Fast Lane English trip to Great Britain

4 – 9 October 2009

3rd year pupils

Accompanying teachers: Marij Wijnands
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On the 4th of October early in the morning all the participating pupils arrived at Stella Maris College in the company of their parents. They were given a warm welcome by their Fast Lane English teachers. In spite of the influenza scare, none of the participants had fallen ill and, so, everybody who had planned to take part in this trip was present. At exactly 5.55 o’clock a.m. the bus set off for Calais in a downpour.

Fortunately, the seemingly characteristic British weather at the departure soon turned into bright and sunny weather on the way to Calais. It was an expedient trip to Calais and we arrived one hour early at the docks. We had a relatively smooth crossing to Dover by ferry.

Once in Great Britain, the bus headed for Canterbury, where the group walked through this very picturesque town to the cathedral. Upon entering the grounds of Canterbury cathedral the group was split up into three to tour the church. In the church the pupils got their first live taste of British religious history and their first impressions of British perpendicular architecture.

Next the bus headed for Oxford where the pupils would be accommodated by host families.

At first the pupils felt a bit awkward meeting their British hosts, but in the morning it appeared that all the receiving British families had made each pupil feel welcome.

On the second day the group met 2 guides, called Brian and Delia, in Oxford at the Martyrs’ Memorial. While touring the town past several colleges, these guides told the pupils a lot about the historic development of Oxford university and the educational system at Oxford. Finally we all entered Christ Church College and admired the marvels of the cathedral. Because the academic year starts on 5th of October, Christ Church Dining Hall, which has served as the background in many a Harry Potter film scene, was not open to the public.

In the afternoon the pupils set off for Blenheim Palace, the residence of the Dukes of Marlborough, in Woodstock.

While preparing for this trip to the UK, the pupils had made a tourist guide giving information about the sites they would visit during this trip. In Great Britain the pupils had to
give additional information about each sight in English. Their presentations were assessed by
the teachers. Their teachers are happy to report the pupils did very well.

In the host families the pupils had to speak English to their hosts, of course.
Furthermore they had to interview their hosts, following guidelines they had been given.
The pupils also had to write down their reflections about the trip in a little diary as a little
memorial of this trip. These diaries would be collected after their trip and teachers would
then assess their efforts.
The teachers accompanying the group mostly addressed the pupils in English.

Soon all the pupils noticed that being in the U.K. and being continually surrounded by the
English language, actually, being submerged in the English language greatly improved their
fluency in English.

On the third day the group headed for Harrow Public School near London. Here we met two
teachers who informed us about the Harrow educational system. When touring the
extensive grounds of Harrow School the Dutch pupils marveled at the British pupils wearing
their school uniforms with typical boaters. They were fascinated by the sports facilities this
school offers. They must have realized that this British educational system reflects elements
of British culture that differ enormously from life in Holland.

In the afternoon the pupils were offered another aspect of British culture: the British Royal
Family. The group visited Windsor Castle, the home residence of the Queen and the place
from which the Royal Family takes its name.

On the fourth day the pupils got a glimpse of one Britain’s most important literary sights in
Startford-upon-Avon, the town in which Shakespeare lived and died.

All this time the weather had been wonderful. Unfortunately, the weather got worse when
we came to the end of our stay in Stratford. In the afternoon it started raining and once we
had had a cream tea in Burford, the weather prevented us from really enjoying the beauties
of this lovely little village.

On the fifth day we left Oxford very early in the morning. We would not return to Oxford for
we went to London and, at the end of that day, we would return to Holland by night ferry.

In London we paid a short visit to the Tower of London and viewed the crown jewels. Next
we spent some time at the Globe Theatre, a replica of Shakespeare’s original theatre. Here
again the pupils got an impression of what the theatre must have been like in the 17th
century. After some time in the Globe theatre, we crossed the Millennium Bridge and made
our way to Covent Garden. In the evening we watched the musical Les Miserables in the
Queen’s Theatre. At 11 o’clock p.m. we boarded the bus and headed back to Holland. Early
in the morning at approximately 9 o’clock we returned in Meerssen, Holland.

It had been a wonderful experience for pupils and teachers.