

Comenius Project 2010 – 2012

Common Roots – Common Future

Newsletter Nr.3 June 2012

Coordinators Meeting in Reykjavik September 2011

All coordinators met in Reykjavik from 21st September to 25th September 2011 to plan the new academic year, evaluate the first project year and to discuss the ideas for the further meetings with the students.

We were all looking forward very much to going to Iceland, as most of us had never been there. Our Icelandic hosts had planned a varied programme for us with lots of work but also lots of information and sightseeing at the most beautiful spots of their country. On top of that they had arranged nice weather for us – so we were ready to start the second year of our programme together.



On Thursday morning Gudjon came to pick all of us up, but what a surprise: he hadn't brought the typical school minibus everyone was expecting, it was an expedition van seating 14 persons. We renamed ourselves as C-Team and started work.

When we arrived at the school we were welcomed by the headmistress and the colleagues. Some of them were already known to us from exchanges during the last academic year and it was nice to meet our friends again.

After evaluating the events and results of the last academic year we got the guided tour of the school and an introduction into the Icelandic school system which is different from our school systems but has got a lot of excellent solutions to the problems in the field of modern education e.g. inclusion of disabled students, mixing academic and vocational studies or studying different subjects with different speed.





After the lunch in the teachers room we decided to do some of our discussions outside while walking around in the school area as the weather was too nice to stay inside.



When we had finished our work for the first day Gudjon and Sveinn took us on a tour around Reykjavik showing us the most interesting points in the area. So we went to see a small geyisir near the water reservoir of Reykjavik which is called Perlan and does not only house the hot water reserve for the Reykjavik area but also a very famous restaurant, a museum and to top it all it offers a brilliant view over the town.

From there we carried on in our famous C-Team van to the coast to get some impressions of the sea that surrounds Iceland with an average temperature of 8°C . As we didn't have to go swimming there we enjoyed some time on the beach before turning back into town for dinner.



On Friday morning we went back to school to work all day to finish our planning session and to start thinking about a new project idea.



Things went smoothly and as a reward we were allowed to go swimming in the Blue Lagoon another touristic highlight in Iceland, which included a meal in the restaurant there which our Icelandic hosts had prebooked for us and which was just marvellous.

So we soaked ourselves in the warm water and treated our skin with the famous silica mud and enjoyed the good company.

Saturday started with downpours of rain and it was the day we wanted to see the countryside with its waterfalls, Geysers and all the beautiful landscape. As we had decided to cook ourselves in the evening an international meal we had to make a shopping stop at a supermarket first and luckily the rain cleared away during that time and we set off happily.

On our way to the sights Gudjon gave us a lot of information about the area, the landscape and the geological characteristics. We also learned a lot about the history and the myths of Iceland during the day.



Some of the most impressive places we saw were Thingvellir, the Geysir region and the Golden Waterfall. In the distance we saw some of the impressive glaciers of Iceland and we felt the cold wind and smelled the “slightly” sulphuric odour of the volcanic regions.



When we reached the summer house our hosts had booked for the evening we amazed by the possibilities it offered to us and we wished we could have stayed there for a longer period. Anyway, we managed to cook a European meal together with Norwegian salmon and Bulgarian salad followed by an Icelandic leg of lamb from the grill together with a German lentil stew followed by Belgian chocolate mousse and cookies and sweets from Hungary and Scotland.



After a very short night we departed in the early morning hours back home to our schools with a lot of wonderful memories in our mind.

Bulgaria Bound (by Amy Hollingsworth, Scotland)

Very early on a cold Sunday morning, five Wallace Hall Academy pupils – Amy Hollingsworth, Iona Anderson, Hamish Brown, Bethany Ransom and Fae Treadaway – and our teacher Mr. Harley made the long trip up to Edinburgh airport to begin our week in Bulgaria. After a long day of travelling, we arrived in Kazanlak, along with Hungarians, Germans and Belgians. We met our host families and got to know everyone and then went to bed as we were so tired.



The next day we all got up early and were met by a traditional Bulgarian breakfast, before heading to school to begin our project work. We split into 4 different groups and each covered a different topic, such as National Identity, Social Identity, Environment and Economy. We spent most of the day in school developing our presentations and, after school ended, we went with our host students to explore Kazanlak, visit the local pool club and take the chance to get to know everyone on the trip.

Tuesday morning started the same as the day before. However, we had until lunchtime to finish our presentations before we presented what we had discovered to everyone. After a quick bite in an American style restaurant, we had to go home as all of us were asked to prepare a traditional Bulgaria meal to take to the concert that the Bulgarians had kindly organized for us on the Tuesday evening. The food was absolutely delicious and everyone really enjoyed getting to know one another.



