



THE BERKELEY BUTTRESS

AUTUMN 2025

FRIENDS OF BERKELEY CASTLE NEWSLETTER

Your Chairwoman Writes

Let me begin by thanking David, our retired Chairman, for his hard work. Thank you also to the committee, who are always supportive, and you, the 'membership', for always being here whatever the event, all because we are working for the best interests of Berkeley Castle.

When you take the guided tour of Berkeley Castle there is only one bedroom to view and it's found in the Keep, Drake's Room. In Drake's Room hang three important paintings and opposite them is the Tester Bed. The Friends' Committee have arranged for new bed cover and valances, plus curtains for the window, in a material which complements the room, to be made by a local business that works from a converted barn in the old Estate Yard. This project has excited us



Our President, Charles Berkeley, making a presentation to Diana Merrett on her retirement as Deputy Chairman.

(Unless otherwise stated, all photos in this issue were taken by Valerie Moores.)

since the moment it was suggested; it was completed during August and will be available for you to view at our September event.

With three events to take place during the latter part of the year, we will have ample time to catch up with each other and listen to your ideas. One suggestion has been that we might hold events during the day when the year has moved on, making travel easier. The Committee would be pleased to hear your views on the subject.

December 18th in the Great Hall will see our Christmas Drinks Party. Our event at Christmas has become one of our popular events, a couple of hours chatting and catching up with friends. What better way could there be of unwinding and rolling into that wonderful time of celebration?

Eleanor Garratt-Taylor



The Berkeley Banner, after restoration by Alison Lister (see page 3) hanging from the roof of the Great Hall.

Tapestry Conservation, a talk by Alison Lister

Report by Althea Hamlyn

Alison is the Director/Principal Conservator of Textile Conservation Ltd. In her illustrated talk after the A.G.M., she said that she became interested in what textile conservation is and why and how it is done, recognising the importance of textiles as historical 'documents'. She trained at Hampton Court Palace in the 1980s, then moved to a bespoke building in the Winchester School of Art: suitable premises need to be of a good area and height, have flexibility of usage and easy access. Closure came in 2009, when the University needed departments to be self-financing. Alison and her business partner then set up their Textile Conservation Service in Bristol and Alison became the sole director when the partner sadly died.

She serves a huge diversity of clients - private homes, churches, museums, military; and of items - curtains, carpets, upholstery, even a Teddy Bear - in a wide variety of textiles. Her largest commission was cleaning the Graham Sutherland tapestry in Coventry Cathedral. The dirt which had built up over the years took eight weeks of cleaning from front and back, on an assembly of scaffolding.

Conservation starts with assessment and recording of the current state, then proposals of what can be done to reduce problems. For example, there must be a balance between having



Alison Lister with Charles Berkeley, in front of the FoBC pop-up banner describing the restoration project.

enough light to see an item without the light causing damage. Velvet becomes worn through use. Insects causing damage can be undetected for a long time. Soot and dust can become embedded.

Intervention and treatment can take several stages: cleaning with light vacuum; washing with special detergent (having tested for dye fastness and possible shrinkage); stabilisation by attaching a new fabric backing with delicate stitching; lining and mounting in preparation for display. The intention is to restore as necessary and conserve what remains now. Work is often done on site and in public.

Alison said she was very grateful to be given the task with the Berkeley Banner just before Covid lockdown, since it meant the workshop could remain productive, offering training and experience to staff at a difficult time. The banner was taken to the workshop, where it was found to be strong enough to cope with gentle washing. After being dried flat, it was sandwiched between two fine layers of net, being stitched together along original seams, and the ragged outer edges were bound. Back at the Castle, the banner was attached to a batten and hoisted up in the Great Hall where it can now be seen.

In answers to questions, Alison said that she used synthetic dyes when necessary. She explained briefly the technique of weaving: vertical warp threads (often silk) are assembled on the weaving frame and the 'picture' built up with weft (usually wool) woven at right angles. Originally it was men who did the weaving; women finished off the edges of a tapestry.



The Berkeley Banner in its original state, with moth holes and missing sections.

(Photo © Alison Lister.)



Above: The Berkeley Banner being washed under controlled conditions.

Below: Fine netting being attached to the Berkeley Banner to help preserve the original fabric.

(Both photos © Alison Lister.)



