



BERKSHIRE GARDENS TRUST

Chair's Informal Update April to September 2023

I would like to bring you up to date with what has been going on this year, from April to September 2023. Many of you have joined us at our visits and I do hope that many more of you will join us for the AGM and Autumn panel discussion and forthcoming events.

Governance: As you know Hugh Simon has kindly taken over the Secretarial role from Fiona Hope. We have therefore also changed our registered address to Chilton Lodge, Speen Lane, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 1RN and notified the various bodies including Companies House and the Charity Commission.

Events: A key part of our activities is the programme of events. This year, as a 'thank you' to our speakers and garden owners, we have again invited them as special guests to our AGM and lecture. Hopefully you will be able to meet some of them. Thank you also for the kind messages from attendees saying how much you have enjoyed the visits.

The five wonderful places we have visited this year:

Kelmscott Manor in April



Savill Garden in May



Lower Bowden Manor in May



Old Camps in July



Englefield House in September



Winter Zoom lecture Programme: We will be restarting the Zoom lectures this November when Elena Saggiaro, a Research Fellow at the Walker Institute, University of Reading, will give a talk on the University's research into how climate change is likely to affect the management of our historic parks and gardens. We will be continuing these lectures over the winter until March with a talk in January by Anna Haworth, scholar, historian and a senior ceramics specialist with extensive experience as a lecturer in art history and as a guide for museum tours. In February we welcome Dr Anne Benson, FSA FRHistS, lecturer, author and award-winning researcher specialising in the history of gardens and architecture during the Tudor and Stuart periods in the United Kingdom. Keep an eye on our emails to you and the website for further information.

Membership: The membership has dropped slightly to 95 this year.

Through Alison, Sian and Deborah's efforts we continue our close liaison with the Friends of Savill Garden and with Caversham Court, through Member Vicki Abel.

Communication: We are pleased that hits onto the website have risen considerably. We have continued to update the website with new posts and updated information. Deborah James expanded our social media platforms which has helped to increase the 'footfall' on the website.

Our **research work** has also slowly expanded with new reports on Kidwells, Maidenhead from Hugh Simon; and from me on the work of the Victorian garden designer, Robert Marnock, in Berkshire. These can be read on our website. Michelle Leek will shortly be reporting on Lower Bowden Manor. Janet Fuller's report on Gertrude Jekyll's involvement with Wargrave Manor, Wargrave can also be found on the website.

Planning matters have been slightly quieter in the last six months with eleven new applications but we have received four new ones in the last week. There are now five or so ongoing proposed developments at **Park Place, Remenham**. In September I submitted a Statement of Evidence to the Planning Inspectorate for an appeal where we objected to a garden extension and buildings in support of Wokingham Council's enforcement notice. I have visited nearly all of the land ownerships now at Park Place and we are working closely with the various owners' agents and Historic England.



For example, approval was granted in September for a new mansion, gatehouse and staff quarters at the Strowdes Estate west of Upper Culham Lane.

Most contentious in the east of our county is the proposed expansion of the hotel at the Grade II listed Ditton Manor, within the Grade II Registered Park and Garden at the Ditton Park. We strongly objected to the proposals and asked for the submission of more information on the impact on the historic assets.



Caversham Park, Reading: The Grade II Registered Park and Garden has come back again with some revised plans for retirement homes and houses to the west and east of the Grade II listed house. The new plans are below. Historic England have been consulted as well as ourselves.



We have also been commenting on development at **Silwood Park**. Helen Parvin met with the developer Beechwood who have listened and acted on all her concerns including the view across parked vehicles to remnants of Repton landscape and retention of Gardeners' Cottage.

We are in the process of at last launching our new Newsletter. We have engaged Olivia Cal, a professional copyright and content writer, to assist us in putting together an engaging and attractive revised newsletter with a variety of articles from our President, Christina Hill Williams, the trustees, and the members. Sian Thomas has kindly agreed to collect articles and liaise with Olivia. If you would like to contribute please contact Sian via berksgtmembership@gmail.com.

Thank you to all our members for your loyal support. Do continue to spread the word on how important the health and quality of our historic parks and gardens are to us all.

Bettina Kirkham

Chair of the Berkshire Gardens Trust