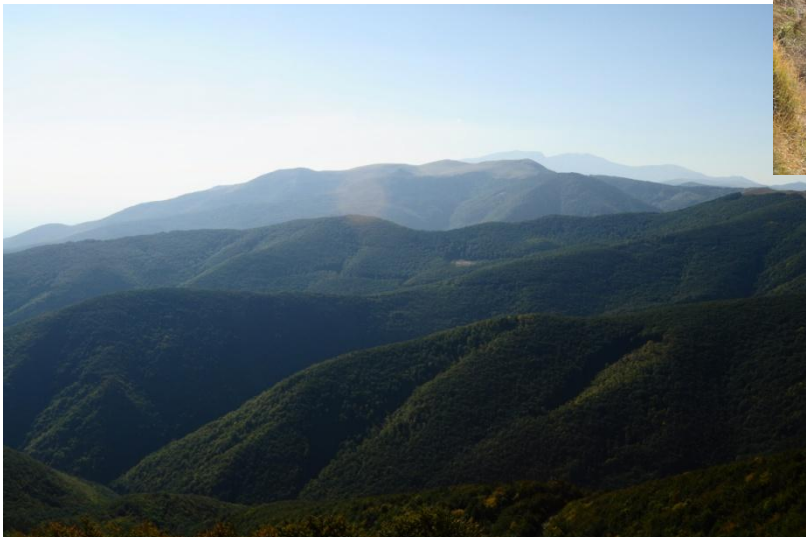
After we had finished eating, each school was asked to perform something for everyone. The Germans did a version of Britain's Got Talent, which was absolutely hilarious and they asked a pupil from each school to perform. Hamish from our school played "Blackbird" on the guitar, which was very well received. Unfortunately, he was piped to the post by the German Show Boys, who charmed everyone with their completely ridiculous dance that got everyone on their feet. The Hungarians performed a national song for us, while the Bulgarians and Belgians taught us dances, performed with varying degrees of success.



Finally it was our turn and we had decided to perform two dances for them – Gay Gordon's and an improvised version of the Dashing White Sergeant. We got everyone up and dancing the Gay Gordon's and they were very good at it – almost better than us! To finish off Bethany and Hamish performed "Auld Lang Syne" for

everyone. It was a fabulous night and everyone really enjoyed themselves.

On the Wednesday we found out we were visiting a guitar factory and Shipka Peak. The guitar factory was amazing, seeing all the intricate work and the designs, although the dust was slightly annoying! Then we all got on the bus and travelled to Shipka Peak. Thankfully we all managed to climb the thousand steps to the top of the Shipka tower, where the Battle of Shipka Pass took place in 1877-78. The views were absolutely breathtaking and even though some of us were scared of heights, we all appreciated the beauty of it.



On the way back from Shipka Peak, we visited a church that had the most beautiful architecture. We got the opportunity to go inside and

light a candle for people who had passed away, or to make a wish for something we wanted to happen. After we got back, we had dinner before heading out to a local café to get to know everyone better and have some fun.



Thursday morning, our last day in Bulgaria, we arrived at school wondering what we were going to be doing. To our surprise, the school had organized a talent show, displaying traditional Bulgarian song and dance. The first performer was a little girl, who sang beautifully, followed by an older student who performed “Tonight I’m Loving You”. Next some folk singers performed a local folklore tale, followed by a drama production by the students, which was so funny, especially as Martin – Hamish’s host – was in a dress and pulled it off rather well.



We then got on the bus and travelled to Plovdiv, which was so full of history and was just amazing to look at. We visited a coliseum and then were meant to go shopping, but we went bowling instead at a local shopping mall.



Since it was our last evening, everyone met up in the local pool bar as a last goodbye. Everyone was talking and mingling and we managed to beat the Germans at table football, thanks to Mr. Harley. Finally, exhausted, we went home to get what little sleep we could, before getting up and going to school to be taken to the airport. As the bus drove us away from the madly waving Bulgarians we had got to know so well, all of us agreed that this had been an amazing trip. As we settled down to go to sleep, we dreamt of the memories of the week that had passed and the friends we had made and that we would never forget.



Bulgaria (Kazanlak) - a new experience for the Belgian students

When the weather was getting better in Belgium, we had to leave for Bulgaria. Nervous as we were, we arrived in Kazanlak past midnight. It was the beginning of great trip. It was an old and typical East-European country, but the people were very nice and kind. The first two days we had to do some project work in the school together with our exchange students, who were all girls. Except of those two days at school we went to several towns and cities.

A very interesting day was, when we went to a music factory where we had a tour and we could see how they make violins, cellos and guitars. After this we went to a very famous mountain, named Shipka peak. This was the scenery of the battle against the Turkish. During the food corner, we had the chance to taste the typical culture of Bulgaria. That evening each group of exchange students showed some typical dances from his country. Almost everything was cheap, because of the local currency.



So we were very happy when we had some time to do some shopping, especially the girls. The weather was beautiful during the whole week except from the last day when it started raining. So we had to say goodbye in the rain, when our exchange students were crying. It was quite a sad morning. But we were happy to be back in Belgium after eight, great days.



Iceland and Belgium in Germany (October 2011)



On a wonderful warm day in October 14 guests from Iceland and Belgium arrived in Urspring for a week of working and socializing and making new friends and learning something about their German partner school and the area where the school is situated.

The meeting was dominated by the topic of apples and sustainable living. This meant that the students and teachers worked in four groups on the following topics:

- Apples as an example for globalization
- Migrating food
- Alternative ways of producing energy
- Governments response to the alternative energies

On the first afternoon all participants set out with baskets and boxes to harvest all the apples from the school's orchard and from the trees leading towards the town of Schelklingen. It seemed very easy at the beginning but it turned out into a pile



of work as we harvested more than 450 kg of apples and a very big basket of plums. But we all had a lot of fun and the guests could discover how nice some types of apples tasted that didn't look very promising in the beginning.



On the next day there was an excursion to Ulm not only to see the town and the cathedral but also to find out about the apples on the weekly market and to get as many different types of local apples as possible (we came back with 18 types ☺)

In the afternoon we started to produce local specialties from Iceland, Belgium and Germany

with our apples and plums. This took place in the school's kitchen with the support of the kitchen staff and some other ladies from the school management. So we were able to produce 4 different cakes, apple jelly, plum jam, two different types of salads with apples and lots of apple sauce. Even if it was hard work we had a lot of fun.





