



**FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER**

NEWSLETTER

No. 45, AUGUST 2010

The Committee hopes that you are having a most enjoyable summer and that you will find the programme of events for this part of the year interesting. We are very pleased to announce that the restoration of our mid-eighteenth century Sham Bridge has now been completed and that to mark this we are arranging a celebratory event on Saturday 28 August from 3.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m., during which time light refreshments will be served. We do hope that you will be able to join us to applaud our collective achievement.

Jean Knight

Heritage Quiz

Our season of events began on Friday 16 April with the annual Quiz Night. It was a very convivial evening, with six teams taking part, but it almost looks as though we shall have to rename it the Whitehall Perpetual Challenge or something as the Friends of Whitehall's two teams took first and second places for the third year running. That is not to say that the Water Tower did badly, coming a close third - we shall just have to do better! Doris again provided raffle prizes and raised a further £35 for the coffers.

Liz Thornton

Times Past Transport IV - Archive Film Saturday Afternoon Repeat Showing

Now that we show the archive films in digital form on DVD, a second showing of the programme of archive transport films first aired in October last year was readily possible. This often suits those who prefer a daytime showing and others who might like to see the films again or missed them the first time. A second show took place at the Tower on Saturday 15 May.

Films in the first half of the programme included the early years of London (Heathrow) Airport, Railways for Ever where John Betjeman looks at the last steam service run by British rail in 1968, Seaspeed Express a film about the now withdrawn hovercraft services across the channel and, from the early 1950s, The Elephant will Never Forget takes a nostalgic look at the last days of the London Trams.

The second half of the presentation was interleaved with short public information films with a road safety theme. The film Just the Ticket was made by British Rail to promote travel by train in the 1960s, Scooter Commuter looked at the popularity of motor scooters in the early 1960s, and the second half ended with QE2 - The Last Great Liner, a compilation of material covering the building of this great British liner in the 1960s and its forty years of service including its last journey from Southampton in December 2008.

It's gratifying to note that around 50 attended showings of Times Past Transport IV when the October and April attendances are added together. We hope to do it all again on the evening of Friday 29 October with Times Past VI, a new presentation and discussion on general archive documentary films, again looking at Britain from the 1940s to the 1960s.

John Freeman

The Tower at Night

This year for the first time we opened the Water Tower on a Sunday in mid-May in support of 'Museums at Night'. We were extremely pleasantly surprised to find that we had several visitors, including children, in spite of the dreadful weather. They were most interested and we, John Freeman, Vic Knight and I, were

very encouraged. As a result we would like to support this event next year and, if more stewards are available, offer tours of the Hermitage. The awful inclement weather did give the Water Tower the 'at night' feel but one cannot help thinking that this national event should be rescheduled either much earlier or later in the year for better effect. It was introduced to replace 'Museums Month' in May.

Jean Knight

Unveiling the New Tile Displays in the Water Tower

These tiles came to light during structural alterations to a part of St Philomena's School which contained a set of toilets which the Sisters had nicknamed the 'Houses of Parliament'. The tiles were about to be discarded as rubble when they were spotted by the Headmistress, who retrieved them and showed them to Andrew Skelton. He consulted two experts as to their age and value and obtained two opinions slightly at variance with each other but agreeing on their preservation.

The Sisters of the Congregation of the Daughters of the Cross of Liege offered the tiles to the Friends, feeling that the Water Tower would be a fitting home for them. Jean Knight sought and obtained a grant from the Mercers' Company to fund restoration of the tiles by the Jackfield Studio and mounting as two panels for display.

To mark the completion of this work, the Committee decided to stage a 'thank you' ceremony at the Tower on Saturday 22 May. As Chairman of the Trustees I was pleased to welcome the guests as they arrived. The unveiling was carried out by Sister Veronica Hagen, Sister Provincial of the Daughters of the Cross, accompanied by Sister Margaret McMullan, both of whom are members of the board of Trustees. This was followed by an address by Cllr John Leach, Deputy Mayor of the Borough. We were particularly pleased that Ms Caroline Tate, representing the Mercers' Company, whose grant enabled us to rescue the tiles, was able to attend the ceremony. Jean Knight presented her and the two Sisters with bouquets, and we all enjoyed light refreshments and socialising before leaving.

