

# Sutton House Society Newsletter

## September 2003



For all interested in the past, present and future of Sutton House

### Sutton House Society trip to Stour Valley



We were fortunate to have a fine day for our trip to the area both loved and painted by 18<sup>th</sup> century **John Constable** and 20<sup>th</sup> century **Alfred Munnings**.

We began in East Bergholt, Constable's childhood home. Only a stable entrance now remains of East Bergholt House where he was born, but many old buildings survive, including the barn which acted as the artist's first studio and the cottage home of village glazier, John Dunthorne, who enjoyed painting and helped to foster young John Constable's growing interest in art. Hackney could not afford a bell tower when St. John's Church was built and so, as we know, left the tower of the old church which still remains as a pleasing feature in the Narrow Way. A similar problem faced East Bergholt in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century: in 1531 the bells of St. Mary's church were put in a wooden cage in the churchyard as a temporary measure. However, the planned tower was never built and they still are in the wooden cage and are operated by a wheel. According to one theory Cardinal Wolsey had promised money for the bell tower but fell into disfavour before making the gift. In Constable's day the vicar was the Rev. Rudd, who for ten years opposed



John Constable's marriage to Rudd's grand-daughter, Maria Bicknell. In the end the couple defied him.

After lunch by the River Stour at Flatford, which inspired Constable with a sense of the Divine and gave much pleasure to Munnings, we crossed the county border from Suffolk into Essex.

Alfred Munnings lived for many years at Castle House in Dedham. He left this elegant and spacious house with its garden studio and large grounds to be used as a gallery where the public could enjoy his work. We did enjoy his work; as well as his famous pictures of horses and racing, we saw scenes of life in the local gypsy camp, lively children, trips on the river, landscapes in Exmoor and Scotland – one of his pictures he painted with twigs because he had forgotten his brushes! The high spot was seeing a depiction of a very contented and maternal pig with young. Before leaving Dedham, we paid a brief visit to the very fine parish church of St. Mary the Virgin.

Our especial thanks go to Peter our efficient and ever-patient minibus driver.

AILSA PAIN, committee member

## Beating the Bounds

Up until the 1860s it was a regular practice in the ancient parish of Hackney, as elsewhere, to beat the bounds. The Rector, churchwardens, choir boys and other parishioners would walk around the perimeter of the parish checking on the condition of the boundary posts and impressing on the young boys the parochial limits by the administration of a gentle beating with willow branches. Most of the boundary posts have now disappeared though some remain, particularly in Victoria Park, a third of which was formerly in Hackney parish.

In 1992, on the initiative of the Sutton House Society, a new boundary post was put up in the Middlesex Filter Beds and made from part of an old oak beam from Sutton House. It was blessed by the then Rector of St. John-at-Hackney, the late Rev. Bill Hurdman.

The plaque commemorating the event was a temporary one which has faded away but on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October the post, with a new metal plaque, will be blessed again by the present Rector, Rev. John Pridmore, in memory of Bill who was a long-serving member of the Sutton House Local Committee. We hope to have a good attendance from Sutton House Society members and friends. We will meet at the Princess of Wales on Lea Bridge Road at 1.30pm or in the filter beds nature reserve nearby at 2.00pm (turn left at the gates). Afterwards, those that wish will walk the eastern boundary of the parish along the River Lea and back to Sutton House for tea (about 1½ hours).

*We are grateful to Lea Valley Park Authority for their cooperation in this event.*

## Property Manager's report

### No. 16a Car Yard

If you are a regular visitor to Sutton House you may have noticed that a start has been made on clearing the car yard. The landowner has been served an order (under environmental protection legislation) by Hackney Council to clear the land and we look forward to this being done in the next month or so!

### Black History Month at Sutton House

Sutton House is proud to be hosting a series of events for Black History Month in October 2004. Contact Kathleen Patterson on 020-825 9055 if you would like further details, or look out for our latest

*What's On.* Next year we shall also be promoting a series of monthly talks leading up to and including Black History Month.

### London Area Manager

At last we have a new area manager for the London properties including Sutton House! Her name is Zoe Gamble and she has extensive experience of working in the heritage sector, including stints at English Heritage and Somerset House. She started work on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2003 and is based at the London area office at Queen Anne's Gate.

SIÂN HARRINGTON, Property Manager

## Sutton House events

### Discovery Days

Free activity-packed events for all ages

#### **Black Cats and Broomsticks**

Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> October, 11.30am to 5pm

#### **Christmas Time Travel**

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> December, 11.30am to 5pm

### Art Gallery

#### **Home: what does it mean to you?**

Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> October to Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. In this unique photographic exhibition six local people share with visitors their thoughts and feelings about "home", using the many stories of Sutton House as their starting points.

