



**FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER**

NEWSLETTER

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Tiles! Glorious Tiles! (and the Mercers' Company!)

The Daughters of the Cross have most generously given us twenty-four blue and white tiles, decorated with flower vases. These were discovered, in what was possibly the dairy of Carshalton House, when builders were constructing the Mc Auley Computer Suite in St. Philomena's School. We are extremely fortunate to have them as they might have been lost from the Estate for ever.

The designs on these tiles perfectly complement our Bath Room tiles. The ornate flower vases, of which there are six different types, are extremely decorative and rich in the variety of flowers, butterflies, dragonflies and insects depicted. There is some question about their date but they are either eighteenth or nineteenth century.

We shall display the tiles in the Water Tower, restored where necessary, and mounted as two panels by the Jackfield Conservation Studio. You may remember what a wonderful job Lesley Durbin and her assistant made of restoring several broken and damaged bathroom tiles.

The Mercers' Company have been extremely generous in granting us an award of £1130 towards the cost of these two panels, and plaques to give information about their provenance and sponsors. The overall cost will be approximately £1500 and we have been very fortunate in getting this wonderful sum towards the project. If you feel that you can donate some money, it does not matter how modest the sum because collectively we can reach our target, so it will be very much appreciated. There is a separate slip enclosed with this mailing which can be returned to Julia.

Jean Knight

The Annual General Meeting, 20 June 2009

The Meeting was well attended: an encouraging group of over twenty members gathered, not only for the formalities, but also for a generous strawberry-and-scone tea, followed by a talk by Andrew Skelton - about which your will hear more below via John Freeman and Andrew himself.

Jean Knight gave a comprehensive update on matters including Sister Mary Damian's situation and the possible funding of repairs to the Folly Bridge.

Liz Thornton said our funds seemed healthy despite several large bills for refurbishing the floors in the Tower, and for work done to the stairs and the urn in the Orangery. Income from our fundraising events and lettings was down slightly, but we appear to have around 60 regular members.

Tony Alien gave a full report on all his hard work in the gardens - not only the general upkeep and mowing, but the newly planted pots at the entrance (the gift of Shirley Hulme, the Head of St. Mary's Junior School). The Hermitage is also a challenge and more volunteers on gardening days would be welcome.

John Freeman gave details of the changes and improvements which Paul Freeman is planning, or has already undertaken, for our Website. It appears to be a well-used facility and is making the Water Tower more widely known. Paul was thanked by Jean for all his efforts.

The Committee remains as before except for Ian Ruse, who felt he should resign for health reasons. He was thanked for all his work over past years.

Details of new Water Tower publications - eight postcards and two leaflets, on the Garden and the Stations of the Cross, were announced.

Next year's AGM will be held on Saturday 19 June 2010, at 2 pm. Here's hoping it will bring even more supporters to the Water Tower.

Simone Guyonvarch

A Day Out with Sir John Fellowes

The talk by Andrew Skelton after the Friends' Annual General Meeting opened a new chapter on the history of the Carshalton House Estate, the Water Tower and the life and times of Sir John Fellowes, who was responsible for the building of the Water Tower.

A considerable amount of new information has come to light at the Norfolk records office and Andrew could not believe his eyes when he began to sort through some old documents. The documents formed part of the Fellowes of Shotesham papers, coming from a later generation of the Fellowes family - in fact from the youngest son of Sir John Fellowes' elder brother William. Sir John and his younger brother Edward, both owners of Carshalton House, had no offspring of their own.

Andrew gave an overview of Sir John's later life including his downfall from power due to the failure of the South Sea company and the resulting financial losses incurred. It is documents and inventories made for the estate sale which reveal the key information. Andrew was able to present pictures to us of the relevant documents as originally written, with the key entries clearly visible. Andrew then spoke in detail about Sir John Fellowes' "days out" to the great gardens of Sir Richard Child at Wanstead, then in Essex, and how these visits may have influenced certain aspects of the Water Tower's design. We thank Andrew for his fascinating talk and for his initial article on the subject below.

John Freeman

"Two-Baths Fellowes"; The Fellowes Papers in the Norfolk Record Office

As John Freeman has explained, the Fellowes of Shotesham papers, preserved in the Norfolk County Archives in Norwich, have provided much new general information about the Carshalton House estate. Of course, one always hopes to find something really important and, with respect to the Water Tower, I was not to be disappointed. As you may know, the oft-quoted (or misquoted) line from the published Particular and Inventory of 1720 states that, "In the greenhouse and bagnio, in the bottom of the garden, there is neither greens nor furniture of any kind". This is exactly the same as in the manuscript version submitted to the House of Lords' committee, and preserved in their Library, but a later inventory, made for the Contents Sale in 1722 and preserved in manuscript form in the Fellowes of Shotesham papers, is dramatically enlarged. The makers of this inventory, visiting Carshalton late in 1721 or early 1722, were in two minds about their entry for the garden and Water Tower, so they listed salvageable materials, including the tiles on the bathroom walls, the marble tiled floor and the two marble baths with two stopcocks, the water engine and water wheel.

