betty Nickson who ran it successfully for many years.

Along the quieter roads of Upton, strings of youngsters could often be seen walking one behind the other, many of them on their own ponies. Day rides were available and weekly riding holidays for children and adults were a popular occurrence. Pupils were prepared for show rings, including the jumping category and were often successful.



Ponies and horses would also be supplied for other events such as local fetes, where children loved to ride them, also for film promotions when the animals would be taken to the Odeon or Classic cinemas and on one occasion two horses were taken to the Plantation Inn, Chester to be photographed with cabaret performers on their backs.

Royal British Legion



HIGHEST AWARD FOR TWO LEGION MEMBERS

Club Ceremony At Upton-By-Chester

Two members of the Upton-by-Chester branch of the British Legion are to be honoured next month during a ceremony to mark the opening of the new headquarters and club in Heath Road.

They are Mr. James Pearson, of 10 Rosewood Avenue, Upton, and Mr. T. W. L. Clay, of The Limes, 11 Saughall Road, Upton, who are to receive the British Legion's highest award, the Gold Badge.

The awards have been made in recognition of their services to the British Legion. Mr. Pearson, who has been connected with the organisation for 44 years, is a former president and chairman of the branch, and Mr. Clay, a member since 1946, is honorary secretary and a former treasurer.

The new headquarters will be opened by Sir Frederick Lister, Cheshire county president, national vice-president and first national chairman of the British Legion, on October 22.

Mr. Clay

ON PARADE

A parade from Saughall Road to the new headquarters will be headed by the regimental band of the Cheshire (Earl of Chester) Yeomanry, and taking part will be British Legion branches from all over the county, detachments of the Sea Cadets, Cheshire A.C.F., and Air Training Corps 1366 (City of Chester) Squadron.

The branch was founded in 1925 and the new buildings have enabled it to expand its membership to nearly 800. A new concert hall was built four years ago, and an extension, including a lounge and facilities for games, is nearing completion.

The buildings, which have cost £11,000, replace the wooden hut—a former sergeant's mess—that has housed the branch since 1945.

Mr. Pearson

The Royal British Legion was created, initially, by Lord Haig, for ex-servicemen who had been disabled in the First World War. The idea was to make poppies, to sell; not only to commemorate those lost in the war but to raise funds for the welfare of those who had returned disabled. There are two sections to the Legion; the club, which acts as a social centre for recreation of the branch members, and the branch, which takes care of the welfare of its members by raising funds to support them. The Royal British Legion in Upton was established in November 1933. One of its four founding members - Frederick L'Anson Morris was honorary secretary from 1935 - 1950 and is commemorated on a plaque in the club-house.

Newspaper cutting included in 'The WI 1965 Book' Newspaper and date unknown

As they had no premises of their own at that time, their first meetings were held at the Men's Institute (now the Guide HQ) in Caughall Road. Later they had the use of rooms in other premises, where they could put up two snooker tables which were to move into the hut when it was built.

In 1946 the group was able to buy a plot of land in Heath Road, from a local farmer, for the princely sum of £400. The members cultivated the land and grew vegetables which were sold locally, and eventually this provided the funds to build their own club house. Built in the 1950s, the club house was officially opened by Sir Frederick Lister, first national chairman of the Legion. The opening ceremony parade was headed by the Band of the Cheshire Yeomanry which marched through Upton.

The structure consisted of a tin hut used by the members as a games room. Later as funds dictated, the tin was replaced by brick. Although the original clubhouse remains, it was incorporated into the newly extended building in the 1960s, which was approximately half the size of the building we know today. When the concert room was extended to its present size it was commemorated to Thomas Nichols B.E.M. who was honorary secretary of club 1970 - 1985. One of the rooms is dedicated to Jim Pearson, who was a relentless fundraiser for the legion.

Many groups use the friendly facilities of the Upton clubhouse, such as the Dunkirk Veterans; the Royal Corp of Signals; Royal Military Police Association and Chester and North Wales Long Service Medallists. In the early days membership reached a massive 1,400 and the rules of the organisation were that at least 60% of membership should be ex-service personnel. This rule has been relaxed more recently and the club welcomes all new members.

The women's section of Royal British Legion was created in 1925, and in Upton in 1949 when Mrs Jones was chairman, they, too, used to meet in the Guide Hut on the corner of Caughall Road. Once the new building was up and running in Heath Road the section was only too happy to hold their meetings there.

