

Society Outings

A Visit to Batemans

reported by
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The 15th May turned out to be a warm, sunny day for the Society's trip to Batemans, the house of Rudyard Kipling and his family for more than thirty years, from 1902 to 1936.

'A real house to settle down for keeps' said Kipling.

The two hour drive took us through lush spring countryside and pretty villages that Jane Austen and H. E. Bates would have recognised, to Burmarsh on the Sussex Weald.

The house nestles in meadows and woods and was built of local sandstone in 1634. It has its original oak staircase and panelling made from local oaks, which were 'so prolific to be called weeds by the locals'. It is a plain Jacobean house, unpretentious and comfortable. Only the stark, six chimneys, set obliquely to the roof tops, cause one to raise an eyebrow. They are from local clay so that they blend into the countryside.

The inside of the house reflects the interests and tastes of the Kiplings. It was both a protective haven for Kipling to write in and a sociable centre for friends and family. Kipling's interest in engineering and motoring was embodied in a sturdy Rolls Royce, circa 1928, which was probably 'state of the art' for its time. Being now a National Trust property, the ubiquitous shop is well supplied with



Kipling's books, both new and second-hand, and with the usual gifts and novelties.

The cafe was well supplied with cakes, scones, home-made soup at lunch time and an assortment of baked dishes to suit everyone's tastes. After lunch most of us wandered in the grounds, having toured the house in the morning. We strolled through the meadow gardens, dotted with beautiful flowering trees, and saw the river where the Kipling children played, for which they had a special licence written by their father. There was a strong sense of the sociability and playfulness of the owners and, strongest of all, a sense of contentment all around this beautiful old house.

There is a mill at the far end of the estate, served by a lake, is small compared to Crabble Mill but otherwise very similar. It had a shop which sells cookery books and flour.

We set off for home at about 4 pm and arrived in Dover at about 6pm. The whole day was a pleasure, thanks to the organisation of Joan Liggett,