

Out and About 2 Trip to Kew Gardens and Kew Palace – 15 June 2016

On Wednesday 15 June 16 members of Out and About 2 visited Kew Gardens and Kew Palace. After some welcome refreshment and a short stroll through the gardens we reached Kew Palace where Cameron was waiting to guide us through this fascinating Georgian style royal residence.

Kew Palace was built in 1631 and was originally known as the Dutch House, the first royal residents were the three elder daughters of George II. The most famous royal to live here was George III who with his wife Queen Charlotte and their 15 children spent happy summers at Kew Palace and it was an important refuge during George's infamous episodes of 'madness'.

After Queen Charlotte died in 1818, Kew Palace was shut up . It was acquired by Kew in 1898 and opened to the public for the first time. A 10 year programme to refurbish Kew Palace was completed in 2006 and it reopened to the public in April that year.

Cameron was an excellent guide and what should have been a 45 minute tour extended to almost 90 minutes.

We had lunch in the Orangery, a fine classical building constructed in 1761 to house citrus trees and other ornamentals, which has now been converted into an excellent restaurant.

The last 'formal' part of the day was a one hour guided tour of some of the highlights of the gardens. Our super guide Chris gave us a brief history of the gardens and then took us into the Palm House where we were able to experience the humid warmth of the tropical rainforest among bananas, palm trees, and one of the oldest pot plants in the world.

We then cooled down outside whilst Chris explained some of the lovely vistas in the Gardens and finished up in the Waterlily House, a fascinating experience.

Kew Gardens comprises over 300 acres and in a short trip one can only scratch the surface but everyone enjoyed the day and there were suggestions of another visit later in the year.