



## **2QAB Learner Diary – Telsiai Lithuania Thursday 6- Sunday 9 May 2010**

3 staff members travelled to Telsiai, none of whom having visited Lithuania before so very much looking forward to new experiences and learning about Lithuanian culture. We travelled from Bristol by air to Riga in Latvia where we hired a car to complete our journey. Once having left the busy city traffic of Riga we faced an open, poorly maintained road across a flat rural landscape into Lithuania where the road quality improved significantly. Weather conditions were cold and wet.

We arrived in Telsiai somewhat tired and found our hotel in the middle of the town's main street. After checking in and refreshing ourselves we took a brief walk around and located the restaurant where we would be meeting our fellow partners later that evening. It was wonderful to see familiar faces as well as some new faces around the tables that evening.

On Friday morning we had a very warm welcome at the Telsiai Adult Secondary School where we were to have our workshop meetings. After working on the partnership content, aims and objectives we were introduced to some Lithuanian folk art where we had the opportunity of trying stained glass painting, learning about folk song and the making of flax and linen products. We were impressed by the young students' enthusiasm for folk culture which is something we don't see much in the UK, possibly because of urbanisation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century outstripping rural cultures.

Saturday morning was taken up by workshops followed by a coach visit to Plateliai in the Samogitian national park, an area of outstanding natural beauty. Temperatures were very low and we all wished we had brought warmer clothes to wear. We visited a small wildlife museum where we met a local tour guide bristling with information about the Samogitian region and its history. Her passion for the region was visibly tangible.

Prior to returning to Telsiai we were taken to a local farmstead for our evening meal hosted by an elderly ex-teacher who turned out to be the life and soul of the party. We all sat around a huge table in her house with her at the head of the table where she introduced us to local traditional food and beverages. She wore clothes made from flax and linen, with buttons made from goat horn and was an extremely entertaining and welcoming host. Food included goat cheese with hemp seeds, fish

from the local lake, potatoes with sour cream and beef. The food was accompanied by locally produced wine and a lethal herb liqueur and it wasn't long before everyone found their voices in singing songs from each country accompanied by Ausra on the accordion. It was certainly a night to remember and sowed the seeds of traditional songs carrying a narrative for inclusion into our project.

On Sunday we drove back to Riga for our onward flight home, via a stop at Siauliai to visit the Hill of Crosses ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill\\_of\\_Crosses](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hill_of_Crosses)), a Christian pilgrimage site with over 250,000 crucifixes displayed.