Dramatic Society



The original Church Choir Drama Group

The dramatic society began in 1934 when a new Vicar arrived in Upton and put on a play 'The Farmer's Wife' using members of his choir. When Rev. Gardner Brown left the Parish, his successor was not particularly enthusiastic about amateur dramatics so the choir members branched out on their own and created

Upton Dramatic Society. In those days the group membership was restricted to Upton residents only, so did well to survive. The society closed from 1940 - 1949, but soon re-established itself post war.



'Tilley of Bloomsbury' 1935

In the early days there would be one production at Christmas and it was quite a social event. Before the war people attending would wear evening dress, all the ladies in the cast received a bouquet and the front of the stage would be elaborately decorated with flowers. There was always a last-night party which would continue into the small hours of the morning. Later the group started to produce 2 plays each year.



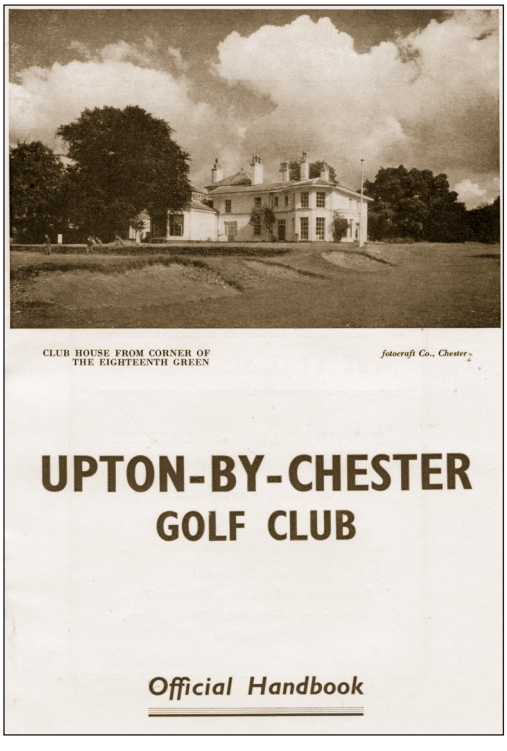
'A Harvest Home' an annual production

The producer for some years was Mrs Gladys Mitchell (producer for Chester Operatic Society) until her death, since when the group have had a number of producers from its own ranks.

Some notable members of the group were Miss Beryl Nield (sister of Judge Basil Nield); Sheila Garston, former Mayor of Chester; Hugh Lloyd of TV fame, and many promising young actors who went on to greater things.

The society has continued to entertain audiences twice a year with comedies and thrillers, raising thousands of pounds for various local charities.

Upton Golf Club



Upton Golf Club was founded in July 1934 when Mr C J F Owen of Upton purchased 'The Oaks', owned by Mr Andrews Crompton, a cotton broker and land owned by Mr Charles Potts; all for the princely sum of £4,500. He later acquired the neighbouring estate of 'Upton Lawn', then owned by Sir John Frost of Frost Flour Mills.

Having an area that totalled 65 acres, Mr Owen called together a dozen of his colleagues and friends and the beginnings of the original 9 hole golf club was formed. Nine circles were mown as the greens on the grazing land (roped off against the cattle), plant pots used as holes and garden canes as flag sticks. The inaugural meeting of the club, when Mr C E Nield was elected to the chair, was held at 8pm on Tuesday July 3rd 1934. Mr Owen (Vice Chairman) offered the meeting access to the course, parking for members cars in the yard and the use of certain outbuildings of The Oaks as a temporary club house. Mr G A Samuel (Hon. Secretary) reported that he and Mr Owen had mapped out a possible 9 hole course and had estimated that expenditure during the first year (1934) would be £30 and £150 for the following year.

He also announced that 60 people had expressed an interest in joining and suggested, for the period ending March 1935, a subscription of one guinea. The meeting agreed that a club be formed and called the Upton by Chester Golf Club and that a joining fee should be levied as soon as the membership reached one hundred.

By August subscriptions had risen to 210 and as plans were in the pipeline to extend the course to 18 holes, a temporary limit of 250 members was agreed with boarding school boys being granted partial membership at 10/6^{d} pa. It was agreed to open the course for play on 4th August with green fees being fixed at

1/6d for 18 holes (2 rounds of 9 holes). Mr Basil Nield was elected as Captain, with Sir Charles Cayzer Bt. MP, as President (1935-1940).

