

About Fairies and Germans

It was raining once again when we visited Castleton on Sunday. It is one of the typically British villages, with gray stone houses and narrow streets which are surrounded by hills of green. Even during rainy days it is somehow enchanting, charming and incredibly beautiful. Our first stop was at a small and cozy cafe in which I had a soothing hot chocolate with whipped cream (actually really a LOT of whipped cream) and I felt a lot warmer afterward. That was probably the best thing I could have done before heading to a mine we wanted to visit due to the weather condition (a long walk up the hill wasn't the best idea without a waterproof jacket). We walked through fields and the view was breathtakingly beautiful. The color green was everywhere and in between were fluffy sheep and extraordinarily marked cows. The small stone walls which divide the seemingly infinite fields are just another detail that makes you expect to see elves or fairies behind the next stone. You really believe you are in a fantasy landscape.

When we arrived at the mine we had to wait for a long time before we were able to go down so we were lucky to have Katha around who entertained us with riddles we did not always manage to solve despite many further hints given by her. After being almost frozen to death (the hot chocolate probably saved my life) we entered the mine and were instructed by a man with a weird accent. We first thought - since it was another area - we just had to get used to another kind of pronunciation once again. When we had to wait for a few minutes for another boat to pass no one had any questions so we sat there in silence and darkness in this really tight tunnel. One of us said "Wir könnten ein Spiel spielen" and "Gibt's hier ne Toilette?!" so I asked in German to say all that in English in order that everyone would be entertained and not just us who were all laughing. The guide suddenly retorted "Ich kann euch schon ganz gut verstehen". As it turned out he was actually from Germany and understood every bit of what we were saying. Fortunately nobody said anything embarrassing or insulting before. Funny how fast you come accustomed to talking loudly about anything that comes to your mind because you believe nobody is able to understand you. Our guide then started to make fun of Germans and told us about silly questions people asked during tours. He was really amusing so we had a fun time learning about the mine. The fact that they find many new tunnels and passageways each year amazed me most. They have to print new maps regularly to keep them up to date.

We actually had a great time although the rain started to jar on the nerves. Still we made the best of the day – as we did on all the other days as well - and retrospectively it is one of those stories you will probably still be telling in 20 years.