

I went with my team on a geological fieldtrip to Scarborough in Yorkshire. As I saw the vivid, chalky patches of bright yellow rapeseed flowers dotting the landscape, I felt that David Hockney's paintings had come to life around me. From our luxury coach the flowers were beautiful but when we got out and walked near them, the scent was over-powering, like cheap perfume.

During the field trip, we saw a *lot* of muddy gullies. We also saw some "No Fouling" signs stating the fine was £100 and yet my hand went into dog poo on one of the steep ascents. Ewww...

On the third day of the field trip, we were standing on Filey Bay, and I contemplated yet another steep, muddy gully. I decided that even if I scrambled up, I'd never make it back down. So, I stayed on the beach and watched the others climb up. As I watched Sarah plunge knee deep into the mud, balancing her backpack and first aid kit, I was convinced that I had made the right decision. Then a few minutes later it rained, and I have never been so cold in my life before while standing on a beach. I decided to warm up by walking in a circle on the sand. I was thrilled to find a pair of blue, leather gloves stashed in the pocket of my blue fleece hoody, so I put them on while I continued to walk in my circles, rubbing my hands together with my head down in a vain attempt to protect it from the driving rain. When the others came down, Emma reported with a big grin that they were looking at me from their vantage point and as I walked around with my head down, in the blue hood and sporting blue hands, I reminded them of a Smurf shuffling along doing my chores!

Kevin, who is from Scarborough, took us for a walk along the seaside. There was an amusement park and games of chance. We saw a sign over beach balls proclaiming "Smelly Balls" and they smelled of grapes and strawberries. The rest of the team was laughing at the sign except Gabriel, our new Argentinean teammate. He wanted to know what was so funny. When I realised that he really did not know *and* that nobody else was explaining, I took the plunge and said, "Smelly cojones". I did not know the Spanish word for "smelly". Why are we never taught the really useful words? Anyway, he understood immediately and replied, "good one".

After that interlude, we raised the whole tone of the evening by visiting Scarborough Castle where we had a great view of the sea as it sat at the top of the hill. The weather was the most diverse I have ever experienced in one location. We had sun, wind, rain and hail follow each other in quick succession.

Looking down from the castle, we saw the graveyard in which Anne Brontë, the youngest of the literary Brontë sisters, was buried. I went down to see the grave at close quarters as I had just recently bought the BBC mini-series based on her book "Tenant of Wildfell Hall" which I really enjoyed.

I then spent the weekend in York on my own. Since my teammates knew my plan to stay, I had recommendations from each of them; Richard recommended the Shambles, Andy recommended the Jorvik museum, Emma said to make sure to see York Minster and William said the Railway Museum was not to be missed. When I got in on Saturday morning, I took the hop-on hop-off bus tour to get my bearings and discovered all their recommendations were within walking distance from my B&B.

Although I was plagued by migraines over the weekend, I managed to do a lot once the migraines subsided.

The Shambles consisted of narrow, winding medieval streets with historic buildings almost touching each other overhead. I saw all kinds of shops there including one called "Eye of Newt" with cauldrons and owls in the window. I also found a little old jewellery store selling only jet jewellery. I thought of the scene in "Possession" that referenced a jet brooch bought in York.

After wandering around the stores, I went to the Yorkshire Museum which is in their Botanic gardens. The backdrop of the gardens was the ruins of St. Mary's Abbey – decimated by Henry the VIII when he fell out with the Catholic Church.

The Jorvik Viking Centre was a very enjoyable experience. It starts with a miniature of the Coppergate site where the Viking artefacts had been excavated. We then took a Disneyesque ride through a recreated Viking town with animatronics characters, some of which were based on what was learned from the three skeletons that had been found. I wondered what they did with the rest of their dead as they could not possibly afford put them on boats, setting them on fire while sailing into the sunset like in the old movies.

I just made it into the Castle Museum before it closed so they let me in for free so I could do a quick walk through their recreated Victorian street. I loved it. Especially a store selling bolts of cloth and another with old fashioned sweets. The atmosphere was so Dickensian. I imagined my great Aunt Pearl would have loved it.

That night I had dinner at a Malaysian restaurant called Ning which was good. I then took a walk to York Minster. When I arrived, the cathedral was glowing golden in the sunset. The tulips near it were so beautiful; I decided to try for an arty shot.

I spent some time just walking around it even though at that time of night it was closed. It was still worth seeing as Emma had urged. The next day I had a massage and then checked out. I had decided as the Railway Museum was next to the York train station that I would visit the museum and then get my train back to Kings Cross. I stashed my luggage at the Railway Museum and was surprised at how much I enjoyed the museum. Since they had full sized trains, they used them to their fullest, so you boarded the Japanese Bullet train and sat in it to view a historical video on it.

I saw Queen Victoria's carriage with its plush soft furnishings and elaborate materials. The pièce de resistance was the Hogwarts Express which was being exhibited until July as it was not part of their permanent collection, so I was lucky to have seen it.

I met Richard and his wife Rachel at the train station and despite nursing a migraine with no medication, I had a pleasant journey back to London as they invited me to join them in their carriage. Emma had alerted us to a special on first class tickets when we were planning the field trip, so we were travelling in style. We enjoyed the snacks laid on while trading stories of our weekend. I was amused when Rachel mentioned that they visited her grand-mother who had a bout of pneumonia and was getting forgetful since that pretty much described me also! Although I think am over my pneumonia. But I cannot remember...

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