

‘Taking the plunge: life in a British boarding school’

Two years ago, I visited Devon. What a wonderful place, I thought. Countryside, friendly people, astonishing nature, rich history and untamed beauty. Everything had its place and I immediately felt like home, even though my departure was set in a few days. The last night I spent with my host family, I wrote a note to myself and anyone willing to read it: ‘I’ll come back.’; and left it on the table.

I did not expect that wish to come true.

And yet, there I was. 2nd of September 2015, departing Cambridge, passing by Stonehenge and eventually, stopping at my new home for a year; Mount Kelly College in Devon.

The school was breathtaking- people were nice and smiling, fellow students helpful and life seemed to consistently brighten and darken unexpectedly. Even though everyone said that the beginnings were tough and the logical part of my brain agreed with them; the emotional side of me I have always worked on suppressing seemed to overtake in the most inappropriate situations. More often than not, I felt like falling and not being able to control anything; my grades were low. I found it difficult to find friends. The language barrier was too high and I felt unable to cross it. I was angry at myself and the world.

And then, just like that, I wasn’t.

My grades got much better; my ability to express myself in language as complex as English has gradually improved- and I have developed strong friendships with people I have never even expected myself to talk to. I started to appreciate things I used to dislike; I even joined a school basketball team, which has been my sport nemesis ever since I can remember. My logical side took over again- and I found myself arguing about the importance of strong European Union during the fortnight meetings of School’s debating society, which you had to be invited to attend; I put on my first military uniform and tried to play squash; though admittedly, I almost ended up in a hospital.

I started to feel a sense of belonging somewhere; which, as I realized, was the thing I was missing the most during the first few weeks; even more than my parents or friends.

And eventually, the impossible happened. I actually started to like my school uniform- and do not make a mistake, I love the concept of school uniforms! But *a kilt*, in *Devon* especially.

I am happy now. I have memorised all of the names of fallen heroes in our school Chapel, finally decided on which hymn I like to sing the most, managed to tame the printer into obedience and learnt to type all of the school codes without making a single mistake. And unforgettably managed to climb several Dartmoor hills during the Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award practice expedition; crying and swearing in the process, probably annoying everyone in my proximity, but the view was worth it. And the well accomplished feeling as well.

Several days ago, I have also met my former British host family from Barnstaple during their trip here- and just after a few hugs I had received from my former host mom, she looked at me proudly and said: “You came back.”

I did. And it was the best decision I have ever made.

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