

Sutton House Society Newsletter

October 2009



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

Annual General Meeting

The Society's Annual General Meeting will take place at Sutton House on Thursday 12th November, starting at 7 p.m.. All members of the Society are urged to attend. This is your main opportunity to hear what the Society has been up to during the past year, and for discussing its plans for next year. It will include the appointment and reappointment of officers and members of the committee. If you would like to join the committee you would be very welcome.

Sadleir plays Sadleir

On Sunday 11th October the Great Chamber at Sutton House was the location for what was almost certainly the first public reading for nearly four hundred years of a once very popular play. *The Whole Life and Death of the Lord Cromwell* was first published in 1602, with the author credited on the title page as "WS". Theatre historians have disagreed for centuries about whether William Shakespeare had any hand in the writing – it was common at the time for a play to have several authors, and scripts were the property of theatre companies, not of individual playwrights.

The Life and Death of the Lord Cromwell is just that: a biography of Thomas Cromwell, turning its main character into a generous and popular poor-boy-made-good whose downfall is brought about by jealous rivals. His one remaining loyal friend in the final scenes is Ralph Sadleir, who arrives with a royal reprieve minutes too late to save his former master's life. This one incident is a vivid demonstration of the tactful spin put on events by the playwright – in the real life, Sadleir read Cromwell's eloquent plea for reprieve three times to Henry VIII, who was moved to tears but then confirmed the death sentence. But the Lord Chamberlain's Servants did not want to risk offending Henry's daughter Elizabeth I by putting it like that.

Bill Sadleir took on the cameo role of his 12-times-great-grandfather, and Peter Mudge read the part of the Lieutenant of the Tower of London. The rest of the cast was made up of members of Clío's Company, and the music that is an integral part of most Tudor plays was provided by Tamsin Lewis and Christopher Goodwin of Passamezzo.

We are now planning to run an occasional series of rehearsed readings of sixteenth and seventeenth century plays, concentrating on the many with strong local connections.

Summer Outing

A small but select group of Society members came on our Summer Outing this year to Tutbury Castle. This was quite an ambitious expedition — we have never before travelled such a distance: more than 100 miles each way! But it was definitely worth the effort to visit the castle in Staffordshire where Sir Ralph Sadleir (by then an old man) spent several years guarding Mary Queen of Scots. We were fortunate that it was a special visiting day, so we had the services of a very interesting guide to show us around.



1. East range



2. Gate house



3. North tower



4. View from the east range

Annual Lecture

The theme of Tutbury Castle continues with the Society's 2009 Annual Lecture on "Sir Ralph Sadleir and the imprisonment of Mary, Queen of Scots at Tutbury Castle". It will be given by Dr. Gareth Williams of the British Museum on Thursday 12th November, starting at 8:00 p.m. (immediately after the AGM). The lecture will cast new light on what must have been the most difficult period of Sir Ralph Sadleir's final years. In 1584, at the age of 78, Sadleir was appointed, much against his will, as jailer of Mary, Queen of Scots. For much of the following two years Sadleir was forced to leave the comfort of his own home for the cold, damp and isolation of Tutbury Castle, and the irksome responsibility of the care and custody of his royal prisoner.

Admission to the lecture will cost £5 for members of the Society and £6 for non-members. This price includes one glass of wine. To book seats, please complete the attached form and send it with a cheque to Sutton House, labelled "SHS Annual Lecture".

Dr Gareth Williams is director of the Tutbury Castle Project, run jointly by Tutbury Castle, the British Museum and the University of Birmingham.

Ruin and rebellion: uncovering the past at Tutbury Castle

This exhibition runs from 9th July 2009 to 21st March 2010 at the British Museum in Room 69a. Admission is free. It explores the history and archaeology of Tutbury Castle in Staffordshire.

Tutbury Castle dominates the landscape on the border of Derbyshire and Staffordshire. The site has been used from prehistoric times to the present day, and the castle itself is linked with many important figures and events in English history. The exhibition traces the history of the castle site through a combination of archaeological finds, which provide evidence about the occupation of the site from the past 10,000 years, and pictures, which show the changing appearance of the castle since the 1560s.

The centrepiece of the display is part of the Tutbury Hoard of 1831 — the largest hoard ever found in Britain — and an exploration of why the hoard was buried in the first place, and what happened after it was found. Other objects in the display show coins, prints and drawings from the British Museum's collection alongside recent excavation finds and objects from the collections of the Duchy of Lancaster and the Potteries Museum & Art Gallery, Stoke-on-Trent.

The exhibition looks in more detail at three key episodes in the history of Tutbury Castle. These include the rebellion of Thomas of Lancaster in 1322, which led to the burial of the Tutbury Hoard, and the English Civil War, which led to the partial destruction of the Castle after it surrendered to the forces of Parliament in 1646.

The third episode is the use of Tutbury Castle as a prison for Mary, Queen of Scots. Mary was imprisoned at Tutbury on four occasions, with three visits in 1569–71, early in her English captivity. Her final stay at Tutbury lasted for almost the whole of 1585, and is well documented both in her own papers and in those of her gaolers, Sir Ralph Sadleir and later Sir Amyas Paulet. Between them, the papers of Mary and Sir Ralph Sadleir have allowed archaeologists to identify and partially excavate the building in which Mary was imprisoned in 1585. The exhibition includes photographs of two plans of Tutbury Castle from the Sadleir papers (the originals cannot be shown for conservation reasons) as well as objects from the recent excavations, and silver tokens issued during Mary's captivity.

The exhibition is related to a research project on Tutbury Castle by the British Museum and Birmingham University, with support from the Duchy of Lancaster.

Annual Lecture Application Form

Thursday 12th November 2009

Please fill in this form if you would like to attend the lecture, and send it with a cheque payable to "Sutton House Society" to SHS Annual Lecture, Sutton House, 2&4 Homerton High Street, London E9 6JQ.

NAME

ADDRESS

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TELEPHONE

EMAIL

	<i>Price per person</i>	<i>Number of people</i>	<i>Total</i>
SHS members	£5		£
Non-SHS members	£6		£
Total			£

SIGNED

DATE