Of these, the most dramatic news here is that there were two baths. There is no reason to believe that these need be free-standing baths, although such were known; it is more likely that they were part of the structure of the building, as the large plunge bath is now. Using information from a contemporary design for the double-bathed and three-niched bathroom in the Greenhouse in the great formal gardens at Wanstead, it is possible to suggest how the bathroom looked before the present bath was constructed, probably in the mid-18th century. It is most likely that each bath was situated under one of the outer tiled niches of the present bath. By doing this the bottoms of the niches, set lower than the floor level, are adequately accommodated; it would be otherwise difficult to see how the baths could be arranged. The landing between the two baths would allow the much higher central niche also to come into play; its cill lies at the same level as the window seats in the bathroom and the tall niches in the Saloon. It could thus be used as a seat. The lower niches connected with the baths may have been used as tables for spices, ointments and the like or, if covered by water, as seats for the occupants. Too little is known about the water levels to confidently argue for either arrangement.

A final point has to be made: John Fellowes' personal petty cash book, found (as John Freeman has already said) amongst the Fellowes of Shotesham papers, tells us that Fellowes visited the gardens at Wanstead twice, in 1714 and 1716. One of its greatest wonders was the Greenhouse and bagnio, which

Defoe described as "*fit to entertain a Prince*"; it seems most unlikely that Fellowes did not see it. Did he carry the idea of the bathroom there back to Carshalton, to be modified and used in his own Greenhouse? It is an interesting question which we cannot hope to answer directly, but the evidence strongly points to such a possibility. In the petty cash book Fellowes himself tells us that he spent a lot of time at Carshalton in the second half of 1717 when it is most likely that the Water Tower and formal landscape were under construction, and the likelihood is that he was here "supervising" the works in hand. It is an intriguing story!

Andrew C Skelton

Lovely Lavender

On the evening of Friday 22 May a good-sized audience waited with keen anticipation for our speaker, Lorna Maye of Mayfield Lavender. Anticipation began to turn to apprehension as the commencement time passed and the minutes ticked away with no sign of our speaker, who was also proving impossible to contact. But eventually both she and her husband appeared and entertained us with pictures and facts about the different kinds of commercially-produced lavender and with the story of how they acquired and developed the site on the Oaks Farm, borrowing machinery from growers in Kent and elsewhere until they were able to purchase their own, much of it second-hand and from as far away as New Zealand. Their products are now available through a number of outlets, the nearest being Naturally Thinking in Carshalton High Street.

John Thornton

St Raphael's Charity Wandle Walk 2009

The Friends of Carshalton Water Tower again played host at the finish of the St Raphael's Hospice charity River Wandle walk. We offered our services to those who had walked from Merton Abbey Mills, following the course of the river. The numbers were a little down this year for the walk on 17 May. Heavy rain before the 11 am start may have deterred some, but a hardy bunch, including all ages, some with dogs, and children of all ages set off in the rain which eased on route arriving in the dry at the Tower. The party was seen off by the Mayor of Merton. The Mayor of Sutton at the time. Councillor Dr Brendan Hudson led the way with his wife. He found himself in an unusual position as he made the walk twice: as one of his first duties as Mayor in 2008, and as his last in 2009.

John Freeman

Eight New Postcards of the Water Tower

The Friends of Carshalton Water Tower have recently had printed a set of eight new postcards, including four exterior views of the Tower, two of the Bath Room, and one each of the Orangery and the Folly Bridge. These are beautiful cards and well worth having, and we are offering Friends a chance to purchase them at a special price of £2.50 the set, including postage. To take advantage of this offer, please forward a cheque for £2.50, payable to "The Friends of Carshalton Water Tower".

Julia Gertz

Come to the Fair(s)!

The Friends will be present at the Carshalton Environmental Fair in Carshalton Park on Bank Holiday Monday and at the Carshalton Charter Fair only five days later on Saturday 5 September in The Square opposite the Library. The Charter Fair is celebrating its 750th anniversary this year, so borne along and see us!

Friends of Carshalton Water Tower: Secretary Julia Gertz, 136 West Street, Carshalton SM5 2NR

(The working Committee of the Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Garden Trust. Registered Charity No. 1086243)

www.carshaltonwatertower.co.uk