Visit to Hardwicke Court

Report by Eleanor Garratt-Taylor and Althea Hamlyn

Turn left off the A38 opposite the bus stop, over the cattle grid and gosh, another world, rolling parkland with mature trees, all the lower branches levelled by browsing cattle and, sure enough, a bit further on a herd of Gloucester cows, around the corner and there we were, Hardwicke Court, hidden from the world.

After a rather damp June morning, 36 Friends and Guests assembled in the courtyard of Hardwicke Court in the afternoon just as the rain, happily, ceased. As we were a larger party than was usually entertained, we divided into two groups, one group immediately touring the garden before going indoors for tea and cake. The other group went straight into the house, where Jude Lloyd-Baker, a member of the fifth generation of the family, led the way.

We learned that the house was built in 1816 after the old one was pulled down (it was full of dry and wet rot) by Thomas Lloyd-Baker, Robert Smirke being commissioned as architect. Thomas Smirke was the architect responsible for The British Museum and for the Shire Hall in Gloucester. Thomas's bust, and that of his son George, formed two items in the entrance hall, together with various family portraits. The hall led onto the stairwell hung with other portraits, including that of Mary Sharp, first wife of George Lloyd-Baker, whose father was a surgeon to King George III.



The Drawing Room contained an enchanting portrait of the two Sharp sisters, one of whom was mentioned in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*; they must have known one another. A Gainsborough hung on the wall opposite an immense mirror over the fireplace, either side of which stood two superb marquetry cabinets. The room was a treasure trove of interesting items of furniture and art.

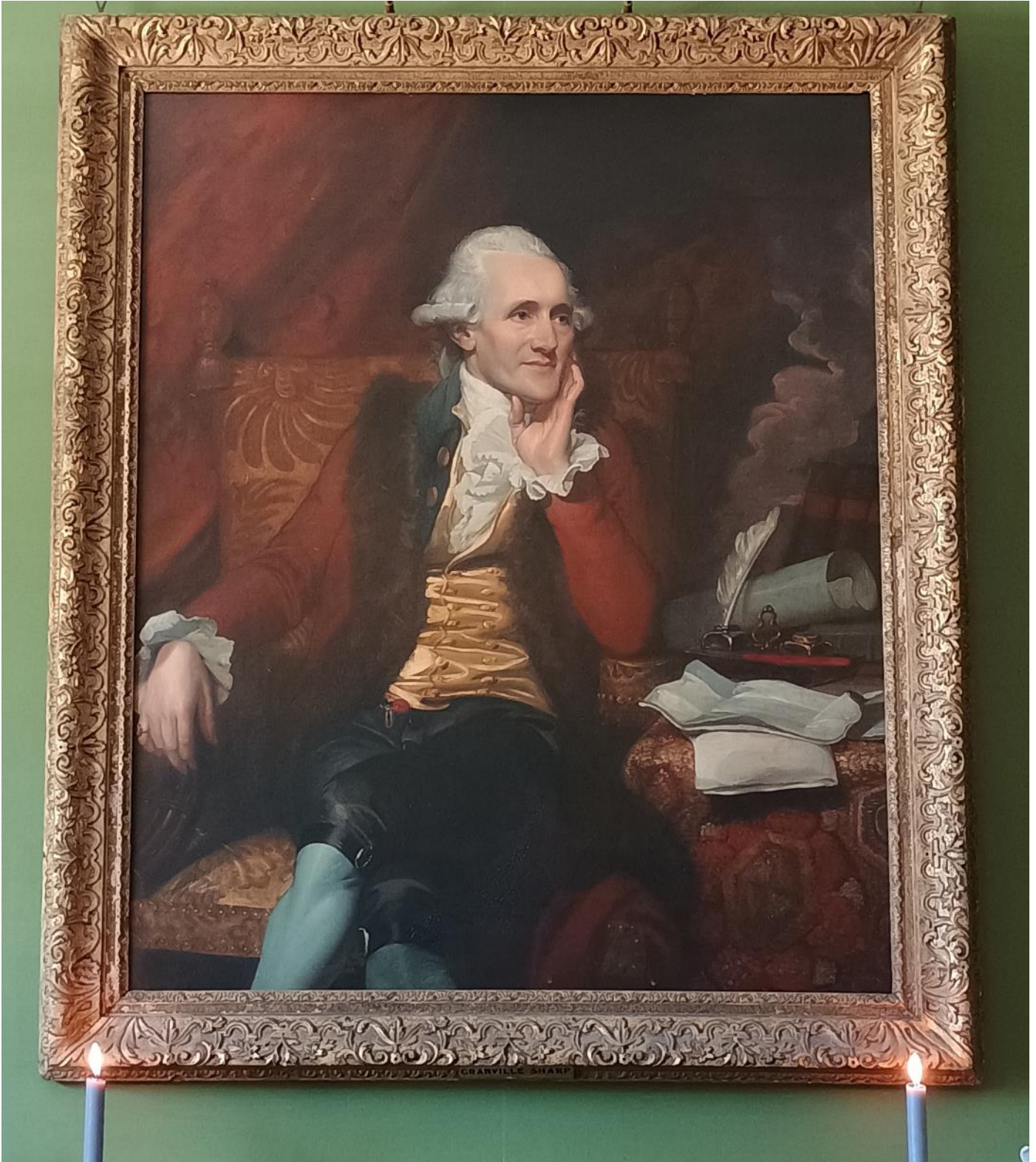
The Library had a whole long and high wall accommodating many books and original manuscripts, some of them going back to the early days of printing. The books were mainly clerical - little fiction! Normally the curtains are kept closed to protect the valuable books from damage by light. There is an ongoing programme of restoration. One highlight was a volume of natural history illustrated by Edward Lear. There was a portrait of a kindly-looking (although he was cradling a shotgun!) Thomas Lloyd-Baker and one of his father-in-law, Granville Sharp. In 1787, Sharp was a leading voice in the group which persuaded William Wilberforce to campaign for the abolition of slavery.

