

We head into the gardens and near Azalea Drive find some welcoming benches for our picnic. Here the children, thanks to the Butterfly and Bee Summer Worksheet, issued on arrival, spot a variety of butterflies including the Gatekeeper. Throughout our visit we are introduced to more such as the Small skipper, the Ringlet and Grayling.

Glancing at our map the children notice the play area so we have to go and visit that next. It's a very pleasant summer's day, 23 degrees Celsius, and when passing beneath the tall trees there's always some welcome shade. It is mind boggling to think of the initial vision and the amount of work that has gone in to creating this paradise. As we head to the play area we walk beside a river and spy yet more dragonflies. Harriett spots a water boatman, too. The trickle of the water and the peaceful surroundings provide a tranquillity that can be hard to find in this busy world in which we live.

To the delight of our children we eventually arrive at their preferred destination where considerable time is spent swinging and climbing. Caroline and I are even allowed a few minutes to rest and talk on a nearby bench. "We must visit Five Arrows Gallery and Centenary Garden," she insists. So we amble over Gilbury Bridge savouring our surroundings as we go. There's a local art exhibition in the gallery, which inspires us all. Outside Henry spots a massive metal sculpture of an insect.

We walk past a tree, which has a delightful heavy scent engulfing the surrounding area, and is a haven for red-tailed and white-tailed bumblebees, honey bees and black bees.

Making our way through the Herbaceous Garden there are more fascinating plants including Teasels and a very tall flower, whose name I do not know, unfortunately. Just over the path in front of Exbury House, which wouldn't look out of place in Bath, is



Sundial Garden

the Burmese Bell, hanging from a massive tree. Henry, on my shoulders, is able to make it ring by using his hands and then hitting it with a stick. What a great idea.

Ahead is the delightful Beaulieu River and along the way is the Sundial Garden and Centenary Garden. Unfortunately, after this, it is time to leave. As soon as Heidi gets in the car she is asleep.

We have only really touched on a third of what the Exbury experience offers. It is possible to purchase family membership (between March to November) that allows two adults and up to three children to visit whenever they wish for £84, an excellent way to see Exbury in all its many colours throughout the seasons.

An excellent day out for all the family.

www.exbury.co.uk

Watch the video at www.travelwriter.biz



Henry, Heidi & Harriett at Exbury Steam Railway



The Hydrangea Walk