



FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER

Chairman's Report 2015 - 2016

Dear **Friends and Volunteers**

I am very pleased to be able to report that, with your support, we have been able to move forward with Water Tower building works. Perhaps the most important project was the glass barrier we now have between the piers in front of the water wheel and race in the Pump Chamber. This is such an advantage as it replaces the simple bar that was there. It allows our visitors, people hiring the Water Tower and their guests, which so often includes children, to be able to see the Water Wheel without our fear of an accident. There are lockable glass doors at each side of the piers to allow access to the wheel race and display lighting. We were extremely fortunate to have Jeff Gertz, who was in the construction industry most of his working life, although working on multimillion pound projects, willing to manage this for us.

Our events throughout the year were generally very successful with Doris Freeman's raffles giving a very good boost to our income. After our AGM we had a most interesting talk given by Amanda Hill, *The Daughters of the Cross at Carshalton House*, which was really quite poignant as they no longer have a presence on the site. We supported the London Open Garden and Squares event and had some visitors with a remarkable knowledge of garden history, which makes the day so rewarding. Still with gardens upper most in our minds, Michael Symes in his talk introduced us to William Kent's eighteenth century London gardens which was very well received. We think of Kent's iconic creations, such as that at Rousham, not appreciating that there are his works virtually on our doorstep.

We supported the Festival of British Archaeology with a display of the restoration work on the Spring Head. We are excited about this project as it brings, with the restoration of the revetment wall of the island, closer to getting water in the lake as a permanent feature. We still actually have a little water at the moment, but hardly noticeable unfortunately.

John Thornton very kindly manned the stall for us, which we shared with the Carshalton Society, at both the Charter Fair in July and the Environmental Fair at the end of August, of which we are extremely pleased and grateful. As we are for his contribution in being our newsletter editor and our Treasurer, no mean tasks.

In the autumn we again had two very successful events in support of the National Heritage opening and Open House London. The Water Tower was positively heaving with families. Our great thanks goes to the catering team who, with Doris' very tasty cakes, made an excellent profit. John gave us another Betjeman treat from his archive. He had gathered so much research material for his first very successful Betjeman evening that we thought it a very good idea to have a new second programme in October. This presentation was repeated to a very appreciative audience on an April afternoon this year. The Beer, Bangers and Mash event was highly successful as usual, but it was also extremely demanding on the Committee, who always need to be fully involved if we are to get the success we do.

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The Friends of Carshalton Water Tower, the working Committee of the Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Garden Trust, Registered Charity no. 1086243

Our Christmas Soirée, as is traditional, closed our social season with John switching on of the Water Tower floodlighting and giving technical support to our readers of festive seasonal text. Simone, John Thornton and Derek were joined this year by Mary Yeomans. We were so pleased that she was able to support us and help to make this event special.

The closed winter season this year was particularly busy for Julia with hires generally and with the use of our venue in support of Carshalton Old Rectory Association, (CORA), for their meetings. We are very pleased to say that CORA now has registered charity status and that John Phillips, their chairman, will give a talk to us after our AGM about this fascinating building.

We were given a very large number of spring bulbs and had a busy planting party, only, to our horror, to have many removed by groundsmen who dug a trench across our grass in front of the Orangery for new cabling for the lighting along the drive. We have also suffered considerable damage to our railings and hard landscape during St Mary's School's building works. However, our pre-opening working party was very successful in setting us up for the Open Season. Our thanks to everyone who was involved.

Our events started extremely pleasantly with a private view of our new Orangery display for this season, *Refurbishment Achievements of the Friends*, researched and devised by John Freeman. If you have not already seen it, please do as you will discover a selection of the projects we have managed to achieve with your support. This was followed by our most enjoyable Quiz Night and our deepest thanks goes to Amanda for organizing such an excellent event again. Alas, I can not report that your team won, however, there is always next time. Our Mediterranean Evening was also great fun. The dancers wore costumes from various countries, the sangria flowed and the delicious food was most plentiful, all in the spirit of a southern European evening. We are very pleased and grateful that we had sponsorship for this evening.

There are a considerable number of Friends events to come, Michael's *Assessing Capability Brown's Legacy* in celebration of the 300th anniversary of Brown's birth, which promises, as always, to be most enjoyable and enlightening; As does John's new social vintage film programme, entertaining us with clips from the 1930s and 1940s, this year in support of Museums at Night; And many more. We sincerely hope to meet and greet you at our future events as it is through your support that we can keep our Water Tower in good condition. If there are activities that you would like to see on our programme, please do not hesitate to suggest them.

We have sadly lost two Committee members, Tricia and Chris, because of external pressures. We wish them well and certainly hope that they will come back to the fold when work eases. No less sad, due to ill health, was the loss of Tony Allen, as our Head Gardener this year. We certainly have missed his guidance. However, we are extremely pleased to report that Tony is now well. But unfortunately can not take up the garden commitment again. We are in need of both Gardeners and Committee Members. Please rise to the challenge!

Visitor numbers are up, possibly due to the extra Hermitage openings. Our very deep thanks go to all our Sunday Stewards and Guides: Julia Ashford; Margaret Coombs; Anne Dodwell; John Greig; Clive Orton, who is a Trustee; Tony Thorpe; Andrew Skelton; and our new team member, Bob Steele, for making our visitors feel so welcome. Doris Freeman; Allan Gellett; Jeff Gertz; Amanda Hill and Michael Symes, a Trustee, have all also given us many, many volunteer hours for which we are also very grateful.

Also on a very positive note, we have had excellent support from Paul Freeman who has so ably updated and managed our web site, giving us many hours of his time and Hannah who is working hard to get our archive in order. And I personally can not thank your Friends' Committee: Julia; Simone; Hannah; Our two Johns and Derek, enough for the incredible number of hours they give to raise funds and operate this, our beautiful building. Please continue to give us your support and offer as much help as you can.

Jean Knight 2016

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