

RECTORY NEWS

FOR THE SUPPORTERS OF CARSHALTON OLD RECTORY

Editor: Sue Horne

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View of the south side of the Old Rectory from Margaret's Pool

Useful Conversations

We haven't stopped looking for ways to secure the future of the Old Rectory. For example, last year, a conversation with a friend about CORA led to a useful discussion with the **National Trust**.

The National Trust have a charitable remit to address unequal access to 'nature, beauty and history' – and this includes locations outside the National Trust estate. There's a team within the NT London & the South East region which is in contact with the Wandle Valley

Regional Park Trust and meets with them periodically to discuss the Park and the work they're doing. My hope was that they might see the potential of the Old Rectory in relation to the Park and be persuaded to take it on. That didn't happen but ideas were discussed and introductions were made and the next conversation, at the beginning of this year, was with the **London Historic Buildings Trust**.

LHBT has been involved in high-quality heritage projects across Greater London. They work to

remove problem buildings from the Heritage at Risk register, alongside London Boroughs and Historic England. Their aim is to 're-use historic architecture to create sustainable projects, innovative social solutions and cultural benefits for future generations, and act as a facilitator, assisting local authorities, community groups and other building preser-

vation trusts to move their own projects forward'. Although the Old Rectory is not on the Buildings at Risk Register, I'm hopeful that something will come out of the discussion. After all, you can't be completely sure where a conversation might lead.....and the end result might surprise you.

Sue Horne



Jean Knight, CORA Trustee (and founder member and Trustee of the Carshalton Water Tower and Historic Gardens Trust and Chairman of the Friends) was at Sutton Archives looking for new images of the Water Tower. This is what she found: a delightful painting depicting not only the Water Tower but the Old Rectory as well. Painted by Alan J Crowe 1979. LBS archives