Jude Lloyd-Baker: our hostess at Hardwicke Court.

In the Dining Room, we were shown various family artefacts: a fragment of the Black Prince's shirt dating from 1357; a small piece of the cover of a Missal (prayer book) belonging to Mary, Queen of Scots; lace from Queen Victoria's coronation gown; a large green velvet 'purse' given to Bishop William Lloyd-Baker by Queen Anne when he was Lord High Almoner. Bishop William gave the sermon at the coronation of Queen Anne. The Lloyd-Baker family moved in royal circles.

Then it was time for tea and cake and a chance to wander in the now-drying gardens, a lovely space with trees to climb and games to play. Hardwicke Court is very much a family home.

It was a most enjoyable and instructive visit, on what became a sunny summer afternoon.



A portrait, by Thomas Gainsborough, of Granville Sharpe, a slavery abolitionist.



Some of the Friends of Berkeley Castle enjoying afternoon tea at Hardwicke Court.

The 2025 Friends' Summer Party

A wonderful sunny evening at Berkeley Castle. Summer dresses, linen jackets, Pimm's and canapés - what could be better? Swallows dipped over the lower lawn, bumble bees worried around flowers, just a delight.

Our annual Summer Party had a particularly relaxed feel. We all knew each other or got to know each other and enjoyed the company, cares and woes forgotten. How lucky we are to be able to share the haven that is Berkeley Castle.



The Friends' Summer Party in the Outer Bailey.

Can You Help?

One of the administrative volunteers, who deal with membership enquiries, issue tickets and process our payments for membership and events, is leaving Gloucestershire.

Are you able to join Committee member, Helen, and help to deal with FoBC enquiries?

For most of the year it is routine membership and event applications. There is a busy burst of activity once a year, in February/March, when memberships are renewed.

Please contact FoBC (see back page for address) if you might be able to help.

AUTUMN 2025 EVENTS

***An Events Order Form is included with this edition of
The Berkeley Buttre.***

Thursday 18th September: Treasure Hunt & Tea Party.

The deadline has already passed for this event. Berkeley W.I. have been given final numbers for catering purposes and no more ticket applications can be accepted.

Thursday 13th November: Talk by Professor Stuart Prior, The Anarchy: 1135 - 1153 and the Berkeley Connection.

12th Century Anarchy and Berkeley Castle. Stephen and Matilda, grandchildren of William the Conqueror, are pitted against one another, arguing about who should be Monarch and ascend to the throne. Matilda, daughter of Henry I, has a legitimate claim, because her father made his nobles swear loyalty to her before his death. However, Stephen quickly usurped the throne. While Matilda was in France, Stephen was crowned King of England on December 22, 1135, which caused 19 years of strife to break out, in a period known popularly as the Anarchy.

In time, Matilda and her army gained control of the south west of the country, further supported by David I, King of Scots (her uncle), and Robert of Gloucester, an illegitimate son of Henry I, from his castle in Bristol. Stephen largely controlled the south east from his base in London.