### **Ghosts of the East End**

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> November to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> November. Atmospheric photographs by Paul Gardner of old buildings and disused spaces in East London that survived the Blitz, demolition by local councils in the 1960s and property developments in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.

### Talks and events

#### **Queen Victoria's African God-daughters**

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2pm to 3pm. Caroline Bressey of University College London talks about Sarah Forbes, a West African woman who became Queen Victoria's god-daughter, and her daughter Victoria Davies who was educated in France and at Cheltenham Ladies College. This informative talk explores issues of class and prejudice in Victorian Britain. Admission is free after entry to the house.

## **Sutton House Free Guided Tours**

Sundays 5<sup>th</sup> October and 2<sup>nd</sup> November. These informative events bring to life the architectural changes at Sutton House, exploring the stories of the many different occupants, their social aspirations and the changing face of Hackney. Tours start at 1.30pm and 3.30pm (duration about 1 hour). Admission is free after entry to the house.

## **Ghost Tours**

Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October and Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> November. Experience the spookier side of Sutton House. Your guide is a costumed character from the past who will lead you through the house telling tall tales, or are they? With creaking floorboards and whispering shadows, will you hear the wailing dogs or see the Blue Lady? Doors open at 5.30pm. Tours at 6pm, 7pm and 8pm. Tickets: adults £5, children £3, families £14; available from the Box Office on 01494-755 572.

## **Christmas Craft Fair**

Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> December, 11.30am to 5.30pm. The historic rooms will be filled with over thirty craft stalls as this highly successful annual event provides the perfect opportunity to find unusual Christmas gifts. The event includes children's activities, mince pies and mulled wine, all adding to the festive spirit. Tickets: adults £1.50, accompanied children free; available on the door.

## **Candle-lit Carols**

Friday 12<sup>th</sup> December. In the atmospheric candle-lit courtyard join in the carols led by a jolly brass band. Raise a glass of mulled wine to welcome in the festive season. Doors open at 5.30pm. Group singing from 6pm. Tickets: adults £5, children £3, families £14; available from the Box Office on 01494-755 572.

## **Tudor and Stuart London**

Tuesdays 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2003 to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2004, 6.30pm to 8.30pm. London experienced a vast population increase during the early modern period. People poured into the metropolis from all over the country. This created great commercial and cultural opportunities but also led to severe social and health problems. For further information please contact Verity Barnett on 020-7631 6655.

## **Lives of Londoners Past**

Fridays 19<sup>th</sup> September to 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2pm to 4pm. A series of ten weekly talks. Come along and enjoy the oldest house in East London where you can go on guided tours, take part in art and crafts workshops, listen to talks and learn more about the lives

of Londoners from long ago. Entry is free to Hackney residents over the age of 55. Please bring a utility bill or other evidence of residency. For details please call Mary Colson, Education Officer, on 020-8525 9057.

## **Free Recital**

Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> October: **Thomas Tulacek**.

## **Sutton House Music Society**

The Sutton House Music Society presents its twelfth season of concerts at Sutton House. All concerts start at 5pm. Tickets: adults £8.50, concessions £5, families £20; available from the Box Office on 01494-755 572.

Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October: **Richard Tunncliffe** (violoncello and violoncello piccolo).

Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November: **Emma Dogliani** (soprano), **Katy Bingham-Best** (contralto), **Lilian Wilson** (piano).

Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> December: **City Chamber Choir**.

## **Sutton House Society events**

### **Autumn Trip**

See Sutton House Society Autumn Trip on page 4 for details.

### **Beating the Bounds**

See Beating the Bounds on page 2 for details.

### **Annual Lecture**

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm in the Great Chamber. The lecture this year is called *A Hackney Anthology*. There will be readings about Hackney from writers such as Daniel Defoe, Samuel Pepys, John Betjeman, Peter Ackroyd, Barbara Vine and Harold Pinter. Tickets are £5 to members and £6 to non-members, available on the door or in advance by calling Sutton House on 020-8525 9054. The ticket price includes wine and a wide selection of snacks and nibbles.

### **Annual General Meeting**

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November at 7.30pm in the Wenlock Barn. This is your chance to vote for the committee. If you wish to make any nominations to the committee please ensure that they are received by the committee at least 2 weeks before the meeting.

### **Christmas Social**

Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> December at 6.00pm in the Old Tower, St Augustine's, Hackney Churchyard, The Narrow Way. As well as nibbles and mulled wine we shall be having an introduction to the art of the campanologist by local bell ringer, Steve Jakeman.

## Sutton House Society Autumn Trip

The autumn trip is to 16<sup>th</sup> century Eastbury Manor House, Eastbury Square, in Barking, at 2.00pm on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October. Our guide for the day will be Mark Watson, the Borough Curator. There is no charge for the trip, but there will be a contribution towards the cost of tea and coffee on the day. Please return the booking form to secure your place.

