



in support of **National
Trust**

SEAFORD ASSOCIATION

Promoting the work of the National Trust



Newsletter No 78

Winter 2025

www.nationaltrustseafordassociation.co.uk

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Cover picture: Alice explaining how gin is made at Bombay Sapphire

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## 1. Letter from our Chairman

Hello everybody. I trust you are all well and enjoyed the summer despite some stormy weather at times.

Earlier this year the National Trust asked us to review our various procedures regarding Data Protection, Code of Conduct and Values, Complaints Procedure and Safeguarding Policy. I also mentioned on the holiday the need for any one not wanting their

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photograph taken to let us know. Big thank you to our secretary Rod, who did the donkey work of putting all the details together for us to approve.

I also received an important consultation email from the National Trust regarding their proposed staffing changes. Details appear at the end of this newsletter.

We have had an excellent Spring/Summer number of trips, with reports later in this newsletter and a big thank you to Bob and Jenny for all their hard work. The new booking system is working well, and I thank you for your co-operation. The Christmas 2025 visit to Rochester looks exciting and I look forward to seeing many of you on this trip. I know Bob has already started looking at potential visits for next year so watch this space.

The holiday was fantastic with superb weather, excellent hotel and visits to so many National Trust properties. Well done to our organizer Phil Armstrong. Difficult to beat, so where to next year ??

Our overworked Treasurer, Michael Staples, recently gave a talk to a local group re the Seaford National Trust Association and found that we were started by a group from Eastbourne NT and that we are approaching our 40th anniversary. This is excellent but it is only possible provided members are prepared to put themselves out to help run and organize events etc. We are lucky to have such a hard-working and happy band prepared to put in the time so that you can enjoy the various events that we put together. We see other local NT newsletters, and many are struggling for committee members.

The afternoon tea at the Golf Club was a great success with our biggest attendance for several years. Many new members were so happy with it that they requested to be included in our upcoming Autumn lunch on 6th November, so a booking form is enclosed. A big thank-you to Chris and her team.

By the time you receive this newsletter we will have had our first lecture of the season by local naturalist Mike Vingoe, and look forward to the talk by Duncan Lavin on 'An Antarctic Odyssey' at our new venue, The Seaford Rugby Club.

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The AGM is fast approaching. I took on the Chairmanship on the understanding that I would do so for 3 years. That period has now been completed. I have agreed if no one else is prepared to take on the role to stand for one further year.

Now let us give Gill Tansley all the support she needs for the fund-raising Autumn Fair on the 22<sup>nd</sup> November. She has put her plea in later in this newsletter, but I am stressing the need for plenty of cakes/biscuits for the cake stall. It is one of the best money spinners, provided we get the goods.

I look forward to seeing you at our forthcoming events.

*Arthur Bradbury, Chairman*

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2. Administrative Matters

Our fully paid-up membership as at the end of August 2025 stands at 275 people in 204 households. The drop in numbers is because we have taken off those whose subscriptions have lapsed despite reminders. Overall we have had 6 new members since March 2025, which is very encouraging. We welcome these new members and hope they will enjoy participating in our events:

Mrs. J Lindsay

Mrs. J Weston

Mrs. A M Harvey

Mr. B E Andrews

Mrs P N Waymark

Mr. P Tester

Email messages and addresses

It has been brought to my attention that more than one person in some households would like to receive the email messages from our Association. Therefore, if you would like me to send the NTSA messages to more than one person in your household, please email me with all the addresses you wish me to use so that I can add them to the list.

Note: We send such messages by blind copy (Bcc) to ensure privacy and security.

Diana Gebbett, Membership Secretary email: membershipntsa@gmail.com

Newsletter Deliveries

The Newsletter will continue to be delivered by hand in order to save the costs of postage, which will enable us to contribute more to our chosen NT projects. Thank you to the volunteers who do the deliveries, and if anyone else would like to join us in delivering a few magazines in their local area I would be very pleased to hear from you.

Sue Saunders
Magazine Distribution Organiser

2026 Subscription Reminder

Membership subscriptions for 2026 are due on 1 January 2026 and should be paid within 60 days. The rate is the same as last year. A 2026 renewal form is enclosed with this Newsletter and you are also invited to make a contribution towards the Association's National Trust projects.

Subscriptions from January 2026 are £10.00 for a single member and £5.00 for each additional member at the same address. Bank transfer is now also available and is our preferred method to avoid extra bank charges.

The methods of payment are set out on the Membership Renewal form.

