

On 2nd September 2009 the Garden Group visited Tapeley Park in the pouring rain. It is a very imposing house in the Italian style high above the Torridge Estuary and overlooking Bideford and the Atlantic Ocean. What a shame it was such a dreadful day.

Nevertheless ten members complete with riding macs, cagoules, umbrellas and wellies were (a) pleased to be offered cheap tickets because there were more than 5 of us and (b) dismayed to be told that the man who ran the tea rooms had just left (we had passed him on the drive) because there were no customers. However, when informed that 10 intrepid ladies had arrived, bless 'im, he came back and opened up for us. What a result!

We had very wet wander round the gardens - also largely laid out in the Italian manner - and what a beautiful place it would have been on a hot, dry, sunny day! Definitely worth another visit, so we are hopefully going to persuade Marion to add it to next year's programme.

The garden is laid out on terraces linked by steps, with topiary, herbaceous borders, statues, clipped yews and wonderful little Italianate buildings at the end of the vistas. There is a permaculture garden, a border designed by Carol Klein, an 18th C ice house, a walled kitchen garden full of fruit and vegetables and a lovely curved roofed greenhouse home to a grape vine at one end. And so much more which we didn't see because we were cold and wet and gasping for a hot cup of tea.

SH