



Surrounded by the wooded landscape of the Sussex Weald, this 17th-century house, with its mullioned windows and oak beams, Batemans was home for Rudyard Kipling and his family.

We each went our different ways to explore the house and grounds. The rooms of the house remain much as he left them, with oriental rugs and artefacts reflecting his strong association with the East. Those not of fleet foot were able to sit at a tablet and take a virtual tour of house.



In the glorious summer weather many took advantage of the garden tea-room enjoying the usual high standard of the National Trust hospitality. Vegetables having come direct from the well kept market garden. Others enjoyed their picnics in the beautiful surroundings.

A short walk brought us to the water mill, currently under restoration, and the mill pond buzzing with dragon flies and birds in chase.



All too soon it was time to return to the coach and depart for our second destination:



On arrival we were given a Sissinghurst Shilling, a plastic token for entry, in the spirit of Vita Sackville-West's levy for charity on friends and visitors to the gardens. Vita began transforming Sissinghurst Castle in the 1930s with her diplomat and author husband, Harold Nicolson. Harold's architectural planning of the garden rooms, and the colourful, abundant planting in the gardens by Vita, reflect the romance and intimacy of her poems and writings.

The gardens were magnificent with roses in bloom everywhere and their perfume greeting at every corner. Room after room was a breathtaking blaze of colour and plant variety. A climb to the top of the tower gave panoramic views of the complex garden layout and estate beyond.



At each turn new vistas opened up with carefully planned openings in multiple directions attracting you to explore the hidden spaces beyond.



Many took afternoon tea at the restaurant and coffee shop. Those looking to make a purchase visited the Gift shop and the Garden shop, with a vast stock grown in Sissinghurst Castle nursery.

**Everyone's sincere thanks to Organiser Eve Osborne for such a successful day's outing.**