

## **U3A Science and Technology Trip to Wales Report**

*Spring 2025 by Dr. Victoria Polland*

A large group from Science and Technology had a wonderful trip to Wales, action packed, full of fun and with beautiful weather. We went up Snowdon in the train to the summit from where we could see for miles and miles. It was breath-taking.

Snowdon was not the only train trip we went on. In true Science and Technology fashion we also took the steam train from Porthmadog/Ffestiniog to Tan Y Bwlch. This train has beautiful livery with 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> class seats. It has an amazing engine with two chimneys which can both push and pull the train, an important feature from when it was used with trucks carrying slate from the mines. We had a little delay at the end of the track because the fire from the engine had set fire to the dry grass on the track. We got back to the hotel late but the management kept our dinner and served us with their usual efficiency and humour.

Portmeirion was another high point of our trip. It is such an amazing village built by Welsh architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis to a colourful mediterranean style. We found it charming and full of surprises.

Bodnant Gardens are also set on the steep mountain slopes. It is magnificent with colourful, splendid views across the gardens to the mountains beyond, views which are locked into our memories.

Conwy is an old town built into its castle walls. The town with its cobbled streets is pretty as is the river estuary. We loved the country's tiniest house, really tiny, and we enjoyed beautiful ice-cream by the water. Bliss.

On our way to Wales, we stopped at RAF Cosford. This is an amazing museum showing war time planes from both Germany and Britain. The display is designed so that we could feel the attachment the pilots had to their aircraft, a very moving experience. On our return we stopped at Shugborough Estate, a delightful stately home where Sir Patrick Lichfield lived. We saw his apartment and some of his special photos and enjoyed the whole house along with well-appointed kitchens.

This whole trip was excellent, we loved North Wales, the hotel in Betws-y-Coed, the sheep, the mountains, the slate mines we passed, the Welsh language spoken by the locals and the friendly reception we had everywhere.

Thank you to Colin and Dawn as always for their organisation of such a happy trip.