



## Chairman's Report 2013 - 2014

### FRIENDS OF CARSHALTON WATER TOWER

#### Dear **Friends and Volunteers**

This period could have been a little dull after celebrating our *Coming of Age*, but not a bit of it! The exhibition, which was on display until we closed at the end of September, was very well received. Immediately after our last AGM we had an extremely informative and pleasureable talk, given by John Phillips, about the Orangery at Carew Manor and ours here on Carshalton House Estate. This was followed later in June by another absolute gem, Michael Symes' very original 18th century Vauxhall Gardens experience, evoking the sights and sounds of this pleasure ground, was fascinating.

We shared a stall with The Carshalton Society at the Charter and the Environmental Fairs which were very kindly manned, the former by Doris Freeman, and the latter by John Thornton. John Freeman set up the Hermitage exhibition in support of the British Festival of Archaeology. In late summer, as usual, we open free of charge for the national Heritage weekend and London Open House. Doris Freeman's extremely tempting cakes and the very good service given by the Volunteers ensured that we did remarkably well selling teas at these latter events.

The Openings were followed in October by a previously unseen programme of films devised by John Freeman, *Times Past IX*, from his archive. This was very well received. We had omitted *Beer, Bangers & Mash* from the schedule this year because of the work load but, with Patricia joining the Committee, we have put this very successful event back on the programme for 2014. Our Christmas Soiree, as always was a joyous affair and it was good to have our Friends and Volunteers close. We were also so pleased to have Anne Dodwell join Simone and John Thornton to perform our readings this year and John Freeman to gave his technical support with the microphone and music. John also timed the floodlighting to illuminate the Water Tower to coincide with this event to herald in the festive season.

We had such a pleasant surprise in January. Water in the Lake! Not just a trickle but a lake full once more! And indeed we still have the water rushing from the Lake under the Water Tower and on into Festival Walk. We have had several visits organized by the Borough's Heritage Department as part of their special group tours of the River Wandle, during our closed season.

But on a personal level our year did not start well. Extremely sadly we lost Elizabeth Thornton, who died in March. Liz give up her position of Treasurer last year but she was still very much part of the team even though extremely ill. Many of us will remember Liz organizing the teas for our special openings and her excellent cakes, apart from her very tasty onion gravy to compliment the bangers and mash at our beer tastings. She is greatly missed.

In April what better way to start our season of events than to have Amanda to help revive our spirits with the Quiz and her excellent entertainment as a very fair Quiz Master, with a range of challenging and interesting questions. Doris Freeman arranged a raffle for the interval as she so often did, very successfully, throughout the season.

We had an extremely pleasant afternoon in May viewing the re-run of John's autumn film programme, Times Past IX, and in the evening we opened to support the national Museums at Night festival. Unfortunately, with far less publicity from Culture 24 for small sites that were not staying open all night, it was not a success this year. However opening to support the Borough's Heritage tours of Carshalton House and for the London Open Gardens & Squares event more than compensated for this disappointment.

We have several more unusual and interesting happenings to come. In praise of the summer solstice this year Michael Symes, a Trustee, is going to introduce us to the *Druids and the 18th Century Garden*. Weather permitting we may even search for them in the Hermitage. John Freeman is devising a new programme of archive film, with a difference, to celebrate Sir John Betjeman's life. *Beer, Bangers & Mash Returns* and our *Christmas Soiree* are set to entertain us during the winter. We hope to welcome you at these future events.

Our Website is going from strength to strength. Paul Freeman has been working diligently on this and has kept us up with the communication trends. Facebook has been installed in the hope that we will capture the imagination of some of the younger population, and experiments are underway to facilitate the sale of tickets for our events online.

We have had the most generous gift of champagne glasses and tablecloths from Mrs Buchen. These are greatly appreciated and we have so far received several donations for the *Restoration of the Spring Head* appeal. Thank you very much indeed if you have already supported this venture. Before work can commence we need to wait for the water level to drop to keep the job at a reasonable contract price. As soon as this restoration gets underway we will contact you. We have a painting contractor ready to re-putty and decorate the Water Tower windows outside. Inside the contractor will wash down the Bathroom paint work, repaint the window frames. They will paint the window frames in the Saloon and Orangery where needed. This work which should start imminently. We are also just waiting for stair coverings to arrive. We can however report that work has already been carried out on the Hermitage. The floor was professionally cleaned in February in order to see its condition. The Trustees will now decide on what, if anything, to do to restore the areas of cement infill.

Tony, who is a Trustee, and his gardening team, comprising Jan, Alan, with help also from Amanda, Patricia, her partner Peter, and Tony's wife, Brenda, will never be unemployed. Our thanks goes to them for all their hard work. Unfortunately John Pickup has had to retire from Tony's team this year. We deeply appreciate all that he has done for us. Not only did John have very good ideas, he was always prepared to carry them out himself. His departure is really a great loss to us, but we wish him well with his move.

John Thornton, apart from being our Treasurer also produces the Newsletter. Simone, who is our Committee's Minutes Secretary, also offers your Committee excellent hospitality during the winter months, when it is too costly to heat the Water Tower for our meetings. I am certain this is the reason why we always have such an excellent attendance. John Freeman, as always, was extremely busy with technical matters, lighting, film, our other events on the programme; whilst Patricia and Derek, who are both Trustees, have also been heavily involved not only with these but with Sunday duties, as have the rest of the Committee.

Julia has deeply involved with the hires and private tours but inspite of her hard work, there have been fewer this year. We did however have one extremely lucrative photo-shoot. But we urge you to consider the Water Tower first, if you are thinking of hiring a venue or organizing a visit. Please remember that there is a discount on the hourly rate for Friends and Volunteers. Doris very kindly has also volunteered to help with the hires but we are still short of Stewards for these, private tours and our public openings on Sundays. Please give us an hour or two of your time.

Our Volunteer Stewards have done an excellent job throughout the year as is evident from the general public's comments. Anne & John Dodwell, Clive Orton, who is a Trustees, Julia Ashford, Beryl Palmier, Tony Thorpe, Andrew Skelton, Peter Wootten have our deep thanks for their support. We also highly value your support of the Trust and the Friends' Committee, who are amazing in the time and energy they give to our beautiful site. Thank you.