

Wednesday 20th April

The City of Dreaming Spires

Usually used to describe Oxford, this phrase could just as easily have been used for Cambridge as the golden towers of the University buildings became visible on the horizon. Our excellent journey down meant we would have five hours there. We were really fortunate in the weather, as the sun was shining in a clear blue sky. There was a cool breeze, but we needed it as it became very hot.

The REA has run trips to Cambridge before, so Stewart parked up at the Backs, a lovely green park behind the University, hence the name. We then split up to explore the glories of King's College Gothic Chapel, the stunning Botanical Gardens, the famous Fitzwilliam Museum-or Café Revive at M&S! Moira, Pam and I decided, this time, to go further afield to Grantchester, a beautiful village some six miles outside Cambridge. Many of you will know it from the ITV detective series of that name, and the chance to run into Sidney Chambers (the delectable James Norton who has sadly left the series) or his replacement Will (Tom Brittney)was irresistible. A quick bus journey took us there and it was a delightful place. Thatched cottages nestled together and the interior of Sidney's Church of St Andrew and St Mary was well worth a visit.

In need of refreshment, we then strolled to the Orchard Tea Room, made famous by its connection with the WW1 war poet Rupert Brooke when he was at Cambridge. It certainly lived up to its name, as the tables were set in a huge orchard full of pink spring blossom, surrounded by deckchairs. The scones were huge, the clotted cream thick and still the sun shone. Perfection! The local ducks were soon round our feet waiting for crumbs-and they did get lucky!

Returning to Cambridge, only one thing remained-a punt on the river. A quick calculation showed we had time- just- so on we got. The tulips and floral displays along the river banks reflected the wealthy status of this university. Sadly, we did not have the Lewis Hamilton of punters, and we were passed many times even by amateurs. To be fair to the wee lassie "driving", she had done back to back shifts as some guides had not turned up for work. But it did mean a very quick sprint back up the Backs to the coach, and the walk of shame as we were quite late. Fortunately, everyone was very forgiving!

We had an excellent journey back also, and everyone had thoroughly enjoyed their day with its various activities. A huge thank you to Steve, Chris, Brian and Stewart the driver for the perfect day trip and I can't wait till we venture off to Whaley Bridge next month.

Barbara Pearce