

Sutton House Society Newsletter

August 2006



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

Summer outing

Please join us on the Society's summer outing to Buckinghamshire on Bank Holiday Monday (28th August).

In the morning we shall visit Milton's Cottage. There will be an introductory talk, followed by an opportunity to view the Milton records and his period cottage. The herb garden is listed by English Heritage.

There are various possibilities for lunch in Chalfont St. Giles, which is nearby.

In the afternoon we shall visit Chenies Manor, which is just a few miles from Chalfont St. Giles. This house is mentioned in the indictment of Catherine Howard. It has a very pleasant garden and a tea shop.

We shall depart by minibus from outside Sutton House at 9:30 am, and return there by 6:00 pm. The cost of the outing will be £12 for members and £15 for non-members. These prices include admission to both properties. To come on the outing, please fill in the attached form and send it with your payment to the Secretary.

Sutton House Society Annual Lecture 2006

We are very pleased to announce that the Dalston-based novelist and idiosyncratic travel writer Iain Sinclair has agreed to give the annual lecture this year. It will take place on Thursday 19th October, starting at 7:30. The subject is 'Disappearances'. The cost will be £5 for members, and £6 for non-members. To book your place, please fill in the attached form and send it with your payment to the Secretary.

What the critics said about Iain Sinclair's *Dining on Stones* (2004): 'The ultimate road novel, and Iain Sinclair is in the fast lane' [J. G. BALLARD]; 'The reach, integrity and beauty of Iain Sinclair's writing is simply without parallel. He is the hierophant of contemporary English letters' [WILL SELF].

Spring outing

A very select group of us came on the Society's spring outing to Hampstead at the end of April. We visited the Freud Museum and Fenton House. The opportunity to see the Freud

Museum was particularly well timed, because it almost coincided with the celebrations of Freud's centenary. At Fenton House it was good to see Kathleen Patterson, who was on a temporary posting there from Sutton House.

We are very grateful to Ailsa Pain, who once again was our indefatigable guide.



Freud's statue



Fenton House

A Celebration of the Quincentenary of Sir Ralph Sadleir: 23rd–24th June 2007

Next year we are celebrating the birth, 500 years ago, of Ralph Sadleir, the builder of Sutton House and notable 16th century statesman. Please register your interest *now* either via the Society's website or to the Secretary, Sutton House Society, High View, 44b Woodbury Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9NG.

The Prince of Swindlers

The last five centuries in the history of the Sadleir family have seen many prominent descendants of Ralph, for example: the novelist Michael Sadleir (1888–1957) who wrote the famous book and film *Fanny by Gaslight*; Superintendent John Sadleir, the Australian policeman, who arrested the infamous Ned Kelly; and, notoriously, John Sadleir 'The Prince of Swindlers'!

Bill Sadleir, a direct descendant of Ralph, has written a very interesting article on the latter. Unfortunately it is too long to be included in this newsletter; however, we have edited the opening paragraphs of the article and if you would like to receive a complete copy please send £1.50 (cheques payable to the Sutton House Society) to cover copying, postage and packing to the Secretary, Sutton House Society, High View, 44b Woodbury Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9NG. Alternatively, you may download the article from the Society's website.

‘These men are signs of the times – emblems of our era.’¹ What does the fall of John Sadleir, and of his fictional derivatives, tell us about his age?

John Sadleir, ‘the prince of swindlers’,² was born in 1813 of a middle-class farming family in Co. Tipperary. His father, a Protestant, married a Catholic and converted to Catholicism, and Sadleir was educated by the Jesuits. He trained as a solicitor and joined his uncle’s practice in Dublin. At the age of 32 he left the law for a career in business, finance and politics. He became involved in various banking and railway companies and launched a newspaper, the *Telegraph*, in the Catholic interest in Dublin in 1852. He graduated from being the parliamentary agent for Irish railways to become the M.P. for Carlow and subsequently for Sligo. Following the publication of the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in 1851, which sought to counter papal attempts to establish a Catholic hierarchy in Britain, he was one of the leaders of the so-called ‘Irish Brigade’ in Parliament (otherwise known as ‘the Pope’s Brass Band’), whose object was not only to oppose the bill but also to obstruct government business as a whole. Nonetheless, in December 1852 he accepted office as a Junior Lord of the Treasury under Lord Aberdeen. At this, the apogee of his career, he was the coming man, perhaps the next Irish leader, consulted by Cabinet ministers and spoken of as a future Chancellor of the Exchequer.

