

The Friends Holiday in Cornwall

Once again the Friends' holiday was a great success made especially so because of the glorious weather we had every day.

Our holiday this year was based in Truro in a most comfortable hotel with pleasant staff and very good food. On our journey there we visited Powderham Castle, mentioned in the Domesday Book, and home of the Earls of Devon since 1391. Much of the look and feel of the castle remains but it has gone through a assortment of periods, chopping and changing through the ages but always commanding wonderful views over the deer park which runs down to the river Exe and overlooks the Estuary.

We visited Trelisick House and Gardens, again with beautiful vistas over to the river Fal and meandering paths through the woodland leading to exotic plants and borders bursting with colour. The magnificent trees, some of enormous size, displayed a glorious variety of foliage. The



house was the home of Ida Copeland who bequeathed it with a splendid collection of china to the National Trust.

Some of our party had already been to the Lost Gardens of Heligan but were not disappointed to re visit this unique and wonderful place. It is Europe's largest garden restoration, first created over a 150 year period but lost until 1990's, since when it has been so remarkably brought back to life as a living memorial to the skill and dedication of the gardeners of a bygone age. It contains historic pleasure gardens, sub-tropical jungle, complete with Burmese rope bridge, a home farm and vegetable gardens.

The huge kitchen garden is an inspiration and it was fascinating to learn how the pineapple bed was made and worked so as to bring on these exotic fruits so highly prized in the 19thC. It was poignant to learn of the 22 gardeners employed there, many of whom left to fight in WW1 but never returned, and encouraging to know that 22 young gardeners are employed there now. It is a very magical place.

Truro itself is a delightful city and we had a very warm welcome from the Friends of Truro Cathedral, a delicious cream tea and talk followed by choral evensong. It was interesting to learn that Cornwall had its own bishop until the latter part of the 10thC but the diocese was then held in





Exeter from 1050 for over 800 years. In 1877 the diocese was re-established and Edward White Benson became its first bishop. It was his vision that established the cathedral and in 1880 he created the service of 9 lessons and carols, which is now a much-loved tradition at Christmas. He was also responsible for the integrated scheme in the stained glass windows, which is the largest project of its kind ever made. Other treasures include the reredos in the Jesus Chapel painted by Annie Walke of the Newlyn School of artists, and a terracotta frieze, the work of George Tinworth, who rose from poverty to become one of the foremost sculptors of his day. This large relief depicts Jesus' walk to Golgotha and was given to the cathedral by Mr FW Bond in gratitude for the safe return of his 2 sons from the South African War.

Despite a busy schedule we managed a trip to Mevagissay harbour and the sea, some went independently on a river ferry to Falmouth and others enjoyed meeting up with friends, shopping and exploring the little city of Truro.

Our return journey took us to Killerton House and Gardens. A jewel in the Devon countryside, this vast agricultural estate combines parkland, woodland and

farmland, 2 villages, 18 farms and over 200 cottages. We only had time to explore the fine 18thC house and wander the superb gardens containing stately trees, many of them hundreds of years old and still providing peace and serenity. Home of the Acland family, the house contains a fascinating collection of photographs and memorabilia of Sir Richard with his accomplished wife, Lady Anne. He inherited the role of country landowner with mixed feelings. He was Liberal MP and his Christian persuasion led to his launching the Common Wealth Party. These same convictions led to the estates being given to the National Trust in the 1940's and thus enabling us to enjoy them. Our visit was extra special as one of our party is a relative of Sir Richard and shared her memories and some newspaper cuttings with our guide, which made his day! Another 'friend' sat in the charming music room and played both the Broadwood grand and the delightful chamber organ built in 1807 as a wedding present for Lady Lydia Acland.

All too soon we boarded the coach and were returned safely to Salisbury full of memories, having made some new friends and with our purchases of plants or souvenirs of the happy few days spent in Cornwall.

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