

UNSTONE GRANGE ORGANIC GARDENS

REPORT TO THE TRUST ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2003

This year will be the first that the gardens will start to yield their full potential thanks to the completion of the **infrastructure** projects. The stupendous lean-to greenhouses, rebuilt by local social enterprise firm *Safe and Sound*, are not only superb growing environments, but also give the Grange and gardens an excellent extra meeting space. The paths have been upgraded with flagstones, providing wet-weather access to all areas of the gardens and enhancing wheelchair access. In addition, we have installed a metal shed for secure storage and the safer Perspex greenhouse to replace the old glass one. All this means that Unstone Grange now has a superb horticultural facility.

And the whole site has now been officially designated as fully **Organic** by the Soil Association's exacting standards, a process which takes three years in the case of the fruit trees in the orchards.

The gardens have continued to stage a series of **public events** which raise the profile of the Grange as well as promoting organic issues to over 1000 visitors. The Open Days in August are now established as an annual event and a tradition for the many helpers who contribute to them. We hope that Apple day in the autumn and the Seed-swap in the spring will also become regular events. The gardens and Grange have also been used as a venue for relevant groups such as THRIVE (horticultural therapy network) and the Community Composting Network.

The Organic Gardening for Health project has now been running for two years and has assisted more than 200 volunteers in finding health and happiness by growing and consuming Organic fruit, vegetables, salads and herbs. Our success was confirmed when our funders, the N.H.S. Opportunities for Volunteering scheme, extended funding to a third year. On her visit to the project and gardens, their representative, Lynn Gillett, was highly complimentary about the service we have delivered to volunteers and placed our performance in the top 5% of the 87 projects in our bidding round.

We are currently collaborating with a national research project run by Loughborough University to try to scientifically evaluate and quantify the mental and physical health benefits available through horticulture. They have now visited several times and conducted extensive transcribed interviews with our volunteers.

We are also in contact with an ever-increasing circle of projects which share our Organic health aims and objectives. Many of these are new initiatives based around Healthy Living Networks and Centres. Unstone is uniquely placed to be an example of good practice and a source of support and information for these projects.

Thanks and congratulations are due to everyone who has put their energy and commitment into the gardens over the years. I hope we all derive much satisfaction and pride from this achievement.