He was, however, obliged to resign his position because of an electoral impropriety, and his troubles forced themselves in upon him. So heavily had he speculated (and lost) in Irish land, railway stocks, Californian gold companies, German coal mines and commodities, that he had borrowed huge sums from the London and County Bank and from the Tipperary Bank; he had embezzled trust assets and misappropriated title deeds; he had forged conveyances and bills of exchange; and he had sold counterfeit shares in the Royal Swedish Railways Company and peculated the proceeds. Pressed for cash, with the elaborate edifice of his malfeasance crumbling, he took prussic acid on Hampstead Heath on 17th February 1856. ‘Thus died, by his own hand ... John Sadleir, one of the greatest, if not the greatest ... swindler that this or any other country has produced’, wrote the editor of *The Bankers’ Magazine* in 1859. When the full extent of Sadleir’s defalcations was revealed, they were found to have amounted to about £1.25 million (about £75 million in 2001 terms). According to Charles MacCarthy Collins, writing in 1880 on Irish banking, his death precipitated ‘a panic which was the greatest that ever occurred in Ireland.’ *The Times* summarily pronounced him ‘a national calamity’.

[BILL SADLEIR]

Update on the car yard site

I would like to thank the Sutton House Society for the generous donation of £2,000 and your offer to raise additional funds towards the cost of archaeological investigations which we wish to undertake on the land adjacent to Sutton House, once used as a car breaker’s yard. As I am sure you know, the land is believed to include the site where the Tan House was once situated.

Unfortunately, because of the nature of its former use, the land is believed to contain significant levels of pollution which would need addressing prior to any extensive archaeological exploration. The National Trust have now commissioned an investigation into the extent and nature of the pollution and this work is currently underway. Once the nature of the problem has been identified we will take the necessary steps to address the contamination.

¹ Charles Lever, *Davenport Dunn: A Man of our Day*

² D.M.Morier Evans, *Facts, Failures and Frauds. Revelations Financial, Mercantile, Criminal*

The environmental investigation will involve a small amount of hand-digging adjacent to the wall of Sutton House and we hope that this will be monitored by an archaeologist from the Museum of London Archaeological Service, just in case any items of interest are exposed by the process. It is anticipated that a more extensive archaeological ‘dig’ will be possible once we have received the contamination report. If the levels of pollution preclude any work on site until after remediation this may have to be delayed but we would hope to be able to undertake at least a preliminary archaeological investigation later this year.

Naturally the Sutton House Society will be kept informed of developments. We are aware that there is great interest in observing any such activity and we intend to work with you to facilitate any visits or fundraising ‘event’ you may wish to organise.

So, watch this space, as they say, and join us at the Trust in hoping for a favourable environmental report so that we may progress with plans for the site.

[JUNE COOK (Property Manager, Sutton House and other smaller London Properties)]

St. John-at-Hackney Fete

For the last three years the Society and the National Trust have shared a stall at the St. John-at-Hackney Church Fete. This year the fete took place on 23rd July. It was rather more constricted than usual, because of all of the “improvements” that are taking place in the churchyard. And unfortunately, in the afternoon it started to rain – one of the rare occasions in July when rain was not welcome! But despite this, we still managed to achieve takings of £36. Many thanks to all those who donated items to sell, and to Mike Gray, Alan Hayday, Peter Mudge and Rhys Roberts for minding the stall.



London Voices

On 9th June the Heritage Lottery Fund awarded the National Trust (London) a grant of £401,000 for the London Voices project. The project will be a three-year family-based community learning programme based at Sutton House that will seek to engage new audiences. In addition to Sutton House the project will include workshops at Ham, Osterley and Morden Hall Park. Ruth Clarke will manage the project, with support from project posts funded through the grant.

Booking form: summer outing and annual lecture

Please fill in this form if you would like to come on the outing or to the annual lecture and send it with a cheque payable to “Sutton House Society” to the Secretary, Sutton House Society, High View, 44b Woodbury Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 9NG.

NAME

ADDRESS

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TELEPHONE

EMAIL

<i>Event</i>		<i>Price per person</i>	<i>Number of people</i>	<i>Total</i>
Summer outing	SHS members	£12		£
	Non-SHS members	£15		£
Annual lecture	SHS members	£5		£
	Non-SHS members	£6		£
Total				£

SIGNED

DATE