Most of the apples were taken to a local cider mill to get apple juice and we managed to get more than 300 liters of wonderful juice which we brought back to the school to be served to the students during the next days.

There was still work to be done on the topics given to the working groups, so we had another morning of hard work in the library with really good results as the next day when we were due to show what we had achieved showed.



So we had earned the break at the climbing forest in the afternoon absolutely. This was bringing some fresh air into our minds and we could find out how much can be achieved together with good friends who help each other to overcome a challenge.



In the evening we had an international apple buffet for dinner to which all the students and the host parents and the teachers were invited and where we presented all our products and all the types of apples we had found on the market. It was a big success and we were very pleased with the results of our work.



As it is good tradition when Comenius guests come to our school we had also planned to plant three new apple trees in the orchard, which we did, even the rain, that decided to come exactly at that moment couldn't stop us.



We went back to our roots by visiting the "Hohle Fels", a cave next to Schelklingen, which was inhabited for a minimum of 50000 years and where some of the oldest artifacts of mankind were found during the excavations in the last years. We got a guided tour by an experimental archaeologist which impressed us a lot.

The day came to a close with the presentation of the results of the project work and the after work party in the school disco.



On our last day we went to Lake Constance to the island of Mainau and to see Konstanz, the town that gave the lake its name. The weather was not what we had been looking for but it couldn't dampen the good mood of the participants.

So we explored Mainau Island with only some other tourists and had a lot of the main attractions to ourselves which was fine by us. Even there was the topic of the day: APPLES!!!!





A sightseeing and shopping tour in Konstanz followed and we went back to the school by taking the ferry boat to Meersburg as the weather had improved a lot.

When early on Sunday morning everyone came for the last time to the school campus it was hard to say good bye to the new friends. But we will meet again in Iceland or in Belgium ...

Apples

In the week of Steve Jobs's death, a delegation of students from Waregem were guests in Schelklingen with the main focus on... apples. A coincidence? Probably... A success? Most definitely! 6 Icelandic students, 6 Belgians and a whole lot of Germans researched the origin of many edible products and they investigated the means to make their transportation more ecological.

The exchange was part of the Comenius project 'Common Roots – Common Future' and focused on making the students work together in mixed groups around a topic that concerns all: food and the distribution of it. We chose as the main angle: apples....

The Urspringschule in Schelklingen with its beautiful surroundings is famous for its orchards. So it was obvious that with a temperature reaching 23 degrees and more, everyone was very happy to first go picking some apples (the fruits that is, not the brand of computers). Using these, we prepared some traditional recipes from each country and we invited the parents and the students from the boarding school.



We Belgians tried something new. Instead of making the traditional dessert of the apple rolls, we decided to change the recipe and add salt. Not a good idea, but luckily our second attempt was more successful. We also investigated the more theoretical side and so the students presented their findings in different power points and we also developed a 'Glossy Magazine'.

We of course also wanted to visit the beautiful German scenery, so we went to see Ulm and Lake Constance (amongst other things). The weather was getting worse though, but luckily not the atmosphere. Judging from the 8 sad faces in my minivan on the way back (7 students plus me), I'd say we had a very good exchange week! Thank you Inge and all of your colleagues!

Emmanuel Vercruysse and Belgian students



7 Belgians in a city of 2 million inhabitants called Budapest

From Sunday 23 October till Saturday 29 October, six Belgian pupils and their form teacher Koen Devlaminck were welcomed in Xantus Janós School, a quality secondary school in the centre of Budapest.

As usual, there was a project to be worked on and Andrea had done her utmost to find a nice



balance between project work and amusement. She seems to know that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. Well, we have to admit that Jack had no complaints.

The project on social security was made more interesting by bringing an American teacher into our work room. He told us about the disadvantages of the US when it comes down to pension, unemployment benefits or sick pay. In the end, we were definitely happy not to be American as far as these aspect are concerned.

Apart from the input of the American colleague, there was also a much appreciated visit to a so-called *Invisible Exhibition*. A blind guide led us through a number of spaces which were pitch dark. We were taught in the most convincing way how hard it must be for blind people to 'survive' in a busy, noisy world like ours.

All of these data were put in powerpoint presentations, which we then presented to a visiting class in a library which actually made us very jealous.

But as I have already made clear, there was also ample space and time for amusement, cultural visits and above all: lots of friendship. We visited the amazing parliament of Budapest. Pupils from the school guided us through the main sites of the city, and on

Wednesday in the best of autumn weather we had a day outing to the famous Danube Bend.

Of course there was much more, but looking back we are sure to remember the Hungarian hospitality best. We were made to feel very welcome, we experienced the Hungarian way of life, we were introduced to new dishes and – yes, I confess – drinks. Etcetera etcetera. This was to a large extent something Andrea deserves credit for, because our visit was prepared in the most meticulous way. Thanks Andrea, although it would be unfair to overlook the many other nice colleagues who joined in during the week. Thank you all!

That's why we look forward to your return visit, because we want to present you with all the nice experiences you have offered us!

Koen Devlaminck



Iceland forever...

From October 22 till October 29, we had the opportunity for an exchange week in Reykjavik, Iceland, and it really came up to our expectations. A short day-report:

Day 1: Saturday

We arrived at the airport where our Icelandic exchange students were waiting for us. We met and then we went to their house to meet their family. In the evening we all met and ate an ice cream and afterwards we went to the pool bar.

