



# NEWSLETTER

No. 53, August 2014

## FRIENDS OF CARSHALTON WATER TOWER

AFTER such a wet winter who could have imagined that we would have such a glorious summer! We are hoping to keep this warmth in our autumn programme. Still to come this year, before John floodlights the Tower to welcome in the festive season, we have the Heritage openings in September which are always very successful. In support of Open House London we are going to be open on Saturday and Sunday at a slightly earlier time and for these events we will be serving delicious teas. We look forward to seeing you and are hoping that you will join us and partake of tea.

We will commemorate John Betjeman in John Freeman's Times Past programme this October. He has some remarkably rare footage to show us which will form part of his very special entertainment. Also scheduled in October is Beer, Bangers & Mash Returns! The planning for this event is well advanced as John Freeman has already ordered a beer selection from Adnams of Southwold for the tasting (a brewery dear to John Thornton's heart, reminding him of many happy holidays spent in Southwold); If you are particularly keen to attend our beer tasting, we would urge you to buy your tickets quickly as this is always a sell-out and we will not have tickets to purchase on the door. On a mellower note, it just would not be an end to our 2014 season without our Christmas Soiree and this year is no exception. Our usual Christmas fare with mulled wine and seasonal readings will be on the programme for the evening.

*Jean Knight*

### **Your Management Committee**

Your Committee has grown! Hannah Witkowska, a very long time Friend, and Chris Coles, a very new Friend, have joined the team and we warmly welcome them. At the moment they are in the 'honeymoon' period and they have not been put to task yet but soon you will be reading their names regularly in dispatches.

### **The Gardening Team**

Helpers are always welcome in the garden as it just doesn't stop growing! If you feel that you can spare an hour occasionally, or indeed more frequently, please telephone Tony on 01737 354690. Thank you.

### **Open Garden Squares Weekend**

This year we opened earlier only on the Sunday, 15 June, in support of this London event but we were extremely pleased to have so many visitors. We had sold very few tickets on behalf of the London Parks and Gardens Trust, who organised the weekend in association with the National Trust. We did not expect therefore to have many visitors, if any at all, as Sunday travel is not

always the easiest as we are a considerable distance from the centre of London and there were no other gardens in our area participating. Our Visitors however were extremely interested and a joy to conduct on a tour of the Water Tower and Hermitage. Excellent teas, including Doris' homemade cakes, were served by the Tea Team and were greatly appreciated.

### **Festival of Archaeology**

The Festival of Archaeology lasted three weeks from 12 to 27 July and we joined in the celebrations by having a display in the Orangery. This, which was mounted by John Freeman, showed a series of interesting archaeological excavations made on Carshalton House Estate by Andrew Skelton and his team. One group of photographs and drawings pointed out areas of investigation around St Philomena's School, carried out between 1984 and 2010, whilst the other showed exploratory works around the Water Tower, between 1984 and 2007. By the Water Tower, evidence shows that the present steps we have in front of the Saloon are an addition as the stone plinth has been crudely cut away to accommodate them. It has also been revealed that these probably replaced an earlier flight when a fine arch was discovered beneath the steps during an exploratory dig to lay new drainage pipes in 1996. An early 18th century brick culvert was also revealed, when bad weather caused considerable tree damage in 1992. This tunnel takes lake water through the headrace, on the edge of the lake in front of the Saloon windows, under the Saloon to the wheelrace in the Pump Chamber. There were several areas around the School which have been explored with a wealth of interesting finds showing that the site had been occupied from prehistoric times. But interest in what is below ground level and the site's history is not a new phenomenon, as Andrew pointed out. It was revealed that human bones were discovered when Sir John Fellowes' splendid new drive, which we can still see today, was being set out by Charles Bridgeman in the early 18th century. Brick culverts were also discovered in the lakebed during the early part of 20th century suggesting a very different landscape design from that which we see today.

As part of this festival we opened the Hermitage for tours each Sunday, which was very much appreciated by the general public, as we are normally only open once a month. We would like to offer Hermitage viewing throughout our open season, but unfortunately this is not possible without more volunteers coming forward. Volunteers would not be expected to take the tours across to the Hermitage, unless they wished to do so, but to help man the Water Tower whilst tours were underway.

### **Decorating**

We are delighted to announce that the Water Tower's windows and south door have now been painted outside, the Saloon and Bathroom windows inside and the remaining woodwork in the Bathroom cleaned. And at long last we have stair carpet on the stairs up to the roof. We are now looking very 'posh' and we look forward to seeing you very soon to admire what our funds are achieving.

### **Quiz Night**

Friday 25 April, and it was time for Amanda Hill to put us all to the test again. In a well-attended and highly entertaining evening we had eight rounds of questions on all manner of subjects (except sport - she doesn't do sport) which stretched our capabilities and taxed our memories. Not for the first time the team from St Elphege's triumphed, with the Water Tower team close behind, thanks to a couple of gambles which came down 'tails'. An enjoyable evening for all, though, regardless of individual fortunes.

