

Our Prize Trip to Scotland

2017.6.24. Day #1 – Giant Iron Machines

After sleeping only 4 hours, and waking up at 3 AM to take a taxi to the airport, we could say I wasn't in my best shape. On top of that, my anxieties about my first ever flight were also trying to knock me to the ground. It didn't help that we went to the wrong end of the airport and had to run from there to catch the bus to the plane. *Fun.* Once on the plane, I strapped myself tight to my seat, and tried to not let panic attacks get the best of me. On the airport, the lady waiting for us turned out to be Brenda, who, along with her husband, Duncan, was responsible for providing our accomodation (by a huge minivan) during our stay in Glasgow. She took us to the house of one of our tour guides in the city, a welcoming and friendly lady named Morag. I instantly felt more comfortable when she said there would be breakfast. We sat for a while in the living room, joined by our other tour guide, a lady named Lexa, before heading to the official program of the day: the Falkirk Wheel and the Kelpies. I took *only* a coat, foolishly thinking it would be enough. Don't be me. Wear multiple layers.

It turned out the Falkirk Wheel is not a ferris wheel, like the three of us previously thought, but a huge metal object at the meeting of two rivers. It looks rather fascinating already, but wait until you hop in a boat and get on it. It takes you pretty high up, from where the view is breathtaking. Next sight, after lunch, was the Kelpies, the largest equine statues in the world at 30-something metres. Odd title to hold. But they look pretty majestic up close. They are just two, enormous, metal horsehead statues, but there's something in them that demands attention. Back at Morag's again, while waiting for Morag to be ready with the dinner, the rest of us were reading the newspaper, and talking to get to know each other. I decided to wear my fencing team's jacket as I was cold in just a short-sleeved shirt, thus bringing up the topic of sports. We also talked about places we want to visit, and all of us could share our unique opinions about the world.

After dinner, we packed out suitcases in the minivan again, and headed off to our Glasgow „bed and breakfast”, Mike and Mary's house. They live in a family-friendly, suburban area, in a pretty big house, with their dog, Archie, who's freaking adorable. Each of us got our own rooms, mine's distinctive feature being a closet with mirror doors. (Shout out to you if you get my room next year.) We had a conversation with them, too, where they mentioned coming to Budapest in October. (If you're there, please ask them how it was, for me. But I suppose they'll tell you anyways.)

2017.6.25. Day #2 – Dedicate Your Hearts!

It was Sunday, and Sunday means church. Well, to those who go each week. I was up half an hour before breakfast, trying to get something decent out of my hair if I was already looking pretty formal in a skirt and all. And after we ate, Brenda and Duncan came for us, to take us to the Queen's Park church, with the stained glass windows paying homage to Jane Haining. You actually can't miss it, with the tall, *bright yellow* doors. The second we stepped in, people started coming up to us, for a handshake and occasionally some small talk. One of the first being the quite young minister of the church, Elijah Smith. As an introvert, I don't do well in situations like this, but that day, I felt honored. The members of this community genuinely wanted to see us and speak to us. They treated us with an incredible amount of

respect, and I'm sure you guys in the future will be treated the same way. Cherish it. You deserve it.

As a religious school's student, I've attended at least two hundred services in my life with my school to this date. I thought nothing could surprise me now, since I know by heart how everything goes. But this time, it was so similar, but still so different that my attention was permanently captured. It was in a foreign language, and I might have known some songs' Hungarian equivalents, but it was something new, and it interested me. Plus, I kind of liked Elijah's style of speech. And after service, we had lunch with the members of the community who decided to stay.

After a short walk through Queen's Park, (the actual park) the rest of our day continued in central Glasgow, with Brenda, where I spotted the first real life, kilt-wearing person. I might've been too excited. (By the way, Duncan went to tend to his garden. Ask him about it when you're there. He'll appreciate it.) Our first visit was the Museum of Religion, full of stuff related to every religion, and Jane Haining's Medal of Honor. I got jumpscared by a glowing Mexican skeleton, and I spotted some Weeping Angels from Doctor Who among different renditions of angels. We also saw the Glasgow Cathedral, where I picked up pamphlets in all languages that interest me: Hungarian, English, and Japanese (I could read a small bit of it already. I'm quite proud of myself.) And in addition, I had my first double-decker bus ride. I loved every second of it.