Day 2: Sunday

It was supposed to be a family day but our Icelandic friends organized a trip to the flea market. There we could taste the shark and the dried fish. It was nice to see the beautiful handmade sweaters, scarves, gloves... Then it was already midday and the boys decided to go swimming. But, as we are sportsmanlike women, we decided to go for a walk. So the girls climbed one of the beautiful mountains that surround Reykjavik (I can't remember the name). The view



was extraordinary, but afterwards we were all tired and so we went for a swim. Actually it was more relaxing that we did in the hot pools. Then our ways split and everybody went home to their family. I still can remember the food we ate in the evening with the family because it was that good (thanks to Gudrun's mother☺): a lamb leg and caramelized potatoes (njamnjam). After the diner the Icelandic people decided to come round in Gudrun's house, where we learned each other knowing better. We played Jungle Speed and had a lot of fun. The boys arrived an hour later because they were playing on the play station (typically). Together we went to a pub. That evening, it was already obvious that we were a very good group. I looked already forward to the rest of the week.

Day 3: Monday

On Monday the 24th of October we did some project work. We worked in groups and we discussed about tourism, electricity, ...

In the afternoon we went swimming. All the pools in Iceland are outside with hot water! It is very relaxing.

Afterwards there was a food court. We tried some Icelandic food, like the rotten shark and sheep head.

The German guests also prepared a typical German dish.

We brought Belgian food with us. They liked it very much! (especially the chocolate !)

Day 4: Tuesday

On Tuesday we explored the Icelandic nature by bus. We went to school at 8. We had an old bus which drove us to the places we needed to be all day. First, after a pretty long bus drive we went to the place where the geographic border between Northern America and Europe is situated. After



having felt the difference between American air and European air we went to a cafeteria. The cafeteria was very close to the geysers and so, after we ate we went to see the geysers. Having seen the water jumping out of the earth we went on to see the hot springs, they smelled very bad, and eventually we went to see the waterfall Gullfoss. It was raining all day so we didn't mind being in the warm bus for 2 hours before we got home.

Hot springs - with a strong smell.

Day 5: Wednesday

On Wednesday, we went to the swimming pool in the morning. The swimming pools in Iceland are really different from ours, because in Iceland the water is always heated and that's very relaxing. After that we did some interesting project work. In the afternoon we visited Reykjanes, that's a very beautiful area, with a lot of volcano's and hot springs. We also saw a part of the astonishing, untouched coastline of Iceland and the separation of the European and the North-American tectonic plate. While the bus was driving us home, we were able to enjoy the lovely view. That evening two Belgian students had to cook something typical Belgian. We (Marthe & me) chose for a dish with

leeks and salmon and for dessert we ate 'Moelleux' . The meal we made was successful and afterwards we came all together and played a parlour game named 'Jungle Speed'.

Day 6: Thursday

The first thing we did that day was two project works.

The first one which we talked about was about the energy (What are the most used energy sources? How many does it cost?...), the law (at which age you can do something legal?) and we also talked about tourism (Does that influence the environment, accommodation, ...?). These subjects we compared with Iceland and Germany. Then our second project work, we presented our school more specific our school system. We showed them some famous cities and persons of Belgium. And our last subject was about our political system. Then some Icelanders talked also about their school... And we learned in that project that their school system so different is from ours.

After all that work, we went in the afternoon to the Blue Lagoon. That was very relaxed and very great ☺ we spent there an hour. In my opinion too short because it was so hot the water and it was very nice to swim. But then our day was almost over. In the evening we did something with all the Icelanders together. We went bowling. That was a very great end of a great day.

Day 7: Friday

Our last night together was a really good ending of a fantastic week in Iceland. To celebrate two birthdays we went to the famous "Hamborgarafabrikkan", an astonishingly beautiful hamburger bar, where we all ate the best square hamburgers we had ever eaten in our lives for sure.



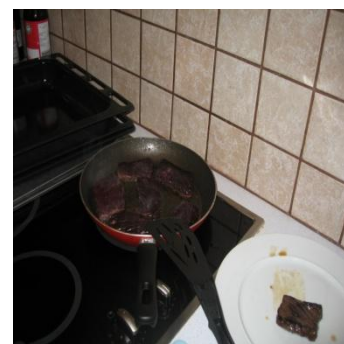
Our attempt to sneak into a nightclub later that night was a failure, unfortunately. But we did succeed at slipping into a good bar where we still had an amazing night for those last few hours, with the sad thought of leaving Iceland in the back of our minds ...



Rotten shark



sheep head



blood sausage



The Scottish Experience

On Sunday 6th of November 2011 students and teachers from all over Europe started their trip towards Scotland to visit their Scottish partner school in Thornhill. They came from Kazanluk in Bulgaria, Syykylven in Norway, Waregem in Belgium, Budapest in Hungary and from Schelklingen in Germany and all were welcomed by their Scottish host families where they would stay for a week.

This was going to be a week full of new and wonderful experiences in a country many of them hadn't seen before. Guests and hosts started on Monday with a tour of the school followed by project work in groups of mixed nationality on changing borders since the Roman times until today, a comparison of social security systems in their countries and many other topics, which we presented on Tuesday afternoon to the other groups.

One of the highlights of our visit was definitely the evening event on Tuesday: hosts and guests met for a delicious buffet provided by Wallace Hall Academy which was followed by brilliant performances by the Scottish students. Then it was our turn to present something to the audience and we had much fun with the ideas the groups came up with. And now a new challenge was presented to us by our hosts: taking part in the typical folkdances of Scotland – it looked easy but it was quite complicated – but with the help of our Scottish friends we managed to overcome the obstacles and felt like great dancers afterwards. It was a pity, the evening ended so soon ...

On the next days we got the opportunity to see more of Scotland and to learn more about its history while visiting the parliament and the National Museum in Edinburgh and Caerlaverock Castle and the Vindolanda site of the Hadrian's Wall complex.



