Holland 2017 Hockey Tour Report

Everyone woke up early on 14 October, a cold, Saturday morning. I arrived at the school at 2:40 am for the coach which left at 3:15 am. The majority of the boys helped to lift the luggage onto the coach. Within 10 to 15 minutes lots of people had fallen asleep to be woken up to the bright glare of the sunshine as we entered Dover. We arrived at the port roughly at 7:00am, unfortunately we missed the ferry which we had planned to get by 10 minutes, so we went to a nearby building with shops and restaurants. After an hour had passed we got onto the ferry for an hour until we arrived at Calais, France. Once we got onto the bus we drove for another 2 hours until we arrived in Bruges, Belgium. We spent an hour and 30 minutes in Bruges, which gave us enough time to buy the fantastic chocolate on offer in the city. I was in a group of 5 people and during our time we had a Belgium McDonalds, Belgium waffle which tasted amazing, but also some Belgium Chocolate which is one of the best ever foods I have ever tasted. The city of Bruges was fantastic it looked great with tall buildings and a lovely river flowing through it. After that it was a 2-hour coach journey to Holland. When we arrived at the De Hopbel Hockey Clubhouse we were greeted with a warm welcome from everyone from the hockey club. I was staying with Toby Rigg so we went off with our parents who later took us into the middle of the town to meet up with some other families and try some of the great ice cream in the town. Every time we went into town we would all go on bicycles which I found enjoyable. We later went to bed for an early match in the morning.

I woke up feeling shattered after the long coach journey yesterday. Toby and I woke up to a Dutch breakfast of what I can only refer to as a ‘sprinkle sandwich’ but Toby and I

 both agreed that it tasted great and that we had to take some sprinkles back for our families in England. Our boys’ match was against a De Hopbel Boys (younger) side, which started roughly at 8:30am but before that we had to pick up the tour kit which had been ordered for us which looked great. My kit number was 12 and I was very pleased with my shirt. The match went very successfully and the score was 6-0 to us. The girls played two matches with the first game resulting in a 2-0 win to Princethorpe and their second match 2-0 win for De Hopbel Girls team. Later that day the majority of the families met including my family. The families had hired out 6 man bikes which had 4 wheels for us all to ride around a woodland area. However, this turned competitive and was made into a race, my team managed to get back first and win. To win however Ross and I had to jump off the back of the bike and push it along. In the evening my family held a disco in their back garden and everyone who went had an enjoyable time.

The next day was a full day training session and later in the afternoon was a match from a team near to De Hopbel Hockey Club. During the day we visited a massive sports shop where everyone bought new items. Some people bought new hockey sticks which would be harder to find and purchase back in England. During the training day people were struggling with the heat as it was one of the hottest days of that week. But training had to go on and so it did. The boys practised lots of defensive situations as well as short corner routines which went very successfully and we managed to put some of them into our match later that hour. We finished and we won 7-2 with some good saves from Fred Barnes, whose second hockey goalkeeping experience in a match was on this tour, kept us ahead with some fantastic saves. The girls also won their match 3-0. In the evening all of the families met up at a restaurant to eat a fantastic meal and try some Dutch cuisines for our starter course.

On our final full day in Holland the coaches took us into Den Bosch where we had a chance to spend the rest of our money. There was a very nice hockey shop in the city with some good hockey sticks and tops on offer. Den Bosch was a beautiful city and had narrow cobbled streets with some very modern shops along the streets. When we returned to the hockey club we played against an older De Hopbel side however we still remained unbeaten and the score was 7-0. The girls also won with a score of 2-0. After our matches everyone gathered in the clubhouse for the trophies to be given out. The boys captain Alex went up to collect our trophy, we managed to retain possession of the cup and the girls captain Anneliesa went up to collect the girl’s trophy as they had gained the cup. In the evening there was a barbecue which was prepared by the club and the food tasted amazing. Later there was a silent disco which Dex had prepared for us. Everyone loved the silent disco, people went out to dance on the AstroTurf, others were still playing hockey on the Astro whilst listening to music. Our Dutch hosts were also seemed to be having a great time. When Toby and I returned to our host’s house we played a game with the children we were staying with. The game involved us having to set out English words for our hosts to guess the Dutch word for it and vice-versa. We all were laughing into the night with the game and the amount of new words we learnt was incredible. Some Dutch words we found were similar to their English ones as well.

On the morning of our departure back to the UK we said farewell to our wonderful hosts. We left the hockey club for a long journey back. We stopped during our 4-hour coach journey at a nice building surrounded by grassy fields filled with flowers. We then arrived at Calais to board our ferry which again was a good experience with arcades and was a last chance to buy items for family members. When we entered England I started to miss Holland as it felt as if it was a second home. During the journey home we were met a lot of rush hour traffic which delayed our arrival time by another 2 hours. As we drove up the Princethorpe drive way everyone cheered and thanked the coaches for the great trip we were able to go on. Parents greeted us in the playground and help take our luggage off us.

In the future as I look back on my time at Princethorpe College I will certainly remember this school trip for all the amazing memories it has given me. It is one of the best sporting trips I have been on and I would like to thank the organisers of this trip on the behalf of all the other children who all throughly enjoyed the trip. I would also like to thank the coaches and our Dutch hosts who help look after us during the trip and made it so we could have a fantastic time and made sure we could enjoy this wonderful experience. Also Mr. Dexter who has set up this trip for us and for making this trip all possible. I hope to see our Dutch hosts again later this May and hope both boys and girl’s teams can manage to keep hold of our trophies.

Oli Thomas