

Sutton House Society Newsletter

January 2007



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

Sadleir Quincentenary

The programme for the Sadleir Quincentenary weekend (23rd to 24th June 2007) is out now. If you have received this newsletter through the post, a copy of the programme leaflet should be included. If you are reading this newsletter on the Society's website, please download the leaflet from www.suttonhousesociety.org.uk/SadleirLeaflet.pdf. There is a booking form at the end of this newsletter and there is also one at www.suttonhousesociety.org.uk/ApplyForm/Sadleir500Form.php. This online form also allows you to book your tickets using Direct Transfer (if you have an online banking facility) or by debit card, credit card or Paypal.

Annual General Meeting, 16th November 2006, Report from the Chair

After a rather strained relationship between the Society and the National Trust during negotiations over restructuring proposals in 2005 I am pleased to report a return to the good level of cooperation which has typified relations between the two bodies since 1987. At the last AGM we bade goodbye to property manager Siân Harrington, and welcomed Louise Ayres who had been appointed custodian, and June Cook property manager although based away from Sutton House. Louise has been a valuable ex-officio member of the Society but has now moved on to fresh fields. In her place we welcome Deborah Hudson and wish her all the best in her new appointment.

Committee

Within the committee there have also been changes during 2006. Colin Brooking stepped down as secretary for personal reasons in May, and we were fortunate that Carole Mills (formerly property manager) was able to pick up the reins. Four committee meetings were held in the course of the year

Monograph

I am very pleased to announce that our book *Sutton House: a Tudor courtier's house in Hackney* has been awarded second prize in the prestigious SCOLA (Standing Conference on London Archaeology) awards, worth £100, 'for an outstanding contribution towards archaeological publication'. Although this modest prize is shared by four authors I hope that it will be agreed to donate it to further archaeological research on this site.

Holbein portrait

Further in the category of good news comes the news that a drawing by court painter Hans Holbein is now accepted by Holbein authorities to *plausibly* be Sir Rafe Sadleir. This drawing, and an oil painting based on it on loan from New York, was on display at Tate Britain in the autumn.

Archaeology

The Society has always been very keen to see an archaeological investigation of the former car yard, now owned by the National Trust, at the side of the house, because from documentary evidence it is the site of a medieval tannery and was later owned by Sadleir and in 1605 became the property of Thomas Sutton. In May the Society donated £2,000 towards an exploratory dig on the site. At the time of writing this work is about to commence.

Sadleir quincentenary developments

We all know by now that next year sees the 500th anniversary of the birth of Sir Rafe Sadleir. We have been planning the event for several years but this year we formed a sub-committee consisting of Lissa Chapman, Louise Ayres, Peter Mudge and Mike Gray, later joined by Carole Mills and Audrey Seabrook. The weekend of the 23rd and 24th of June 2007 was chosen for this event and Dr. David Starkey has agreed to give the keynote talk which will also be the Society's annual lecture for 2007. A grant application will be made to the lottery to support a children's project with local schools and a coach visit to Standon is also being planned. Descendants of Sadleir from all over the world will be sent a leaflet, which is being designed by Audrey and Peter, early in the new year, and members will receive a copy with the next newsletter.

Newsletters

Three newsletters were circulated this year in March, August and September and we thank Peter Mudge for putting them together and sending to members electronically and to the National Trust for printing and distributing the hard copies.

Events and activities

The Annual Lecture was given by Iain Sinclair, Hackney novelist and travel writer. His subject was his newly published book *London, City of Disappearances*. Twenty-one members and nineteen others attended, and a surplus was made on the evening.

Visits were made to Bromley Hall, at Bromley-by-Bow, arranged by Colin Brooking. A very interesting recently restored building probably predating Sutton House.

Ailsa Pain organised two further outings in 2006: in April to Hampstead for the Freud Museum and Fenton House, and in August to Milton's Cottage and Chenies Manor in Buckinghamshire.