Those of us who were lucky enough to stay a bit longer went to Ayr and had a family day on Saturday. We all have to say a big “Thank you” to our wonderful and friendly hosts who made us feel at home in their families and in Scotland and to all the staff in Wallace Hall Academy for everything they did for us, especially to Alan Harley. We believe he didn’t sleep during the whole week with all the events he organized for us! We will always remember the week in Thornhill.

Inge Banholzer

Our Comenius Counterparts

report by Beth Muirhead, Emma Greenlees, Iona Anderson and Rosie A Sloan

The date was the 5th of November; a cool autumn breeze was blowing in from the west. As the clock struck 4.44pm 7 Belgian students found themselves stranded in the wake of Wallace Hall Academy, eagerly awaiting the week ahead, of traditional Scottish dance, cuisine and banter.

They were greeted by their Scottish hosts and shipped off “home”, venturing as far as Dumfries, Dunscore, Moniaive and Ae, admiring the beautiful views and being assured that they were not in the middle of nowhere. That night many trekked back to Thornhill to share the traditions of fireworks, bonfires and stories of Guy Fawkes.



Sunday was a family day for all the Belgian students, watching fireworks, visiting hosts’ relatives (and doing the week’s food shop) as more students descended from Germany, Norway, Bulgaria and Hungary.

The Monday and Tuesday were focused mainly on the project work which included research on the European justice systems, health care, common roots, how those with disabilities are treated in different countries and producing a charter highlighting what students in the Comenius project viewed as a common policy that should be adopted by all our countries. We intend to present this to the European Parliament at our final meeting in Belgium. We also compared the political systems of each country and decided on the perfect democracy.



Tuesday night was a cultural buffet for students and our host families with a traditional Scottish meal and tasters of food from all of our guests. The meal was followed by a performance by each of the visiting schools topped of by a rendition of the Gay Gordons and an Orcadian Strip the Willow, exhausting both students and teachers.



The Belgian Marie Louise



On Wednesday we embarked on a day trip to Edinburgh, touring the Parliament where we were shown round by our local MSP. We then visited the Royal Museum of Scotland, where the exchange students were given the chance to really explore Scotland's past. After this we visited the Gyle Centre for some shopping.



Thursday was a trip to Vindolanda, part of Hadrian's Wall, to show our visitors the old Roman borders of Scotland and England. There was a tour and then we were all given the chance to explore for ourselves. On our way home we visited Caerlaverock Castle for another exploration, (or a cheeky game of hide and seek). Once back at Wallace Hall Academy we had an international football tournament with our pupils, Comenius pupils and staff which was a great success.



The Friday morning was an early one for the Hungarians, Bulgarians, Norwegians and their hosts as departures from the school were as early as 4.30am. For those few students left, it was a trip to Ayr for Laser Quest and bowling, but first, we went to the beach, to pay our respects in a two minute silence to the soldiers lost in war from all countries. We had a great day just hanging out with our new friends.



We have had a great week with our Comenius counterparts and were sad to see them leave.



Comenius Visit to Norway

Report by Mhairi Rodden and Chloe Davidson

At three o'clock in the morning of Sunday 12th of February, the seven person party from Wallace Hall Academy of Sophie Jackson, Martha Ferguson, Mhairi Rodden, Alison Maxwell, Chloe Davidson, Katie Grierson and Mr Harley travelled to Sykkylven, Norway. The pupils were staying with the Norwegian pupils they had hosted in November.

After a flight cancellation, which resulted in a short delay, and two ferry trips, all of us arrived safely in Norway. Once we arrived we were met by our hosts and renewed our friendships. It was lovely to catch up with our friends and meet their families.



The next morning we were given a tour of the school which was very interesting. The school is known for having robots which are used in the local furniture industry. After lunch we started our project work where we were split into four international groups where we mixed with pupils from Norway and Belgium.



The first presentation was about economics and focused upon the euro crisis and in what way this affects each of our schools or families. We also compared the benefits system of each country focusing on the unemployment benefit and the maternity benefit and whether or not these have been reduced because of the crisis.

The second group constructed a brief history presentation, highlighting how each of the countries has developed from the 1950s to the turn of the century. This element was completed as a video.

The third group worked on researching recycling in each of the countries taking part and the results put our country to shame. Suggestions were made on how we could improve in areas such as paper and waste recycling.

The final group chose to make a film on the stereotypical view of each others' countries. The perception of Scottish people is that they wear kilts and eat a strict diet of haggis while the Belgians drink lots of beer and eat chocolate and the Norwegians ski everywhere and eat fish all the time.

In the evening we gathered in the primary school's gym hall to play a little football and discover the obsession we would soon inherit – legretto, a somewhat stressful Norwegian card game.





On the Wednesday we all took a bus ride up into the mountains where we spent the day learning to ski. The snow was at least a foot deep but we quickly learned the basics. For lunch we dug snow holes and had a barbeque in a blizzard. In the afternoon we practiced our skiing skills and then had some fun sledging.

In the evening we had an international meal cooked by the pupils from each country. Following this there was music and dancing demonstrated by the pupils of the three countries present. Martha

entertained the audience with a beautiful performance on the piano which was very well received.

On the Thursday we visited the nearby town of Aalesund – the nearest city/town to Sykkylven. We were treated to a tour of the town’s historic buildings and harbour which was preceded by a visit to the aquarium.

The following day we said our sad farewells and began our long journey back home.



