

# Sutton House Society Newsletter

July 2009



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

## Summer Outing

Our Summer Outing this year will be to Tutbury Castle. This has an important connexion with Sutton House because it was here that Sir Ralph Sadleir (by then an old man) spent several years guarding Mary Queen of Scots. So it should be an interesting visit. We very much hope you will be able to join us. The outing will take place on Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August.

We shall leave from the front of Sutton House at 9:00 a.m., and aim to return there again at 7:00 p.m.. Please note that this is an earlier start and later return than normal. The reason is the distance: Tutbury is in Staffordshire, so we need to allow plenty of time to get there and back. (But don't worry: there will be stops on the way!) It is also the reason why we need to charge rather more than usual: £20 for Society members and £25 for non-members. These prices include admission.

To come on the outing, please fill in the attached form and send it with your payment to Sutton House.

## Annual Lecture

This is advance notice of the 2009 Annual Lecture. It will be given by Dr. Gareth Williams on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November. Dr. Williams is responsible for organizing the special exhibition that has just opened at the British Museum on Tutbury Castle. So, if you come on the Summer Outing, you will definitely want to come to the Lecture too!

There will be more details about the Annual Lecture in the next newsletter.

## Common Ground – a children's history of Hackney 2009

This year's activities, staged by Clio's Company in partnership with the National Trust and the Sutton House Society and generously funded by The Companies of Goldsmiths and Mercers, built on the work begun in 2008. The project aims to build up an imagined yet historically based picture of life in Hackney nearly five centuries ago from a child's perspective. Participants from Grasmere Primary School focused this year on the end of the 1530s when Sutton House was newly built and Ralph Sadleir was in the midst of acquiring a huge fortune in land, bought cheap when the monasteries were dissolved. Sadleir's position at Court meant he was well placed to make the best deals, and within a few years he owned several thousand acres in at least five counties.



### 1. Performance in Great Chamber

The focus of this year's work was to look at one of the "side effects" of the closing of the religious houses: the immense growth in the number of homeless people, many of them sick and/or old, who had been employed as monastery servants or been cared for in their hospitals, who now wandered the streets of most villages, including Hackney. Sometimes they came to beg,

sometimes to steal or to riot. We used a combination of “standard” history, information from the local history archive, the results of new research – the latter included staggering through the very idiosyncratic Latin of the account book of Gervase Cawood, Sadleir’s Receiver General –, the music of the time and the groups’ own imaginations to build up a picture of the events of one spring day in 1539, just before Whitsun.



**2. Music in Wenlock Barn**

Sadleir is currently away at court, but expected home for Whitsun. What is he going to find? He will be making only a short visit, and will be returning to Court and reporting to the King and Thomas Cromwell (who is a local landowner as well as the King’s chief adviser) about what is happening in Hackney. There are several different groups of people who want to get to him so that he can either help them himself or get to Cromwell for them. There are his own household, there are prosperous villagers, there are poor villagers, there are the homeless, there are some former novices and priory servants.... How are they going to get their message over, and who will be listened to? And are they all going to stop at asking politely? And the Court may be staying at Bromley Hall later in the summer on a hawking trip.

These were a series of full-day workshops, mostly based at Sutton House, with visits to Bromley Hall and St Augustine’s Church Tower, and a final reporting-back session at school. The workshops were planned to enable the children to combine the discovery of something of the history of Tudor Hackney with the opportunity of taking an active part in drama, music and dance and to produce artwork. In some workshops there were other activities such as quill-pen writing, artwork and Tudor food preparation, and the children were encouraged to undertake research between workshops – this was sometimes in class, sometimes done at home with parents or in groups at the after-school club.

The participants and workshop leaders worked together to devise and stage a promenade performance at Sutton House, using the historic rooms and courtyard for the early scenes and leading the audience through the various spaces. They encountered a sequence of characters and scenes, with a song and presentation at each location. The audience was briefed at the beginning of the show, and were told that they were friends of Ralph Sadleir, invited to his home for a party to celebrate Whitsun, but their host had not yet arrived. Even though the event was on a weekday morning, we had a capacity audience, perhaps partly because many families had become involved in the project. The children and teachers were so enthusiastic that the performance was re-staged in the school hall a week later for those who had been unable to get to Sutton House.



**3. Sugar-cutting**

Ian McGovern, Deputy Headteacher of Grasmere Primary School, said “We have found the approach to be creative and well researched. This has had a direct effect on the motivation of all the pupils, who take part with real gusto. Many of the children involved are from inner-city areas of high deprivation and some have special educational and complex needs. It opens a doorway for them that meets their needs and gives them opportunities which they have not had before. Our higher achievers use these projects to develop their own interests further, often alongside their families.”

We are now intending to take the project forward into the new academic year, working again with Grasmere Primary School and with other schools in their “cluster”, and planning to produce a resource pack and CD.

Grateful thanks are due to Christopher Cleeve, Learning Officer at Sutton House, for his support of the project – this can take the form of everything from a guided tour of the house to the loan, at no notice at all, of several dozen coloured pencils.

[LISSA CHAPMAN]

# Outing Application Form

Tutbury Castle, Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2009

*Please fill in this form if you would like to come on the outing and send it with a cheque payable to “Sutton House Society” to SHS Outing, Sutton House, 2&4 Homerton High Street, London E9 6JQ.*

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

TELEPHONE .....

EMAIL .....

	<i>Price per person</i>	<i>Number of people</i>	<i>Total</i>
SHS members	£20		£
Non-SHS members	£25		£
<b>Total</b>			<b>£</b>

SIGNED .....

DATE .....