

VISIT TO MARWOOD HILL GARDENS

It was sunny and bright on Thursday, 16th May when twenty-one Kilmington Gardening Club members joined the coach to set off to North Devon. It was a very worthwhile journey as Marwood Hill gardens proved to be delightful.

Dr. Jimmy Smart MBV, VMH, who created the gardens, was a plantsman who drew inspiration from his extensive travels to Australia and New Zealand and elsewhere. His horticultural knowledge embraced plants, shrubs and trees of particular interest, such as Bhutan, Turkey and South Africa. The wide scope of his interests is amply shown in the great variety of specimens in the gardens.

On arrival at the gardens, we were greeted by Malcolm Pharoah, (who has been at Marwood Hill for over 50 years as Head Gardener), before we headed in to the gardens. A spectacular Wisteria pergola greets visitors and immediately gives a flavour of the magical feeling in the gardens. It is described as a garden of two halves; the upper garden breaks all the conventional garden design rules where naturalistic planting flows and merges across the landscape. Three lakes break up the vistas and the extensive woodland surrounds the whole site. Dr. Smart's plant-hunting expeditions have resulted in magnificent specimens of Camellia, Rhododendron, Magnolias, flowering dogwoods, Hydrangeas and Champion Eucalyptus trees each with its own 'walk' to be enjoyed by visitors.



The gardens showcase their important National Collection of Astilbes, one of four National Collections at Marwood – the others being Tulbaghia, Japanese Iris and its Garden Heritage Collection. There is also a splendid Bog garden enhanced by the stream which wends its way eventually into the lakes.

The café provided a very welcome and delicious lunch before we headed to the walled garden where plants were purchased before boarding the bus for home.

Some of our group had already visited Marwood Hill gardens, but for those of us who had never visited, it was a revelation and a return trip is definitely called for!

Jean Falconer