The talk will examine Berkeley Castle's part during and after the Anarchy. Eventually, Matilda's son, who became Henry II, joined the war but he has no funds, so Robert Fitzharding, a wealthy Bristol merchant, sponsored Henry, and, in return, Henry gives Berkeley Castle to Fitzharding, leading to the castle being built in stone.

7pm in the Great Hall, Berkeley Castle.

Tickets: £10 (£15 for non-members). Cash Bar and light refreshments.

Thursday 18th December: pre-Christmas Drinks Party.

A social evening around the Castle's traditional Christmas Tree.

This will be one of the Friends' popular pre-Christmas parties, with mulled wine and mince pies in the Great Hall, with the Castle's decorated Christmas Tree in the window and the fire lit in the hearth to give a welcome winter glow to our final event of the year.

6pm - 8pm in the Great Hall, Berkeley Castle.

Tickets: £10 (£15 for non-members).

Ticket Order deadline, Wednesday, 10th December.



The hitherto private chapel, dedicated to St John, in the Castle Keep, is open to visitors during September. You can also visit the cell where, according to tradition, King Edward I was murdered on 21st September 1327.

(Photo: David Bowd-Exworth.)

The Face of Monarchy

A Royal portrait measuring approximately 37cm by 27cm and painted on a wooden panel, hangs on the wall of the King's Gallery. It faces the room in which Edward II of England is said to have been held prisoner. It is a portrait not of an English king but of a French one, Charles V, King of France 1364-80.

Of the portrait, nothing is recorded at Berkeley about its origin or how it came to be there. By coincidence, a contemporary of Charles V, the then Lord of Berkeley, Maurice de Berkeley, was one of the very few English knights to be taken prisoner by the French at Poitiers. It is too fanciful to imagine that Maurice acquired a portrait of Charles whilst in France and later took it back to England. There is, however an important clue. As Richter Sherman and other scholars have remarked, it has long been known that a fourteenth century panel portrait of Charles V once existed. Even more intriguing is the fact that this portrait was one of four on hinged panels, now lost, which also comprised portraits of three other monarchs. A four-fold set of portraits painted by any fourteenth century artist would have been of the greatest importance. Nothing is known about the quadriptych after 1416.



What is the explanation of the portrait of Charles V at Berkeley? Although it is almost certainly not a fourteenth century original, it could have been produced in the fifteenth century or in the sixteenth (as suggested in a Sotheby's report). There is an outside possibility that it was derived at one or more remove from the earlier panel portrait, but the most likely answer is that it was part of an attempt made long after the event to realise an individual portrait of long dead kings. Such posthumous portraits are common.

Extract from Ireland, England and the Continent in the Middle Ages and Beyond
Edited by HB Clarke and JRS Phillips

Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1723 – 1792

Sir Joshua Reynolds was a leading portraitist of the C18, well-known and respected in his lifetime. He principally painted portraits of members of society. He was the founder and the first president of the Royal Academy of Art. He was knighted by George III in 1769.

He was taken by Commodore Keppel to the Mediterranean, where he spent three years studying in Italy.

Reynolds is famous for experimenting with materials and experimental with the colours he mixed, using all sorts of materials with his paint to change the pigment, that over time it has compromised his work.

He painted Elizabeth Drax the wife of the 4th Earl of Berkeley and her portrait hangs at the top of the Grand Staircase. Evidence of his experimentation can be seen in this portrait, instead of the pale rose coloured complexion usually given to high society ladies she now looks pale green. It is none the less a sympathetic portrait of a Berkeley Lady.



Elizabeth Drax, Countess of Berkeley, by Sir Joshua Reynolds.



The refurbished bed in Drake's Bedroom.

The Friends have paid for the bed to be re-dressed, with new valances and counterpane and matching window curtains. A report will appear in the Spring 2026 edition.

(Photo: David Bowd-Exworth.)

September Special

The private family chapel of St John, in the Castle Keep, together with 'Edward's Cell', will be open to the public for the first time. Your Friends' membership card will allow you to see these two remarkable mediaeval rooms at close hand.

The Castle is open from 11am, from Sunday to Wednesday, and last admission is at 4pm.

Friends of Berkeley Castle

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(please do not contact the Berkeley Estate Office staff)

Website: www.berkeley-castle.com/friends-of-berkeley-castle

Facebook group: www.facebook.com/groups/2273280299552857/

Current FoBC Officers

Chairwoman: Eleanor Garratt-Taylor Deputy: Althea Hamlyn

Treasurer: Mary Frost Secretary: Jane Handoll