

Our day out, the coach trip to the National Botanical Gardens of Wales.

On a somewhat rainy and damp day the Association members and friends set off from Leominster at about 8.30am for a two hour journey through wonderful countryside, and apart from misreading of a brown sign that resulted in a difficult reversing of the coach which the driver did to a round of applause, we returned to our route and arrived at the Gardens at about 10.40.

Most of us headed upwards on the pathway, passing fountains, a large pond, rocks of ages past, water features and a rill set into cobbles and criss-crossing the path towards the huge expanse of glass, the Dome, for a coffee and as it was still rainy, shelter. Inside the Dome, (a Norman Foster design) were an impressive selection of plants from various regions of the world, all so incredibly different, fascinating shapes, colours, forms, some in flower, and some familiar that we now grow in our gardens. Sparrows and Robins had taken to living there amongst the plants and were seen flying about as well looking for food.

A glasshouse set in an old double walled garden was very interesting, housing exotic butterflies amongst the ferns and plants from hotter, damper climates, a couple of experts on hand to show the life cycle of the butterflies to anyone interested. There were feeding stations with very ripe bananas, some amongst the plants hanging up to provide sweet food for the butterflies.

As the rain continued and lunchtime approached most of us decided the cafe would be a good idea as well as hot meal. The menu selection was varied and the food we chose was very good, everyone enjoyed their meal. After about an hour the sky lightened it had stopped raining, so time to explore outside in the grounds. The enormous tree stumps with their exposed roots were amazing, samples of exotic wood as part of an experiment to see how lichens and fungi grow was part of the reason for this display.

There was an Apothecary, set up with illustrated information boards, and the uses of herbs and plants from around the world with detailed information as to how they were used to treat people in the past.

As it is early in the year there were many parts of the Gardens that were dormant and some that were awaiting renewal, however the open aspect of the grounds was very pleasing, a red Kite circling overhead gave it another dimension.

The plant for sale area was interesting as well as the small cafe for a last cuppa before returning to the coach at 3.30pm. No rain on the way home and lovely views of the snowy Brecons', buzzards, and rainbows as the weather improved.

We arrived back in Leominster at about 5.30pm and everyone thanked the driver for a safe journey, and Gill for organising the trip.

Written by Vivienne Pearson (L.A.A.) 11th March 2018.