



**FRIENDS OF  
CARSHALTON  
WATER TOWER**

# NEWSLETTER

No. 47, AUGUST 2011

## **The Hermitage**

We are extremely pleased to say that the Hermitage restoration work, which was started at the end of April by our contractors Massey Masonry under the direction of Caroe & Partners, is almost completed. We are greatly relieved as this project has taken such a very long time. We approached English Heritage in 2008 seeking funding to help address the roof drainage problem which was extremely detrimental to the stonework. It was not until March this year that English Heritage promised us a grant of 75% of the project cost, just over £50,000. Delaying the works for such a very long period only exacerbated the situation. With our recent harsh winters far more stone had deteriorated making the job of restoration that much greater. However all our wonderful Friends who have so kindly donated money towards the cost of this project will enjoy the official opening. The restored Hermitage will be open to the general public at the beginning of September and for the National Heritage weekend and Open House London weekend.

## **An Angel Award**

Although we are no angels, we have entered the Angel Awards competition for the restoration work on the Hermitage. Andrew Lloyd Webber, with publicity through the *Telegraph* newspaper, is going to give over a million pounds to English Heritage to distribute to future building restoration projects. If we should actually win our competition category, we will receive no money but an Angel Statuette and an award ceremony. Somewhat disappointing one might think but there is the national publicity and we have already had the Hermitage featured, albeit a small photograph, in the Weekend Telegraph dated 6 August. We will keep you updated.

## **Dodgy Bankers**

The Private View of the 'Dodgy Bankers' exhibition, which we were so kindly given by Honey wood staff, took place on 17 April. The exhibition describes several bankers living in the area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and perhaps it is not surprising how well received it has been. One cannot help feeling that our jobbers, brokers, dealers and bankers in this modern crisis have got off extremely lightly when thinking of Sir John Fellowes, the Sub-Governor of the South Sea Company, who was committed to the Tower of London, albeit for a month, for his part in the South Sea Company crisis which ruined so many in the early eighteenth century and was so graphically described by Hogarth.

If you have not seen the Dodgy Bankers exhibition yet it is certainly worth viewing and you can see a copy of the original Hogarth etching in the Saloon.

## **Charles Bridgeman's South Sea Garden at Briggens: a comparison with Carshalton**

This year's Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Carshalton Water Tower was held on Saturday 18 June and was followed by an illustrated talk by Andrew Skelton on a subject not covered before, and of which many would be unaware. This is a link between the gardens at Carshalton House and those at Briggens in Hertfordshire, both the work of the 18th-century garden designer Charles Bridgeman. The talk was enhanced by a visual presentation of a comprehensive range of photographs, prints, maps, plans and reproductions of estate records and accounts.

Andrew revealed that early in Bridgeman's professional career period he was involved with a number of garden projects for the 'infamous directors' of the South Sea Company, who contributed to its collapse leading to the famous bursting of the 'South Sea Bubble' in June 1720. Andrew traced the connection between Charles Bridgeman and the gardens of a number of these men who included Sir John Fellowes at Carshalton House, and Robert Chester at Briggens. At Carshalton accounts indicate that Bridgeman was paid large sums of money around 1720 with the garden probably complete by the time of the collapse. At Briggens the work seems to have been in progress at the same time.

Andrew showed that the landscapes at Briggens and Carshalton share the same client-base, landscape designer and development history. They have equal, if differing surviving features. At Carshalton the vast majority of the features that Bridgeman created have gone, destroyed in the mid-18th century by the creation of the present informal landscape, but the Mansion, terrace and Water Tower survive. Andrew stated that the larger wider landscape at Briggens largely survives, although it has lost some major garden buildings - including an engine house in a similar position to the Water Tower at Carshalton House, and plantations, and the house and attendant buildings have been considerably changed. The canal-lake at Briggens survives, whereas the canal-lake at Carshalton was replaced by the informal lake we see today.

Andrew's original research at Briggens was in the 1980s when the house, then a Hotel, was a thriving venture. He revisited Briggens for the first time for 15 years last year and found the hotel closed, the lake now heavily silted up, and the walled gardens a wilderness. Despite this, Andrew ended his talk by commenting that beneath the decay lie the bones of a great landscape which photographs from earlier in the 20th century clearly display, and that those with an interest in the survival of landscapes will be keeping a close eye on its future.

