

An Ilam Hall Diary

Monday

Staggered into school extra early this morning loaded down with our rucksacks and one permitted bag. All three coaches were queued up waiting on West Leigh Avenue and after a tearful farewell (not) we set off up North. After a four and a half hour journey, which included a welcome toilet stop at a service station on the M1, we arrived at the youth hostel. Just as well, because the teachers were going insane with our singing! Everything looked brilliant – grass and sheep, sheep and more sheep.



Straight into our dormitories to check out our nighttime arrangements. Packed lunch sunning ourselves outside and then the forced march up Thorpe Cloud. Excellent view from the top but very painful on our legs. I wish I'd taken the advice and practised for this first! The ice creams at the bottom of the mountain made it all worthwhile. Gastronomic dinner – played football until 9:30pm to help it go down.

Tuesday

Crawled down to breakfast this morning – I'm sure my legs didn't feel like this when I left school. Managed to eat cornflakes, bacon, eggs, beans, tomatoes, sausages, fried bread toast and even black pudding (actually quite tasty). After the briefing we were off to Castleton. As the road had collapsed down the mountain we had to do an extra walk to get to the cavern, but it was really worthwhile. We went right down into the centre of the earth. The afternoon we spent climbing a mountain called Mam Tor. We had to put on and take off our waterproofs about a hundred times as the weather couldn't decide whether to be fine or not. I didn't know it could rain sideways!

Wednesday

This morning we were going into Ashbourne to hire some bikes. It took us a while to get fitted up with the right size bike and a helmet but then we were ready to go. This is the first time I have cycled for six miles along a railway track –

no trains though fortunately. It was an excellent ride and the bikes had 24 gears. We had to slow down so that the teachers could keep up!

We spent the afternoon at Chatsworth House. The maze was amazing and the cascades were even better. Had a great time splashing around but a few of us were **literally** soaked to the skin – we had to dry out our underwear back at the hostel!

Had a good evening eating and drinking, chatting, playing on the grass and going for a mystery walk along the river at the back of the youth hostel.

Thursday

Alton Towers today – say no more! We left really early and as the theme park is only half an hour away we were soon heading off for the major rides. My group started off in the X Sector. We fitted in Oblivion, Smiler and Enterprise before our packed lunch (lucky we had not eaten it first!) and then headed towards the Forbidden Valley for the afternoon. We queued for an hour to go on Nemesis but it was worth every minute. Make sure you do Hex! Back at the hostel it was our last evening. Not so good was the room inspection – our dormitory failed twice and we spent at least an hour getting it up to standard.

Friday

Going home today. We wanted to stay for another week. But before we went there was a climb up Bunster Hill. The teachers said it would help keep us quiet on the coach – no chance. The walk was a killer though – no footpath in sight, just straight up the side of a hill. There was a brilliant view of Ilam from the top. The savage dogs and field of bulls added to the fun though.

Then back onto the coaches and after a group photo back down South to parents and school! It's been a great week. Everyone thoroughly enjoyed it. I'll miss Derbyshire, the fields, the walks, the hostel meals, the open space and even the sheep (particularly Numbers 24 and 42). But most of all ... I'll miss all the fun we had by just being together. It will be a special memory that I'll take with me as I leave West Leigh.