Hackney Tower and Churchyard gardens

Members of the Society have been involved in the lottery bids for Hackney Tower and the Churchyard gardens, both projects are nearing completion



Iain Sinclair

SCOLA Award

The book Sutton House: a Tudor courtier's house in Hackney won a prize in November for an outstanding contribution towards archaeological publication. This is how the book came to be written.

Right from the start the Sutton House Society decided on three principal objectives:

1. To convince the National Trust to restore the house and open it to the public for a wide range of community uses and general visitor enjoyment
2. To research the, then unknown, history of the house hopefully leading to a substantial publication
3. To seek acquisition of the motor repair yard to the west of the house which in the 16th century was part of the estate of this house and would give visitors a view of the least altered original elevation and give the opportunity to create a garden and provide wheelchair users access to the first and second floors.

The first objective was achieved within two years. What was known as the Community Scheme was approved by the National Trust in September 1989. The second and third objectives took a little longer to achieve but eventually both were realized in a space of a few weeks in 2005!

In respect of the research process we were once again fortunate in that a senior officer of the GLC Historic Buildings Division (later absorbed into English Heritage) Victor Belcher, was a Hackney resident. He was able to arrange for two historic-buildings surveyors, Richard Bond and Andy Wittrick, to undertake a

careful analysis of the built structure; a process which was incidentally made easier by the derelict condition of the building at the time.

When it came to research into the people who owned or occupied the house and were responsible for the original building and the later alterations, we had very little to go on, little more than unsubstantiated theories. A slim volume *The Old House at the Corner* published by the local church in 1906 suggested two early owners, Thomas Sutton and John Dodd. Thomas Sutton was the founder of Charterhouse Hospital and School so it seemed a reasonable starting point to delve into the Charterhouse archives. We met the Master at his house near Smithfield, were entertained to tea and given permission to consult the archives.

It soon became apparent that Sutton's property in Hackney, which was bequeathed to his new foundation on his death in 1612, could not have been what we now call Sutton House at all but a property immediately to the west which had been demolished in 1805. The evidence from the structure of the house suggested a building date in the first half of the 16th century. Did the Charterhouse archives give any clue as to who were Sutton's next-door neighbours? Fortunately, yes, because a sequence of deeds of Sutton's house known as 'the old tanhouse' and dating back to 1487 had been preserved. Correspondence between Sutton and previous owners of the tanhouse and the house next door indicated that a family called Machell lived in this house (now known as Sutton House) in the second half of the 16th century.

The next advance came when a well preserved coat of arms was discovered in the room which is now the gallery, the same as others less well preserved which had been uncovered earlier. The College of Arms were certain that the arms were that of the Milward family although similar to the Dodd family who had monuments in Hackney Church, which is why the Church had jumped to the wrong conclusion. This is when a very fortunate piece of serendipity occurred.

Looking through the card index of manuscripts in the Guildhall Library, London for the merchant, Milward, Mike Gray stumbled on a deed of sale of property in Hackney dated 1550, from one Sir Ralph Sadleir to John Machel, Alderman of the City of London. This clearly related both to 'the old tanhouse' and the house next door (Sutton House) which was described as 'the bryk place'. So now we appeared to have the original builder and owner of Sutton House, Sir Ralph Sadleir, Henry VIII's ambassador to Scotland and later Principal Secretary of State. In the British Museum we found an account book of Sadleir's property in Hackney which confirmed our interpretation of the deed.

Victor Belcher working on wills and court cases involving the early families filled in more background information and we were well on the way to establishing the first 100 years or so of the history of the house. The rest followed over the following years, but it would take too long to describe the progress of the research, only to say a founding member, Jane Straker, phoned up a William Sadleir in the London phone book and made contact with a living linear descendant of Sir Ralph and through him to many other members of the 'dynasty' who were delighted that the first house of their famous ancestor had been identified! We are now looking forward to celebrating the 500th anniversary of his birth. [M.L.G. 2006]



Launch of the Friends of Clapton Cinematograph

The Friends of Clapton Cinematograph was launched in December with the aim of preserving and restoring the historic Clapton Cinematograph Theatre at 229 Lower Clapton Road. Known to many in recent years as the Palace Pavilion, the building's modern frontage hides the facade of the old cinema, which is due to celebrate its centenary year in 2010.