If paying by cheque, please include it with the completed form.

If paying by bank transfer, please ensure the reference is used to help us identify you as payee and send the completed form by email (having scanned it) or by post to:

The Membership Secretary, NT Seaford Association
The Corner House, Cuckmere Road
Seaford BN25 4DG

Whilst we would be very sorry to lose any members, it would be much appreciated if you could let me know if it is your intention not to renew your membership.

It is no longer necessary for NTSA members to have a membership card as it is seldom used or checked by anyone. However, be assured that we are always very grateful for

your subscriptions and donations. This will also save you having to send a self-addressed and stamped envelope with your renewal form. All renewals and current members are listed on computer (code protected) and if you have any questions regarding your membership please feel free to contact me on membershipsntsa@gmail.com or 07739 174520.

Many thanks,

Diana Gebbett, Membership Secretary NTSA

Internet Banking

Please note that our bank is now charging us 50p per cheque handled, so if you can only pay **by cheque**, please make it payable to National Trust Seaford Association.

If you are able to pay by **bank transfer**, please do so, as it will keep our costs down because the bank does not charge for this service. In this case, please put your name as a reference so we know who it is from. Please then scan or photograph your completed form and email it to the Membership Secretary.

Michael Staples, Treasurer

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### **2025-26 Committee members**

|                             |                     |              |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| President:                  | Ann Thompson        | 01323 892150 |
| Chairman:                   | Arthur Bradbury     | 01323 899408 |
| Vice Chairman:              | Sheila Guyatt       | 01323 899573 |
| Secretary:                  | Rod Evans           | 01323 370840 |
| Treasurer:                  | Michael Staples     | 01323 894893 |
| Membership Secretary:       | Diana Gebbett       | 07739 174520 |
| Teas and Lunches:           | Chris Burgess       | 01323 895407 |
| Holiday Organiser:          | Phil Armstrong      | 01323 893229 |
| Editor & Publicity Officer: | Charlie Grimble     | 01323 896060 |
| Day Trips and Ticketing:    | Bob and Jenny Tyler | 07778 512111 |
| Fund Raising:               | Gill Tansley        | 07801 898388 |
| Magazine Distribution:      | Sue Saunders        | 01323 490415 |
| Winter Programme:           | Margaret Smith      | 01323 895212 |

### **Non-Committee Posts**

Fund Raising Events: Gill Tansley, Sue Saunders & Janet Kent

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### 3. Notice of 2024/25 AGM

To be held Wednesday 19 NOVEMBER 2025 at SEAFORD RUGBY CLUB, THE  
SALTS REC., RICHMOND ROAD, SEAFORD BN25 1DR  
at 2.30pm

#### AGENDA

1. Welcome
2. Apologies for absence
3. Minutes of the 20 November 2024 AGM
4. Matters arising
5. Chairman's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Appointment of Accounts Examiner for 2025/26
8. Election of Officers and Committee

The AGM will be followed by a talk from Allison Pritchard about Monk's House, Rodmell.

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY 20th NOVEMBER 2024 at 2.30pm. The Barn Theatre, Steyne Road, Seaford

1. Welcome: Michael Staples, Hon. Treasurer, took the chair and welcomed members to the meeting on behalf of Ann Thompson, President, Arthur Bradbury, Chairman, and Sheila Guyatt, Vice-Chairman, who were all unable to attend.

2. Apologies for absence were also received from Gill Tansley, Diana Gebbett, Chris Bradbury and Catharine Wells.

3. The Minutes of the 2023 AGM were accepted as a true record by general consent of all present.

4. Matters Arising There were no matters arising.

5. Chairman's report In his absence, Arthur's report was read out by the Secretary. He spoke of the gratifying, slow recovery of President Ann from her serious accident, before going on

describe another good year for NTSA. Arthur paid tribute in some detail to the dedicated commitment of his committee and the variety of activity that they had provided for our members.

Having slightly reluctantly agreed to taking on the chairmanship three years ago, Arthur expressed his willingness to extend his role for one more year, largely because of the contribution of the committee and also his awareness of the difficulty that many other Trust Associations experienced in maintaining a full committee.

