

Institute of Physics

LONDON AND SOUTH EASTERN BRANCH REMS SECTION SPITALFIELDS - Two 18th Century buildings 5 April 2005

This visit has been organised by David Simmons

The area was originally just outside the city walls the name coming from 'Hospital' and its burial grounds or 'fields'. Since the late 17th century it has been the home of various groups of artisans or craftsmen of whom the Huguenot silk workers were one of the first.

An Act of Parliament in 1711 called for fifty new churches to be built, allocated funds, and appointed commissioners, who in turn appointed Nicholas Hawksmoor as one of the two surveyors. Only twelve churches could be built with the available funds, and **Christ Church** is one of the six designed by Hawksmoor; who also designed St Alfege's Greenwich, assisted Wren at St Paul's, and worked with Vanbrugh on Castle Howard.

Work was started in 1714, it was consecrated in 1729, and is now recognised as one of the finest Baroque churches in England. Much altered in the following centuries, a dangerous roof led to the congregation moving out in 1957. Two flats then replaced vestries and a rehabilitation unit was established in the crypt. In 1976 the campaign for the restoration of the church was launched; and after considerable fund raising and research into the original structure, the church was reopened in 2004, recapturing Hawksmoor's original vision.

For more information see the Church Times September 2004 issue (No 7384), or search for 'Hawksmoor' on their website, www.churchtimes.co.uk.

Dennis Sever's House is one of a terrace that has been occupied by craftsmen or artists through the centuries. Dennis Sever has arranged the house to give visitors the impression they are walking through the house of a family of silk weavers in the early 18th century, perhaps they have just gone out. See www.dennissevershouse.co.uk. Maximum numbers in the house is 35.

Programme

10.20-10.45 Liverpool Street station, meet for coffee at the 'Hamilton Hall' a Wetherspoons pub; from the concourse take the stairs or escalator up towards Bishopsgate, and it's on the right before the street. If it's a fine morning the nearby coffee stall may be preferable. We will walk to the Church.

11.0 to about 12.00, tour of church and talk by Andrew Mason architect responsible for all the work.

We then walk to Dennis Sever's house to start the visit between 12.15 and 12.30.

About 1.30 - a short walk back to Spitalfields Market where there are a variety of places for lunch. After lunch, we could have a walk round the area, look at the 'Gherkin' ('Swiss Re' building, outside only), or take a short bus ride to the Geffrye Museum. More details of lunch and afternoon options will be available on the day.

Cost: Church £5; House £8, maximum number 35. (either or both may be booked)