

Garden Visits Group visit to Belton House and garden

By Sandra Evans

BELTON HOUSE was built in the late 1600's and is a beautiful country house with a huge park and delightful gardens. There are five sections, each with different layouts and planting schemes. The entrance to the gardens had a travelling exhibition created by children in a rainbow of colours all made from paper or fabric and related to climate change.

We came into the sunken Italian Garden first and this was beautifully laid out with sculptured topiary being the main feature, our first sight being one of the gardeners with a pair of hand clippers manicuring the trees. There was several huge urns planted with red Geraniums and I would imagine that during the summer months this garden will be awash with colour.

The Orangery overlooks the Italian garden and housed an interesting collection of tender plants: the lush foliage of the huge Camellias created a background for Arum lilies, peach Geraniums, some pretty pink Shrimp plants and other colourful plants. There were two teenage boys with cloths polishing the glossy Camellia leaves which had been marked by droplets of water – what a task to set anyone; the National Trust certainly pay attention to detail.

The walled area behind the orangery was originally called the Rosery but although there are still some magnificent climbing Roses against the walls, it is now mostly colourful herbaceous borders which line the three sections. The very tall Delphiniums contrasted beautifully with the swathes of Geranium Johnson's Blue at the edge of the path.

The Garden to the North of the house is called the Dutch Garden and is laid out in a late seventeenth century style: very formal with green and gold Yew topiary, some some stunning urns planted with purple Salvia and lemon Petunias, again this garden will look superb during the summer when the flowering plants have developed.

The trees, lakes, lawns and wild flowers make up quite a large part of the whole garden and was very pleasant to wander through.

Belton House has a superb collection of paintings and tapestries, and the wood carving by Grinling Gibbons were absolutely incredible. The entire house felt like a comfortable home one could enjoy living in, especially during the time of the filming of *Pride and Prejudice* with Mr. Darcy in residence.

Thank you to the Garden Group for organising this outing.