6. Treasurer's Report

Having circulated copies of the accounts, Michael spoke of the similarity to the previous year in NTSA finances. Just one of the outings had shown a deficit, but otherwise things were as healthy as in 2022-3. Membership had increased by 25, and he hoped all would agree that money had been spent wisely: £500 to Scotney Castle and various similar sums to the closest NT properties, Birling Gap and Clergy House Alfriston, while Monk's House Rodmell had been promised funding too. Additionally £3000 had been transferred to the 'Big NT' for investment. They now held £10,211.30 on behalf of NTSA. Mike went on to explain the bad news: Lloyds Bank were now charging 50p for each cheque they handle; but if every member (unachievable ambition!) managed to use BACS payments, NTSA would save £200 per year. Chris Burgess proposed and Michael Reynell seconded the motion to approve the accounts. Carried nem con.

7. Appointment of Accounts Examiner

Mike Staples proposed and Charlie Grimble seconded the appointment of Mike Rogers as Hon. Accounts Examiner for 2024-5.

8. Election of Officers and Committee.

The whole committee had agreed to serve for another year, and despite the Chair's urging, no other volunteers were forthcoming.

Accordingly the committee was approved as set out on page 5 above

9. Other business:

Mike spoke about a few places remaining on the 6th December trip to Greenwich. Sue Saunders passed on information from Gill about the Autumn Fair, due in three days' time.

Chairman closed the AGM at 2.44 pm.

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## 4. Report on visit to Chiddingstone Castle and Village Thursday 26 June 2025



**Chiddingstone girls**

This trip to this country house was full of surprises. Firstly we found it is not a castle, but an extended house once in the village, but then enlarged and separated from its humble origins by parkland. A detailed model in one of the rooms showed us how it was transformed into what we see today. There were several rooms full of display cabinets with Japanese artefacts, ancient Egyptian items, Jacobite memorabilia and Buddhist objects reflecting the taste of the collector, Denys Eyre Bower who spent 5 years in Wormwood Scrubs after being charged with attempted murder and suicide! His library gave more clues to this enigmatic part of his history and so I shall not provide more detail but leave readers who did not go on the trip feeling they have missed out on a rich story to ask someone who went on the trip! Because there was sufficient time in the day, the lovely village of Chiddingstone contained several places of refreshment, and beyond the village was the Chidding Stone itself. The history of this large lump of sandstone has given rise to many interpretations which means that no-one knows, so choose between

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- a) A place for public rebuke of nagging wives
  - b) A Saxon boundary marker
  - c) A place of Druidic ritual.

What is clear is that it is a very popular place for personal graffiti and group or lone selfies!

The village is owned by the National Trust and so preserves and earns the descriptive word 'quaint' but boasts a lively primary school that is clearly very popular. A different and great day blessed by good weather and company.

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5. Report on visit to Highclere Castle 24 July 2025



Highclere Castle, Newbury (aka Downton Abbey)

Fans of Lord and Lady Grantham and the Crawley family in general were delighted to be invited to their ancestral home only to find that it is actually the home of the Herbert family, the Earls of Pembroke and Carnarvon (no typo here!). The trouble was that we

arrived at the same time as many other visitors eager to see a place already familiar to fans of the TV series. Again, our group included new members taking part for the first time, which is most encouraging. This meant that a trip round the house was like joining a queue to see the Mona Lisa, but on 2 floors. However, it is the basement that holds a magnificent recreation of Tutankhamun's tomb, as it was the 5th Earl of Carnarvon who sponsored the work of Egyptologist Howard Carter and whose persistence over many years led to the discovery of that Ancient Egyptian pharaoh's tomb in 1923.

For those who were not around for the magnificent Tutankhamun exhibition in the British Museum in 1972, this was a breathtaking exhibition on a smaller scale, but set in a labyrinth of rooms evoking the original tomb arrangement. Those taking a snack in the café grounds outside discovered that the Berkshire variety of wasp was particularly prevalent, mitigated only slightly by volunteer staff going about with electric tennis racquets, electrocuting as many as they could! The day was too short to see all that there is to enjoy here, and our driver from Lynns of Eastbourne showed remarkable perspicacity in bypassing a really bad traffic jam on the M23, by going through the eastern edge of Crawley on the way there, and having real bad luck in trying back roads of Surrey to try and circumvent a similar scenario on the return journey. He certainly knew the outside dimensions of his vehicle!! Still, one out of two was not bad, and it enlivened the journey home with all of us following his route on Google maps!