Mr J W (Bill) Davies and Mr T E (Eric) Par, professionals at Rhuddlan and Blacon Point Golf Clubs respectively, agreed to give advice on the course lay-out. Bill was also coerced into giving golf lessons and agreeing to stock and run a golf shop. He was appointed club professional at a wage of £2.5.0 which he held until November 1964, when Mr Peter Gardner took over until his retirement in February 2002. The current professional is Mr Stephen Dewhurst.

Soon after the club's formation Mr Owen purchased a number of large stone blocks from Mold Prison, which was being demolished, and created a golfers shelter that stands today near to the 12th tee. Up to the early seventies, players reached the 18th tee by ascending a series of stone steps (bought by a member and brought to the course). These were the very steps which led to the gallows at Ruthin Jail.

Due to the increasing demand for membership it was decided to make the course 18 holes. Extra land was offered by Mr Owen to allow the extension, provided the club paid for clearing the land. The new course layout was planned by Mr J E Hassall, the eminent golf architect, who mapped out an 18 hole course of some 4400 yards, the work being carried out during the winters of 1935/36 and 1936/37.

Further land was made available by Mr Owen, in September 1935. This allowed two, of the existing 18 holes, to be transferred across Church Lane, thus lengthening the course to its present 5810 yards.

In 1936 the Club was elected to membership of the L.G.U. (Ladies Golf Union). Entrance fees were set at one guinea with the first subscriptions two guineas. The acquisition of 'The Oaks' as the new club house with its billiard room and ballroom took place shortly after.

To mark the official opening of the new course an exhibition match was arranged for May 8th 1938 to include Percy Alliss, Alfred Pagham, (1936 British Open Champion), Bert Gadd (1933 French & 1937 Irish Open Champion), John Williams and of course the club professional Bill Davies.

In February 1940 the Club tragically lost its President, Sir Charles Cayzer, in a shooting incident at his Scottish residence. Mr Basil Nield, the 36 year old son of Mr Charles Nield of Upton Grange, became the club's new president.

In December 1942, the club was visited by a sub-committee of the Cheshire War Agricultural Committee and agreement reached that the 2nd and 3rd fairways be cultivated in 1943 for either oats or wheat, thus the course was restricted to 16 holes temporarily but remained open. It was frequently used by H.M Forces. During the war, part of the clubhouse was surrendered for use as a school for evacuees from St Patrick's Catholic Elementary School in Liverpool. In 1948, as food was still in short supply, approximately 12 acres were grown and cut for hay, following instructions from the Cheshire Agricultural Executive Committee.



Club members in 1951

Following Fred Owen's death, after World War 2, the Golf Club membership became a Limited Company to own and run the club; Bill Davies died in 1978 after spending his retirement in a cottage on the course near to the Clubhouse. The cottage was demolished in 1992 to create a small car park.

Mothers Union

In Upton the Mothers Union began in the 1930s when Rev. Sparling was Minister. The group continued to meet in the Vicarage, under the leadership of Mrs Wheldon Williams, until the Church Hall was built and enjoyed a strong membership in its earlier days.

The group closed in 1998.

Freemasonry

Upton Weal Stone Lodge was warranted on 6th November 1946 and consecrated on 27th January 1947.

Frederick (Frank) Chidlow was a founding member and became the first Secretary of the Lodge. He suggested that "*This ancient stone being fashioned by men to enable them to fulfil their several obligations one to another and in so doing to promote and enrich the common good and well being of their fellows - it thereby presented a fitting symbolism worthy to be preserved in the name of the Lodge"*

(Frank Chidlow (b.1898) was Headmaster of St. Mary's school for many years. See comments in Reminiscences Chapter 18.)

The first Worshipful Master was 'Past Grand Standard Bearer' Dr John Ambrose Cooke. The minutes of the Consecration record the presence of 18 Founders and 96 others. The Bishop of Chester the Rt. Rev. D H Crick in his capacity as Provincial Grand Chaplain gave the Oration.

Shortly after the consecration, the Vicar of Upton, the Rev. John Wheldon Williams was admitted to membership of the Lodge retaining the parish church's tradition of close association with local freemasonry. The centenary of the church held in 1954 started with a service for Freemasons. The Rev. Wilfred Sparling had been a member of a local Lodge.