The Clapton Cinematograph Theatre dates from 1910 and was designed by George Duckworth, who was also the architect of the King's Picture Palace in Kensal Rise (now demolished). In its early days it combined live music performances with short one-reel silent films. A 1912 poster advertising the cinema, which is in the possession of Sutton House Society member Julia Lafferty, announces "A splendid Edison Drama, entitled At the Point of the Sword" together with "The Famous Banjoists – Miss Hilda Barry and Mr Harry Stuart".

The Clapton Cinematograph was one of a number of early cinemas which were established in response to the Cinematograph Act of 1909, which required film presentations to be shown under controlled and licensed safety conditions, due to the highly inflammable nature of nitrate film. Among other cinemas of a similar age are the Electric Cinema in Portobello Road and the Phoenix Cinema in East Finchley — both Grade II listed.

Early promotional material for the cinema shows a highly decorated frontage, to reflect the decorative mouldings on the adjacent public house, the White Hart (these may still be seen around the pub's entrance). The cinema's original facade is substantially hidden behind the later additional frontage, but some of the cinema's original mouldings may be seen (though painted black) on the part of the upper original facade still visible.

With an elaborately decorated barrel-vaulted ceiling, the interior of the cinema originally seated around 750 on one floor with no balcony, though this was later reduced to 700 when it became the Kenning Hall Kinema in 1919. In the late thirties the cinema was taken over by the Odeon circuit when the extended frontage was added. This take-over was with a view to eventually demolishing the Kenning Hall and building a modern Odeon Theatre on the expanded site of the cinema and adjacent pub. The seating capacity was further reduced to 641 and the name was changed to Kenning Hall Cinema.



Due to World War II, the redevelopment never happened and the Kenning Hall soldiered on, remaining one of the Odeon circuit's lesser cinemas (ABC had got in first and in October 1939 built their 1,884 seat Ritz Cinema almost next door. This was later demolished and replaced with a block of flats). The Kenning Hall was leased out to an independent operator D Mistlin from March 1958, but finally closed in June 1979. It lay empty and unused until 1983 when it was converted into a nightclub called "Dougies", then renamed the Palace Pavilion. In recent years, the Palace Pavilion has become the focus for a series of street shootings which has earned the area the name "Murder Mile".



After years of campaigning, the local community have finally succeeded in getting the support of Hackney Council and the Police in having the licence of the nightclub withdrawn. With the establishment of the Friends of Clapton Cinematograph, the goal of having the historic cinema restored and brought back into use for the benefit of the people of Hackney is at last a real possibility. The success of this project would create a visual symbol that the local community have finally succeeded in reclaiming their neighbourhood from the drug barons and gunmen who have blighted the area for the last decade.

If you are interested in receiving information on the Friends of Clapton Cinematograph, please contact Julia Lafferty on 020 8806 2441 or email: julial@cpre.org.uk. Julia would very much like to hear from anyone who has memories of the old cinema before it closed down at the end of the 1970s.

Sadleir Quincentenary Booking Form

To book tickets for the Sadleir Quincentenary (23rd to 24th June 2007) please fill in this form, 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*; or visit <http://www.suttonhousesociety.org.uk/App/Form/Sadleir500Form.php>.

Event		Price per ticket	Number of tickets	Total
Sir Rafe Sadleir and the Tudor Court	SHS members	£8		£
	others	£10		£
Midsummer Feast		£25		£
Glimpses of Tudor Hacknaie	SHS members	£3		£
	others	£5		£
Trip to Standon	SHS members	£17		£
	others	£20		£
Combined ticket for all four events (<i>available until 1st March 2007</i>)	SHS members	£42		£
	others	£48		£
Total				£

NAME

ADDRESS

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