



NEWSLETTER

No. 65, NOVEMBER 2020

FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER

Dear Friend

We hope that this letter finds you safe and very well.

This year we were to commemorate the crash of the stock market with the implosion of the South Sea Company, known as the bursting of the South Sea Bubble – an event which happened in 1720 and in which our Sir John Fellowes played no mean part. It was a financial catastrophe and compared, at the time, with the terrible disaster of the Great Fire of London. It is truly remarkable that we should be suffering, this time a health and an economic crisis, in this year 2020.



We apologise for having been closed and not running any of our planned events but we felt that, even when the government relaxed rules a little, it was still not enough for us to be able to keep our, stewards, other volunteers and the general public safe. But John Freeman will illuminate the Water Tower over the Christmas Festive season and into the New Year, as has been our tradition since the turn of the Millennium.

However, next year we will be making up for lost time. We plan the first general public Water Tower opening on Sunday 18 April from 2:30 pm. Please put the date in your diary. We will have, for the season, the *Dodgy Bankers Exhibition* in the Orangery with additional material compiled by John Freeman which gives more details about the South Sea Company. We are hoping that Andrew Skelton will have time to give us his lecture, *The Rise and Fall of a South Sea Company Man*, at our AGM on Saturday 5 June. Andrew would have given this talk at this year's AGM, if we had been able to hold it as usual.

We are extremely pleased that Amanda Hill is willing to run another of her quizzes for us, which always exercises our 'little grey cells', but are always great fun! John Freeman promises to delve into his film archive again to show us a newly devised programme. We will support as usual the local and national heritage related events. But there will be more!

The AGM 2020

As you know we were unfortunately not able to hold the Friends' AGM this year in the Water Tower and were deprived of, meeting together, Andrew's talk and our strawberry tea. But we are extremely pleased to report that our Friends really entered into the spirit of our AGM postal vote and we thank you very much indeed for being so good at responding to it so well.

A Hermitage Information Lectern

We are very pleased to tell you that a permanent information board, which has been funded by the late Meg Woodford's most generous legacy, will be placed at the Hermitage for our visitors to read, if they should so wish. It is currently being made and, all being well, we hope to have a special unveiling in May to which you are invited.

Building Works

Unfortunately, we found during this lockdown that the terrace roof has started to leak, in spite of Julia cleaning out the gullies and our repainting over the years. We do not know when it was last fully restored but it was no later than the early 1990s. So, for flat roof, with our care, it has lasted far beyond its projected life, which is normally 20 years.

It is planned that restoration work will start in early November. This will be paid for by the Trust but we are hoping to have funds enough to redecorate the Orangery in time for our opening in the spring.

Bob Steel

It is with great sadness that I report the death of Bob Steel in August. He was a very good Friend of the Water Tower, taking on Sunday stewardships and giving us a brilliant talk about the River Wandle. He, in partnership with Derek Coleman, wrote a definitive book on the River.



Bob was a great champion not only of the Water Tower but our Carshalton heritage and local volunteer groups. Just before he died he so generously thought of us and gave the Friends a considerable sum of money, part of which he asked us to give to other local charities. This we have done. We will use the money, he so was so kind to give to us, for a project in his name. But we greatly miss his support. Our deepest condolences are with his wife and family for their loss which must be so keenly felt at this very sad time.

Looking for an unusual Christmas Present?

Why not purchase one of the publications we now have on offer, or both? We have for sale: *Carshalton House: A Landscaped Country Seat* and *The River Wandle Companion*. Information fliers with ordering details are included with this Newsletter mailing. Thank You!

Where would you spend winter: the Hermitage?

Derek Coleman

We all know that butterflies and moths fly during the summer months but they have to get through the winter months when it is too cold to fly. The life cycle of a butterfly has four stages: egg, caterpillar, chrysalis and adult so they have four potential stages to pass the winter and each one is utilised by different species.

Perhaps, it might be expected that most species would overwinter as an egg, since they are relatively resilient but that leaves them little time to reach adulthood once spring starts. Consequently to gain a head start most overwinter as a caterpillar or pupa, with the latter emerging first. A few species hibernate as adults and some species use 'underground' sites, for instance abandoned mines, pill boxes, ice houses, air raid shelters. All such sites are where the temperature is colder than outside but does not fluctuate much remaining relatively constant.

I have been visiting a tunnel at Beddington, which has hibernating butterflies and moths for nearly twenty years. I had never considered the Hermitage to be suitable since it is above ground and fairly exposed but on an open day in September 2018, I discovered hibernating butterflies and moths. The outer chambers are too open but the passageway behind the main chamber is very suitable.



Two Peacocks at the Hermitage (John Freeman)

Of just over 50 resident butterflies found in Britain, four hibernate as adults. Comma and Brimstone hibernate hidden within vegetation while Peacock and Small Tortoiseshell use underground sites. Peacock use the Hermitage hibernating with their wings closed but if disturbed will flash their wings and give a loud hissing, snake-like sound; it is intended to scare off predators and has made me jump on more than one occasion!

Of around 2500 species of moths found in Britain, just over one hundred pass the winter as adults. Some of these species do not even hibernate but are active on warmer winter nights. The females of these species tend to be flightless, not having the energy to fly with a body full of eggs. Others do hibernate. There are three species that



Hibernating Heralds at Beddington

commonly hibernate in underground sites and all three have been seen in the Hermitage. The commonest moth at both the Hermitage and Beddington is the Herald. At Beddington, they are present from September to April with numbers fluctuating each winter with no clear upward or downward trend over the years. They often bunch together in groups of ten or more individuals; the most I have ever seen at Beddington is 43.



Hibernating Tissue at the Hermitage

On my first visit to the Hermitage in September 2018, not only did I see three Heralds but also three Buttoned Snouts and two Tissues. It may have been beginner's luck since I have not seen the latter two species again. The Tissue moth is restricted to chalk sites so I have never seen them at Beddington but the Hermitage is not so far away from the chalk. In some of the old pill boxes on the North Downs, up to 40 have been seen. I have seen Buttoned Snout at Beddington but only three times. When John Freeman kindly showed me round this October, there were four Peacocks and eight Heralds.

The butterflies and moths are hibernating but do they wake up and change their position? A difficult question to answer since my long-term memory is not good. However, my impression is that Heralds do tend to stay in the same position and the Tissue seems to be more mobile and may well change position or even leave the site.