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## **6. Report on visit to Hinton Ampner (NT) Alresford, Hants, and Bombay Sapphire Gin Distillery, Laverstock Mill, Hants. Thursday 4 September.**

In pouring rain our intrepid members queued at bus stops across the town and gently steamed as we travelled along the coast towards Southampton and turned up the lovely Meon Valley to **Hinton Ampner house and garden**. Which was for all of us, a completely wonderful revelation. Known for many years for its garden, which was a delight revealed to us by David Bridges a volunteer gardener who clearly loves it, the house and its contents were a revelation, brought together by bachelor Ralph Dutton, the 8<sup>th</sup> Baron Sherborne with a focus on tasteful Georgian furnishings including exquisite pietra dura-

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covered tables and cabinets within a collection of 3,547 items of ceramics and art. We could have spent the whole day there but went onto Whitchurch on the River Test,



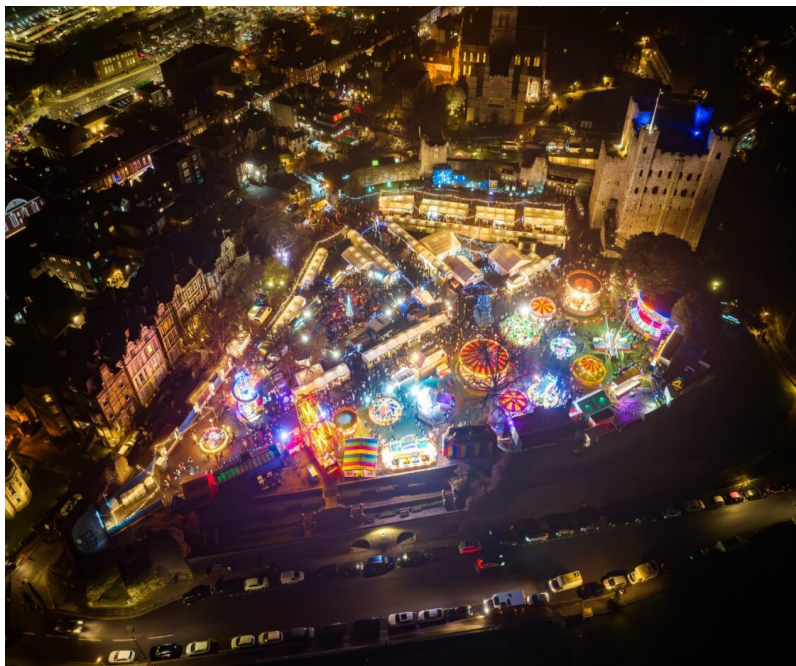
**Hinton Ampner house and garden, Alresford, Hants (NT)**

where we entered the **Bombay Sapphire Distillery**, based in the Laverstock Mill, which in 1718 became the centre for making specialist paper, including Bank of England banknotes until 1963! It became a distillery in 2010. Alice gave us a conducted tour of the building and most of us found out more about how 10 ‘botanicals’ are the key ingredients of their gins and were then able to try and identify them by personal analysis! A fine end to a trip where Kevin, the Lynns driver guided us expertly through Hampshire lanes back onto the usual motorways/A roads home, many of us carrying long square bottles filled with clear liquids- ahem! The cover photo is of the distillery.

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7. Future Visit Programme 2025

Saturday 6 December 2025 Trip to Christmas Market at Rochester



Rochester Christmas Market 2024

Bob and Jenny are now taking bookings for this exciting annual event. Bob has chosen the Saturday when there is the bonus of the annual Dickensian Christmas Festival, so get ready to meet Scrooge, Mr Bumble, possibly the Artful Dodger, and have a great choice of Christmas presents as well, before the Christmas rush descends upon us all. If you want to take a breather, visit nearby Rochester Cathedral, or Rochester Castle (free to English Heritage members) or just walk around Rochester's picturesque High Street with plenty of places for refreshments. Complete the booking form early to ensure you have a place on the coach. You have received a copy of the form by email but a printed copy is also enclosed with this newsletter.

8. Other events

Autumn Lunch November 6th 2025 at Seaford Golf Club Firlie Road, 12:30 for 1pm start

Enclosed with this newsletter is a booking form for you to complete and return with your menu choice to the organiser, Chris Burgess. This is a great social opportunity to get to know one another better, win raffle prizes, whilst being served by the efficient staff of the club. The facilities there always encourage members to stay longer after the meal, so put it in your diaries and reserve your meal and place.

Autumn Fair November 22nd, 2025, at Cross Way Church Hall, 10am till 12.30

If anyone would like to help on this busy happy event we have a variety of roles. I would love to welcome more helpers. We start setting up at 9am but, before that, several cars will have turned up at my house to help load books and Tombola Prizes and anything else that has been stored there.

