



Adventure # 3 – Hockey, Masonry & Medieval Ruins



Well, I reported to my Fulbright post at the University of Lancaster as planned on January 12, after a couple of weeks of travel as detailed in previous newsletters. I found them in the midst of a flail brought about by delays in new construction (I am certainly familiar with that from IUPUI). They were supposed to be moved into the new Engineering Building over the holidays....but it did not happen. At any rate, I have a temporary shared office with the promise of a new one when they are allowed into the new building (now hoping for January 26).

I have met the 10 fourth year students who make up Lancaster's Formula Student race team. That is less students than on IUPUI's team, but the Lancaster fourth year students get to work on the project full-time for 6 weeks at a time and then take 4 weeks of classes, and then repeat. It appears that I will also be co-teaching one class, preparing to give a plenary lecture to the whole faculty, and helping with Lancaster's STEM outreach program to local schools.



Since we left Indiana, my ice hockey addiction has had to rely on occasional internet updates on the Tampa Lightning (who continue to win and are atop the NHL Eastern Conference standings) and checking the website of our new minor league team, the Indy Fuel (who had been having a pretty pathetic season with only 7 wins in 34 tries, and as of our departure would have had to improve some to be merely awful). On the weekend of 17 January, we traveled to Sheffield,

where they have a team in the Elite League (the Steelers) and also a lower tier (minor league) team (the Steel Dogs) and both were playing that weekend. The Sheffield arena seats 8500 and was about half full for the Steelers. The Steel Dogs play in a smaller, 1500 seat, arena next door to the big one. They had a very vocal crowd of about 1000.



We stayed in a unique little inn, called the Moose and Gibbet. It is across the street from the two ice arenas and its pub is a gathering spot for fans and players before and after games. We met some of both and learned quite a lot about their view of hockey. Many of them watch NHL games on TV and there was a smattering of NHL team jerseys in the crowd.



The both games were a struggle between two excellent goaltenders. The Steelers game went to a shootout, with only one puck in the net the entire night. The opponent was the Belfast Giants, and these were the top two teams in the league last year, so it should have been a good example of Elite League play. Since a number of the North American players on the rosters had AHL, CHL, or



ECHL experience, it is not surprising that the talent level was consistent with American minor league hockey. But I have to say that they play with a lot more energy, heart and hard work than I had been seeing back in Indy before we left. The SteelDogs played a bit more like the old Indiana Ice junior league team, as might be expected with lower tier players. But again, they played with a lot of heart and never gave up.

Some observations: fans here do not pound on the glass, there are drums in the stands instead of air horns or cow bells, there was a female linesman, referees over here are blind and seem to regularly make poor calls that decide the game, the team mascots (Steeler Dan and D'Fur) wander about the stands during the game interacting with fans just like Nitro at home, the wider European rink makes for a faster, more wide-open, offensive game. While both fans and players made us feel very welcome, since the home team lost both nights, I think they might prefer if we don't return to jink them.

After making initial contact before leaving Indiana, I have subsequently been warmly welcomed by one of the local Masonic lodges, the City of Lancaster Lodge, #281 of the Grand Lodge of England. This lodge is an amalgamation of the Lodge of Fortitude (founded 1789) and John O'Gaunt Lodge (founded 1790). They meet in a renovated church known as Rowley Court. I attended my first regular meeting which was followed by a Festive Board dinner, on 15 January.

Noteworthy: The original warrant for founding the lodge hangs on the wall. The furnishings of the lodge room are notably different than in the USA. The WM and Wardens enter and leave the room in a processional. Multiple fraternal hymns are sung, accompanied by an organ. Next month I will see their installation ceremony (even more singing I am told) and on the 31st Wendy and I

have been invited to a black-tie affair for lodge brothers and wives.



On the trip to Sheffield, we stopped at the ruins of 12th century Rievaulx Abbey. It was impressively huge, with ornate arches and buttresses and at its peak it held a contingent of over 400 monks.





And we stopped at Helmsley Castle, also built in the 12th century by Robert de Roos, a Knight Templar who fought in the Crusades to free the Holy Land. The major remnants are the earthen embankments that formed the primary defense, and the tower.



We finally got to move into our flat on campus, which means I no longer have to make an

hour drive in the dark/snow/sleet/wind to-and-from my office. I am looking forward to that, and Wendy is happy to finally get packed. The university housing does not have food service typical of US dormitories. Instead there are numerous little cafes, coffee shops and pubs scattered all over campus. Food is plentiful and cheap. We have gotten to know one called "The Bowland Trough" where you can get a pie and a pint for a mere 5.95.....and you cannot walk away hungry.