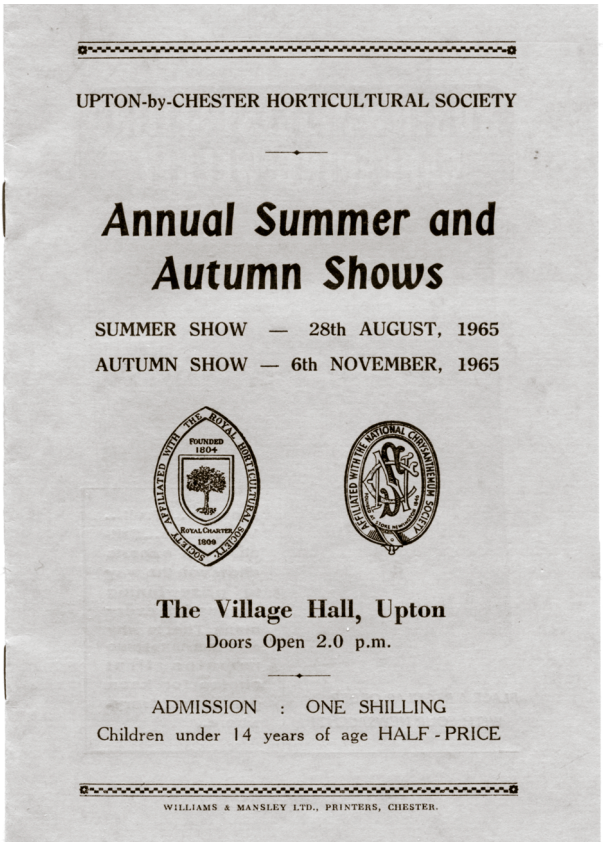
The mother lodge for Upton Weal Stone is the Independence Lodge, both of which continue to meet in the local Masonic Hall, Cheshire View in Christleton.

Up to the middle of the 20th century many of the well known figures in Upton would have been Freemasons. One could expect to find members of the established professions, civic dignitaries, clerics & other church officials, landed

gentry - all members of one or other of the local lodges - only some of these would have chosen to transfer to the Upton Weal Stone Lodge. Current membership stands at around 30.

Horticultural Society

A Horticultural Society seems to have flourished from c1894 until 1914 as shown by old records of Flower Shows These shows were held in various large houses in the area. The present Society was reformed in 1946, when a *'Flower, Fruit, Vegetable and Farm Produce'* show was held, along with a pony gymkhana on Mr Roberts' field at Upton Cross. The show committee, seeing how successful it was, reformed the following month and founded Upton-by-Chester Horticultural Society. The aim of the society was to promote the cultivation of flowers, fruits and vegetables by means of shows, lectures and meetings.



UPTON-by-CHESTER HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Annual Summer and Autumn Shows

SUMMER SHOW — 28th AUGUST, 1965

AUTUMN SHOW — 6th NOVEMBER, 1965

The Village Hall, Upton

Doors Open 2.0 p.m.

ADMISSION : ONE SHILLING

Children under 14 years of age HALF - PRICE

WILLIAMS & MANSLEY LTD., PRINTERS, CHESTER.

At the first committee meeting, held in October 1946, Mr C. Watkin was elected chairman, Mr S. French secretary and Mr C. Cassidy treasurer. Shortly afterwards Mr D Miln, of Miln's Seed Merchants, was elected as president. Initially they met in the Scout Hut on Mill Lane, then in 1947 they were able to use the Village Hall, where they have been holding their meetings ever since. The committee who, in the early years paid for the hire of the meeting rooms, were asked to loan the society 10/-, to help with set up costs; they were also asked to enrol 5 new members each. One month later 24 members had been enrolled, each paying 2/6^{d} for subscription and the loan of 10/- was repaid to the committee members the following February. Membership was restricted to those who lived in the Parish of Upton but associate membership was allowed to those who lived in the neighbouring parishes with ladies not being allowed to join until the following year. All membership applications had to be approved by the committee, and not

everyone who applied was granted membership. Two of the earliest lady committee members, Mrs C Norman and Miss E Main (co-owners of Normain College, now The Firs School), expressed an interest in playing a more active role but were politely prevented from doing so and had to continue to be invited, occasionally, to attend committee meetings.

The first annual show was held in on Saturday 22nd November 1947 in the Village Hall. It consisted of 4 sections, totalling 60 classes; the sections were Chrysanthemums (members only); Chrysanthemums (open); Fruit and Preserves. The entry fee for each class was 6d and the 1st prize for most classes was a princely 7/6d.

The following year Summer and Autumn Shows were held and open classes were made available to residents who lived within a 6 mile radius of Upton Cross. A total of 150 metal vases were bought in 1948, to be used for exhibits in the shows - which are still used today.



