



**FRIENDS OF  
CARSHALTON  
WATER TOWER**

# NEWSLETTER

No. 51, August 2013

## **Friends' Events**

Our last Water Tower event was the wonderful eighteenth-century Vauxhall Pleasure Garden experience, devised by Michael Symes, which was so apposite with our wonderful evenings this summer. But our season of events is not yet complete and we have to come the two Heritage Openings, Open House London and the National openings in September, which are free of charge to all, so please bring your Friends, family and acquaintances. We also have an excellent new programme of films devised by John Freeman, Times Past IX, and our Christmas Soiree, which is always extremely enjoyable. Please consult the enclosed programme for details of these events.

## **Coming of Age**

In April we had a most joyous event. The Private view of our Orangery exhibition, 'Coming of Age', which was opened by the Chairman of the Trustees, Derek Yeo. It was extremely pleasing to mark the fact that we have, as Friends and Volunteers, been in existence for twenty-one years. This exhibition was very ably researched and mounted by John Freeman. It gives a brief outline, in captioned pictures, of our Friends' and Volunteers' events year by year and marks the progress we have made. If you have not already seen it please drop in one Sunday afternoon.

## **Museums at Night**

Each year we have opened in the evening in support of Museums at Night. But we have few visitors which is a great pity. Not all museums could or would wish to accommodate sleepovers and it is these museums that get the lion's share of Culture 24's publicity. What could possibly help this excellent event and us would be, in advertising it, that it was site, date and time specific for all museums and heritage venues participating; that the dates were consistent each year and that the event took place, not in May but when it was dark earlier at night. We did however get some publicity, albeit somewhat misleading, from a small photograph of the Water Tower's winter illuminations.

## **Carshalton Open House**

It was very pleasurable to support the Sutton Heritage Department's successful opening of Carshalton House again in May this year, under the leadership of Val Murphy. Andrew Skelton again acted as tour guide. His knowledge of the Mansion and the Estate was very much appreciated by the considerable group of visitors. The Friends and Volunteers also benefited from the large sales of cream teas and the taste of Doris Freeman's excellent home-made cakes. We hope that next year the Heritage Department will open more than once in the year as it is a very popular event.

## **Gardeners Wanted!**

A spare hour or two or three? Tony, our Head Gardener, contactable on 01737 354690, can always find a job for you in the garden. We have a contractor to carry out the heavy work and would expect you to do only those tasks you would enjoy in good company. We look forward to seeing you in the garden soon.

## **Vic Knight**

As many of you will know, Jean's husband Vic died suddenly on 5 June. Poignantly, this was only weeks before their Golden Wedding. Although Vic was a familiar figure at the Water Tower, he was generally seen quietly in the background rather than up with the movers and shakers. Most of his contribution to the life of the building was similarly behind the scenes, involving installations and necessary repair work. Much of his working life had been as a technician of various kinds, although many of us were conscious of his parallel career as an antique dealer in Camden Passage. Vic was also a skilled photographer and many pictures appearing in exhibitions and displays at the Tower were his. Perhaps not many of us could say we knew him well but that does not mean that we shall not miss him. Our sincere condolences go to Jean and to her children Natasha and Lawrence, not to mention granddaughter Daisy, who will possibly miss him most of all.

## **'Times Past VIII'<sup>1</sup> repeated in a Spring showing**

Times Past VIII was repeated on the afternoon of Saturday 18 May and gave the opportunity to those who prefer a daytime showing of the films. Again it was pleasing to see a number of people who viewed these archive documentary films last October returning for a second look.

The programme was in two halves with the first half including amateur film from 1951 made at the time of the death of King George VI; then 'Michael and the Flying Boats', a 1949 film showing the BOAC Flying Boat service from Southampton, a cartoon 'Your Good Health' from the 1940s introducing the new National Health Service, and three short humorous Public Information films from the 1940s: '30 Miles an Hour', 'Don't Spread Germs' and 'Pedestrian Crossing'. The final film in the first part of the show was 'Oss Oss Wee Oss' a unique colour film with sound from 1951 which records the May Day traditional festival held at Padstow in Cornwall.

Films in the second half of the programme started with 'Down to Sussex' made in 1964 to promote the Sussex seaside, country, and history; followed by 'Shopping by the Ton' a Look at Life film from 1966 about London's food markets. The final film 'All in Good Time' was back by request being a light hearted film about a local pub in Banbury, its barmaid, and a beer with well known actors and actresses from the time. The film was sponsored by Guinness back in 1964, but their name is never spoken during the film.