We have a variety of stalls:

A Bumper book stall, An amazing assortment of **Puzzles**, a **Raffle**, a busy **Tombola stall**, **Gifts** including Jewellery, Scarfs and gift sets, **Preserves** and **Jams**.

Cake stall. Could bakers please add a list of ingredients for their cakes? Thank you in advance. This is a most popular stall.

Raffle prizes can be brought to the October or November meetings or to the hall on the day.

Tombola prizes can be brought to our meetings. We usually have 100. It can be an unwanted gift or a book in good condition or toiletries. Bottles can be given as well. The stall was so well-supported last year.

Refreshments are also served with space for a rest after browsing the stalls.

If anyone has a problem with getting gifts to the sale I can collect if you contact me.

All the money raised goes to support National Trust properties in the local area.

With kind thanks for all.

Gill Tansley 07801 898388

Booking arrangements for tours

****Please take a moment to read these booking conditions****

Booking arrangements for Coach Outings

Outings are run for members of the Seaford Association. Occasionally members may also purchase seats for non-NT guests if sufficient seats are available, however priority will be given to members. Prices quoted include transport, entrance fees (except for NT properties) and gratuities for drivers and guides. Refreshments are not included unless stated but details of available facilities will be publicised. Requests for seats should be made using the booking form distributed with the Association's Newsletter.

Members must bring their National Trust membership cards for visits to National Trust properties otherwise the full entrance fee will be payable. Membership of the Seaford Association is not sufficient for entrance to NT properties.

All sections of the form need to be completed.

If you can, please pay by direct transfer, please include "NT Trip" as reference. Cheques must be made payable to "NTSA". Please ensure that, however you pay, you complete a booking form for each trip.

Confirmation of booking will be issued by email, however if confirmation is required by post a **stamped addressed envelope must be included**. Should all seats be sold, a waiting list will be kept in case seats become available through cancellation. Members will be notified as appropriate.

Ticket-holders who wish to cancel their booking should inform Jenny Tyler on 07778 512111 as soon as possible. No refund can be made unless the vacancy can be filled from the waiting list. A £2 handling fee will be deducted to cover costs where a refund is made.

The organisers reserve the right to cancel any outing. Should this be necessary, a full refund will be made. If, on the day of the outing, booked members are unable to participate, they should inform the organiser so that the coach is not delayed.

Please arrive 10 minutes before the scheduled departure time to avoid delays.

If any member has health or mobility problems they must book with a helper who can assist them during the day as the courier is responsible for 49 people and is unable to devote particular attention to one individual however much they may wish to.

Booking forms to be sent to:

Mrs Jenny Tyler, NTSA,

Flat 20, Cheney's Lodge, 24a Sutton Avenue, Seaford BN25 4LG

See separate booking forms to reserve your places early!

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## 10. Speaker Programme 2025/6

*All talks are held at The Seaford Rugby Club, The Salts Rec, Richmond Rd, Seaford  
BN25 1DR and start at 2:30pm.*

**Wednesday 15th October 2025 Duncan Lavin.** “An Antarctic Odyssey”. Duncan will be talking about his 2017 visit to Antarctica with stunning photography.

**Wednesday 19th November 2025.** Our Annual General Meeting. Members of the team from Monk’s House will attend and talk about the work they do.

**Wednesday 21st January 2026. Ian Everest.** “Stories from the Sussex Downs”. Find out about the Home Guard Cavalry, a college for Lady Gardeners, Poverty Bottom, a Grand National winner and much more.

**Wednesday 18th February 2026. Tony Harris.** Appearing as Henry VIII. With stories of all six wives and Henry’s life from cradle to the grave, presented in full regal costume.

**Wednesday 18th March 2026. Neil Sadler.** “Stories from the Clink”. A second visit from Neil, a former police officer, who visited many UK prisons and met many colourful characters.

**Margaret Smith**  
**Winter Programme Organiser**

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11. BIRLING GAP NEWS

On behalf of the NTSA Committee, I wrote to Liz Girling, People Engagement Director of the NT, after her 11 July email to our Chair consulting about proposed changes to staffing at Birling Gap which would reduce staffing costs and “lead to a 6% reduction in jobs.” That 45-day consultation period started on 9 July and ends on 21 September 2025. The questions I raised related to supporting the retention of the field staff who as a team look after the wider educational and pastoral work of the extensive portfolio. This is in the light of increasing visitor footfall, encouraged by the investment of not only the NT at Alfriston Clergy House, the Chyngton Brooks project and the Birling Gap visitor centre, but also the South Downs National Park, the recent extension of the King Charles III Coastal Path and initiatives by the rail company, LDC and STC to encourage greater visitor numbers.