We went shopping in one of the streets. We've seen quite the selection of grocery and clothing stores, but there's one that stuck with me. A store dedicated entirely to geek stuff. It was the first thing Balázs and I spotted, and wanted to go in. I originally went in looking for Game of Thrones merch, but when I laid eyes on the large selection of anime related things, I instantly forgot about all that. I bought myself a keychain with the blue and white wings emblem of Attack on Titan's Survey Corps, thinking that's the best I'll find. Oh, how wrong I was. Walking around, I spotted something that interested me even more. The jacket of this very Survey Corps. I tried telling myself no. I really did. Guess who left with a new jacket and a huge, dorky grin on her face. And my wallet feeling a little bit lighter. Oops. We left before I could *accidentally* move in there. But at least everyone I showed the jacket to said it was worth it.

2017.6.26. Day #3 – Something Smells Fishy

And here comes the angsty part of the story. One thing you most certainly can't miss when visiting the British Isles is the seaside. Bunch of rocks, calming waves, violent seagulls, fish and chips in literally *every single street*. What could go wrong?

We took a ferry to the island of Cumbrae, a chill little thing not too far away from the main island. The wind we had that day was insane, but at least the sun was shining, unlike the first two days. It was beautiful. We walked around a little bit on the docks, before going exploring the streets of Cumbrae's capital, Millport. We had ice cream in the process. I'm still surprised how I came home on Saturday without a cold or any lung related issues. During our exploration, we found a bike shop, where you could rent bikes to have a ride around the island, and decided to give it a try after lunch. Despite protesting in the beginning, I ended up on a bike, ready to cycle all the 16 kilometres without any previous warm-up, and little to no training since school and my fencing trainings finished for the year. Not my best idea. The landscape was, sure, beautiful, and my legs kind of needed a bit more workout, but by the time we finished, I felt half dead.

After taking a look at the most recognizable landmark of Millport, the Crocodile Rock, (which is, quite literally, a crocodile rock) we went to go grab dinner, and what a better way

to do that other than *fish and chips*? I've been to Brighton last year, and tried this very British dish, so I thought, okay, why not? Turns out, the oily, heavy fish and my stomach weren't exactly best buds. I got incredibly nauseous in the car, and it wasn't the usual motion sickness. In the end, my condition stopped us from going to a place we wanted to visit, and I felt incredibly bad, that for me, two others will never see something they would've had the chance to. That's my luck I guess.

2017.6.27. Day #4 – Dunscore's Hungarian Flag

Breakfast was some form of torture. All those delicious-looking bacon strips and sausages on the table in front of me, and I had to eat toast after my usual cereal, because of yesterday. My heart broke. Aside from that, we woke up pretty early to catch our train to Dunscore, Jane Haining's hometown. I've never tried British public transport, aside from that one bus ride on Sunday, so I was curious to see what's waiting for me. The train station, where we said goodbye to team Glasgow, Brenda, Duncan, Morag and Lexa, was another place and situation I'm not unfamiliar with, but the differences between Hungarian and Scottish thing were amusing to experience.

Our Dunscore hostess, Pam was waiting for us on the Dumfries train station, to take us over to Dunscore. But, as it was near noon by then, the first stop was lunch. The place where we ate, a calm café named The Usual Place, an old church turned into a special café, helping teenagers and young adults with learning difficulties with getting work. They are super nice people, and their hot chocolate is quality stuff.

The second stop was still not Dunscore. (Sorry to disappoint.) But something close by, namely Ellisland Farm, the old home of Scottish poet Robert Burns, whom you may know as the writer of Auld Lang Syne. He reminded me a little bit of an American historical figure, first Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton. Same time period, and the many written volumes of pure genius... Can't be a coincidence, even though there were a lot of people like these men.

As a city kid, born and raised in the capital, in a world of technology and tall blocks of flats, moving to a sweet and tiny village for a few days was a completely new experience. There was something in the mostly silent streets, worn-down phoneboxes and some of the most beautiful gardens I've ever seen, something charming. You'll see when you get there. It's like a whole another world. And when I saw the Hungarian flag flowing in the wind, on a flagpole next to the house we arrived to, I felt a little bit more at home.

