

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION

HACKNEY EMPIRE AND SUTTON HOUSE

TUESDAY 17 February 2009

This visit has been organised by David Simmons.

The Hackney Empire was one of the many theatres designed by Frank Matcham and built between 1890 and 1910, opening in 1901 with electric lights and a built in projection box. It opened as a Music Hall and Variety Theatre. Performers included; Marie Lloyd, Louis Armstrong, Charlie Chester and Liberace. Owned by Oswald Stoll (later Stoll Moss), it continued until 1956 when it was put up for sale and bought by ATV to become a television studio; *Take Your Pick* and *Emergency Ward 10* were filmed there.

It was converted to a Bingo Hall in 1963 and continued until about 1984, when becoming a grade II* listed building, Mecca put it up for sale rather than restore the domes as required by the listing. Under the ownership of a preservation trust, it became a leading venue for Stand up Comedy acts until 2001 when £15 million had been raised for a complete renovation and restoration. The theatre was reopened in 2004 with many improved facilities.

Sutton House was built in about 1535 for a Tudor courtier and since then has been the home of wool and silk merchants, a girls and a boys boarding school, a home for several Huguenot families, a house for the Hackney Vestry Chief Clerk, a Church Institute, a trades union headquarters and a squat for the homeless. It is the oldest domestic building in the East End of London.

In 1936, when no longer required by the Church, an appeal was launched to save it for the nation. The money raised enabled the National Trust to acquire it in 1938. The last tenants, the ASTMS union, moved out in 1982. It's future was in doubt when the Trust were unable to find suitable tenants. It could have been converted into residential units, if a local pressure group had not mounted a campaign that raised £2 million for a restoration.

Arrangements

10.45-11.10	Assemble at the Hackney Empire for coffee
11.15	Start tour of the theatre
12.30-	Lunch in local pub or restaurant
~14.00	Short walk to Sutton house for conducted tour, followed by tea and biscuits.

Costs

The maximum number of people is 25. The cost for members of the National Trust, who bring their membership cards, will be £8.50. The cost for non-members will be £11.

Travel

The Hackney Empire is on Mare Street (see map). Nearest station is Hackney Central on the Richmond – Stratford line. There are frequent trains from Liverpool Street going through London Fields and Hackney Downs stations, both about 600 yards from the theatre. There are many bus routes going to or past Hackney Central Bus Station.

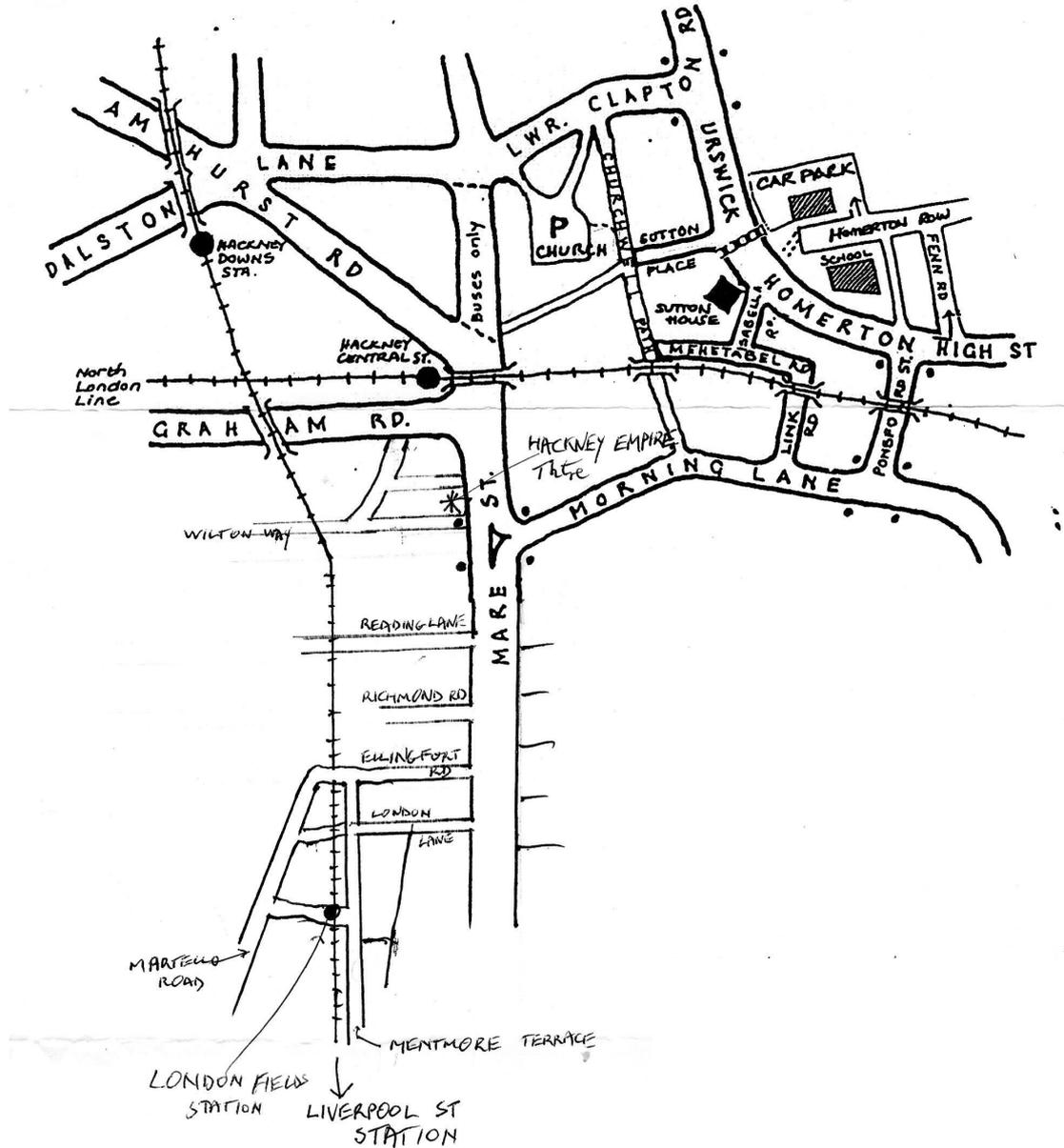
By car.

There is no car park at Sutton House and local street parking is very limited. Parking controls apply Monday to Saturday 8:30 am – 11:00 pm. The cost is £2 per hour. The maximum stay is 2 hours. The postcode for the theatre is E8 1EJ.

Contacts

Before the 17th February, please contact Reinalt on 020 8946 3399, 07758 085741 or reinalt@physics.org

On the 17th February, please contact David Simmons on 0794108 7338.



The map is not to scale. Both London Fields and Hackney Downs stations are about 650 yards from the theatre.