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I received the following reply from Nicola Briggs, Regional Director London & SE on 7 August which I reproduce in full. It sadly does not address any of the specific points in my letter.

*“Thank you for your email and letter to Liz Girling. I’m responding as the Regional Director that covers Birling Gap.*

*I am sorry that you are upset by the news that some roles are proposed to change or reduce as part of the consultation process that we are currently going through as an organisation.*

*We’re working to equip the National Trust for the long-term future. The organisation has been successful for so long because it is able to evolve. Five years on from the pandemic, the National Trust must now respond to the economic environment affecting all charities, including rising inflation and cost of living, and extra financial pressures such as the rise in National Insurance employer’s contribution and the National Living Wage. This year we launched our new 10-year strategy, shaped by more than 70,000 members and other stakeholders. It commits us to three main aims: restore nature, end unequal access to nature and cultural heritage and inspire millions of people. This proposed restructure means we will be properly resourced for the future allowing us to both withstand economic pressure and deliver our new strategy, which is to restore nature,*

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*increase access to nature and culture and inspire millions to care and take action. If we didn't restructure, we wouldn't be able to absorb current cost pressures and deliver the strategy.*

*In March we introduced temporary measures to limit recruitment and to pause or stop non-essential projects. We have tried to minimise job cuts as much as possible, including by looking at non-pay savings first, and working closely with Prospect our trade union, to find solutions. We are offering voluntary redundancy to mitigate compulsory redundancies as far as possible. We're reviewing all areas of our work".*

*As the initial consultation period opened from 10 July and closes on 24 August, we don't yet know what the impact specifically on particular properties or regions will be yet, as consultation is ongoing and these are only proposals at this stage. Kind regards, Nicola.*

**Charlie Grimble Editor**

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12. Other Sussex News

Errata

Your editor tries to be meticulous in his proofreading as well as syntax, spelling and fact checking. Imagine his horror when kind Members pointed out 2 errors in previous Newsletters! As a native of Hampshire, I was mortified when Jane Finch, a Member pointed out I had mis-spelt the wonderful town of Alresford in our Winter 2024 edition! She will be pleased to note that this has been correct in every edition since!!

Eagle-eyed Laurie Holland pointed out in the last Summer 2025 magazine that what I thought was a beautifully-written article about the National Trust portfolio was spoiled for him because the map (provided by the National Trust itself, I might add in self-defence) showed that it owned half the Seaford Head golf course. Well, as Nigel Molesworth of St Custard's Prep School says "as any fule kno" Seaford Town Council is the proud owner of this fine golf course. You just cannot get reliable cartographers these days! The Editor is happy to know the Newsletter is closely read!

Report from Sissinghurst

Sissinghurst's Assistant Head Gardener, Saffron, has been busy working on the Moat Walk Azalea bank. She has enlisted the help of horticultural students from Plumpton and



Azalea Walk, Sissinghurst

Writtle Colleges to assist the removal of the outgrown perennial underplanting below the azaleas. In addition, she has collaborated with a member of the RHS Rhododendron, Camelia & Magnolia Group, researching which of the current Azaleas along the Moat Walk are original to Vita's time. Vita bought the Azaleas as a result of winning the £100 Heinemann prize in 1946 for her poem *The Garden*. This poem sets the seasons of the garden against the seasons of life, reflecting Vita's own concerns for the future after coming through the Second World War. It could also be a metaphor for the life of gardeners working in an historic garden. They need to be aware of what historically went before whilst also managing changes in climate and soil, etc in the present time.

Nicci Obholzer

Sissinghurst | Lamb House | Smallhythe Place | Stoneacre

13. Diary Dates

Talks take place at 2.30pm in the Seaford Rugby Club,
The Salts Rec., Richmond Road, Seaford, East
Sussex, BN25 1DR

2025	
15 Oct.	Talk: Duncan Lavin 'An Antarctic Odyssey'
6 Nov.	Autumn Lunch
19 Nov.	AGM and talk from Allison Pritchard of Monk's House, Rodmell
22 Nov.	NTSA Autumn Fair Cross Way Hall, 10:00-12:30
6 Dec.	Christmas Fair trip to Rochester
2026	
21 Jan.	Talk: Ian Everest 'Stories from the Sussex Downs'
18 Feb.	Talk: Tony Harris 'Henry VIII talks about his life and wives'
18 Mar.	Talk: Neil Sadler 'Stories from the Clink'

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