Final Meeting in Waregem 4th March- 10th March 2012

52 students and 11 teachers were arriving in Waregem in Belgium for the final meeting of their project “Common Roots – Common Future” on 4th March and were welcomed by their host families.

As most of the students did only know their Belgian partner, there were quite a number of getting to know each other games being organized by the Belgian students for everyone. The students were divided in three groups and in the end each of them knew a bit more about all the others and the work could start in earnest.



This meant, that we were all welcomed by the headmaster of Heilig Hart College, Mr. Jean-Marie Noreillie, before giving the school presentations we had prepared for the other delegations

Then we started the different working groups by organizing the tasks given to the groups by the teachers. Everyone got into working mode quite quickly and we could go home very satisfied at 18.00 to the host families.



The next day started with an introduction into the history of Bruges, where we were heading for. First we explored the town by boat before getting the chance to find out more about the town in small groups by following a questionnaire given to us by the Belgian teachers. There was a lot to be seen and done, especially exploring all the chocolate shops and the other tourist attractions.



When we arrived back at the school we had to set up the “Food Court” for the parents and teachers of the Belgian school presenting specialties from our region. The only problem was, nobody was able to try everything, it was just too much! But everything was delicious and some things were very special

... and not enough after that the parents had arranged a bowling night for the visitors, which was a big success as well and we are quite sure that everyone slept very well that night!



So we were prepared for the project work on Wednesday with information and good ideas and one could see students groups with participants from 8 different countries all over the place working on their special tasks in order to produce something astonishing for the other groups for the presentations on Friday. That evening everyone stayed at home in the host family for a quite evening as the next day promised to be full of activities again.

We started out for Leuven shortly after eight in the morning – queuing around Brussels for some time- and arrived around 10 o’ clock at the University of Leuven, where we were welcomed by the Vice Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Prof. Dr. Johan Verberckmoes and his colleagues who were showing us around in three groups introducing us to some interesting parts of the university related





to our project work. After that we enjoyed some free time in the nice university town before leaving for Waregem by bus.



In the evening the parents had arranged not only a wonderful barbeque for all students and teachers and parents involved in the meeting but they had also engaged a group of people introducing us to some folk



dance activities, which was a new experience for many participants. We had much fun together and when we called it a day, we were more than ready for a good night's sleep.

The last working day had already arrived when we had to get up again and the hectic final preparations in the working groups started as the presentations were planned after lunch and we had to set up the exhibitions and according to Murphy's Law a lot of things didn't work out the way they were supposed to ... but all the problems were solved when we started the presentations.

Students, teachers and headmasters were pleased by the outcome of the joint work of all the delegations

What was left was the reception at the City Hall by the deputy of the Mayor, who welcomed everyone and gave a speech as well as the headmaster of the Belgian school and Emmanuel Vercruyse, the Belgian coordinator.

The last task was the expo of the joint project work to the school community and the parents



with all the end products of the whole project, a photo exhibition on the beauty of nature with photographs from all participating countries and a bit of a farewell party, as the delegations started to leave the next morning.

It was an unforgettable and busy week we had in Waregem – we made new friends and met old friends again, and we will stay in touch with each other. We have to say thank you to everyone taking part in the meeting and giving their best to make the meeting the big success it was for all of us!



Diary of a coordinator

Dear diary

For our newsletters and school magazines, we get many articles from students and teachers involved in meetings. This time, I wanted to do something different, so I kept a diary of the Final Meeting myself. This is my story. It begins the 4th of March 2012, but the preceding days and weeks have of course all been leading up to this moment. Here goes!

04-03-2012

I wake up early in the morning, around 5.30 o'clock. That's even before my son normally awakes. I suppress my desire to go scream him out of his bed for once and I go downstairs to have a final look at my checklist. I actually should say 'checklists', because our living room has been remodelled to what seems to be the office of a shady private detective investigating a murder case. I haven't murdered anyone yet, but I have prepared a black list with the names of a few of my students on it. Just in case.

My wife has tricked me into coffee and cake with some family we only see once a year, but my mind is with the delegations that will be arriving shortly. Everyone is going to be picked up at the airport either by train or by car... or so I hope. I can't stop watching my cellphone and I'm not really talkative, so I guess I'm not really making myself too popular in this branch of the family.

In the evening, almost every delegation has arrived safely. That means I can again cross out the students responsible for the pick-ups off my blacklist. So far so good. I can even go to bed at a decent hour, perhaps for the last time this week, only to be awoken again five minutes later by my son. I should have screamed him out of his bed this morning.



05-03-2012

A peaceful night. No students called to report injuries. No police called to report felonies. I can leave for school with my mind at ease. Today the presentations start. Every school is going to present itself by means of a powerpoint. And afterwards we immediately kick off the project work. I will probably not make myself popular this way, but it's the only way to get the work done in time. Tonight it's every delegation for itself, but since Waregem is not really what you would call a 'concrete jungle', I suppose everything will work out fine.

I'm the one responsible for the German delegation, so in the evening, we have a nice dinner at my house. Since both Inge and Rainer have kids, they even prove to be a handy source of information for the possible imminent dangers in our house. It turns out we didn't really make it 'baby-proof'. I'm imagining that when my boy gets older, this house will be like an Indiana Jones quest for him.

06-03-2012

Today is Bruges. I'm not going to accompany the group. One of my students yesterday asked me when I would be teaching another class of English. And he was sincere! And in the evening, when I was trying to remember all of the names of that class, I got stuck after 10. That means I had better stay home today and bond with my own students. Plus, the group has got the next best thing: Lieven and Piet. In Bruges, everyone will get the chance to visit the town, do some shopping, have a relaxing time in the boat. I hope that makes them less angry for the entire day of project work that is scheduled tomorrow!

