

Sutton House Society Newsletter

April 2005



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

Welcome to the first newsletter of 2005.

The Sutton House chairs

The Sutton House Society has kindly funded the purchase of six chairs and two armchairs for the Great Chamber at Sutton House. The National Trust has purchased an additional two chairs for the Little Chamber.



These replica chairs replace the late 17th century walnut and cane armchairs. These were lovely chairs but they were constantly on the move as we catered for school parties and weddings. This constant moving made them vulnerable to damage, as did the daily wear and tear at the property. The new chairs are an excellent buy for a busy house like Sutton House. We no longer have to move them out for weddings and school groups, and they are used by the registrars and the couple at the weddings, and by the schoolchildren during their role-play sessions during their visits. An added bonus is that we have doubled the amount of rest space we have in the house. Now visitors who are less mobile can sit down in the Great Chamber for a much-needed rest after the exertion of climbing

up to the first floor. The 17th century chairs have now gone to Paycocke's, a Trust property in Coggeshall, Essex, where I am sure they are much appreciated. (The Sutton House Society summer outing in 1994 included a visit to Paycocke's.)

The following is a description by craftsman Nicholas Berry of the process of selecting designs for the chairs and making them.

We submitted a number of armchair illustrations to Sutton House, dating from the early 1500s to the mid 1700s. We kept to armchairs for this purpose, as opposed to chairs, as a lot more earlier examples exist today. Surviving chairs appear only to date back as far as the start of the seventeenth century. Contemporary illustrations prove they definitely existed before then, just that none (as far as is known), are still around today. Early armchairs were designated to only the most important household members or dignitaries (at the time everyone else normally had to make do with stools), and thus being more valuable (in terms of both cost and pride of ownership), must contribute to their survival in relatively larger numbers today.

Sutton House's final choice of armchair (in this case, it was actually a child's armchair) was dated between 1580 and 1630. The style of construction of this example, although clearly in a scaled-down form, resembles the Caqueteuse type of armchair. These became fashionable during the later half of Elizabeth I's reign and their popularity lasted for the next hundred years. They can be best identified by the horizontal arms of the chair bending inwards to meet the narrower back and the (usually) lighter construction.

We kept the overall height, width and depth dimensions of the armchairs somewhat larger than the chairs for the importance reasons stated above. The chairs also differ in that, being smaller, from plan view they are rectangular rather than tapered. However, they share identical construction methods, just as their original counterparts, utilizing a framed construction jointed together with mortise-and-tenon joints and oak pegs (this is where the terms *joined* and *joinery* originate from). To help to prevent splitting, through the natural movement across the grain of wide wooden boards, the fielded panels of the backs can expand and contract freely within grooves cut in the upper frame members. This simple yet clever system, known as "framed and panelled", was developed during the medieval period and is still in common use today.

The legs are simple turned Doric columns enriched with astragals and this style was replicated in large numbers on many types of furniture from the late sixteenth to the middle of the eighteenth century. They are joined by plain stretchers which are set quite low down, typically in keeping with other chairs of the period. The chairs and armchairs all have hand-carved "sunburst" cresting rails and have been made from kiln-dried solid English oak.

Further details of Nicholas' work can be found on his website: www.earlyoakspecialists.co.uk.

Property Manager's report

Staff changes

We are pleased to welcome Louise Ayres to Sutton House as of 25th April. Louise will be taking over as House and Visitor Services Manager. She has a strong background in house management, having worked at Ham House, the Treasurer's House in York, and Blickling Hall in Norfolk.

The car yard

We hope to be able to come back to you in the next newsletter with the launch of a fund-raising campaign to clean up the land.

Spring Outing

The Red House, Bexleyheath; 2pm on Friday 20th May 2005

Red House was acquired by the National Trust in 2003 and opened in the same year. Commissioned by William Morris in 1859 and designed by Philip Webb, Red House is of enormous international significance in the history of domestic architecture and garden design. The garden is a delight, and should be one of the highlights of our visit providing it is a nice day! (We may be able to arrange a picnic in the garden before the tour.)

Please return the booking form if you are interested in coming. Parking is very limited at the Red House, so we will aim to get there by public transport. However, there is parking about 15 minutes away from Red House, so if you are intending to drive please indicate on your booking form whether you would be happy to offer a lift to someone else. Further details (about transport and about meeting for lunch beforehand) will be sent to you on booking.

Sutton House forthcoming events

Art gallery

Esther Collins : Wednesday 6th April – Monday 2nd May

Local artist Esther Collins is forming an organisation of artists to trade tasks and conversation with residents on the Kingsmead Estate.

