



FRIENDS OF  
CARSHALTON  
WATER TOWER

# NEWSLETTER

No. 54, FEBRUARY 2015

WELCOME to an exciting new year and a very rich array of interesting events! In April we have two old favourites which are very popular: the traditional quiz, with Amanda Hill very kindly taking on the role of Quiz Master again, and John Freeman's film show. This is a repeat of last Autumn's 'Times Past X' about John Betjeman, which was most interesting. John's programme is showing in the afternoon to enable more of our members to see it. In May we are again supporting Museums at Night but we will also have our celebration of the Spring Head restoration. This will be free for all who most generously contributed to the Spring Head Appeal But tickets will be on sale for people who may wish to join the party but did not give a donation. We are very pleased to announce that Carshalton House will be open again this year, but please note that tickets are only available from Val Murphy in the council's Heritage department. Val's contact details are on the Programme of Events which is included in our spring mailing.

After our AGM in June, a talk will be given by Amanda Hill. We shall have the benefit of Amanda's latest research into the Daughters of the Cross' time at Carshalton House. This will be fascinating as their tenure has lasted well over 100 years! Amanda's talk will be followed by a strawberry tea, We will open in support of London Open Squares and offer tea on the Sunday. Still very much on the garden theme, Michael Symes has very kindly offered to give us a talk which will focus on the 18th-century designer William Kent's London gardens. Light refreshments will also be served. In July we hope to have a presence at the Carshalton Society's Charter Fair in the War Memorial Gardens. We will also support the British Festival of Archaeology with a small display about the Spring Head in the Orangery.

In the autumn we hope to be at the Environmental Fair in Carshalton Park and September will see us supporting the National Heritage openings and Open House London Weekend. On these days we will be offering afternoon teas. Why not come to the Water Tower and taste Doris Freeman's delicious homemade cakes? In October we will be entertained with 'Times Past XI - John Betjeman 2'. John had/gathered so much material about Betjeman when making his earlier programme, that we shall have an entirely new show. The ever popular Beer, Bangers and Mash is on offer again in October and early in December we will have our Christmas Soiree to round off our season, and John will illuminate the Water Tower and herald in the New Year.

We have already had enquiries for hires and we can only imagine that this will be a very busy year for Julia. But if you wish to have a venue for a special event please remember, as a Friend, you are entitled to a special hourly rate when hiring the Water Tower.

## **Hermitage Update**

Some visitors to the Hermitage will be pleased to find that we now have a very attractive new bench in the central chamber. We bought it late last year in memory of Liz Thornton who gave so many years of excellent service, not only as our Treasurer.

We are also very pleased to tell you that the Hermitage's early 18th century limestone floor in the central chamber and east and west bays has been cleaned, and areas when there were cement repairs, apart from the central square, have been replaced with stone. Very much to our surprise and delight we found that we were able to replace the areas of cement infill with the green and red limestone from the original quarry on Oland, an island off the coast of Sweden. The same stone can be found in Sir Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral. The one area of the central chamber floor, which has not been restored, is believed to have been the place where the Daughters of the Cross possibly had a Pieta and we felt that the position of the statue was an integral part of the later history of this garden building. The Hermitage, when used as a sanctuary, had housed several of the Daughters' statues during the early part of the 20th century. An Ecce Homo was in the circular chamber.

## **More Hermitage Public Openings**

Because we are frequently asked by visitors if they can see the Hermitage when it is not officially open to the general public, we are trying this year to give greater access by regularly opening twice a month from just after Easter until September. We will open on the first Sunday in the month, as is traditional and also on the third Sunday.

This will put a strain on our stewarding. If you have an hour or two that you could give us on a Sunday, even if very occasionally, we would deeply appreciate it. You would not need to take a group over to the Hermitage, unless you wished to, but it would free up another Steward who would be happy to do this.

Please fill in the Stewarding Rota included in the spring mailing or contact Julia on 020 8647 0984.

## **The Spring Head**

We are extremely happy to tell you that the entrance to the Spring Head at the south end of the lake, near to the Hermitage, has been refurbished. It is not as dramatic as the Sham Bridge at the north end but is believed to have been constructed at the same time, during the mid-18th century.

The Spring Head is an interesting area in the garden. It was possibly made a feature in Charles Bridgeman's early 18th century layout of the grounds, decorated possibly with statuary and arranged into a waterfall. But it has a much older history as it is identified on the Arundel map of the mid-17th century when the Old Farm was on the site and before the construction of Carshalton House.

If we look inside there is a wide entrance tunnel which then opens into three separate tunnels running in parallel, travelling to the west, deep into the hillside. These would appear to have been longer but have been blocked by clunch blocks. The outer two of these tunnels have bays at right angles to the line of the three tunnels. They appear to be much earlier than the main entrance, and the reason for their construction is unclear, but it is likely that they formed part of arrangement to

make a water feature. It is believed that the wider outer tunnel section was added when the kidney-shaped lake was formed, to offer a pleasing rounded form to this end of the lake.