*John Freeman*

### **The Friends' Quiz Night**

On Saturday 16 April the Water Tower's 2011 season had opened with the annual quiz night. The Friends of Whitehall, last year's winners, supplied the evening's questions, presented in the absence of Carol Jenkin, who was unwell, by Laurel Jacobs, the resident Warden of Whitehall. The evening went well with seven teams competing for the title, but despite their best efforts your representatives were unable to reclaim it and it remains in Whitehall's hands for another year. (We did actually come second, in case you were wondering.)

*John Thornton*

### **Times Past VI - archive films given a Spring repeat showing**

Readers will be aware I reported in the last News Letter of the good attendance at the showing of 'Times Past VI' when first aired in October last year. A Saturday second showing often suits those who prefer a trip to the Water Tower during the day, and on 7 May around 20 people were present to see the films, some for the first time, and others who just liked to see them again. There is a limit to the number who can be comfortably be seated in the Saloon, this being around 40; but having a second show about six months later allowed the total who viewed these archive films to be around 60 people, which makes the effort in putting the show together well worthwhile.

The program was in two halves with the first half made up of 'The Downlands'; a film on farming in 1947, 'Kentish Harvest' (1950) harvesting of hops in Kent by East London hop-pickers, 'Report on a River' - the future of the River Thames as seen in 1961, and some newsreel items from 1949. In the second half of the programme there were four films, 'Cyclist Special' from 1955 which sees a bicycle club take a special day out by train, a 1960 film promoting Wales 'A Letter for Wales' and concluding with 'Coffee Bar' a film from the late 1950s about London's coffee bars. The films were interspersed with a number of commercial breaks: cinema film commercials from the early 1960s.

We hope to do it all again on the evening of Friday 21 October with 'Times Past VII', another new presentation and discussion on general archive documentary films, looking at Britain from the 1940s to the 1960s. It is hoped to include at least one film from one of the early Times Past presentations, which started in the 1990s, then using 16mm film.

*John Freeman*

### **Special Openings**

Once again we supported the Wandle Valley Festival by opening on both 4 and 5 June from 1-5 pm and charging only half-price entry, with children free. The weather no doubt contributed to there being disappointingly few visitors, despite Andrew Skelton's bringing a walking tour of the sources of the Wandle into the grounds. The following weekend, 11 and 12 June, we again opened from 1 to 5 pm on both days as part of London Open Gardens and Squares when attendance (though not the weather) was a little better and takings were boosted by refreshment sales.

*Julia Gertz*

### **Heigh ho, come to the Fair (again)**

The Environmental Fair will take place as usual on Bank Holiday Monday, 29 August, and the Friends will be there to spread the word about the Water Tower. Do come and see us - we'll be sharing with the Carshalton Society again. Back in July, we also had a stall at the Carshalton Charter Fair in the War Memorial Garden. The Fair seems to be settled in its new date and venue and, with a good crowd attending, we were able to attract an encouraging amount of interest.

*John Thornton*

### **September Specials**

On two successive weekends next month there will be free admission to the Tower between 2 and 5 pm. This is as part of National Heritage weekend on the 10th and 11th, and on the following weekend, the 17th and 18th, as part of Open House London, when hundreds of properties, some not normally open to the public, will be granting free entry. Here in the Water Tower we shall also be offering tea and cake on both weekends.

### **Gardeners**

Tony Allen has arranged a garden working party day on Saturday 15 October from 10.30 am. If you are able even to give just an hour or two you will be most welcome. You will not be expected to carry out heavy work. A light lunch will be provided for everyone and the day is extremely congenial.

There are regular meetings of the gardening group. If you are interested in helping please contact Tony, telephone 01737-354690.

### **Events**

There are a number of excellent events still to come this year, apart from our support of the free Heritage weekends, and the Garden Working Party. We have the traditional Beer, Bangers and Mash on 8 October and if you are interested in this event, please book soon as we are always oversubscribed and, since our capacity is limited, have very sadly to turn people away. John Freeman is compiling a new Times Past programme for us to see on 21 October, which should not be missed, and we have the Christmas Soiree, weather permitting, on 2 December, offering that wonderful seasonal feeling but without the fuss.

### **Effie Gordon-Carrie**

Since the last Newsletter, we learned with regret of the death on 19 April of Effie Gordon-Carrie, who had lived in the village for many years and had been associated with the Friends of Carshalton Water Tower from its inception. She had been a member of the Committee in the early days and compiled the first scrapbooks. Much of her working life was spent in hospitals and her spiritual journey had led her to the Russian Orthodox faith, which provided an interesting experience for those of us who attended her funeral at Clapham Manor Street on 4 May.

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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)