

Day Trip to Dorothy Clive Garden and Wollerton Old Hall Garden on 28th May 2013

Our day began early, unpromising with grey skies and drizzle. Following a short comfort and coffee stop we arrived at the Dorothy Clive garden near Market Drayton, Shropshire mid morning. With rain still persisting albeit fairly light at the outset, we all started to explore under the protection of our umbrellas this 12 acre site. Evolved since 1940 in memory of his wife Dorothy, Colonel Harry Clive has planted a wonderful quarry area with many varieties of Rhododendrons and Azaleas zinging with vibrant colours that lifted our spirits. A network of paths led us through wonderful trees and shrubs all looking fresh with their new spring foliage. Other exciting areas included a large pool at the bottom of the gardens with lush plantings on one steep side framed by rocks. We concluded our visit with refreshments in the tea room.

After a short drive which gave us time to consume packed lunches we arrived at Wollerton Old Hall Garden. The Head gardener Andrew Humphris kindly gave a short interesting talk about the history of the house (part Tudor) and how the 4-acre site had been developed.

Current owners John and Lesley Jenkins have transformed the garden into "rooms" with clever vistas. Lesley's artistic background was much in evidence with wonderful plantings using scale and eye-catching colour combinations. The garden had echoes of Arts and Crafts, especially the wooden obelisks and tall yew spires. Much of the garden is divided by hedges, walls and paths, each with its own style. Splendid tulips were still going strong and herbaceous borders were crammed with plants many still to come to fruition. I'm told this garden in July is magnificent, full of summer colour, and worth another visit. Their clematis collection is significant and my eye was caught by a variety called "Lemon Chiffon" with its single large flowers in delicate pale yellow looking stunning against an old weathered oak frame. By mid afternoon the rain had started to get heavier and eventually we all retreated into their 16th century warm, cosy tea room with tasty home-made cakes. Our trip finished off with a quick visit to the plant nursery which contained some choice plants.

A pleasant coach journey back with Swanbrook's driver Roy, who kept us entertained and brought us safely to Cheltenham by 6.15pm. Despite the awful weather we disembarked happy, tired and full of wonderful memories of our day.

Caroline Mobley