



Chairman's Report 2010 -2011

FRIENDS OF CARSHALTON WATER TOWER

This year has been extremely exciting but due only to your support and our wonderful Committee who go that little step further to ensure success.

It has always been our wish to restore the Sham Bridge and since signing the lease to look after the northern end of the lake area, we had looked in earnest for funds to carryout this project. With your help we have succeeded. But it has taken even longer to obtain a grant from English Heritage to carryout repairs to the Hermitage. This work is necessary because the roof drainage was not correctly addressed during the restoration which took place in the early 1990's. However English Heritage has given the Trustees a grant of just over £50,000. We are extremely pleased that work is in progress and is due to be completed in mid August. We have had a fine new terrace created just above the head race and there is now a clear view to Carshalton House. The Water Tower has not been neglected. The upper window frame and the shutter housing of south window, in the Saloon, along with the bottom rail and sill have been replaced. Our newest, the kitchen window and sill have also been repaired.

The build up to the Sham Bridge restoration work had taken much of our time in the early part of the last calender year. To highlight this project we had had an excellent lecture given by Michael Symes, landscape historian, author and Trustee. Michael had also helped with the historical content of our Bridges that Deceive display, mounted in the Orangery for the season. There had also been a series of changing photographs which showed restoration work in progress throughout the project. There were however very interesting Friends' events before the Sham Bridge restoration work was completed.

Directly after our AGM in June, Andrew Skelton gave a most enlightening talk about Monuments and Mausolea with special reference to the Scawen Family in our Parish Church, All Saints. This was followed by our traditional strawberry tea. For the first time we supported the Festival of British Archaeology and by having a presence at the Environmental Fair again we had some excellent publicity. However at the end of August we did unwrapped our restored Sham Bridge. It was a glorious day on many levels as the weather was exceedingly fine enabling us to have much of the celebration in the lake bed area in front of this folly. Welcomed by our Chair of Trustees, Derek, Michael gave us an excellent address, putting our Sham Bridge in context. Tom Brake M. P. praised us by saying what a very good example of community involvement this project had been. Our Patron, Mark Girourard, was also present and spoke many kind words. We had three of Viridor's representatives with us. It was their patronage in giving us a £20,000 grant that had enabled us to start this work and of course it was funds you donated and helped to raise which allowed us to complete the project.

We had an artist, Sharon Mcelroy, in residence throughout the summer and during the heritage weekends she transformed herself into a somewhat exotic hermit and was domicile in the Hermitage. We had many visitors for both the National Heritage and London Open House Weekends and although there is free entry on these occasions, thanks to Liz and Doris for their excellent cakes and all the other helpers and guides, Anne, Tony, Derek and our Johns who seduced the public into buying teas, we were able to add considerably to our funds. Doris again very generously, throughout the year, organised the raffles which were also of great financial benefit. The event, Beer, Bangers and Mash, in October, was as usual a sellout long before it took place. I am certain that this is only due to the specialist selection of Beers that John Freeman always manages to conjure up and the catering that is so well done. Liz buys the best locally produced sausages and provides exceedingly good onion gravy, Julia produces all the excellent mash potatoes and Simone and Doris are wizard at cooking hundreds of sausages. The evening is exceedingly good value for money, most enjoyable for our guests but exhausting. No less well supported was John's Times Past VI film show, with a wonderful array of archive social film. Our last event of the season should have been the Christmas Soiree but we were unable to celebrate all the hard work that the Friends and our Volunteers had done throughout the year because of the Snow! These celebrations had to wait until April but fortunately John braved the very deep snow and switched on the Water Tower floodlights as usual for the winter for our neighbours' and our pleasure.

The closed season seemed to me to be more active than ever. The autumn and spring garden working parties were very well supported. Tony with his gardening team, including Jan, Kay, Mario and John Pickup have made great advances in clearing and general maintenance. Two new trees have been planted to replace felled unsafe old trees and John Pickup has been very busy reinstating the posts which protect our small lawn in front of the Water Tower. These are knocked over regularly by vehicles, and he has made a handrail for the steps leading to the causeway which is of great benefit to our visitors. Much of the winter has also been taken up with finding contractors and Liz dealing with funds for our various projects. Julia also has been busy in trying to obtain hires. We have not had the number of photo shoots that we would like which appears to reflect the current financial situation.

Our first function, just before our Sunday Openings to the general public, was the Friends Quiz. The Friends' of Whitehall won yet again, well done, but our team come a close second, so perhaps next year. We thank our Quiz Mistress, Laurel Joseph, for preparing such an interesting quiz and giving us a really very pleasant evening. Also in April we had our belated Thank You party for our Volunteers, without whom we can not open our wonderful building, look after the garden and a thousand other things. A special private view of our new display, Dodgy Bankers, was arranged to celebrate their good work and Julia, as always, had prepared very fine fare. The Exhibition has been very kindly donated to us by Honeywood Museum and we will very happily have it on display throughout our open season. Our next event was John's rerun of his autumn film show which was again very popular and most enjoyable. We were extremely pleased to see that the opening of Carshalton House was well supported and we look forward to opening in support of the Wandle Weekend and London Open Garden Squares Weekend, just before our AGM.

We are extremely fortunate that Paul is continuing to manage our website, which he does with great skill. This is an excellent working tool for us and many of our hires, in these difficult times, are only due to this means of publicity. We are very grateful for the time Paul gives us. We are also very fortunate in having John Thornton who edits and produces our Newsletter. He and John Freeman have been out and about giving talks about the Water Tower and producing publicity. Whilst John Greig has started to work on our archive.

The only event to mar this year, and deeply so, was the death of Effie Gorden-Currie. It is with very great sadness that I report this. Effie was one of our founder members and was the editor of our Newsletters for several years. When she felt that she could no longer do this, Effie continued to be extremely erudite, offered many positive suggestions and was always so supportive. If you did not have the pleasure of knowing her directly you will certainly thank her for introducing our tradition of Strawberry Cream Tea to follow our AGM. She is truly missed.

Jean Knight, June 2011

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The Friends of Carshalton Water Tower, the working Committee of the Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Garden Trust, Registered Charity no. 1086243