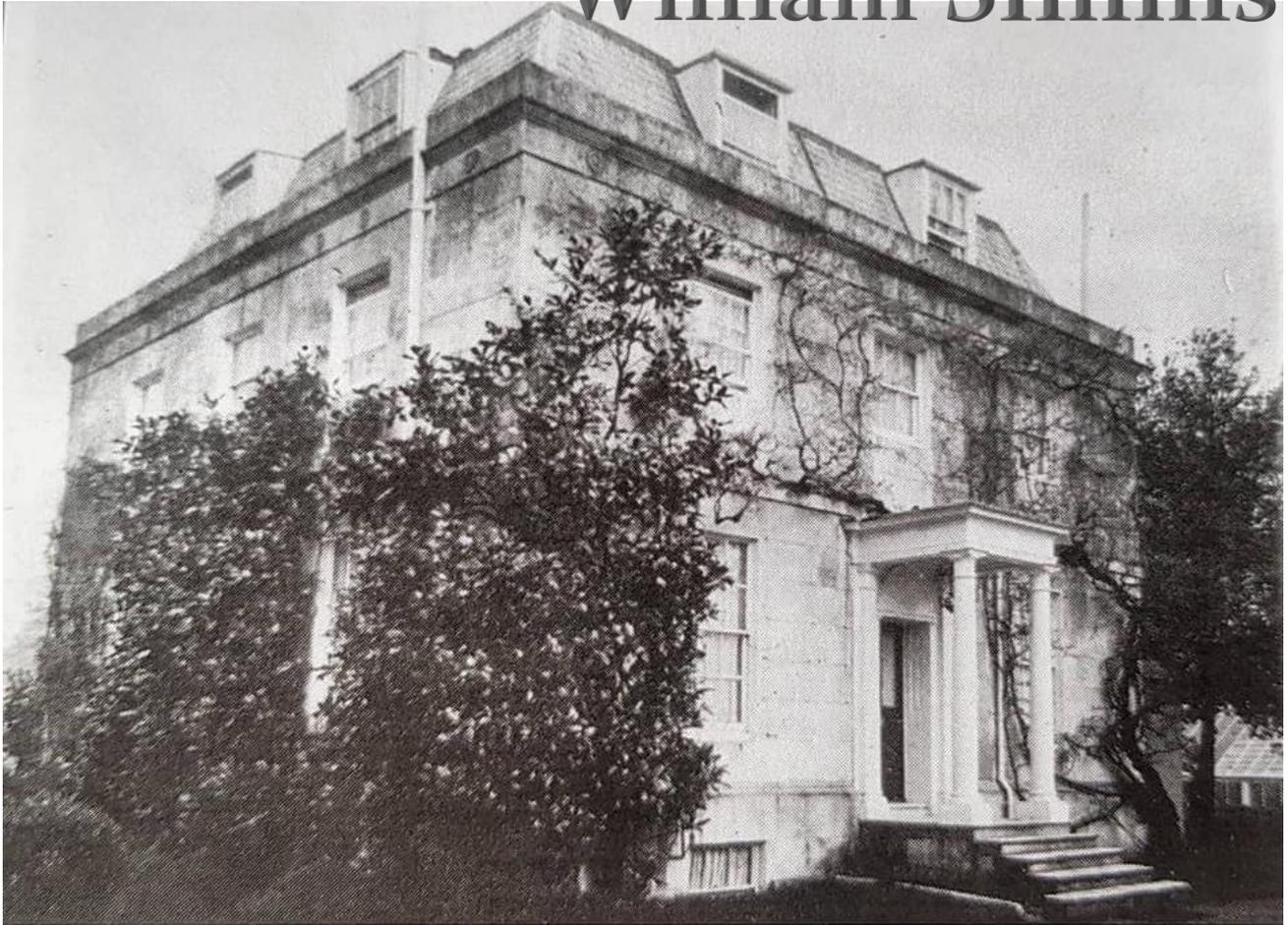
Membership Renewals

A BIG thank you to everyone who has renewed their membership. We've had extra donations as well - which is a lovely bonus. Your continuing support for CORA is very much appreciated.

If you haven't got round to renewing just yet, it's not too late. Connie can be contacted at:

Beighton88@yahoo.co.uk

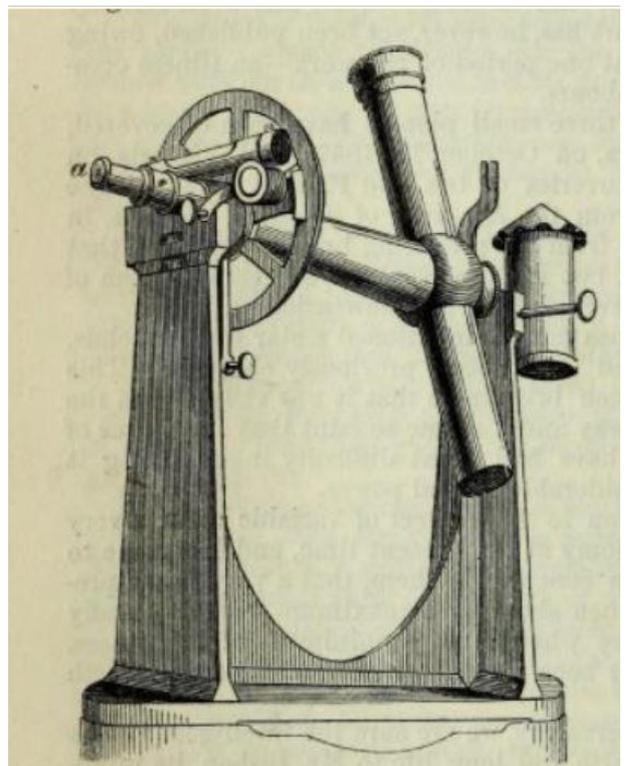
Bramble Haw & William Simms



One of the many handsome Carshalton houses demolished in the early 20th century was Bramble Haw. It stood on a triangular plot between Acre Lane and Westcroft Road. From 1851 to 1860 this fine Portland stone house was home to William Simms - and in his garden he built an observatory.

The observatory was a simple 16 x 8ft wooden construction with a flat roof covered in asphalt. One half of the room was used for calculation and was permanently covered over; the half with the telescope could be uncovered - six rollers on rails were fixed to the underside of a shutter. Outside, Simms also had a larger equatorial telescope on a heavy base with a 9in. aperture and 15ft. focal length.

As a renowned scientific instrument maker, it's not surprising that William Simms was interested in the technicalities of observing the stars. As early as 1817, he specialized in precision surveying instruments, supplying theo-



The transit telescope in the Carshalton observatory

dolites to the Ordnance Survey and then to the East India Company, including those used by George Everest. Later, his company furnished telescopes, meridian circles and other astronomical instruments to most of the observatories around the world including Greenwich, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Kraków, Madras and Calcutta. At that time, the measuring of positions, orbits and astronomical constants was the main function of observatories. Transit timings, then the most accurate method of measuring the positions of objects in space, relied upon meridian instruments to perform these complicated reckonings.

William Simms was particularly interested in the accurate division of the circle, essential for the manufacture of precise scientific instruments. In 1825 he was asked to repair and re-divide an astronomical circle made by Edward Troughton in 1800. Troughton, one of the pre-eminent manufacturers of scientific instruments, invited Simms to become a partner in his company. Troughton & Simms was in business until 1915.

William was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society from 1831 and was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1852. He was also an Associate of the Institution of Civil Engineers. He died at his home in Carshalton at the age of 66 on 21st June 1860. His son, James, continued the business supplying high quality instruments around the world. One such purchase by the British Government was for two 6 inch refractors, known as Simms nos. 1 and 2, for the 1874 expedition to observe the Transit of Venus.

Sources:

Society for the History of Astronomy - <https://shasurvey.wordpress.com/observatories-surrey/>
Royal Observatory, Greenwich - <http://www.royalobservatorygreenwich.org/articles.php?article=1231>
Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Simms
Transit Circle: The story of William Simms by Elenor Mennim 1992
Old Carshalton by John Phillips/LBS 2008



William Simms 1850



This photo is thought to show one of the refractor telescopes used to observe the transit of Venus.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We'd like to hear from you. Your comments and suggestions would be very welcome.

Email: savetheoldrectory@gmail.com



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