The New Hut in 1983

The other notable event in 1948 was the opening of the Society's Stores on Long Lane (where Dulas Court now stands). This moved in 1983 to its present location off Caughall Road. This is open on Saturday afternoons from March to October and is staffed by a rota of volunteers. It is here that members can buy garden tools such as canes, plant pots and fertilizers at reduced prices.

Thank you gifts, made to the Show Judges, were a little different in the early days; a gift of 10 cigarettes was common-place and the prizes for the winners of competitions were unusual too; dressed chickens, large balls of string and a load of manure were awarded to some lucky members. Three times the society has played host to BBC's Gardeners Question Time radio programme, in 1951, 1983 and in 2004.

As with most societies, members come and go, in 1951 membership stood at 220, in 1965 it stool at 300 with members paying an annual fee of 3/6d.

By 1984 membership had risen to 629 and today it stands at a respectable 450. A thriving and active group, they meet nine times a year; have a plant sale in May; hold Spring, Summer and Autumn shows; have a bi-annual 'Garden Trail' through Upton as well as organising trips and visits to places of interest.

At the 1986 show, the all male committee lunch……



Frank Whaley, Frank Beckett, John Pritchard, Ken Stamp, 2 visiting judges, and Charlie Clark.

…….....while the women wait outside



Wyn Beckett, Betty Pritchard, Mrs Cassidy and Rose Snelson.

Badminton Club



Upton Badminton Club started its life in 1949 when the members used to meet at the Gilwern TA centre in Abbots Park. They transferred to Upton Village Hall in 1957 when they would meet twice weekly, once for a club *'practice'* night and once for match night. In those days they played in division one of the Chester & District league and several players either played or went on to play at County level. They continued to meet weekly on a Tuesday evening from April to September and from the evening club, a group of members branched out to play on a Thursday afternoon, also in the Village Hall.

Hinde's Riding School

Hinde's riding school was set up in 1950 by Jean Hinde (Daughter of Frank) at Northfields on Long Lane. Jean had 12 ponies at the school, either owned or liveried, and taught local children to ride as well as entering local Gymkhanas, fetes and point to point events.

The school closed in 1959 when Jean married and moved out of the area.

Scouts

In the Souvenir Programme for the Official Opening of the Headquarters Upton Drive Mr E R France, Group Council Chairman wrote '*The group was formed in January, 1952, as a result of an appeal from the Vicar of Upton, and initially met in the Village School. The response was so encouraging, it was immediately realised that to operate efficiently a building of their own was essential'*.

Through the generosity of Mr Justice Basil Nield and his family, this object was achieved, and the first Headquarters opened in Church Lane in May, 1953. It was subsequently necessary to move from these premises, and they were fortunate in having the present piece of land donated by Messrs. Capstick & Owen Ltd., and a semi-temporary building was erected in the summer of 1958. During this period the Group Council realised that, with the continued growth of the area, bigger and better accommodation was necessary, and in February, 1963, a general appeal was sent to the residents of Upton, which was to form the basis of a fund for the building. This realised the sum of £310. Further efforts were made and in January 1967 sufficient had been raised to enable definite arrangements for the building to be started.



Leaving for camp with the help of Rev. Wheldon Williams

The Scout hut at Upton Drive was officially opened by His Grace the Duke of Westminster on Saturday 12th October 1968. It is pleasing to note that, since then, no less than 12 Queen's Scout Badges have been awarded to the Group and the boys have had the honour of being selected to attend Jamborees in Canada and in the United States. It has also been possible for expeditions to be arranged for some of the senior members to travel on the Continent and in Scotland. This, in addition to the annual Scout camps in various parts of the British Isles. The Cub Section has also had local camps annually.



The 1st Upton Cub Scouts, at a presentation by the local manager of the TSB. Pictured outside Scout HQ with Akela and Officers in 1980

Young Wives

Upton Young Wives Group was inaugurated in 1956 when Mrs N Ingham was appointed Leader and the annual subscription was set at 2/-. The first meeting, held on the 24th October in the Village Hall, welcomed 58 new members and Mrs Williams, the vicar's wife, presented a gift of £1 to the group on behalf of the Mothers Union. The programme for the first year of the group covered topics such as 'Children Growing up', a Christmas Party, 'Six Essentials for a Happy Home' and a film about the 'Oberammergau Passion Play', plus a mystery outing.



