

# CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

## February 2010

One of the most rewarding aspects of being your Chairman is that I have the opportunity of working with an incredible team of hard working officers and Council members. In this my fourth annual report as Chairman I dedicate this to them and highlight many aspects of their expertise and enthusiasm for the roles they undertake.

Our Vice Chairman, Francis Lee, continues to represent the Society at many committees influencing the developments within Eltham, particularly on Eltham Town Centre matters. I very much value his advice and support and Francis is always there behind the scenes preparing the hall for our monthly lectures. Our Secretary and Amenity Committee Chairman, Laurie Baker, holds two of the most significant positions and ensures that the Society's administrative functions are expertly maintained and provides superb support to the Council and steers the Amenity Committee, which has immense respect across the Eltham community. Laurie continues to maintain and update our website, which is an incredible resource for members and all those with an interest in Eltham and the Society.

Our Treasurer, Margaret Skinner, presents and maintains our finances in excellent order and her advice and expertise are always sought at Council meetings and is a valued member of the Amenity committee. Sue Kelly, our Membership Secretary took over this role from Gill Towey during the year and has done an excellent job in processing the membership renewals and contributed greatly as a Council member. Without doubt our social events are very much enjoyed and appreciated by members and once again our Social Committee Chairman, Monica Horner provided a superb and diverse range of events culminating in our annual Christmas lunch at the Bromley Court Hotel, always a wonderful way to celebrate the festive season and show our appreciation to Monica for the hard work she undertakes.

Joanne Sanderson, our Programme Secretary organised an outstanding series of lectures and speakers on a variety of subjects from celebrating the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Darwin, the success of Mark Wall's *SE Nine* magazine, the delights of Tom Hart Dyke's World Garden to Ray Andrew's incredible archive film looking back on Eltham and Margaret Taylor telling the Story of Mr Gregory. It all goes to show that our lecture programme is paramount in the Society's activities.

Another aspect of the Society which is paramount is of course our quarterly newsletter, so professionally edited by John Kennett and assisted by Marion Kennett. Each edition is eagerly awaited by all members, which is central to the Society's aims and objectives of promoting Eltham's rich heritage, encouraging members to record their reminiscences and record the Society's activities and developments in modern day Eltham.

We also had a change in Newsletter Distributor in 2009 and I would like to thank John Smith for taking over this important role from Dick Bowmaker. John has reviewed the distribution process for the newsletters and I would like to thank him for all his efforts and the improvements made. John is always willing to assist in all matters relating to the Society and we await ideas that he is discussing with other Council members about 'modernising' the Society. I would also once again like to record the immense contribution that Dick Bowmaker played as Newsletter Distributor over many years.

As always, Phyllis Duignan provides excellent administrative support to the Council as Minute Secretary and is always willing to assist on a whole range of matters behind the scenes. Marion Kennett has once again represented the Society on matters relating to Eltham Town Centre issues and Well Hall Pleasaunce and brings a wealth of experience to the Council and is very active in selling our publications. Barbara Kingston has again lead on maintaining our strong link in commemorating Prince John of Eltham with a local school and overseeing and liaising with Deansfield School who this year participated in the commemoration of visits to Eltham Palace and Westminster Abbey to lay flowers at the Prince's tomb.

Sheila Squire is an immense support at lecture meetings, always there early and oversees the welcome refreshment arrangements for lectures and the rota of all those members that help with the refreshments, which is greatly appreciated. John Towey once again secured a large sum of money for our funds, through his hard work in administrating the Gift Aid scheme, which greatly assists our finances. John's wide experience and knowledge is always sought at Council meetings. Gill Towey ensured a smooth transition of the Membership Secretary role and again I record her past immense efforts in undertaking this vital role.

I could not end my report without mentioning what was one of the key highlights of 2009 and that was the event to celebrate the centenary of the publication of the unique book on Eltham's history *The Story of Royal Eltham* by RRC Gregory. The event was conceived and organised by John Kennett whose aim was to have a photo call with as many people as possible holding a copy of the book and what was so great about this event was that an enormous number of people rose to the challenge and participated holding their own copies with pride. The event so exemplified a key role of the Society in understanding and promoting Eltham's history and it was so appropriate that our founder member, John Kennett should take centre stage and remind us all of the lasting legacy of RRC Gregory and the great contribution he made to recording Eltham's past and the people that influenced its development.

The event was made all the more special with the author's grand-daughter, Sue Gregory from North London being present and two of his great grand-children. What a wonderful surprise and that the event was held at Eltham Church of England School in Roper Street the actual place where Richard Gregory devised this treasured and unique book, and where the Society started in 1965.

I conclude by thanking all those that have helped the Society throughout 2009. If it has been selling publications and encouraging others to join, assisting with the refreshments at lectures, enjoying social and other events, attending our monthly lectures or just relaxing at home with a copy of the newsletter. I would like to thank you all for your continued support and making The Eltham Society a Society well worth belonging to.

David Sleep