



FRIENDS OF
CARSHALTON
WATER TOWER

**Chairman's
Annual Report
2006/7**

We have had a very exciting year and many very good reasons to celebrate. There has been an increase in our events and networking. We have taken part in more local heritage and national initiatives to promote ourselves. At long last we have taken a lease on the area of Carshalton House Estate which we have been negotiating for such a long time and we have a most generous financial gift.

Our Friends' events have been no less demanding this year, but most enjoyable. The Spanish Evening, last July, was a complete sell out and an extremely entertaining evening due to the efforts of Simone, helped by Sonja, and her team. Although there were no events until the Environmental Fair, very late in August, Julia had a photo shoot and other lettings to organise. The Fair was very successful, in spite of dreadful weather most of that day. Our Stall at the Carshalton Society's Charter Fair, in early September, was also very successful in spreading our fame and raising funds. This was in no small part due to Doris and her helpers. September continued to be extremely busy, not only with lettings, but we had our Open House weekends, supporting both the National and London Open House events which were very well attended. John's archive film show, Times Past V, also gave us great pleasure in September. October's Beer Bangers and Mash event was again a sell out and Liz also came up trumps again in organising the food and, this year, John Freeman organised the beer. We tasted Youngs' beer, with a certain amount of sadness, as it was the last beer to be brewed on their London site. The Christmas Soirée was enjoyed by Friends, their friends and the Committee alike, who organised a very congenial evening with most appropriate traditional fayre, readings and music. The Water Tower was lit throughout the Christmas period and into January this year, which was greatly admired by the Friends, locals and travellers.

We were not quiet during, what used to be, 'The closed season' as there were more lettings including photo shots and an Awards Evening for Sutton Volunteers, at which Tom Brake presented the certificates. The Friends Quiz was quickly upon us in April. The Water Tower Team did not disgrace itself, but the Winner's shield has eluded us yet again. However Amanda Hill did devise a very fair and fine set of questions. Our deepest thanks and appreciation goes to her for this most enjoyable evening.

We had another showing of John's autumn film programme on a Saturday afternoon, which proved very successful. Many appreciated the repeat as some of our Friends were not so keen to venture out on a cold wet winter's night. We welcomed two Mayors and exhausted walkers to the Water Tower as we were the destination of St Raphael's Charity Walk again this April.

We were also extremely happy to support the Borough's opening of Carshalton House at the beginning of May and delighted to have the new Hermitage Exhibition launched later last month in support Museum's Month and the local Heritage Department. Andrew's lecture, with the exhibition about the Hermitage, was well attended. These brought together several years of Andrew's study and work on this most interesting garden folly, much to our edification and enjoyment. This Month we have linked yet again with another external agency, this time, with London Open Gardens Squares and we were lucky enough to be chosen by Loire Wines, who sponsor this event, as one of their centres for wine tasting.

Last summer the culvert, that had been damaged by Telewest engineers, was finally repaired. We have revisited the kitchen area, after some years. We have had a larger capacity hot water heater installed and a far safer tap system. The toilet door has been rehung, which we hope our wheelchair bound visitors will find more convenient, and cupboards have also been remade. The refurbishment work has continued in the Pump Chamber after some considerable delay with the Local Authority's Planning Department. The piers have been lime watered, which should allay the amount of flaking that was occurring. Areas of brickwork have also been restored and laminated glass will replace the toughened plastic in the fanlight and door to the steps leading to West Street, making the whole Chamber far lighter.

Late last year we signed a 999 year lease with St Philomena's School Governors for the Lake bed area, including the Folly Bridge. The Hermitage as you know, we have been looking after for quite sometime now. This signing coincided with a most generous promise of a financial gift from the Daughters of the Cross, which the Trustees are in the process of investing to produce a modest income for the Trust. This will give us a little more financial security which we all naturally welcome as it helps to insure our continuity.

The enlarged area of landscape has given our gardeners quite a challenge. Tony, with John Pickup's help, has managed to keep our garden about the Water Tower looking pleasant and cared for and the Gardening Days have been very successful, but more help is needed. We will employ contractors to carry out the really heavy work but please volunteer to help with the lighter duties. It will be greatly appreciated.

We have made an enormous leap forward in promoting ourselves. We have had printed an additional flier to advertise our new domain and the Trust. Although we have featured on other groups' and the Borough's web sites for many years, this year, we have launched our own web site. Our most deepest thanks and all credit goes to Paul Freeman for all his hard work in making this happen for us.

We are also fortunate again this year to be given more prints. These, three photographic prints of some of the few remaining pieces from Sir John Fellowes' Chinese tea and dinner service and prints of 18th century Water Tower Inhabitants, have been added to the existing display of prints on the stairs to the roof. Information about these has been added to the free information leaflet notes for 'Prints on the Stairs'.

Your Committee, Julia, Liz, Simone, Sonja, our two Johns, Ian and Derek, works extremely hard to sustain the programme of events, hirings and our Sunday openings, but these would not be possible without the additional help of Friends and Volunteers. I am really not certain what we should do without the help of Doris, who not only organises our stalls at fairs but also makes wonderful cakes for events and runs excellent raffles, often providing not only most of the prizes but also generating a great deal of money for our funds. Simone has a wonderful trick of miraculously producing helpers, our thanks goes to Jeannie and Brian and we do welcome Maureen, who is charming and has turned out to be a great treasure in the kitchen. Andrew has given much of his time this year, as has Ann and John. Clive also been generously with his Sunday duties as has two new helpers, Alyson and Meg. We do appreciate their support very much. I really can not thank the Committee and our helpers enough for all that they have given this year to our Trust.

It would be extremely easy and wonderfully pleasant to meet in the Orangery or Saloon and congenially just watch the season's pass in our very pleasant surroundings, but unfortunately we can not contemplate this idea for more than a moment and ask you to continue to support us as much and even more, if possible, with our events, volunteering your time, albeit for an hour, perhaps on a Sunday. It is by your generosity and help that we have come so far, and it is only with your continuing aid that we shall be able to proceed. Thank you, our Friends.

Jean Knight