

Last week, fifteen girls from Year 9 at Alton Convent School travelled to Hamelin in Germany to visit their pen pals. For the past two years, the girls had been writing letters and emails to each other and were now excited to meet their friends face to face.

To break the ice, they enjoyed oversized ice-cream sundaes in a local ice-parlour. Soon a mixture of German and English was used to find out more about each other.

The next few days were spent in the historic centre of Hamelin. The Musical "Rats" on the market square was enjoyed by all and reminded us of the story of the Pied Piper who once freed the town of a rat plague.

Hamelin has a lot to offer, but it was their German pen pals together with their English teacher and their parents who made their stay so special. Together, they would explore the partner school Albert-Einstein-Gymnasium, go Bowling, visit the traditional glass blowing workshop, spend time on the banks of the river Weser and play table tennis. One trip organised by the German parents led us to Bodenwerder where we learned about the Baron von Münchhausen. Telling stories made him famous as the lying baron.

A fare-well party displayed the generosity and hospitality of our German hosts. Alton Convent School is now looking forward to the return visit by their exchange students in September.



*Having written to my pen pal, Kati, for just over a year, I was looking forward, if a little nervous, to finally meeting her on our trip to Hameln. I knew that we had similar interests in music and sport and I was hoping that we would get along well when we met. Our first meeting was in an Eiscafe where we sat in tables of four, two English girls and their pen pals. Initially, we were a little shy, however as we exchanged presents and ate huge ice creams we became more at ease and began to talk in both languages. Kati and I got on well with each other and we went off to look around Hameln with other groups - it felt like I had known Kati for a while which encouraged me to attempt to speak German. During the rest of the week, we spent quite a lot of time with each other and then on the final day she invited me, Francesca and Emily back to her house along with their pen pals for lunch. We spent a really enjoyable couple of hours around her house, trying to ride her unicycle and chatting together. The day ended with us exchanging e-mail addresses and phone numbers. It was a great experience to go to Germany and get to know Kati, I think my German has improved and I am looking forward to seeing Kati again in September.*

Sarah Hearn



*The trip to Germany is one of the best, not only do you get to visit the country in which the language you study originates but first and foremost meeting your pen pal. We have been writing to our friends out in Germany for nearly two years now and it was great to finally meet them. I particularly liked mine as she was like my friends at home. Also meeting your pen pal pushes you to attempt to speak the language!*

Hannah Lynch



*It was really tough climbing the hill up to the tower but once I had got to the top and had had a magnum I wanted to do it again. The view from the top was amazing and well worth the climb. From the top we could see the youth hostel, the cathedral and the river.*

Kelly Rankine



*While in Hamelin, we were fortunate enough to see first the musical and then the play of the Pied Piper. Both told the story very well. Lots of local children dressed up in brilliant costumes to be the rats. In the play, the Pied Piper was played by a woman and she played the flute beautifully. We all felt sorry as the boy on the crutches was left alone outside the cave. It was definitely an experience never to be missed! Thank you for an amazing trip! I really enjoyed it!*

Catherine Picton-Turbervill



*When I went to Hameln in Germany, I got the chance to blow a glass ball. I didn't realise how hard it was but I found it fun and an experience I will never forget.*

Francesca Page