### A brief history of Eastbury Manor House

The precise date of construction of the present Eastbury Manor House is uncertain. Building work is believed to have taken place after the dissolution of the monasteries and in the time of Elizabeth I, when the land was privately owned. It was one of several manors in the Barking, Dagenham and Ilford areas which belonged to Barking Abbey. It was originally designed as the country residence of a wealthy London merchant, Clement Sysley.

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was known as Eastbury Hall, to reflect its secular nature. The house was originally in an isolated position surrounded by marshland. In the early 1600s it attracted rich Catholic families who could practise their banned religion there in safety.

From the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was occupied by a succession of tenant farmers. Lack of maintenance resulted in the building falling gradually into decay.

The eastern stair-turret was partly demolished by 1814. In 1834 the dilapidated building was used for farming and to accommodate agricultural labourers, as the tenant farmers had moved out. In the early 1840s, it was saved from imminent demolition by the antiquarian, Edward Sage, Deputy Steward for the Manor of Barking, who recognized its architectural significance. He dissuaded the owner, Wasey Sterry, from pulling the house down. In 1841 Sterry used parts of the building for stables, grain storage and housing coaches. In 1842 he died insane. By 1861, the interior conditions had deteriorated further. W. D. Collier found "long galleries wreathed with cobwebs and half filled with lumber". Some essential repairs were carried out, but by 1880 it was still impoverished.

The building again became in danger of being demolished circa 1913 when the estate was broken up for building purposes. The preservation of the house was due to the enthusiastic actions of heritage bodies during the difficult period of the Great War. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings campaigned to raise funds. The London Survey Committee published a special monograph, *Eastbury Manor House, Barking* illustrated by Hubert V. C.

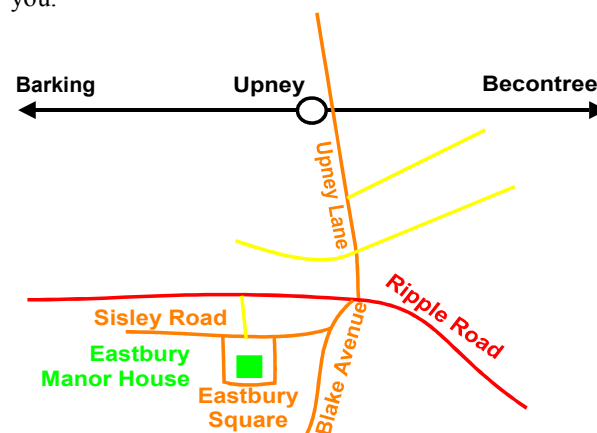
Curtis in 1917. In 1918, the National Trust purchased the house, saving it for posterity. Later the Trust went into partnership with the local authority to open the house to the public.

The building today retains the majority of its Elizabethan appearance on the outside, as it was never extended. It has recently undergone over a million pounds' worth of restoration work, so if you have not visited for a number of years you will be pleased to see the improvements including a new cafe, terrace and lift, and work to the historic fabric of the building.

### Directions by public transport

We are due to meet at the main entrance to Eastbury Manor House at 2.00pm. We are not arranging transport to the site as it is easy to get to by public transport. However, if you would prefer to get a lift do indicate this on your booking form and we'll see what we can do!

Eastbury Manor House is a 5 to 10 minutes' walk from Upney station on the District Line. If you are travelling from Hackney by public transport you should allow 45 to 60 minutes for the whole journey. From Hackney Central take the Silverlink train eastbound to West Ham (the train that goes all the way to West Ham is the North Woolwich service, running 1 and 31 minutes past each hour from Hackney Central and taking about 15 minutes to get to West Ham), and then from West Ham the District Line eastbound to Upney (five stops from West Ham, taking about 15 minutes). At Upney, turn right out of the station down Upney Lane. When you come to the main road, Ripple Road, cross over, and turn down Blake Avenue, the road just opposite the junction between Upney Lane and Ripple Road. Take the first right on Blake Avenue onto Sisley Road, and then the first left, onto Eastbury Square. You will see Eastbury Manor directly ahead of you.



Sutton House, 2&4 Homerton High Street, Hackney, London, E9 6JQ. Tel: 020-8986 2264

National Trust website: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk>

Sutton House Society website: <http://welcome.to/SuttonHouse>

# Booking Form

## Sutton House Society Autumn Trip : Monday 20<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Please fill in this form to book places on the trip, and send it to:

Sutton House, 2&4 Homerton High Street, London E9 6JQ.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TELEPHONE .....

EMAIL.....

I should like to book ..... places on the trip.

*Please tick one.*

- I/we shall travel independently.
- I/we shall travel by car from ....., and can offer lifts to ..... people.
- I/we should like a lift (if possible) from .....

SIGNED .....

DATE .....