

Summer Outing

Sissinghurst Castle and Scotney Castle

FRIDAY 18th MAY 2012

PATRICIA HOOPER-SHERRATT

A bright sunny morning greeted 38 members taking the trip on May 18th.

Sissinghurst Castle

Although we were allotted a specific time, everyone arrived for pick-up early. We had a clear run, so, arrived approximately 45 minutes ahead of time. The coach driver managed to charm his way into a parking slot. We were then directed to a room above the restaurant where we were served complimentary tea or coffee and biscuits. We were then given a very interesting talk about the gardens by the Garden and Estate Manager, Matt Jackson who is responsible for 450

acres. Mainly the expensive vegetables are grown on the estate for the restaurant. The organic vegetable plot 2¹/₂ acres is in its 5th year growing salads, asparagus etc. They have recently sectioned off ¹/₄ acre for a kitchen garden where they have 20 volunteers.

Sissinghurst is in the Weald of Kent. It is close to landscape designated as outstanding natural beauty. A stone manor surrounded by a moat was built in the middle ages. Two legs of the moat survive the original building (replaced in the 15th century by a large manor built by the Baker family, related by marriage to the Sackvilles of Knowle). It was let to the

Government between 1756 and 1763 as a prison camp for the French Prisoners of War.

Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson purchased the property in 1930 where they created a garden for wildlife spotting and walking. The garden is in fact a series of some ten separate gardens separated by walls and hedges. The National Trust took over in 1967.



Sissinghurst Castle

Scotney Castle

After lunch we boarded the coach for Scotney Castle, where we were greeted with a shower of rain, but, our spirits were not dampened.

Scotney is absolutely wonderful this time of year, with an array of azaleas, kalmias and rhododendrons. The colours were a sight to behold. The garden is approximately 26 acres. The Estate including mixed woodland, park and meadow is 770 acres.

There are two houses at Scotney, one at the top of the hill which is the new house. The Jacobean style house was completed in 1843 for Edward Hussey III who chose the young architect Anthony Salvin. At the bottom of the valley are the romantic ruins of a medieval castle and moat, which is in the progress of some sort of refurbishment. Hopefully parts will be open to the public in the not too distant future.

Although Scotney was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1970 the new house was still in private use and not open to the public until after the death of Elizabeth Hussey in April 2006. The house was refurbished before opening, the ground floor in 2007, but the rest wasn't opened until 2009. It was very refreshing to look around this grand country house, of which contents most of us could relate to. Old houses are really



Scotney Castle



interesting, but, sometimes can be drab. This house was light and airy, more in a time warp of the fifties to seventies era. A lot of the paintings were not of known artists, but by some of their friends.

The coach driver brought us home safely from a day everyone enjoyed.