

MEETING OF THE GARDENS COMMITTEE

Minutes

on Monday, 23rd November 2020 via Zoom call

Present: Prof Howard Griffiths (Chair); Mr Steve Elstub (Head Gardener); Ms Kate Hargreaves (Deputy Head Gardener); Mr Donald Hearn; Dr Hubertus Jahn; Prof Anna Philpott; Miss Emma Easterbrook; Prof Alison Sinclair; Ms Deborah Hoy; Dr Ole Nielsen (CRA); Navin Ramikrishna.

1. **Apologies:** Dr Marcos Corchado (CRA); Prof Heine; Mr Oscar Simms (UCS); Mr David Ewing (MCR); Dr Edwards; Dr Lawson.

2. **Declarations of Interest: None**

3. **Minutes of March 2020: Approved**

4. **Matters Arising from the Minutes of the last meeting: None**

5. Report from the Gardens

(i) Update of works;

- St. Regis: Handover from contractor due end of December/beginning January. KH and JM from Gardens had an onsite meeting with Steve Revell from Cocksedge re de-compaction of site and the specifications of subsoil and topsoil depth and quality. The landscape contractor appointed by Cocksedge to do planting etc is Land Structure and KH & JM are to have a site visit with said contractor on 7th December. It is noted that the gardens dept. need to maintain close contact with the landscape firm whilst contract is carried out.
- The re-turfing in Old Court and Front Court went well and received a positive response. The usual mowing schedule and maintenance has resumed.
- Gazebos: two 6m x 6m gazebos are on Memorial front lawns with one 5m x 5m on the large oval at the Colony. These are primarily for supervisions and appropriate college clubs (e.g Chess Club) during the coronavirus pandemic. They are moved as needed, by the Gardens and Buildings staff, to minimize areas of wear and allow lawn maintenance. It is as yet unknown how long they will be needed and what will be the intended use after the pandemic.
- There were issues with the large crane that was needed to do the temporary bridge lift over the Cam. The ground wasn't stable enough to take the weight and some ground subsidence occurred on the lift attempt. Consequently further encroachment into the Mixed border occurred (which was shown on original plans), and scrape back in the root protection area (RPA) of the *Taxodium distichum* (Swamp Cypress). The consultant Arboriculturist was satisfied that appropriate protection measures were taken by Barnes Contractor.
- Due to the current situation we find ourselves in and the increased use of outside areas, the dept. has been trying to maintain interest in the gardens and borders for as long as possible. As the temperature is gradually dropping and the die-back is starting to show in areas, the usual winter cut back and border work will commence.
- The annual top up of bulbs for the Avenue, Mem Trees and other areas of interest for the springtime display was its usual success – looking forward to the beautiful display in Spring!
- Colony allotment area: this is still proving to be an area of interest for the students in residence and they are keen to have some input. One of the Gardens staff also feels passionately about this and has taken on the design and costing as a project to be presented to involved parties; further

discussion about budget and/or fundraising needs to be had. It was suggested that the MCR also get involved as they can help maintain it through the summer, with the possible addition of some Fellows. **Action:** Navin to get the MCR rep David Ewing to contact KH about this.

- As a side point it was questioned if there could be an area in St. Regis for a herb garden. D. Hoy and SE confirmed there are herbs in the existing planting plan and once the landscaping has been completed it will be looked into to see if a raised herb planter can be situated in the garden of 102 Chesterton rd.
- Wisterias in Master's Garden: The committee were informed of the recent errors concerning two of the Wisterias in the Master's Garden. The first being a complete removal of the middle (of three) Wisteria. It was agreed that this had always been on the contractors plan to be removed as it is sited where the two new windows are going. It was acknowledged the oversight was on the landscape designers' plan which led to the belief it was not to be removed. The second error is the sawing off at chest height, all major stems and trunk, of the Wisteria on the railings by the river. KH repeatedly had onsite meetings with Barnes managers and supervisors to explain and direct them where they should cut. It was agreed by the committee that the Gardens staff will need repeated access to the remaining Wisterias to manage and, if necessary, prune the large volume of annual growth that is expected to come from such severe pruning. D. Hoy confirmed there will be a new "man-safe" system installed to aide pruning of the wall climbers in the future and it was noted that all other climbers were planned to be removed and replaced. **Action:** KH & D. Hoy to meet with Barnes to discuss maintenance schedule for remaining Wisterias.
- There was further discussion as to the privacy for the new Master from the café windows looking into the garden, and whether the planting planned was appropriate. The working group for Old Court refurbishment have stated that issues can be changed retrospectively and they are waiting for the new Master to comment. Cloud pruned shrubs were suggested as a way to bring privacy. There is still concern over the linear design and reinstatement of the garden and it was questioned if it was too late for the Gardens Comm. to have an input on this.
- The Gardens Dept. have appointed a new apprentice who is due to start on 30th November under the new intercollegiate scheme administered by Keits Training Services. The Gardens Dept. and the Comm. thanked Donald Hearn for his hard work behind the scenes in being a driving force bringing the scheme to fruition.
- The margins of the Memorial Court front lawn has been turned into a wildflower area with the soil scrape back from the wild area in the fellows garden. KH informed the comm. that they have topped up the primulas, bulbs and wildflowers and we await to see the result next year. The orchids that were removed from the Fellows Wild Meadow area are still to be "plugged" back into the new area.
- The comm. was informed of the felling of three trees in the garden of 67 Chesterton Rd is due to take place wk com 14/12/20.
- The comm Chair HG noted that the *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* (Wingnut) near mem drive central gate, and the *Fagus sylvatica purpurea* (Copper Beech) in the Masters garden, should be due a Picus test next year to check on general health in the trunk core of both trees.

6. Any Other Business

(i) Steve Elstub's retirement: The Chair HG thanked Steve for his support and guidance over the years and reflected upon their time at the college together. The rest of the comm. joined in to wish Steve a very happy and well deserved retirement.

(ii) Thanks were given to KH and Rut G. for their continued work through the spring/summer lockdown in the college and the results they managed to achieve being a team of only two.

(iii) The comm. also recognises and thanks the Garden staff for the continued hard work to recover the areas after COVID and during the building works.

(iv) The comm. was informed of the uses from the various trees that have been felled and their wood. HG plans to turn some of the Box wood and has given some to Antonia Weberling to make

commemorative etchings of the college gardens. EE stated the Cherry tree wood was still with Rowan as the Development Office had rejected the initial designs.

7. Date of Next Meeting

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8. Addendum

Since the meeting Kate Hargreaves has been promoted to Head Gardener, John Mears has been promoted to Deputy Head Gardener and Rut Gallmeier has left the Gardens Department.

Distribution: Prof Howard Griffiths (Chair); Ms Kate Hargreaves (Head Gardener); Mr John Mears (Deputy Head Gardener); Mr Donald Hearn; Dr Hubertus Jahn; Prof Anna Philpott; Dr Paul Edwards; Dr Rebecca Lawson; Miss Emma Easterbrook; Prof Alison Sinclair; Ms Deborah Hoy; Dr Ole Nielsen (CRA); Mr. Navin Ramikrishna; Prof Volker Heine; Mr Oscar Simms (UCS); Mr David Ewing (MCR);