



YFA TRAVEL DOCUMENT

Seeing the world with the YFC Discovery Programme

NAME: Bryce Mackellar

CLUB: Stone YFC

DESTINATION: Ulster

TYPE OF TRIP: Homestay

DURATION: 2 weeks

DATES OF TRAVEL: April 2004



DESCRIPTION OF TRIP:

When people think of a holiday of a lifetime or an unforgettable holiday, usually what comes to mind are golden sandy beaches, brilliant hospitality or even stunning scenery. But what did I find out when I arrived in Northern Ireland? It had all of these things plus the comforts of the good old English weather and no translation barriers. What drew me to a YFA exchange was that I could travel at such a low cost. This started with a flight from Luton Airport to Belfast International for only £45 return.



So of I travelled to Northern Ireland my suitcase packed for every eventuality and a funny feeling of not knowing what to expect. The flight was only 50 minutes long so it gave me enough time to get to know the other English exchangee on the flight with me. Her name is Helen and she is a member of Bedfordshire YFC. I think that she was more nervous about the trip than I was, because she told me it was the first time she had been on holiday without her family.

When I arrived at Belfast International Airport, I was met by William Glen. William is the same age as me and had similar interests to me and lived just north of a town called Coleraine, which is only a few miles from the seaside resort of Port Stewart. William lived on his family farm during the holiday and the rest of the time at Belfast University Studying a degree in agriculture.

The area around Coleraine is very much like Leek with moorland and dairy farms merging into each other. The time with the Glen family was brilliant, seeing all the culture around North County Antrim, be it going to the Giant's Causeway, which was unbelievable to see how the rocks were formed, the Bush Mills Distillery and the history around it and also going to the church service on Sunday.

The nightlife in the area was enjoyable; we went to a nightclub at Port Rush, which was called Lush. This nightclub was part of a holiday complex at Port Rush, which resembles a little Skegness.

I think the most glorious site I saw was at castle rock where we visited a mausoleum. The view from here was breath taking looking out over the golden beaches of the Antrim coastline.

Before I knew it, I was off to YFC Ulster's National AGM in Newcastle in the county of County Down. This was a brilliant weekend where I saw new ways in which AGM's could be run. The

hotel where the conference was held was a beautiful large country house called The Slieve Donard that was part of Ulster's national golf course. I think the people of Ulster are more trusting of the YFC movement because I couldn't see anyone in England letting the Young Farmers stop in a hotel like this.

At the AGM on Saturday evening was a brilliant night where I meet the host for my second week in Ulster. That evening, I sat down with over 800 young farmers for a lovely dinner where I heard some of the best public speaking and jokes ever. After the dinner and dancing had finished everybody stood up and toasted good health to the Queen and sung the National anthem. This showed that the main religion of YFC is Protestant showing that they are loyal to the English government.

Sunday afternoon arrived and I met up with Ian Dunlop, my host family for the second week of the trip. Ian drove me to his home that was in the small town of Hillsborough in County Down. County Down is home to Ulster's Government house where such dignitaries as Tony Blair and Bill Clinton stay when visiting Northern Ireland.

The Dunlop family were very welcoming people who live on a dairy farm. Ian is the youngest of 4 brothers and is studying engineering at the local polytechnic. During my stay with the Dunlop family I visited local dairy farms with Ian's brother David who went round selling Semen and A.I.ing cows for local dairy herds. This was a good way to see local farming practice and also the countryside.

The Dunlop's were able to arrange a tour around Northern Ireland's Agricultural Research Institute. This was a brilliant place to visit, I saw a 50 point rotary parlour been fitted and there was also 60 silage clamps that could hold from 50 to 200 tonne of silage each. This was so they could try a number of different clamped silage's and also additives.

Other places that I visited were Hillsborough Castle and Cathedral, the streets and murals of Belfast, a local folk night at a pub called Wee Mines and not forgetting the nightlife of Belfast.

My trip to Ulster was a brilliant experience, where I found out how welcoming the people of Northern Ireland are. Even with the trouble that has gone on in this area the people of Ulster bear no grudges and always have a smile on their faces. I would like as a last note to thank Young Farmers Ambassadors, National YFC and YFC Ulster for giving me the chance to go on this tour and also to recommend it to any other YFC member. These tours are a brilliant opportunity I am sure I will re-apply to go on another tour. I hope that my report will give you the inspiration to apply to YFA to go on these journeys of a lifetime.

Bryce Mackellar