Trying on hats at a fashion show in 1971

At a committee meeting held on 1st September 1959 it was noted that there was £27 in the Young Wives fund; part of this money (up to £20) was to be spent on a clock for the new Church Hall, and members would be asked to make cakes for the opening ceremony. The meeting held on 30th September started with a short service in Church, then moved on to the new hall, which became their regular venue.

In March 1977 the first 'Easter Egg' coffee morning took place, with proceeds going to the Upton Carnival. Easter eggs were made by committee members, personalised and sold, 70 eggs were sold that first year. Of the £29.10 proceeds, £20 was given to the Carnival Fund and the rest reserved for decorating the Young Wives float. By 1981 the committee was making nearly 300 eggs to meet the demand.

An annual Craft Market took place on the first Saturday in November for several years; nearly 30 local craftsmen paid £2.50 for a stall and sold their produce to the hundreds of local residents who turned out to buy early Christmas gifts.

The group closed in 1990.

Flower Club



Doris Pearce

In 1960 Doris Pearce and a group of friends from Upton formed Upton Heath Flower Club. Early committee meetings and club nights were held in the chairman's home, in Upton Park, or in the Village Hall; either in the afternoon or the evening. At one meeting the treasurer was 'delighted' to report that there was £180/12/1^{d} in the bank.

The entrance fee for the 10th Anniversary celebrations was 3/- although a mistress of St. James Secondary Modern School wrote to ask for reduced terms for a visit by her girls, consequently they were charged 2/-. Raffle tickets were 6^{d} or 2/6^{d} per book. A typical allowance for a demonstrator was £10 for the flowers and £25 for their fee.



Full to capacity meetings held in the Village Hall

Membership in 1972 was 39 but by 2003 it had grown to 100. Various competitions and shows have taken place.

In June 1961 one class was named 'Fragrance' and the judges on that occasion were blind. The show that year was held at the Town Hall and the proceeds of £37.10.0 were split between Chester Blind Welfare Society and Guide Dogs for the Blind. Over the years the group has helped members and their families to celebrate special occasions by presenting them with lovely floral arrangements, or supplying and arranging flowers for their anniversaries or weddings.

As well as flower arranging for pleasure, many events have raised funds for local charities including:- Dorincourt; The Hospice of the Good Shepherd and Guide Dogs for the Blind.

Arrangements have been made for special events - including a visit by the Queen to the Cathedral; functions at Peckforton and Bodelwyddan Castles, local churches and stately homes.

Many members have gone on to become professional demonstrators or teachers, while others enjoy entering local and national competitions. Some who have been attending the Flower Club for many years just enjoy sitting and watching a demonstration and arranging flowers at home for their own pleasure.



Olive Minor, Brenda Saunders, Nancy Turton, Ann Harrop,
Sue Dernie, Marie Christian
and other members of the Flower Club

Youth Club

In March 1965 a Youth Club was founded, which met in the Village Hall. It was open to anyone aged between 14 and 20 and enabled the youngsters to take part in a variety of indoor activities. Making an effort to acquire premises of their own they formed a committee, consisting of members and parents, to oversee the project. Among those involved were Irene Hulme, Les and Cath Feather, Maureen Barraclough, Iris & Dick Richards, Bob Clift, Ian Herbert, Tony Trotter and Dorothy Rushton.

Les Feather worked for the education department at the time. He was a great help in co-ordinating events, once planning permission was granted for Mill View School. It made sense to use the same contractor to build the Youth Club as it would be situated next to the new school and could be built directly the school was finished.



Brian Martin plays his shot at bagatelle

The committee needed to raise £2,500 before they could apply for a grant of £10,000 to aid the project so a couple of years serious fund raising took place. Jumble sales, door to door collections and coffee mornings were organised along with anything else that would help them to reach their target.

Once the building was complete, in 1968, the committee was still totally involved in running the club. They manned the canteen on club nights, served refreshments, organised dances. They also helped when the club members invited all the local residents who were aged over 60, for afternoon tea, which became an annual event. Eventually the club became self sufficient and was able to employ an official youth leader.

Upton Playgroup



Joan Quayle, Pam Parkinson, Val Powell, Sally Symes, Joyce Binns and Jimmy Quayle (Father Christmas) 1983

The playgroup was originally set up in the summer of 1968, in the Upton Youth Club building, by Jean Jonas and Margaret Willey. When Jean left she was replaced by Joan Quayle and when Margaret left she was replaced by Sally Symes. From 1974 to 1988 'Aunty Sally' and 'Aunty Joan' ran a very lively playgroup, with the help of 3 staff, Pam Parkinson, Val Powell and Lorraine Hearse, where 25 children arrived at 9.30 each morning and stayed till 12 noon.