In the evening, we are having the food court. Let's just hope everyone remembered to bring something. And let's hope that the customs officer didn't have to go through all the stuff at the airport. I wonder what his face would have looked like when he found a shark in the Icelandic luggage. The food court is a huge succes. Everyone is smiling and eating. And bonding. It gives me a warm feeling. I just hope that's not the Norwegian lamb kicking in... Afterwards, the students go bowling. And singing. If they still speak to each other after Celine Dion's *My Heart Will Go On*, we're off for a very nice week!

07-03-2012

Today is project work. I eat a hearty breakfast, because we will have to work very hard today. Frank is going to sing a few songs



first, to set everyone into Eye of the Tiger-mode. And then after lunch we start for real... up to 6 o'clock. To my surprise, nobody mutters about the lengthy project work and everyone actually does a great job! I take out my blacklist again to scratch some more names on it.

08-03-2012

This morning I was up at 5.30 again. Not to get revenge on my son, but because of nerves! We travel to Leuven today, where we will be welcomed by the University. Two professors will then take us on a trip through Leuven to explain places and artefacts connected to our project. We will even get to see the original *Utopia* by Thomas Moore! We start perfectly on time, but when the bus driver asks me 'and where exactly is this Leuven-place?' my nerves start again.

We arrive just in time, and after a very nice welcoming speech, we start off in 3 groups. One of the professors tells me he was able to arrange a concert at the Ladeuzeplein especially for us. I'm hoping he means by AC/DC or Metallica. It turns out to be on the carillons, but it's very nice as well. In the afternoon, we get some spare time. It



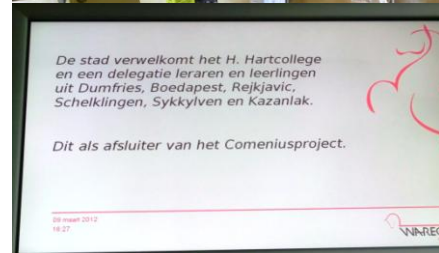
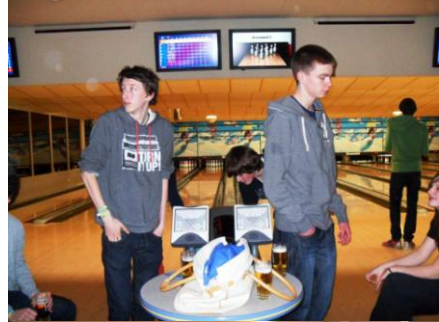
has been 10 years since I last was here as a student. And now I'm bringing students myself. That means I'm officially old.

In the evening, the parents organise a folk dancing evening. They always help us a lot in organising these meetings. And again as always, it's huge fun and very nice food. I just

hope I won't find my dancing moves on Youtube tomorrow morning.

09-03-2012

The last official day of the project. And also the busiest one. First we have to finish all the workshops, then we have a rendez-vous with the local broadcasting Network (WTV, short for World Television I think), then the presentations, then a rendez-vous at city hall, then a reception for the parents, and finally a goodbye dinner for the different teachers. What sounded like a good idea before the meeting, turns out to be a very tight agenda. Very tight. We manage to survive everything, but when the goodbye dinner begins, I feel the exhaustion come up. I start hoping my son won't be up at 5 o'clock in the morning again.



When I run up to my desk in school to store some of the very nice gifts I received, I run into the janitor of our school, Jan. I think I must have made this week a living hell for him, so I am kind of hoping he's not carrying a gun or anything. Instead, he invites me into his apartment to have a drink to celebrate a nice exchange week. It seems that, even though we cut through normal school life and we provide a lot of people with extra stress, many of them still see the importance of the European projects we conduct. So, when I will get home in a few hours, I will fall asleep knowing that all was well and that it was worth every minute of preparation and stress. Thank you, everyone who helped in some way or another!

Emmanuel Vercruyse, Belgian Coordinator

Hey Dad, do you now have time for me?????



My Trip to Germany

Urspring, Schelklingen 22nd- 27th April 2012

A report by Pauline Kurseth from Sykkylven

Travel Diary

SUNDAY

Today has been such a long day! I woke up 6 in the morning to catch the ferry at 8 o'clock, and when we came to the airport at 9 to catch the flight, everything was perfectly clear. But when we just had sat down and ready for take-off, we got the message: the windscreen on the cockpit had cracked! And by that we had to wait six whole hours for a new flight. We waited and waited, played card, got food coupons, and even saw Jan Thomas! When we finally got on the plane, the flight went fast, and suddenly we were in Copenhagen.

After two hours of shopping, a visit to Starbucks and to the tax-free in Copenhagen we were on the plane to Stuttgart. About 21:30 we arrived in Stuttgart, got our baggage, and two smiling teachers met us outside. We drove a while in the minibus and then stopped at a gas station where the boys were going to meet their hosts and come back to their host families. I, Benedikte and Henrikke drove on with Hildegunn and the teachers back to Urspring in the dark, where we was led to our rooms, me with my host, Nadja, and Henrikke and Benedikte in their own room in the house next door. After a very long day we went to bed and I think we slept like babies.





MONDAY

On our first day here in Urspring I woke up 6.45 when my alarm went off and woke everyone on the same floor. I went straight to the bathroom, while the other Germans wanted to sleep as long as possible. At 7.15 Nadja, Benedikte, Henrikke, Miriam and I went for breakfast, and after some bread and yogurt we were ready to start our project work at the library.