The tile panels are now displayed in the Pump Chamber, hanging on either side of the door to the Saloon.

Derek Yeo

The Sham Bridge

With the Sham Bridge as the focus for restoration this year, we mounted, with technical help from John Freeman, a display in the Orangery: 'Bridges that Deceive', with a separate board showing changeable photographs of the work in progress. These displays were designed to heighten the profile of this ornate garden folly, to explain what sham bridges are and show the general public what we, as Friends and Trustees, do with the money we raise. We also wanted to recognise the generosity of Viridor Landfill Communities Fund with their award of £20,000, which made the restoration project a possibility.

We held the Private View of the display to coincide with and support the Carshalton Arts Festival, in the early evening on 30 May. We were very fortunate to have representatives from the local Viridor Consultative Committee attending, including Denis Philpott, who was instrumental in our receiving the award.

The Private view was followed by a talk by Michael Symes, who had been so helpful with the historical aspects of the display. Michael's presentation 'Sham and Illusionist Garden Bridges' was such a treat and really put our Sham Bridge into its mid-eighteenth century context with most interesting slides. It was very well received.

Jean Knight

Annual General Meeting

Our AGM on Saturday 19 June was fairly well attended: the usual faithful were present and twelve members sent apologies for their absence.

Jean presented the Committee and Subcommittee reports and gave an update on the Garden Subcommittee: much clearance of dead and unwanted trees had taken place, in front of the Tower and on the Island. An appeal for volunteers had met with a good response. Commencement of work on the Folly Bridge was imminent, thanks to a grant from Viridor.

Our finances remained healthy, with £4351 in Account 1 and £1965 in Account 2. John Freeman and his son Paul have worked hard updating our website and making it more user-friendly, which has proved

popular. Our Committee members were re-elected, except for Sonja Compton who had had to stand down, having moved to Hove.

The cream tea and strawberries were enjoyed by those at the Meeting and by members of the public who came for Andrew's talk.

Simone Guyonvarch

Monuments and Mausolea, and Sir William Scawen's Monument in Carshalton Church

Andrew Skelton's talk after this year's Friends' Annual General Meeting revealed his great passion for Church monuments. As he said, a fairly quirky subject, but monuments combine many disciplines of mediaeval and modern history, such as genealogy, art, literature, archaeology and architecture.

Andrew went on to introduce us to monuments in All Saints' Parish Church, Carshalton, relating to Sir John Fellowes who died at Carshalton House in July 1724, and Sir John's somewhat difficult neighbour, Sir William Scawen of Carshalton Park, and his wife Dame Mary Scawen.

The development of monuments and mausolea generally was detailed with examples in pictorial form from around the country including locally in the Carew Chapel at Beddington and the Lumley Chapel in Cheam. The men behind the design and production of monuments were also covered, including their individual styles. Examples of tombs and mausolea showed they could be very grand affairs both inside and out, forming part of the landscape design, or extremely plain and almost hidden away.

Andrew returned to All Saints' Church, Carshalton to trace the history and development of the Scawen family and their monument situated in the east bay of the south aisle of the church. It would seem this was an ongoing affair, starting probably around 1702 with a wall-mounted monument to Sir William's wife Mary. By about 1725, there was a new backing slate set within an architectural framework including a rectangular tomb chest, with an effigy of Sir William Scawen, who had died some 20 years after his wife in 1722.

In Andrew's talk he attempted to illustrate the wide variety of monuments which you may see in many churches, and to show, as in the case of the Scawen monument, the stories behind them, and he encouraged those present to visit local monuments to experience them for themselves.

John Freeman

Lady Anson goes sea-bathing at Southampton

It is often the misfortune of a researcher to spend hours trawling through pages of tedious documents in the hope that - Macawber - "something will turn up". This certainly seems to be the case with Carshalton House, the Fellowes Papers in Norfolk being a solitary exception. In the case of letters, one is often wading through boring political or social diatribe which adds nothing to our knowledge, but one can not say that of Lady Anson.

