

Year 1 trip to Groot Bijgaarden

On Tuesday 3rd May we went to visit the castle at Groot Bijgaarden.



When we got there we looked first at the gatehouse and the drawbridge.



There has been a castle on this site for nearly 900 years although the buildings here are not as old as that!

The main building inside dates from 1656, that's over 350 years old.



We all had a good look at the well; this was an important source of water in the castle.

We had a look in the Chapel of the main house and were able to



compare the altar and the organ loft to the Church we visited in Tervuren.

We explored the sculptures that were in the gardens.



Because we have had such a warm spring this year many of the early flowers had already bloomed and even many of the tulips were past their best. We were however able to go into the greenhouses and see a variety of spring flowers, everyone loved smelling the hyacinths!



Back out in the gardens we saw the gardeners digging up some of the tulips that were over and we had a close look at one of the bulbs to see the bulb, the roots and the green leaves.

In the orchard we looked at apple and pear trees, we thought the trees looked rather like umbrellas.



As well as smelling the flowers we also felt different leaves, like this fir tree. We also felt the ferns and were very careful touching the holly leaves. We decided not to feel the stinging nettles!

There were still some tulips in bloom; we noticed that these had beautiful frilly edges like lace.



Groot Bijgaarden for a day!

As well as man-made sculptures we found a tree that looked like it had a face!

We used our arms and hands to measure the circumference of some of the trees, the bigger the trunk the older the tree.



After lunch we went across the old wooden bridge to find out who was trip trapping across the bridge.

We didn't see any trolls though!



Then it was time to go into the Keep, this is the oldest building in the castle grounds and it is over 650 years old.



The walls of the keep are over 2 meters thick. At the bottom of the keep was the storeroom and you can see how thick the walls are by looking at the window.



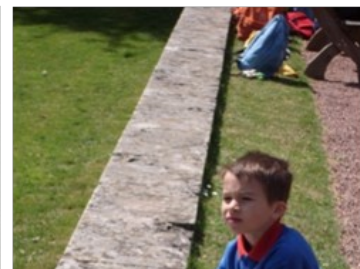
On the next floor of the keep would have been the main living area. It has a stunning vaulted ceiling and a large fireplace.

There were a number of recent paintings on display in this room and we compared them to the observational paintings that we had done.



We found that coming back down the spiral staircase was much more tricky than going up so we all had to be careful. Just imagine running up and down the stairs with all your armour and carrying a heavy sword and shield!

We then went back to the main area of the castle and gave the children chance to make some observational drawings of what they could see around them.



It was a really good day!