We were split into two groups: one about the future and one about the past. I was on the group called “Time Machine” where we were supposed to present how times had changed in our countries from the 1950s until today. After two hours we had second breakfast and after Inge, Ma Comenius, had guided us around the school area, it was back to work.



Lunch was set at 13 o'clock, and after a rather interesting lunch we all were a bit uncertain about, we were going



sightseeing to see the town of Blaubeuren. We drove with the minivan to Blaubeuren, and first were guided into a beautiful old church/monastery.

After that we went to the Blautopf, a blue water source. We walked around the water, and then we had two hours free time. We walked around the little cozy town with flower shops, old cafes and cute little German houses. Henrikke, Benedikte, Markus, Katrine, Miriam, Hildegunn

and Rainer went to a cute little café to have a cup of coffee. Even though the sun was shining it was a bit chilly. After a god break with hot chocolate and cakes we went back to the school. The other boys went home, and I, Benedikte and Henrikke went back to Urspring for supper. After a long day we were very tired and went up to Benediktes and Henrikkes room to relax. We borrowed the computer of Miriam, the girl Henrikke had with her, and watched a movie before we went to bed.



TUESDAY

Today we woke up to a grey and cold Schelklingen. After breakfast we worked with our project at the library. My group , Nadja, Miriam and Henrikke, were almost finished, so while the others finished their own work, we mostly were making power point presentations and rehearsed to our presentation tomorrow. At 13 we had lunch, and wild boar was on the menu! Surprisingly it was very good, and was the only lunch I actually liked (so far). After lunch we

went to “Tiefenhöhle”, a cave in the ground, and it was very exciting. It was cold and wet, but very interesting to see how it actually looked inside. It was very fun, but a bit exhausting because of all the stairs. When we all had come up from the cave, we went climbing in the “Kletterwald”. It was a big forest with different routes and different levels.



Benedikte and I are both scared of heights, so while we tried the children’s trail, the others tried a more difficult route higher up. Our balance (and strength) was put on a test, and if we didn’t follow the routes of how, we got yellow cards. If we got three yellow cards, we would have to leave the routes. There were many cool posts, and one for example had a unicycle which you were supposed to ride on the line. The weather was quite cold and it even came a little snow for a while!

In the end it became so cold that we went to a little café to warm up, and we bought ourselves big cups of hot chocolate. After a nice break we went back to the “Grillhaus” to barbecue. The Germans had a bit different food than we were used to, and we ate some special sausages and some grilled meat. When everyone was finished eating, we went back to school. Henrikke, Nadja, Bea and I stopped at the supermarket on the way back to buy some snacks for the evening. The supermarket was huge and had a lot of things we don’t have here in Norway. We also bought German candy for our family back home. The days are long here in Urspring, so when we got back to Urspring we spent the evening relaxing before we went to bed early.

WEDNESDAY

Today we finished our project work. After breakfast we went to the library to finish and to practice our presentations. When everyone was ready to present, we went to the biology room at the other side of the school. Then we had our presentations. It was exciting and scary at the same time but my and Henrikkes presentation went quite well. After the second breakfast in the school cafeteria we took the train to Ulm. It was a beautiful city with many cute houses. We visited the Münster, a big old church and went for a tour inside of the church. The church was very big and it was very cold inside because of the stone building.



When our tour was finished, we were actually going to climb the church tower, but we were all cold and went for some sightseeing in the “Old Town” first. We saw the river Donau and walked around watching all the old German houses.



When our little sightseeing tour was over, we had lunch at a German Gasthaus called “Wilder Mann”, where we ate some traditional German food. The food was quite interesting, but good. Sondre, Jens Petter, Markus and the other German students then went back to the church to climb the tower, while Henrikke, Benedikte, Katrine and I were tired and cold and wanted to shop instead. Ulm has many great stores and we bought some make-up and clothes before we had ice-cream and went back to the station.

The train to Schelklingen was now filled with people going home from work, so we all had to sit with strangers. When we finally got back to Urspring, we went to prepare for the international dinner. The Germans made a lot of different German dishes, while we Norwegians brought “mør”, “spekekjøtt”, “flattbrød”, brown cheese and crackers.



I think everyone from Norway was thrilled to have Norwegian food and we must have eaten the most of it, because it was nothing left, when the meal was over. After dinner we just relaxed in our rooms because we were all tired after a long day.



THURSDAY

Today we woke up and had breakfast as usual, but instead of having project work we were just going sightseeing. We visited Insel Mainau, an island and saw the Bodensee, which was two hours away from Schelklingen. The weather was fantastic and during our ride to the island we were going to visit, we saw a lot of the beautiful landscape Germany has. We drove past fields, farms, small towns and we even saw



the Alps. The island was beautiful and we saw many beautiful flowers. The landscape was amazing and there were peacocks and ducks made out of flowers.



There were horses, a donkey and other animals, a big castle and a big tropical garden. We walked around the whole island and it only became warmer and warmer.



When we were going back to the bus it became so hot, that we went down to the lake to cool down, and even though the water was quite warm, only a few of us were brave enough to go into it.

After our little “dip” we went back to the bus and our next stop was Konstanz, which was just outside the island. When we arrived the

teachers told us that we had three hours to do whatever we wanted, so we girls went straight to the mall, where we spent most of the time shopping clothes. After some shopping we had lunch in a cute little café and went back to the bus. The ride back to the school lasted a bit longer because of the rush hour traffic and it was already becoming dark when we arrived in Urspring. We then had to start packing. I also went outside to take some last pictures of the beautiful school and now I have to go to bed because we are leaving at 7 o'clock tomorrow. I've had the most amazing week, but I also think it will be good to go back home, too.



