

MEETING OF THE GARDENS COMMITTEE

Minutes

on Wednesday, 23rd June 2021 via Zoom call

Present: Prof Howard Griffiths (Chair); Ms Kate Hargreaves (Head Gardener); Mr John Mears (Deputy Head Gardener); Miss Emma Easterbrook; Prof Alison Sinclair; Dr Rebecca Lawson; Prof Anna Philpott; Ms Deborah Hoy; Mr Graham Ross; Dr Ole Nielsen (CRA); Ashley Dubois (UCS); Mr David Ewing (MCR).

1. Apologies: Mr Donald Hearn; Dr Hubertus Jahn; Dr Paul Edwards & Prof David Rowitch.
The meeting opened with introductions, and a welcome to new members.

2. Declarations of Interest: None

3. Minutes of March 2021: Approved.

4. Matters Arising from previous meeting:

- Further discussion on the Colony allotment – would there be an opportunity for student feedback on the designs? **Action:** The UCS & MCR reps to reanimate the Clare Growers Association and encourage a member to sit on the committee. A site visit with the CGA rep and Gardens management to be scheduled.
- It is noted that the Head Gardener met with Annie Muston (Assistant to the Senior Tutor) who is tasked with collating information from all departments regarding their requirements for departmental pages on the main College website which is due to be updated. The Head Gardener will report to the Committee once the information has been received about the updated pages.

5. Report from Head Gardener:

- The Gardens Department employed two new members since the last meeting, Alyson Tapp & Jo Richards. Both new starters are settling in well and the team is working very well now it is back up to full strength.
- The Picus test on the Wingnut tree, Mem central drive, was completed on 10.6.21. Awaiting full written report, which will be shared with the committee upon receipt. It is expected that there will be recommendation for remedial pruning to occur on the branch affected by fungal decay to minimise risk to College users and the public alike; also the possibility of a general crown reduction.
- Senior Maintenance staff and Gardens management are liaising to cost and implement the compost heap improvements. It is proving difficult to get the relevant costs within the tight timeframe of this year's financial end. Gardens and Maintenance will continue to move this forward as best they can, however it is not likely for work to start until autumn as Maintenance have a full summer schedule of works.
- It was suggested by the Head Gardener to turn the small, grassed area around the Fallen Warrior sculpture in Memorial court into a patch of meadow similar to that of Memorial front lawn. The members of the committee agreed it would improve the area as the grass there is of poor quality.
- The lavenders in Front Court have had their timely replacement and the new plants, albeit small, have settled in well and are expected to fill out nicely. They are already lifting the view of the front of the College with their flower display.

- The planting in Old Court has also undergone its rejuvenation. For Old Court Phase 1A, all plants bar the Bay columns were removed as the entire North Range was to be covered by scaffolding for an extended time. The planting areas in between the Bays have now been filled with Rosemary and Lavender as before, with the addition of other hardy herbs that the kitchens will be able to harvest on a regular basis once they have established. The Bay columns themselves are not in a healthy state from being covered by the scaffolding for such a long time. The Gardens Department have pruned out the dead and are implementing a rejuvenating regime to get them strong and thick with foliage again. There is the option of planting saplings of another similar specimen (*Phillyrea latifolia*, very like Bay https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phillyrea_latifolia) to grow up through the Bays, which could eventually take over should the entire original Bays need to be removed.
- Garden maintenance that creates machine noise, especially mowing, has proven to be very difficult this term due to the extended quiet time and exam timetable. In an effort to lessen the impact of this time in the future, and ensure grounds maintenance can continue on schedule, Garden Management have been to electric mower demonstrations and believe this is an excellent solution to the problem. The department will look to procurement of such machinery moving forward.
- The maintenance of newly developed St Regis has also proved an issue with noise due to examinations being online and therefore students sitting them in their rooms. The landscaping firm are under contract for a year to maintain the grass and plants on site. It has been difficult to coordinate times in which they can work and the quiet needed for exams. A regular schedule has now been agreed between the College and contractor for grass maintenance. The contractors are also under obligation to replace any plants that die within the 12 month maintenance contract. The Gardens team also have been onsite to aid grass maintenance and check overall health of the new plants. It is generally good with a few dead trees and shrubs that will need to be replaced within the maintenance contract. It is also noted that the Gardens team will need to create a compost area for green waste and make practical adjustments to aid maintenance.
- Colony, Castle House tree felling and replanting – Three Silver Birch trees, whose roots have dislodged many block pavements causing health and safety issues, are due to be felled mid July and the paving to be relayed at the end of August running into the first week of September. They will be replaced with three *Cornus controversa* “the Wedding Cake Tree”.

6. Update on major infrastructure projects:

- Deborah Hoy confirmed the Hamilton Road site at St Regis is under a one year maintenance contract and any dead shrubs will be replaced by the contractor.
- Due to value engineering on the Old Court project, the contractors are about to submit costings for replacement edging around the four lawns in Old Court, and further consultation will take place with the Gardens’ Committee regarding the most appropriate material .
- Under the planning permission of the Old Court refurbishment, the Masters Garden reinstatement has to be replaced “like-for-like”. However, if the committee wishes to change the rectangle lawn shape, and central linear path with in it, back to an oval lawn as shown in original drawings of the College, funding for changes must be looked at next academic year. The main project is running 12-14 weeks behind schedule, giving the new completion date of December 2022, therefore the Masters Garden reinstatement will commence in March 2023. As a side note, the Wisterias in the Masters Garden are still alive despite the best efforts from the builders. It is quite likely they will die when digging through the root zone commences to install the riverside terrace.

7. Request from 2022 Committee to consider hosting sculpture by Laura Ford “the Espaliered Woman (2007)”:

- Dr William Foster proposes a two-year loan from Roche Court of the sculpture “Espaliered Woman”, to mark the 50th anniversary of female students being admitted to the College in 1972.
- Some committee members liked it, along with the new Master, albeit a slightly controversial piece.
- The UCS & MCR reps received mixed feedback:
 - It is a confronting piece yet the value of the piece being by a woman is recognised.
 - Has consideration been given about the possible message of advocating violence against women?
 - Students want to do more justice to the occasion rather than just taking it because there is nothing else available.
 - The complexity of art and gender requires a trained speaker to formulate the plaque wording.
 - The wording needs to represent the changes for women in the College over the past 50 years. The plaque must contextualise it properly.
- Other committee members discussed whether the appearance of an espaliered tree could have connotations for constraining, or possibly violence, against women.
- Is it worthy to mark the occasion? Is there something more artistically appropriate we can display for two years?
- Where would it be located:
 - Framed by vegetation?
 - A future location that can be viewed from the river? (There has been past concerns about security and vandalism from river users)
 - Could it stand where Confucius is and he is moved to Learner Court?

The committee concluded to be supportive of the proposal but do have reservations about this piece, which would be relayed to Dr Foster.

8. Any other business: None.

9. Date of next meeting: TBA

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