

Yale College of Wrexham – Learner Diary 1

'Folk without Book' is the first Grundtvig project Yale College has been a part of where there has been another UK partner. Driving to the first meeting in Bristol felt very strange as we would normally be travelling in the direction of the airport. Neither I nor Jan had been to Bristol before and we did not know much about the city.

Jan and I stayed at the Premier Inn near the Stokes Croft area of the City. We arrived on the Thursday afternoon and met with the other seven partners at an Italian restaurant for an evening meal. Yale College is already working with four of the partners in other projects but the partners from Bristol, Italy and Lithuania we met for the first time. From that first evening we could tell that this partnership is going to be a strong one and that the following two years will present some very interesting work.

The Friday morning was the first official part of the meeting. Each partner, as is usual, gave a short presentation on their institution and briefly explained what they are hoping to gain from 'Folk without Book'. For Yale College we feel that the booklet the project will produce at the end will benefit a few programmes of study, especially our International English programme and our summer school. This first part of the meeting is always very important particularly when you are introduced to new partners for the first time.

At the start of the afternoon we were taken on a walking tour of the urban art around the Stokes Croft area by two urban artists. The beginning of the tour started with us meeting Chris Chalkley who runs PRSC (the Peoples Republic of Stokes Croft). He explained to us the regeneration plans that PRSC is involved in with urban artists from the Stokes Croft area. It was wonderful to see someone so pro-active in the community. Some of the street art was fascinating but some of it also left me thinking 'why?'. Whilst looking at one large piece which had been painted on two sides of a nightclub an elderly gentleman passed by and said 'legalised Vandalism' and in some cases I can see his point. Personally, I do feel that what Stokes Croft is doing is incredible but at the same time I also feel that PRSC could work with the councils better as it does feel like they are trying to fight them rather than work with them which has led the council to behave in the same way.

Before coming to Bristol Jan and I had no idea of its proud history of urban art and its high profile graffiti artists. I have appreciated Banksy for some time as a fine artist but was unaware that he came from Bristol and that much of his work adorns the city walls.

From this first meeting I really feel that we have a great opportunity with this project to look at something exciting which could really have a long term influence. Each and every partner seems to have something different to offer which is a very positive start. For Yale College it is also nice to work with another UK partner which we don't normally get the chance to do.

Jan and I are very excited to be involved in this project and are really looking forward to the next meeting in Lithuania.