

## Details of our 4 day visit to the Brecon Beacons in early June this year.

### Trip write up by Vicki King

Just a brief account of the wonderful holiday that 48 of us had in the Brecon Beacons in early June this year. The weather was very kind to us over the four days and travel in our coach was very comfortable with a very experienced and skilful driver. The Parkway Hotel and Spa at Cwmbran could not have been better and several of our group commented that the rooms, service and restaurant were all first class!



Our first stop was just southwest of Newport at **Tredegar House**, a 17<sup>th</sup> century red brick mansion house, with a plethora of historic tales to tell which were very well told to us by one of the guides who had attended a church school once resident in the building. The House is surrounded by three formal gardens which we ambled through in bright sunshine.

Following breakfast on Day 2 we travelled north for a trip on the **Brecon Beacons Mountain steam railway** we were treated to fabulous views of the mountains all the way and especially at the top, Torpantau.

In the afternoon we visited **Llancaiach Fawr Manor**, a historical manor house which has been restored and furnished as it would have been in 1645. The history came alive as we were entertained by a number of costumed servants who related their duties in the manor house with great relish! We all now know how to load a musket, as you never know when it might come in handy!



Day 3 was completely different as we travelled up a narrow winding mountain road in the morning up to visit the 10-acre organic **RHS Partner garden at Nant-y-Bedd** owned by Ian and Sue Maberley who could not have been more welcoming.

In Sue we had our own Gardeners Question Time expert, she was amazingly knowledgeable. The garden has been described as a wonderful mixture of organic fruit and vegetables, imaginative planting, mature trees, winding paths, bridge, pond, stream and designer stone walls. It has everything and such a peaceful place too, a unique wooden bench/sculpture said it all with its inscription of "Silence is not the absence of everything but the presence of everything".

Can you spot the crocodile??



The afternoon was organised with a visit to the **National Heritage Site of the Big Pit National Coal Museum**. Most of our group ventured down to 300 feet on the Underground Tour, to see what life was like for the thousands of men who worked at the coal face. They learned of the life lead by the pit ponies and children that worked in the mine as well. For those of us who stayed overground there was an amazing multi-media tour of a modern coal mine with a virtual miner in the Mining Galleries, exhibitions in the Pithead Baths and Historic colliery buildings.

On our way back on Day 4 we visited **Dewstow Gardens and Hidden Grottoes** another amazingly interesting and place. The gardens were created in 1890s and then buried around the 1950s post war to grow food and only recently discovered and renovated. On the ground level, there are many rock gardens, ponds, water features, ornamental areas, tropical glass houses and a vast variety of plants, shrubs and trees from around the world. These were spectacular, but not unique. But when you go below these gardens, and you enter the subterranean world underneath the magic and unique character of these gardens and grottoes is evident.



Brightwater Holidays once again designed a marvellously varied and enjoyable trip combining gardens with history of the area visited. All the feedback to me has been very positive which is heart warming as I was a little nervous about following in the footsteps of Angela Baldry who has organised these short holidays so well for many years. I am so glad that we all had such a wonderful time and my thanks to the Group and Angela for helping me through my first time as our club tour guide.

I do hope that you will all join me on our next adventure to Cornwall in June 2025

Vicki King