In the grounds there were several springs but this spring was the major source of water supply for the Carshalton House Estate once the natural spring below the Water Tower was no longer viable. It was not until the Mansion was put onto a mains water system during World War II that it ceased to be used. However it did copiously fill the lake for two centuries until the end of that war and even now, on rare occasions early in the year, we are extremely fortunate to have it filling the lake once more.

As a Thank You to everyone who so generously donated money towards the Spring Head Restoration Fund we are having our Restoration Party on Saturday 16 May. There is still time to donate if you have not already done so, or you may like to buy a ticket for the party. Please see details on the Friends' Programme of Events

### **Entrance Charges for the Water Tower and Hermitage**

It has been decided to increase the entrance charges:

From April the entrance fee for the Water Tower will be £2 for an adult and their children will be free;

For the days when the Water Tower and Hermitage are open, the entrance fee will be a standard £3 for an adult and again their children will be free;

As a Friend, this will not affect you as you have free entry whenever the site is open to the public.

*(As from April 2015 Entrance Charges have been further amended, see our Web Site for the latest charges)*

### **More about Benches**

Apart from Liz Thornton's memorial bench in the Hermitage, we have had the two long benches, which are normally set against West Street wall and the south face of the Orangery, painted. Tony Allen had frequently carried out work on them for us but we have now had them stripped back, cleaned and repainted with the hope that they will stay in good condition for some time.

We felt this was a wise use of our funds as it not only sends out a caring message to our visitors and guests who hire the Water Tower but also to the parents and friends who sit and wait for their children to come out of St Mary's Junior School.

### **Garden Working Party**

Tony Allen, who can be contacted on 01737 354690, will welcome you if you would like to join his Garden Working Party. This meets throughout the year. But perhaps you would like to garden just for a day or part of the day, if this is the case, please join us at Water Tower for the **Pre-Opening Working Party on Saturday 28 March from 10.30 am**. There will be lots to do in the Garden and a light lunch will be provided, which is always a very social affair.

### **Networking with Sutton High School for Girls**

We are extremely pleased that through Chris Coles, a new committee member, and as a result of a

visit to the Water Tower by Sutton High School's History Group, we are networking with some lower sixth form girls. They are extremely enthusiastic about raising money for us and have very many interesting ideas on how to achieve this. We are certain that this liaison will be of great benefit to us all.

*Jean Knight*

### **Carshalton Old Rectory**

Some of you may have seen in the local papers that a campaign is being launched to save this building from being sold off, as Carshalton Library was, for a quick cash return for the Council. The Old Rectory, a Grade II-listed building, which housed various offices, including those of the Ecology Centre, is currently unoccupied and in need of repair and, since the Council say it is surplus to requirements, a group of representatives of local organisations, including the Friends of the Water Tower, are studying the possibilities for alternative uses and heritage refurbishment grants. It's early days yet, but we are hopeful that a solution can be found, as the Old Rectory forms an integral part of the complex of heritage buildings around the Ponds area, of which the Water Tower itself is an important element.

*John Thornton*

### **Casting the Net wider**

The Heritage weekends in September always bring in new visitors from further afield, particularly the well-organised and well-publicised Open House London, for which we always open on both Saturday and Sunday. Last year was no exception and quite a few ventured south of the river and into the sticks to visit us. Open House London and the earlier National Heritage weekend both offer free admission to participating venues which is why we offer teas on those days, to tempt the money out of their pockets and purses. Our thanks are due to Doris Freeman, who played her role admirably as chief tempter, providing an array of delicious home-made cakes and sponges.

### **Times Past X celebrates the Films of John Betjeman**

The Times Past archive film shows are made up from old documentaries and educational films from various sources and look at the changing face of Britain from the 1940s to the 1960s. The 2015 presentation on 11 October was a little different, as Times Past X celebrated the films of one man: John Betjeman.

John Betjeman was born in London in August 1906 and died at his Cornwall home in May 1984. He was knighted in 1969 and became Poet Laureate in 1972.

Betjeman's unique narration skill could be formal, casual, comical - often making fun of what he saw. He could also mimic people as well as sing and dance a little as need be. His approach to film narration could be poetical, and sometimes cynical in delivery, covering subjects about architecture, transport, conservation and the English Countryside, etc.

The first half of the programme started with 'Discovering Britain with John Betjeman'- two short films on English places of interest; Chastleton House, Stow-on-the-Wold and West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire. Made for Shell petrol as 3-minute commercials, they form part of a series of 26 films, shown from the start of commercial TV in the mid-1950s. Betjeman got involved in these films as he had written the Shell County Guides in the 1930s. 'The Architecture of Bath' is a Betjeman classic, exhibiting most of his narration skills, and is part of a series of films made

between 1962 and 1964. He takes the opportunity to criticise the developers of the time in his own comical way. The film 'Brunei: Finest Work in England' made for the BBC in 1968 is very rare indeed. I have not seen it elsewhere, but I have a 16mm film copy, transferred to video some years ago. The film traces the life and achievements of this great British engineer, with the script completely written by Betjeman, and presented by him in his characteristic prose style.

