



FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER

Chairman's Annual Report 2007/08

This is the 15th Annual Report that I have written since our inaugural meeting in 1992 and with your help and support, we have progressed so very far in offering our beautiful and unique venue to the general public. To continue to open on Sunday afternoons from 2.30 -5.00 pm, which we are duty bound to do for our charitable status, we need help. We have a wonderful team, with the presence of, Tony Allen, Clive Orton, Anne and John Dodwell, John Pickup; Meg Woodford, Alyson Butcher and your Committee but we are in desperate need of more volunteers. By request we are opening more frequently, adding several Saturdays. In volunteering you will never be left to manage on your own. There will always be other helpers around. Please come along one Sunday afternoon and see how pleasant it can be. Why not bring a friend with you? Your friends can become Water Tower Volunteers. They need not join as a Friend if they do not wish to do so. Any free Sunday afternoon, during our open season, you have to offer will be most welcome. Please contact Julia as soon as possible as your help is most urgently needed if we are to continue our service to the public!

Our desire last year to improve our networking, where possible, has really proved to be successful. Our web site, evidenced by the number of hits and booking enquires, has been a great asset to us and developed our ability to network more easily with other appropriate organisations. Our deepest thanks goes to Paul Freeman for not only having devised the site initially but for now managing the site for us. As part of our network initiative, we have increased our support for local and national events throughout the year.

After our last AGM, we were very fortunate to have Gerald Smith OBE, Chairman of the Friends of Non such, to talk about his group and update us on their position with the three respective boroughs who control their site. Fortunately their position is looking a little more promising. Gerald's talk was followed by a strawberry tea. June closed with one of our international flavoured evenings, the Breton Fest-Noz, celebrating Brittany. It was a complete sell out and an extremely successful event, with traditional dancing, a traditional costume display, storytelling, very fine Breton food and cider. It was devised and managed by Simone with her team. Our warmest thanks goes to her, Sonja and Jeannie for producing such a splendid event.

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In late August we had a stall at the Environmental Fair. This was managed by Doris Freeman who was again very successful in raising funds and heightening our profile. We also had a stall at the Charter Fair, but because of our shortage of volunteers as it was also the National Heritage Open Weekend, two ladies, Tanya and Jannette Short, very kindly gave up their Saturday to run our stall for us. They did absolutely sterling work in managing to raise a considerable sum from somewhat depleted stock. The Committee is deeply indebted to them for their most generous support.

The Fairs brought us into September and our Autumn programme. Apart from the National Heritage Weekend, we also opened the following weekend for London Open House. Both proved very popular with the general public. At the end of September we supported the Borough's Text Fest, Andrew Skelton rewrote and arranged a most enjoyable trip to Case-Horton. Two well supported performances amusingly evoked Carshalton's history in words and music. Andrew, with a keyboard player, was joined by John Thornton to make this a most pleasurable happening. September also saw the closure of our highly successful Hermitage Exhibition which was displayed in the Orangery. Our deepest thanks goes to Andrew for devising these for us and for his very informative garden tours.

The Beer, Bangers and Mash event was no less popular than it has ever been. The tickets sold out very quickly and its great success was in no small part due to the very hard work of John Freeman. John chose and obtained this year Thwaites beers from Blackburn, much to the pleasure of the tasters. The 'girls', Liz and her helpers, Simone and Doris cooked locally produced sausages, beans and onion gravy, whilst Julia manfully coped with all the mashed potatoes. Doris, as she has done for many events, provided very good prizes for the raffle. Doris has raised considerable sums of money to help our funds, not only by organising our raffles and stalls but also by making delicious cakes, with Liz, for our teas when on offer to the public. We deeply appreciate her continuing support.

In early December, in contrasting mood, we had our Christmas Soiree. It was extremely congenial to celebrate this season in the company of our Friends and Volunteer helpers. Liz, Simone and John, with technical assistance from John Freeman, gave us the special flavour of Christmas in verse and carols. With this, Christmas fare, mulled wine and John switching on our Water Tower floodlights, it was a most enjoyable evening. The festive season had begun and lighting the Water Tower always lifts our spirits in this dark period.

During this public closed season, as throughout the year, there were lettings which Julia deals with most successfully. There were also great advances in clearing our newly acquired lake bed area. Under the direction of Tony Allen, our lead gardener, contractors continued their work and revealed the Folly Bridge, which has not been seen for several years. This was much to every ones pleasure. These contractors have also made a layered hedge around part of the drive to the Water Tower. This, in time as it grows, will replace the fencing as a barrier to keep the children out of the lake area.

The Garden Committee was very pleased to be able to help keep this traditional craft alive. More of this layered barrier will be set once decisions are made about the area in front of the Water Tower and over the Folly Bridge. The Garden and Water Tower working parties, which included Amanda Hill and John Pickup, who are regular gardeners and Mrs Duffy who so generously helps with the cleaning, gathered again to prepare for our next public season opening. This highly successful activity was, in no small part, fuelled by Liz's and John's excellent lunch.

April saw the first of our new season's events and it was illuminating in many senses, as it was our annual Quiz. Amanda once more very kindly provided us with an extremely enjoyable evening and sets of questions based on the theme of colours. Alas the Water Tower team did not win the shield but were extremely pleased to host several teams for this event and to have Amanda's skills. On Saturday afternoon, later in the month, John Freeman kindly reran his Transp011 III archive film programme. This was very well received and gathered some new faces in the audience.

In May, Simone and her team, Sonja and Maureen, were very happy to welcome St Raphael's Charity walkers at the end of their Wandle Walk and the Mayors of Sutton and Merton with their Mayoresses. In support of Museum's Month and the London Borough of Sutton's arts initiative, Imagine, Michael Symes, one of our Trustees, gave a most illuminating talk about sham and illusionist garden bridges. He excellently placed our Folly in context. Michael has very recently published a definitive and beautifully presented book on this subject.

Refurbishment work on our buildings has not been forgotten during the year. The lodge downstairs windows have been replaced and the internal walls have been re-plastered and decorated. Pointing work has also been carried out to prevent water penetration. The Water Tower has had a rainwater drainage system installed to take the roof rainwater away from the building and discharge it into the lake area rather than allowing it to soak into the ground around the Tower. There is still a little work to be carried out to finish this. In the Water Tower a balustrade has been installed to help improve safety for the Committee when using the Mezzanine floor in the Robing Room and the long awaited refurbishment of the stairwell has started with a new door to the roof and landing window installed.

Just before the AGM, we are looking forward to the opening of Carshalton House to the general public. For the first time we are going to take part in the Wandle Festival and extending our openings in support of London Open Garden and Squares. This proved successful last year and we are naturally hoping that we can build on this.

We have had a very eventful and successful year. It has only been made possible by your Committee. When not actually organising an event, they take on all the less glamorous duties, such as washing up. There are public opening duties, which both Derek and Ian do so admirably, the publicity, our promotion and a thousand other things that the Committee performs for us. I owe them an enormous debt of gratitude. The Committee and I have welcomed your support throughout the year and hope that you will continue to do so.

www.carshaltonwatertower.co.uk

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