

QARANC WELSH BRANCH VISIT TO DUFFRYN GARDENS

On a lovely sunny day in May, branch and family members made their way to National Trust Duffryn Gardens which are Grade1 listed, site described as a peaceful oasis just outside of Cardiff.

As most of us had travelled some distance, our first stop was the café for coffee, where we gradually congregated. It was lovely that Jenny Jones, although unable to undertake the tour came and met us for coffee. A perfect chance to catch up before we started our tour. Julie Coxell, a branch member and tour guide at the gardens, not only organised the event but also served as our own special guide for the morning. Her wealth of knowledge about the gardens their history, and the flora and fauna enhanced our experience. Julie also introduced many of us to Goggle Lens, to identify plants and trees. Such a useful tool to have whilst walking around the grounds.



Following coffee, we began our tour with an introduction to the Gardens' history and the various areas we would see. The first stop was a wilding area that led into the extensive arboretum, where we admired many different acers of stunning colours, shapes and sizes alongside many other species of trees. Julie pointed out the 297 year old Lucknow Oak, a particular highlight. Most of the trees here are non-native species, having been brought to the gardens by past owners who returned from travels around the world, such as the Ginko tree planted in 1890. As we continued through the grounds, Duffryn House suddenly came into view, a majestic Grade 2 listed building overlooking sweeping lawns. Although currently closed for renovation, it was still an impressive sight.



The gardens themselves are designed in a variety of styles inspired by various countries around the world. We saw a dazzling mix of plants in bright rich colours. Peaceful corners perfect for relaxing. Ponds dotted with a variety of water lilies in bloom, where damsel flies hovered gracefully above. The borders full of mixed planting, were stunning, and the rose garden offered an array of different colours and scents.

After a picnic lunch, we had the afternoon free to explore further. Many enjoyed the kitchen gardens and the tropical glass house, home to an amazing cacti collection.

There was also the chance to visit a special exhibit 'Helios' named after the ancient Greek God of the sun. This spherical piece of artwork provided a detailed view of our solar system's greatest star, accompanied by a soundscape that revealed its hidden beauty and power. A fascinating and memorable experience.



All too soon, it was time to leave Duffryn Gardens. The day had been full of beautiful landscapes, fascinating history, and wonderful company. It was also an ideal opportunity to see *Helios* and catch up with fellow members. A good time was had by all, and we now look forward to our next event, our annual walk in August around Llangorse Lake Powys.