The children started from the term they reached the age of three and stayed until they reached school age. During that time they would learn social skills such as playing fairly with other children, the discipline of sitting at a table and doing organised games and of course there was a story to end the morning. They all had the chance to appear in a Summer Concert or the Nativity Play each Christmas, always well supported by Mums and Dads.

The children also took part in the Upton Carnivals, the first one being in 1977 to celebrate the Queen's Silver Jubilee, when the theme of their float was Nursery Rhymes. One subsequent carnival saw them all dressed up as 101 Dalmatians but the weather was so bad that it was decided not to subject the children to the appalling conditions. However they had their own little party at the playschool on another day.

For a while there were weekly visits to Dorin Park nursery, where the children would all play together. It was good for the two groups to meet each other and make new friends and it made Upton playschool children appreciate how the less able-bodied children coped. Each Christmas a visit would be made to Millview School to watch their Nativity Play. This was a very special event and it enabled the children to familiarise themselves with the 'big school'. Occasionally students from the High School would spend a couple of weeks at the playschool, gaining work experience.

The playschool is currently run by Mrs Pat Miller.

Upton Tennis Club

The idea for a tennis club in Upton originated in 1975. David Hart, an Upton resident, saw in a local newspaper that the Parish Council was asking if anyone was interested in starting up a club to make greater use of the public tennis courts at Wealstone Lane. He was interested, being a tennis player himself, and having noticed much to his surprise that the courts were not at all well used. In fact the attendants went off duty and the courts were locked up every Saturday and Sunday evening.

After having an initial meeting with the Council, he sounded out local interest via posters; press etc. then by having a meeting at his home. Around 50 people turned up with another 50 having contacted him to say they, too, were interested.

The first official committee meeting was held on 13th May 1976. Chairman was David Hart and the other members were Frank Mawdsley, Cliff Evans, Alison Finlay, Beryl Diment and John Todd with Tony Bass, himself (at the time) a junior, representing the juniors. At that meeting one topic discussed was membership numbers, the concern being the possibility of there being too many members for the limited playing times they were allowed by the Council. Membership Fees were set at £3 for adults and £1.50 for juniors. Membership was a magnificent 84.

At these early meetings, the Club philosophy evolved. First and foremost the intention was to be a *'Friendly sociable Club, welcoming members of any standard. There were to be no cliques'*. Positive efforts were made to ensure that players mixed, with anyone prepared to play anyone else regardless of standard. Right from the start, juniors were seen as important members of the Club and early on, junior coaching on Saturday mornings was started by John Ashton. Social events throughout the year were to be important.

On a beautiful sunny October 3rd 1976 the first Club Annual Tournament Finals were held with Mrs Sheila Garston, friend and supporter on the Parish Council, presenting trophies - rather small they may have been, but engraved and kept by the winner. Later, an honours board recording the winners' names was installed in the pavilion

In 2001 the club celebrated its 25th birthday. Events included a fun tournament where members played with old wooden rackets they would have been using in the seventies. Also, wearing those tight shorts, which brought tears to the eyes, as well as bringing back happy memories.



1976
Left to right: Ian Williams; Alison Carter; Tony Bass; Dot Whitehead; Andrew Jessop; Nicola Shepherd with Councillor Shiela Garston

Upton Bowling Club

Upton by Chester Bowling Club was founded in April 1976, at the instigation of Leo Jackson and Len Vincent, secretary and chairman of Upton British Legion. Meetings were held (and still are) at the crown green in Wealstone Lane since it, too, opened in 1976. For the first nine years they played friendly matches and club competitions. Proving a popular pastime with local residents, membership soon grew to 60.

In 1985 they decided to spread their wings and joined Chester and District League, where they have enjoyed membership ever since. Most of that time they

have spent in division C but for a few years enjoyed fame in division B. In 1986 the bowling club joined the Chester Veterans League, progressing over the years to generally 3rd or 4th in the League Table.

In December 1986 the club applied to the parish council to use the crown green on Thursday evenings, to help with league fixtures. The council agreed to this, but only if they gave up one of their other evenings - as they already used the green on Sundays, Mondays and Wednesdays. For the benefit of all who used the green, the team helped with the construction of a shelter. It was soon finished and much appreciated.

In 2002 they severed their connection to the Upton Royal British Legion, in the hope of gaining new members, as membership had fallen to just 20.