For the evening, there was another thing we were invited to. A barbecue a good couple of Dunscore's people organised for us. Around twenty of us were there, and the mood was pretty good despite our surroundings. (And I could talk for hours about the food, even though my stomach didn't appreciate it as much as I did.) And what do I mean by that? The very fact that this was an outdoors barbecue, in the pouring rain and freezing cold. We had several good tents, so it was kind of okay. I was getting bored of Hungarian heat waves anyway...

2017.6.28. Day #5 – Just When You Thought School Was Out...

I was pretty excited for this day to come. Today, we explored more of Jane Haining's life, more specifically the most important places of her childhood. And the first step to that is her old school, Dumfries Academy. Just like the services, school is an entirely different thing in English, too, so I couldn't wait to see how much different classes are here, or just the atmosphere in general. We had a brief walk through some points of the school, and outside, in a square in Dumfries.

P.E. was our first class of the day. Dumfries Academy sometimes holds their P.E. lessons outside on a field by the school. The two places are separated by a cute little river, and are connected by a bridge. We got some spare clothes to change into, so we could participate. Everything was all sunshines and smiles, talking students surrounding the two of us winners, awkwardly standing among them. Then the *royal marines* appeared. Yup, actual men from the actual military to hold us a special class. Not specifically for the two of us, this was something extraordinary for the rest of the class as well. We did some sprinting, squatting, crawling in the grass, still wet from the morning mist...just a regular P.E. lesson, what are you talking about? And after I got past the fact that I haven't exercised this much the entire month, (if you don't count the cycling) and everything hurts, I actually found this lesson quite refreshing. At least I woke up properly.

The second (and last) one was something we don't have at home, which is Home Economics. I was quite nervous as I could literally burn water if I tried to, so knowing myself, I thought I would screw up everything horribly. And everything went better than expected. The easy dessert we prepared by layering biscuit crumbs, yogurt and raspberries was something even I couldn't get wrong. We had a short talk with the teacher, Ms. Templeton at the end of the private lesson, as there was no one, but us there. It turned out she knew my favourite band, Babymetal, which is something I can't tell about anyone else I know. She's one of those young, modern teachers. With a teacher like her, I wouldn't complain about having to cook. That much.

Our program after school was visiting Jane's memorial near the church in Dunscore, go on a walk from the farm where she lived to the church she went to as a little girl, and visit the family's tombstone. The walk was about a thousand metres, and you know what? I loved every second of it. After all the socializing of the past days, I kind of separated from the group, staying only within earshot, so I could hear if something happened, and I walked straight ahead in my pace, enjoying the calm and quiet of the countryside to myself. Spectating each flower, animal and stone I walked past, paying attention to little details for about an hour, was the best form of relaxation I could possibly ask for. I might sound rude and ignorant now, but my mind seriously needed this to carry on for the rest of our stay, and be able to bring the best out of myself.

2017.6.29. Day #6 – Get In, We're Going Shopping

I woke up to the sound of raindrops falling on my room's window. There goes our plans of seaside part two for that day. So Pam came up with the backup plan to take us to a shopping centre in Dumfries. And off to shopping we went.

But first, we visited a Tesco. (Cause food is priority.) For the second time, I treated my greedy self with something. I spotted Harry Potter and the Cursed Child on one of the shelves, and since I didn't own a copy of it yet, but wanted to since it came it, I thought, why not? I haven't spent a single penny since my little 30-pound purchase back on Sunday, so it was time to start. (Before you ask, yes, I bought stuff for my family, too.) We had an excellent discussion about things here you can't get in Hungary, and how it's not too fair.

In the shopping mall itself, the two of us winners just followed my teacher around in the shops she went to, but instead of looking around ourselves, we criticised ridiculous looking clothing items, talked about things that would actually be worth buying and how reasonable prices are, or aren't. And me freaking out when Shape Of You came on in the clothing store, because I can't stand that song. At least I made Balázs laugh with it.