Gayhurst School, Dreams : Wednesday 4th May – Sunday 5th June

Costumes, designs and words based on the children's dreams and aspirations.

Young People's Art Prize : Wednesday 8th June – Sunday 3rd July

Young people from a Hackney secondary school will be taking part in the popular Sutton House Art Prize. Come and see the work of these artists on display for the first time.

Activities for all ages

Free Sutton House Tours

Guided tours at 3.00pm on the first Sunday of each month from February to November. Please contact Sutton House for further details.

Over 55s

Every Wednesday afternoon at Sutton House is dedicated to people who are aged over 55. On offer is a programme of free talks, tours, art-and-craft sessions and activities. Contact Sutton House for further details.

Painting Places : Sundays, 10th April, 8th May, 12th June, 10th July; 12noon – 4pm

A series of special days where visitors are invited to capture Sutton House with assistance from a professional artist and free art materials. Free after admission to the house.

Story Spaces / Art Places : Sundays, 24th April, 29th May, 26th June; 12noon – 4pm

Explore the many different spaces of Sutton House! Storytellers will share tales to delight and surprise you, while the team will be here to help you create your own arty response to our magical spaces. Free activity-packed days for all ages, each with a different theme.

Adult Learners Lectures : Sunday 22nd May; 1pm – 5pm

The Open University returns to Sutton House with a series of lectures on local history. Admission is free but booking is advisable. Call 020-8525 9055.

Talks, tours and courses

London from the East : Tuesdays: 12th April – 28th June; 6.30pm – 8.30pm

This Birkbeck College course, based at Hackney's historic Sutton House, will examine the development of London's East End since the 16th century. We will look at the East End's rich traditions — as a centre of crafts and industry, as the point of reception for immigrants from many lands, and as the home of radical political and social movements. Site visits included. For further information and to book your place please contact Carol Watts on 020-7631 6652

Huguenots talk, at Sutton House (SH10) : Saturday 7th May; 11am – 12noon

Huguenots walk, meet at Liverpool Street station (SH11) : Saturday 28th May; 11am – 12noon

Huguenots walk, meet at Liverpool Street station (SH12) : Saturday 11th June; 11am – 12noon

Our very popular talk-and-walk series led by Michael Berlin of Birkbeck College, examining the contribution of French Protestant Huguenot immigrants to the development of East London. Adult £6 per event. Tickets from the Box Office.

Black Popular Music 1850 – 1940 : Saturday 4th June; 2pm – 3pm

Mark Berresford, jazz writer, will be presenting this upbeat talk that brings to life the dominant influence of black musicians on Western culture. Mark will be using rare film, photographs and recordings to illustrate his talk. Free after admission to the house

Seasonal events

Spring Fete : Saturday 14th May and Sunday 15th May

Our popular spring fair returns to Sutton House. Fill your baskets with plants and herbs, and buy pots and planters by local craft workers. We will also have a selection of related crafts to buy. Adult £2.00, accompanied children free. Tickets available on the door.

Sutton House Music Society concerts

Ticket prices per concert are £9 (one or two concerts), £7 (three or more concerts), £6 (concessions), £20 (families), £8 (groups) and £5 (concessionary groups), obtainable on 01494-755 572.

Bach cello suites (3) : Sunday 17th April; 5pm

The last concert in Richard Tunnicliffe's series of all of Bach's solo cello suites — also featuring Britten's great final suite for solo cello.

Shostakovich series (13) : Sunday 1st May; 5pm

The thirteenth in the Fitzwilliam String Quartet's acclaimed series of the complete Shostakovich string quartets at Sutton House, in which they are also joined by Penelope Roskell for Schumann's Piano Quintet.

Song recital : Sunday 5th June; 3pm [sic]

Tamsin Coombs returns to Sutton House to perform with Lilian Wilson an attractive programme of songs by Mozart, Schubert, Wolf, Poulenc and English composers.

The Red House, Bexleyheath; 2pm on Friday 20th May 2005

Please fill in this form if you would like to come on the outing and send it with a cheque payable to the National Trust (if applicable) to **Sutton House, 2&4 Homerton High Street, London E9 6JQ.**

NAME

ADDRESS

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TELEPHONE

EMAIL

	Number of people	Cost per person	Total cost
NT members		free	£0
Non-NT members		£5	£
Total			£

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

I/we should / should not be interested in meeting before the tour for lunch.

SIGNED

DATE