On Friday 11 October we will present a new 'Times Past' showing more interesting Archive documentary films. We look forward to seeing you then. *John Freeman*

## **The Friends' Quiz Night**

As a quiz is about questions, the first one a designer must ask herself is 'Why a quiz in the first place? It is, as all the Water Tower events, the excuse for an evening of social enjoyment. So the rule should be just as many questions as will put the teams on their mettle, without creating an exam!

Each time Jean and the committee have asked me to devise a quiz I've used a theme. This year I chose to do rounds using colours as a link. The problem, as a question setter, is that your own interests and enthusiasms are evident. As those who have been at the receiving end know, it is highly unlikely that you will get questions on popular music or the soaps. Because I know the make-up of my audience I don't consider this too much of a fault. I'm not a gardener, a cook, a theatre, concert or film goer, and so this probably biases me towards geography, history and literature.

However, I hope my quizzes are as enjoyable for the assembled company as for her who presents them -  
*Amanda Hill*

## **An Evening at Vauxhall Gardens in the 18th Century**

As 'Invitation to Vauxhall Gardens', Michael Symes' talk described the activities in London's Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens. Michael outlined the layout of the gardens through pictures and plans, and detailed its history. The gardens were one of the leading venues for public entertainment in London sited South of the Thames from the mid-17th century to the mid-19th century.

The people who went to the gardens were generally the moneyed portion of society, and also included members of the royal family. Admission was one shilling and food and drink was quite expensive. People

came by river, to escape from the noise and pollution of the city, arriving by boat at Vauxhall Stairs. Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens covered an area of about 12 acres and consisted of several acres of trees and shrubs with walks along tree-lined avenues like the Grand Walk and South Walk. A great attraction was that the walks were illuminated at night with about 15,000 glass lamps hung among the branches.

Adjacent to the main entrances were the areas for entertainment - large bandstand-type buildings for orchestras, the supper room, the picture gallery and the Rotunda music room. Around this area were grouped semicircles of boxes where groups of visitors could have supper and watch the entertainments, which could include tightrope-walkers, hot-air balloon ascents, concerts and fireworks, etc. These boxes were known as 'Supper Boxes'. Pickpockets and prostitutes frequented the gardens and this gave them a truly mixed atmosphere. There were also a number of folly-type buildings such as the Chinese Temple, and structures like bridges which looked real at a distance, but were 'shams' being paintings on large frames.

Michael concentrated on music and songs performed at the gardens and played a selection of popular songs of the time, swapping CDs in his player to perform the music tracks, with the score for songs being displayed on the screen, although we were not expected to sing along. Songs included 'Sailor's Song' (Haydn/Anon), 'Silent Worship' (Handel/Somervell) and the very recognisable 'Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill' by James Hook. It was noted that a sculpture of Handel in the main performance area was commissioned by Jonathan Tyers, who owned and ran Vauxhall Gardens in the mid-18th century.

Although Michael had not asked us to sing, as a finale he did press two ladies and two gentlemen to perform a merry dance, the steps being called by Michael as the music played, and the evening at Vauxhall Gardens in the 18th century was well rounded off by a buffet supper.

*John Freeman*

### **John Phillips' talk on the Beddington Park Orangery**

The Orangery is the optimum garden building - both functional as a greenhouse, and also a potential social space where assemblies could be held. At Beddington however, as John Phillips informed us at the AGM talk this year, the Orangery was purely functional. Created by Sir Francis Carew in the Elizabethan period, the Orangery building - a removable structure - protected the Orange and Myrtle Trees he had imported from the Continent and planted in the soil - not in tubs as is known to have been the case elsewhere, as in the Water Tower Orangery. John recounted the various documentary references to the Orangery during the succeeding decades when the structure was rebuilt in the mid-17th century and lastly in brick soon before 1721. The standing brick Orangery Wall, with its coupled blind arches in bays and the windowed Summer Room at the east end, was built to protect the old trees. Alas! the trees are reputed to have died during the severe winter of 1739/40, and by 1820 only the present wall and Summer Room survived.

John's excavations had revealed foundations of the south wall of the Orangery and possibly those of its 17th-century predecessor, but sadly no evidence of the original Elizabethan structure, built for that remarkable gardener Sir Francis Carew. As ever John presented his evidence in a clear and descriptive manner warmly appreciated by his audience on the hot summer, orange-ripening afternoon.

*Andrew Skelton*

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*(The working Committee of the Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Garden Trust. Registered Charity No. 1086243)*

[www.carshaltonwatertower.co.uk](http://www.carshaltonwatertower.co.uk)