Around lunchtime, we drove to a different city by the riverside, so the shore experience can still be achieved. We stopped in the little town of Kirkcudbright (How come I memorized this but had to Google Millport's name?) to stand outside in the cold wind and rain, and eat our

packed lunches. This place is used as a harbour as well, so walking alongside the river to see all those fishing ships was a must. The town itself with the colourful little houses and shops was calm and insanely aesthetically pleasing.

But the highlight of the day was spotting some Galloway cows on the ride back to Dunscore. I wanted to see some since we arrived to the countryside, and to be honest, they rock belts better than I do. They are something to look forward to when you guys arrive to Dunscore!

2017.6.30. Day #7 – One Last Night

Last morning in Dunscore, quick packing before our last countryside program to come: visiting a real, Scottish castle. I'm terribly sorry, but the name of the castle I have to keep a secret. We were told to keep it a surprise for you guys. (Actually not. I just lost all of my pamphlets somewhere, and have forgotten the name, so, sorry about that.) Surrounding the castle was a quite big forest, so we decided to walk around in the nature, and go up the nearby hill to take a look at the landscape. It's a bit of a shame that as a formerly competitive sportswoman, I couldn't keep up with Pam while walking up the hill. But the entire forest was beautiful. Bright green leaves everywhere you look, tall trees surrounding you in every direction, weak sunlight finding it's way through the branches, and there was a really magnificent-looking little lake in there as well. It was almost like walking in one of those forests you see or hear about in fairytales. And afterwards, we walked around in the elegant gardens of the castle, among many radiant and colourful flowers, on the freshly mown lawn, and up to the outside of the castle. (We couldn't go in. I bet that would've been breathtaking as well.)

After this little trip, it was time to say goodbye to our Dunscore house, to our flag outside on the flagpole, to my little room upstairs, with the view to the hills nearby and the houses of the neighbourhood. (Again, shout out to you if you get my room next year.) We got our luggage and sat in the car for a two-hour drive back to Glasgow, where Mike and Mary, with most of Queen's Park's church community in their garden, and quite the amount of food were waiting for us.

The people were just as welcoming as they were on Sunday, everyone swarming us with questions about our time in Dunscore. That quickly grew into discussions, and there I was, overcoming my social anxiety, talking to people freely. I'm quite proud of myself. (That's the kind of improvement you guys can expect from this little journey. Just don't give up.) And, since Lexa asked to see the *famous jacket* I was so happy wearing, a few days ago, I suited up, and went outside in it again. Needless to say, no one knew what it was from, but I still wore it like a battle armour. The weather was so good that one jacket was enough. On the literal last day. Are you kidding me, Scotland?

The same topics kept coming up with everyone I talked to, and there were two reactions I especially enjoyed seeing. The „absolutely not fair” reaction when I told them when school year ends and starts in Hungary, and the „is she even human?” reaction when I talked about self-studying Japanese in my free time. It was honestly very amusing. As the night progressed, and I was trying to conceal frowns from the salt and vinegar chips/crisps I was snacking on at the moment, a realization dawned upon me. We're leaving tomorrow. We have to get up at 5 AM to catch the flight. Just phenomenal...

2017.7.1. Day #8(ish) – I Open At The Close

I thought this morning deserves a few words, so let's dive into it. Why did I choose a Harry Potter quote for the title of this day? Reason number one is none other than Brenda. She was the one greeting us on the airport on the very first day, and now she's the last person we say

goodbye to on the very same airport. This was the same kind of parallel the title refers to. Or something like that. And reason number two is that I finally got around to read the book on the plane! Two hours was nearly enough for me to finish it, because I was so absorbed in the story. And enjoying the leftovers of the biscuits I got myself on one of the days, because I was starving.

One another thing, to my teacher. She told me I will want to sit on a plane again someday, and I denied it. If you're reading this, (which I'm a hundred percent sure you'll do) I'd like to apologize. Every time I see a plane these days, I wish I could be on them, wherever they may go. You were right after all.

So, this was Scotland. A little less Mel Gibson, men in skirts and bagpipes than I expected, and a little more rain, red traffic lights on every single corner, and breathtaking sights. And, of course, welcoming people. Thank you for everyone who made this travel possible for us! And, of course, shout out to my teacher, Sajó Melinda, for preparing me for this competition, journey, and standing by my side to help me out when I needed it most. And a shout out to Balázs, the other category's winner as well, for winning this, and showing most of his interesting sides.