Elizabeth Yorke, Lady Anson (1724-1760) was the eldest daughter of Sir Philip Yorke, Earl of Hardwicke, who owned Carshalton House between 1732 and 1740. She returned to her childhood home for a brief spell between 1749 and 1752, before her husband George Anson, Baron Anson of Soberton, purchased the grander property of Moor Park, near Watford, in 1751. In an effort to glean - successfully - a few crumbs of information about the Carshalton House estate during her second stay the writer has been to Stafford, Bedford and the British Library to view her correspondence, but has come away with an interesting impression of the lively wit, impressions, tastes, hopes and fears, and loves and hates of a young woman than at the centre of British political and social society in the middle of the 18th century. As a result the writer has gathered together as much of her correspondence as he can to illustrate the period of her life while she was at Carshalton, with a view to doing something with it in the future.

One particular letter illustrates her style. While her husband was away on Admiralty business - and once at Carshalton on his own, much to his wife's chagrin - Lady Anson, whose health was often indifferent, was sent on a course of "cures", which included sea-bathing at Southampton, which had recently become fashionable and was to remain so into the early 19th century. Her first letter sent from Southampton to her sister-in-law Lady de Grey of Wrest Park, and dated August 7th 1751, is preserved in the Lucas Collection in the Bedford and Luton Archives, to whom thanks are given for permission to quote from it. Lady Anson first apologized for not replying to the Marchioness's earlier letter *"all that I can say for myself is that the troublesome embarrass of preparations for a very disagreeable journey . . . and the flutter of being*

in a strange place, with the odious business I came for, had so discomposed all my thoughts, that I could not think of transmitting them to your Ladyship. " She admits that, when first in Southampton, she was". . . greivous dull and cross, & am not yet very happy or lively" _ The town from a distance "is made a pretty object _ _ _ by the old walls & ruined Towers of antiquity, & one pretty modern spire terminates the view" but her analysis of its inhabitants was less inspiring: they were, she thought ". . . the idlest set of People I ever saw, those of any fortune have no employment but cards, no amusement but the great attention people who have no business of their own to their neighbour 's affairs, particularly happy when they can extract a little scandal from any trifling adventure" while the lower classes subsisted on communal grazing rights outside the Town. Lady Anson's party had "the misfortune to be very important people, or rather personages" in Southampton, and found themselves being invited to dine incessantly. One of her more enjoyable visits was to the nearby home of Lady Peterborough, who "has seen a great deal of the world, w^c" with good sense, great politeness, & a turn of humour, makes her very entertaining . . . she has very obligingly lent us keys of her Garden to walk there at any time."

In Southampton's Port " the busiest place about it is the Bath, and the principal Manufacture of the town is Sea-Water. . . the business I came upon w^{ch} I am by no means fond of" Lady Anson decided to see the immersion, which took place from a small room: "the first morning after I arrived, when I was carried down to the bath, to see the . . . sight of a creature walking thro' as many people as the Room would hold (above a dozen certainly) in a flannel waistcoat & petticoat, so much shrunk by the Sea-Water as to be hardly any garment at all, & as yellow as an old Ironing-cloth, with her hair about her ears, & parading down a number of steps in the open ain then jumping off a board into the Water, & coming up half-drowned. I do assure you I could not stay to see her walk out again, but marched out of the Room instantly, & did not recover the impression the right of the plunge had made upon me of two days, nor did I think I could have persuaded myself to have gone in. "

Lady Anson eventually took the plunge herself, but decided to walk down to the bath at 5 o'clock in the morning as "there is then but little company there at the same time - I have indeed obtained that nobody shall stay in the room out of w^{ch} one descends into the water (at each corner of w^{ch} there is a little Dressing room) when I am going in . . . for the first three or four first times I was carried in & dipt like a child but now I fall in (having been much teized to do it, as it is said to make the eject stronger) with the assistance of an old Woman 's hand, who lives near six hours in the Water every day of the year (she is the nearest being to a mermaid I suppose that one can see) but the l/ater being salt she does not catch cold, & as it is not Hot, she is not so coddled a Hag as the Guides at Bath are. "

The selected excerpts from this letter may, I hope, serve as a taster for a further relation of some of the correspondence of Elizabeth, Lady Anson, Châtelaine of Carshalton.

Andrew C Skelton

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)

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