*John Thornton*

## Spring Repeat Showing "Times Past IX" Archive Films

This repeat showing was on the afternoon of Saturday 17 May and gave the opportunity to those who prefer a daytime showing of the films and for those who wished to see these documentary films again since the first showing last October.

As usual the programme was in two halves, with the first half including 'Charley in New Town', a film introducing the concept of the New Town after the second world war, and 'The 654 Trolleybus Route', showing this local route, Crystal Palace via Croydon to Sutton, from its instigation to its closure. This was followed by a selection of Pathe News items from 1953, including the east coast floods, death of Queen Mary and the Coronation. The final film in the first half of the show was 'An Impression of London' a film from the 1950's where a young American girl makes her visit to post-war London.

The second half of the programme was made up of three films: Look at Life 'Eating High' (1965), featuring the restaurant which was at the top of the then Post Office Tower. 'Under Night Streets' from 1958, was a somewhat humorous account of overnight maintenance activities on the London Underground. The programme ended with 'Glasgow Belongs to Me' where a cabbie promotes the city as a place to visit in the mid-1960s

Times Past X, scheduled for October, will be different this year in that all the films, from the 1960s, will feature John Betjeman. Film clips, and complete, rarely seen films, expose his approach to film narration: a poetical and sometimes cynical delivery for subjects about architecture, transport and the English countryside. See our website.

*John Freeman*

## Lady Anson at Carshalton: 1748 to 1752

This year's annual general meeting of the Friends of Carshalton Water Tower was held on Saturday 14 June. After the meeting Andrew Skelton gave us a very fascinating talk - a talk with a difference, as it was based mainly around a person and rather than a local building. The person concerned was Lady Elizabeth Anson (1725 to 1760), eldest daughter of Sir Philip Yorke, first Earl of Hardwicke, perhaps the most eminent of the personages who lived at Carshalton House during its history.

Hardwicke had owned the House from 1732. His son-in-law was George, first and only Baron Anson, Admiral of the Fleet, who sailed around the world twice. Hardwicke's daughter Elizabeth married Anson in 1748, and rarely gets any consideration in the record of Carshalton House, but there is an intimate connection in her letters, including those to her husband, who was often away on Admiralty business. These vibrant and colourful letters, preserved in the Staffordshire and Bedfordshire Archives, formed the basis of Andrew's talk.

Elizabeth returned to her childhood home for a brief spell between 1749 and 1752, before her husband, George Anson, purchased a grander property at Moor Park, near Watford, in 1751. Andrew read a number extracts from letters which gave some idea of their life together, and when they were apart. Lady Elizabeth Anson, whose health was often indifferent, was frequently sent on courses of 'cures', which included sea-bathing at Southampton and the baths at Scarborough, Buxton, Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Often the letters referred to these visits in some detail. One gets an interesting overview of the lively wit, impressions, tastes, hopes and fears, and loves and hates of a young woman during a period of her short life when she was at the centre of British political and social society, in the middle of the 18th century. In many respects the style of Elizabeth's writing seems very modern and one has to be reminded that the words come from over 250 years ago. An illustration of her writing was given in an article Andrew Skelton wrote for our Newsletter No 45, August 2010 (available via our website), introducing Lady Elizabeth Anson's letters. I hope Andrew lets us publish more of the letters of Lady Anson at some future date, and will talk about them further.

*John Freeman*

## **Druids at the bottom of the Garden**

Michael Symes' summer entertainment for us this year concerned the preoccupation in the 18th century and beyond with the notion of Druids. Michael gave us a fascinating insight into the varying attitudes and conceptions brought to bear on the subject. In truth, very little is known about the original druids and so most druid-lore was a latter-day confabulation, tied up with notions of sacred places and the pursuit of the picturesque, and the supposed rituals entirely invented. A framed certificate from 1909 on display showed a white-robed and bearded figure standing under an oak, harp in hand, against a romantic landscape with standing stones, and the words 'Ancient Order of Druids (Heme Hill Lodge)'. It was a pleasantly warm summer evening and at the interval some of us strolled over to the Hermitage at the bottom of the garden, where there were glasses of mead awaiting us; but we didn't find any Druids.

*John Thornton*

## **Carshalton Charter Fair**

The Friends were again represented at the Charter Fair on 5 July, on a stall hosted by Doris Freeman. The Fair was opened by the new Mayor, Cllr Arthur Hookway, (in his capacity as Lord of the Manor) and was well attended, despite some uncertain weather. Don't forget to come and see us at the Environmental Fair in Carshalton Park on Bank Holiday Monday!

*John Thornton*

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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)