To next year's winners, who will be required to read this. First of all, congratulations! You deserved to win this by doing your best, and working your hardest. I wholeheartedly wish you enjoy your journey. Just don't be afraid to interact with the people around you. Everyone is kind and helpful, they care about you and are there to make sure you bring the best out of your trip. Improvement in your speaking and social skills by the end of the trip is guaranteed. Go and sweep them off their feet! I believe in you. You go, guys! Enjoy your stay!

Thank you for reading this long mess of an essay! Brought to you by the winner of the religious schools category, the girl who shouted „What?!” in the chapel after realizing she had won,

Réka

And now, on to the pictures! ^.^

2017.6.24. Day #1 – Giant Iron Machines



This is supposed to be artistic.



Just what it looks like. Horses. Huge metallic horses.

2017.6.25. Day #2 – Dedicate Your Hearts!



Stained glass window
number 1



Stained glass window
number 2



Yup. Bright and yellow.
Told you it's hard to miss.



This is THE jacket if you
were wondering. And
that's me wearing it.

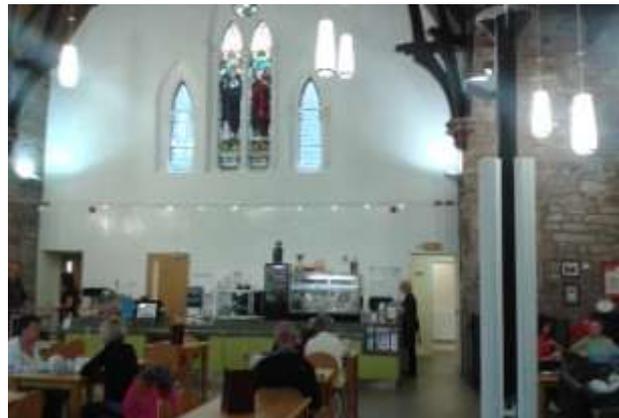
2017.6.26. Day #3 – Something Smells Fishy



It's just what it looks like. But it's actually way bigger than what it looks like.

Artsy picture of a simple bicycle.

2017.6.27. Day #4 – Dunscore's Hungarian Flag



Casual train station photo

Pretty aesthetic little church café, isn't it?

2017.6.28. Day #5 – Just When You Thought School Was Out...



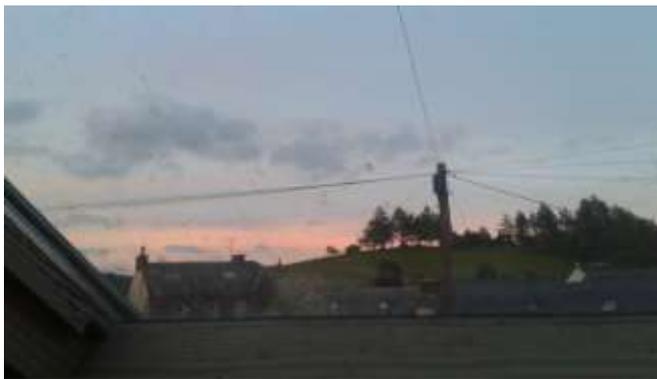
Jane's memorial



The Haining family tombstone



An homage to Jane in Dumfries Academy.



On a completely unrelated note, here's an evening sky from my room's window *.* So pretty *.*

2017.6.29. Day #6 – Get In, We're Going Shopping



Stormy sky and fishing boat.



„In memory of loved ones lost at sea”



Ladies and gentlemen, cows.

2017.6.30. Day #7 – One Last Night



Castle –whatitsname- from afar.



I made a lot of high-quality photos that day. I'm the proudest of this one by far.



Himnusz starts playing in the distance
wine pours itself
a turul flies above your head
tricolor flag blows in the wind
HUNGARY



Meet Archie. Archie is a very good boy. Archie likes eating just like me. I relate to him on a spiritual level. Archie is an obedient pup. We should all aspire to be like Archie.

2017.7.1. Day #8(ish) – I Open At The Close



Nice bedhead...kind of mourning my long hair now...



From the plane window. So pretty :3