

HADS trip to South Wales – May 2019

16 members of HADS enjoyed a short residential trip to South Wales in May. We began by visiting the ruins of Tintern Abbey. This proved to be a bit of a challenge as many of the access roads had been closed due to a rock fall in the valley. However, not to be deterred, we soldiered on and enjoyed the site.



We then travelled the short distance to Chepstow where we visited the castle. It is the oldest surviving stone castle in the UK, outlasting many newer castles. It was built in 1067 and is now managed by Cadw, the Historic Environment Service of the Welsh Government.

We then made our way to our base, the Two Rivers Hotel in Chepstow. The following day was designated Roman Day, so after breakfast we drove the short distance to the Roman site of Caerwent.

The modern village is built around the Roman ruins, which are some of the best-preserved in Europe. The walls are amazing and we enjoyed a walking tour around this fantastic site.

After lunch we travelled to Caerleon where our first stop was the Roman baths site. This was amazing with very effective lighting and information boards that recreated what it must have been like. There were chambers for hot and cold baths, exercise rooms and an open-air swimming pool. We also saw the amphitheatre (below) and the barrack buildings.



On Sunday we left our hotel in Chepstow to drive to the village of Trellech. Today it is relatively small, but in the 13th century it was one of the largest towns in Wales, even bigger than Cardiff!

Archaeological investigations have been taking place since the early 1990s led by the University of Wales at Newport, but in 2005 a young archaeology graduate became convinced that the remains of the lost town lay in a field. He bought the field and has led excavations in this field ever since. We were fortunate to see the ongoing work and speak to one of the volunteers who works there.



Examining the Virtuous Well

We also saw Tump Turret which is the site of a small motte and bailey castle, and the Virtuous Well which was reputed to cure “this scurvy and distempers”. We visited the Harold’s Stones which date back to the Bronze Age and are all that remains of a much larger stone monument. We did some dowsing here, with some members locating hidden stones.

All too soon it was time to go, but not before we enjoyed a delicious lunch in the local pub! This fortified us for the journey home.

It was a short, but fantastic trip in which we saw some truly wonderful places, so thanks especially to Don and all who made it possible.

Ed Cole
June 2019