



**FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER**

Chairman's Report 2011 -2012

Dear Friends and Volunteers

It gives me the greatest of pleasure to know that whilst you are reading this we are in our 20th year of existence and it is all credit to you as Friends, with your most generous support and our excellent Committee. We started in 1992 with a Committee and a pooled fund of but £20. Collectively from then we have develop from the Friends of Carshalton Water Tower to the Friends of Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Garden Trust. We have shown our unique buildings to so many people and have supported the Trust in carrying out a considerable amount of restoration work to honour our charitable status.

Practical completion of the Hermitage restoration work was reached in August just in time for the end of our open season. This was marked with the celebratory party, the cost of which the Friends contributed to the project. Derek, Chairman of the Trustees, welcomed the party guests. These included representatives from English Heritage^Tracey Craig and Stephen Senior with his partner; the architect, Patrick Crawford; the Deputy Mayor, Hamish Pollock, who officially Opened the Hermitage; other guests were our Trustees, Sister Veronica Hagen, Sister Margaret McMullan, Prof. Clive Orton and his wife; Tom Brake, our Friends and Volunteers. The Trust funded the construction work with the help of a grant from English Heritage.

Major refurbishment will start soon on the Water Tower's flat roof which has lasted well beyond its projected life. Although it has been patched and repainted by the Friends' Committee on several occasions, it has started to leak again.

Friends events immediately following our last AGM were Andrew Skelton's extremely interesting talk about the landscape garden at Briggens, planned by Charles Bridgeman, and its relationship to our 'companion' garden; then we supported the Carshalton Charter Fair and the Festival of British Archaeology in July and drew breath until the end of August when we had a stall at the Environmental Fair before a very fiill September with openings for the Nation Heritage and the London Open House weekends. October saw our two contrasting but very successful events, Beer, Bangers & Mash which involved a stupendous effort on all the Committee's and Doris Freeman's part, and John Freeman's very popular film show, Times Past VII. December brought the Committee together again to stage the Christmas Soiree, which was a very successful affair.

The theoretical closed season saw as usual the Committee hard at work organising this celebratory year's programme. All the London and national openings as we have done formerly, such as Museums at Night, the Wandle Festival, London Open Squares and Carshalton House Opening but it was decided to add more events. Our first of this year was the annual Quiz. Our very experienced quiz master, Amanda Hill, made this very popular evening most enjoyable. John's archive film show, the repeat of the autumn showing, was also very well received. Last year's small Orangery exhibition, *Dodgy Bankers*, drew many interesting comments. This season's display, which we hope will be just

as popular, is in support of the Cultural Olympiad. We have tied this into an introduction to the sporting tastes of some of the owners of Carshalton House and titled it *Carshalton House's Sporting Past*. We were very fortunate to receive some money from the Summer Festival Fund towards its costs.

We have our 20th Anniversary Tea to look forward to just following our AGM and film, *A day in the Life of the BBC*, which will bring back memories for many of us. There are also two other special summer events on offer, which are a must. *The Cider Fest*, at which we will have live music due to very generous sponsorship. This will take place in the Hermitage, weather permitting, at the end of June. Our second special offering is in support of the British Festival of Archaeology. Andrew Skelton has very kindly devised two tours of the grounds, *Carshalton House Estate, An Archaeological Walk Through Time* and he will set up a special linking exhibition to add to our knowledge of the site.

This year so far our Sunday openings unfortunately have not been as popular with the general public. This may have been due to the long closure of Honeywood Museum. However with it now reopened we do expect our numbers to recover. Of more concern is the fact that we have not had any photo-shoots. Whilst our events have been financially very successful, it is the hire funds which are so vital for our refurbishment programme. However Julia throughout the year has been kept extremely busy with enquiries for Water Tower hires for private functions, due largely to our website publicity. Fortunately because of her hard work many hires and group tours have materialised.

We have very good news, Paul Freeman, who devised and manages our website has married his lady, Jodie. We wish them all happiness for their future life together. Paul, very fortunately for us, will continue to manage our site which is now so vital.

Tony Allan and his gardening team, including Jan McHale and Alan Gellert have been working to keep the garden in order and Tony has had extremely productive special gardening working parties with the additional assistance from, amongst others, his wife Brenda and Amanda Hill. John Pickup, who is also part of the gardening team, has made a much needed handrail for the steps down to the causeway and carried out minor refurbishment work of broken flag stones which is a perennial problem.

Extremely sadly I have to report that Liz Thornton has decided to retire as our Treasurer this year. We can not thank her enough for all the hours, too many to count, that she has given us in her role as our Treasurer, apart from the all the cakes made, teas served and duties Liz has done over the past 20 years. We are extremely fortunate that Liz, as a founder member, is not leaving us completely but will still be a Committee Member.

We could not have made this journey so far without our extremely hard working Committee, Liz, Julia, Simone, Derek and our two Johns who, with all the other Committee demands on their time, have been very active this year in giving talks promoting us to other groups. I owe the Committee so much for their unquestioning time and patience. But also so vital to the success we have experienced so far are the wonderful supporters who are no longer with us and our present Friends and Volunteers who help with our Sunday openings and support our events. These include, Anne & John Dodwell, Julia Ashford, Patricia Basham, Beryl Palmier, John Pickup, Dr John Greig, Tony Thorpe, Andrew Skelton, our Trustees, Tony Allen, Prof. Clive Orton, Michael Symes and the Committee's partners, Jeff Gertz and Vic Knight who have taken on many chores, and Doris, who not only manages our raffles at our events remarkably well, has also made numerous cakes for teas and is always willing to help. With our Friends and Volunteers how can we not continue our journey successfully adding to what we have achieved so far.

Jean Knight 2012