League games are played on Monday and Thursday evenings while the veterans play on a Tuesday afternoon. Over the winter, just to keep their bowling arms supple, the group play indoor bowls each Wednesday when they travel to Prestatyn for the pleasure.

Angling Club

Upton Angling Club was formed in 1983 after a small group of four friends became disappointed with the steady decline of the local farm ponds which had been fished from their childhood days. The ponds had been neglected and were silted and weeded up, leaving very few spots left to fish. Around 200 years ago every field in England had a pond but changes in farming have seen them decline rapidly. A 1988 survey estimated 182,000 had been lost since the Second World War! These four friends put £20 each into a fund, stated their objective to improve fishing and conservation locally, placed an advert in the Upton Post Office window for members, and the club was born.

It was agreed that they should approach the Zoo, on whose land so many of the ponds lay, with a view to renting the fishing rights on one or more of the pools. The response from the Zoo was very positive and following a meeting with their estates managers, the newly formed club had the choice of any or all of the ponds on their land. To this day the Zoo has never accepted rent from the club, although when funds allow donations are made to the charity. Approaches to Mr Dutton and Mr Ithell whose farmland also held ponds, were likewise well received and in no time the club had control of almost all the ponds in the area around the Zoo. The advantages for the land owners, of the club using the ponds, were seen in the removal of litter; repair of fences and gates; and some degree of control over who used their land. In return for the work the anglers acquired comfortable, secure fishing and protection of the ponds' future.

Work on the ponds started in earnest and by dragging out weed, dredging silt, trimming overgrown trees and building platforms to fish from. News spread fast and the club grew rapidly as like minded local people, who had also seen the decline, joined to help. HQ remained at a founder member's home where the club was run with a full committee and boasted around 500 members! Even with

a membership of that size generating funds, it was impossible to maintain all of the ponds, there were simply too many, so some were left as wild conservation wet areas, where wildlife could thrive. Great Crested Newts, common in yesteryear but endangered now, are living happily just down the road from you.

As the club grew, demand for organising competitions also grew and matches were run on the canal, the River Dee, and some of the ponds. The popularity of the club matches would, at their height, see 80 anglers lining the canal bank on a Sunday morning. The competitions developed talent and attracted other anglers and soon UAC teams were competing in, and winning, local and national competitions. The Club can boast two World Champions amongst its members, with Matthew Dickinson becoming Junior World Champion in 1995 and their most famous member Wendy Locker, Ladies World Champion in 1997.

Community Links

Following a long standing link between the high schools in Upton and Arradon, the parish council in Upton and the commune in Arradon decided to extend the links and in 1992 the Twinning Charter was signed. Following that, 'Upton Community Links' was born, and although it has the full support of the council, it is a financially independent group.

The committee in Upton organised fundraising events, to help support exchange projects and on two occasions have received European Union funding.



Holding the Twinning Charter

Charles Holmes, Upton Royal British Legion; Yves Besnard, French Consul; Monsieur Gall, Mayor of Arradon; Cllr Gerald Grant; Jacque Kercadis, Arradon; Cllr Eric Delaney; Michel Pelissier, Upton High School.

The two twinning committees have worked closely together to organise a rich programme of links, visits and exchanges that have involved a growing number of people from Arradon and Upton. Each year there is a coach visit, to Brittany, by Upton residents and a return visit by people from Arradon. These reciprocal exchange visits have been the highlight of the twinning and have created strong links and great friendships

In May and June 2002 Arradon and Upton celebrated the tenth anniversary of the twinning.

Upton Local History Group

While researching and publishing a book on Upton Park, recently retired Phil Pearn, met several residents who showed an interest in compiling the history of Upton. He called a public meeting in September 2002 to discuss the idea of forming a Group. He had cheekily printed off membership forms which were signed and paid up that night. The Group was soon underway with a membership of approximately 100 and the monthly meetings were typically attended by 50 members.

The first AGM in November 2003 saw the inauguration of their President, Joyce Cook; well known locally, Joyce had taught in Upton for many years. As a commendation to Joyce, and proof of her popularity, many past pupils came along to renew their acquaintance with her and to add their own comments to the evening. Impressively, Joyce could remember something special about each of her ex-pupils and, considering their ages ranged from 30 to 60 that was some feat!

Another highlight for the Group was the Local History Exhibition held in the Village Hall in March 2004. Over 500 visitors attended and were amazed at the amount of material already collected. That volume has increased considerably to far more than this book can contain.



The Exhibition held in March 2004