

Received from Karyn Collie, September 15, 2004

Greetings from Glasgow! Sorry I have not written sooner, but I did not get my Internet set up until earlier this afternoon (I am 5 hours ahead of North Carolina time). My first few days in Glasgow have been hectic, stressful, and a little scary at times. Culture shock does indeed exist, even in a country where they speak the same language as you (at least a SIMILAR language). This email is going to be a little long because I have so much to say about my first few days in Scotland. For starters, the plane ride was very different from anything I've ever experienced. Flying alone can often be exciting, but that is usually when you are meeting someone or only leaving for a brief amount of time. I've never considered myself to be much of a homebody. I'm very close to my family, but have always loved seeking new adventures on my own. However, as I looked back at my family and loved ones from the security line at the airport, it was all I could do to keep from choking up. Of course, my laptop had to undergo further inspection, so the security guard pulled me aside. Since I do not look like a hardened criminal, he tried to make small talk to pass the time. The only problem with small talk was that it led to me bursting into the tears that I had been trying to hold back! The security guard, visibly uncomfortable, hurried up the search and let me pass teary-eyed.

After my long flights (I had two lay-overs), I finally caught a glimpse of Glasgow. Glasgow means "dear green place" in Gaelic and, from a plane, it does indeed appear that way. The arial view is a unique mixture of tall, city buildings and large fields of grass. Instead of having small patches of grass with a manicured tree in the middle, like New York, the sidewalks are lined with grass. It really is an attractive area, especially the historical area where my flat is located.

Now I must tell you about my first 24 hours in Glasgow. For me, it was green but it was not as "dear" as everyone had described it. First of all, my flight was delayed and my luggage did not arrive on time. After sorting through my luggage problems, my host Rotarian kindly drove me from the airport to my residence (I got to sit on the left side of the front seat for the first time without driving!). Thinking I needed to rest after my long flight, my Rotarian and his wife left shortly after they led me to my room.

For the first time in my life, I felt completely alone. My flat was empty, my phoncard to the USA would not work, I had no Internet, no luggage, and had no idea how to get anywhere. It is so uncharacteristic for me to doubt any decision, but for a few hours, I wanted to do nothing more than get on a flight back to my own secure world in the US. Luckily, I met one of my flat mates, who had been in Glasgow for a year. She took me to Byres road, where the students do their shopping. I got to eat and get to know my way around the area. The next few days have been a whirlwind. Apart from 20 million shopping trips (you can only carry so much when you are a 15 minute walk away!), I had to open a UK bank account, register with the police, register with a doctor, and sign up for a meeting with my University advisor!

Today, I attended the first International Student Orientation session with another of my flatmates, Marlit, a girl from Germany, whom I really like. We spent the rest of our day with two Greek boys, a Greek girl, another American girl, and a guy from Britain. It's really funny to have friends from all over the world. I feel like we are conducting a mini-United Nations meeting whenever we meet! A lot of our conversation consists of questions about each

other's country and a lot of looking at the map to figure out where to go in Glasgow! So all in all, I am starting to settle in and have gotten over the scary part of my trip. Hopefully, from here on the adventure will begin and Glasgow will truly become as "dear" to me as it is to the locals.

Sincerely, Karyn Collie

P.S. Here are some interesting tidbits about Glasgow: -Calories are called "Energy" on the nutrition label here. Just think how unappealing diets would be if you were cutting back on "energy" instead of "calories"! I'm going to make sure to eat as many kilos of "energy" as possible! :-) -The University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 and is the fourth oldest university in the UK. The main part of it looks like Hogwarts for any Harry Potter fans out there! -My flat is across the street from a private school. The kids look really prim and proper in their uniforms, but don't be fooled... They have worse language than an old sailor when they are away from their teachers and they stick their tongues out to the friendly old Crossguard who always says, "G'morning mum" to me. -My bathroom is the smallest room I've ever seen and I could not fit in the shower if I weighed one pound more!

I hope all of you are doing well!