'A Journey through the Weald of Kent' started the second half of the programme. This film was made for National Benzole in 1962: Betjeman narrates, and looks at aspects of architecture and the countryside at the time. Although used extensively as a test film in the early days of colour TV, it has become hard to find now. The Weald of Kent Society helped in the production of a remake in 2010 and also hold a copy of the 1962 film. 'Weston-super-Mare', dating from 1962, is another film in the same series as the film on Bath shown in the first half of the programme. Here John Betjeman takes a British seaside holiday as it would have been at the time, including the typical guest house, relaxing on the beach, fast food (fish & chips), local architecture, etc. In the late 1960s Betjeman made the Birds Eye View series for the BBC, looking at Britain as filmed from a helicopter. 'Beside the Seaside' looks at English holiday resorts. Extracts from this film shown included Lyme Regis, Sidmouth, places on the Isle of Wight, Butlins at Minehead, etc. The final Betjeman film was 'Railways for Ever', from British Transport Films, which celebrates the last British Rail passenger train service in 1968 to be pulled by steam, and includes some additional railway history.

A final clip from 1973 featured a typical John Betjeman in good humour. I will not detail it here as it might spoil our repeat of the 2014 Times Past X programme in a daytime showing at the Tower on Saturday 25 April 2015 at 2.30pm. So if you did not get to the October showing, or would like to see it again, please come along. The Betjeman films were so well received last October, and, with so many to choose from, it has been decided to do it all again on Friday 2 October, at 7.45pm for an 8pm start, when a new selection of films will be featured in 'Betjeman 2'. Hope to see you then. See our website for further details.

*John Freeman*

### **Beers from Suffolk mark the Return of Beer, Bangers & Mash in October**

Beers for the night came from the Adnams Brewery at Southwold on the Suffolk coast, and the sausages came from Scott's at Wrythe Green, Carshalton. Five Adnams bottled beers were obtained for 2014: three were tasted before the Bangers and Mash supper, and the remaining two after.

Adnams' 'Lighthouse' was developed from their Champion Pale Ale, a beer that won many awards from 1922 to 1980, with an ABV of 3.4%; 'Gun Hill' was a traditional dark ruby ale, delivering full flavour at just 4% ABV; and the lower-alcohol 'Sole Star', 2.7% ABV, was a great tasting pale amber beer, with a light floral/citrus aroma. We selected Sole Star to accompany the Bangers & Mash meal. Many were impressed with Sole Star, despite its' being a lower-alcohol beer. Another thing which went down well was the sausages, particularly the new taste of 'Smoky Joe's', a sausage with a barbecue flavour.

After the Bangers & Mash supper there was a good number of winners of our raffle, profits from which help to support the upkeep of the Tower. We then tasted the two final two beers. 'Southwold Bitter' at 4.1% ABV is a refreshing beer of real flavour: distinctively hoppy and dry with malt

aromas. This beer is one of Adnams' most popular, along with our final beer, 'Broadside'. At 6.3% ABV, this beer was the strongest of the night: a dark, full-bodied beer, rich in aromas and conserved fruit, a beer well received by all present.

Thanks also go to all who attended, and those who worked so hard both before and on the night. This event is very labour-intensive and relies heavily on volunteers. The event having returned in 2014 by popular demand, by limiting the number present it was made more manageable.

Beer, Bangers and Mash night returns again in 2015 with a date of Saturday 10 October to put in your diary. To make this possible, ticket numbers will be limited to 40, so order early. Beer details will be announced later.

*John Freeman*

### **Christmas Soiree**

The season of goodwill started with a flourish at the Water Tower last year. It was encouraging to see so many new faces and faithful friends at the Soiree on 5 December.

Anne Dodwell joined us once again as a reader and Derek Yeo contributed for the first time. As usual, the mulled wine flowed liberally, and the buffet provided a tasty spread which was much appreciated. On the whole, our efforts to keep up with the carols were fairly successful. However great the challenge, it engendered much enjoyment.

The readings were a kaleidoscope of serious, amusing and informative poems and prose. We pondered over the poignancy of the Truce in World War I and the 'Masque of the Magi'. Many of the readings concentrated on the giving and receiving of gifts - some more welcome than others - and the quandary of sending Christmas cards, as in 'Mr and Mrs R's card list'. The inevitable vintage adverts from *Good Housekeeping* focused on deprived children and the versatility of 'Dromedary' Dates. The inevitable surprises that children bring to Christmas permeated the Gervase Phinn, 'Rumpole' and Dylan Thomas pieces.

Our thanks to all who attended. You made it another enjoyable evening and we hope to see you at our future events.

*Simone Guyonvarch*

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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)