WYNG Post-trip Report: My Trip to England

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This report is a summary of the events that took place during our trip to Cambridge and London, and is illustrated with photographs taken by me, the other winners, or the two adults accompanying us on the trip, Ms Yan-yan Yip and Ms June Ho.

Day 1:

Pictured: The six of us right after the landing of our plane (I’m the first girl on the left in the back row). We all look excited and in high spirits, but just wait until the jet lag sets in… (Picture: Nikki Wong)

We arrived at Heathrow Airport, London after a long twelve hour flight, and upon passing immigration immediately set course for Cambridge. The car ride lasted two hours, and when we arrived it was already nearing 7pm, though the sun was still high up in the sky. (During the period of our stay in England, the sun would not set any time earlier than 9pm, which was very new to me, as the sun always goes down latest by 7:30pm in Hong Kong.) We didn’t have time to do more than check in at the dorms of Trinity Hall where we were staying, and have a quick dinner at a nearby coffee shop.

Pictured: Left- my room upon arrival; right- the common room that I shared with Ellery, another winner.
Day 2:

*Pictured: Above- part of Trinity Hall’s main building; below- the dining hall of Trinity Hall, where we would have breakfast every morning of our stay.*

In the morning, we had breakfast in the dining hall, just like an undergraduate student would. We were accompanied by Dr Andrew Murray and Mr Colm McGrath, whom we had both met the previous day at the Porter’s lodge. Although we were initially intimidated, they were both very friendly and welcoming, asking us whether we were enjoying our stay so far and explaining the mechanics of Cambridge’s colleges system to us. After we had finished our breakfast, Dr Murray and Mr McGrath took us on an orientation walk around Cambridge, taking us around Trinity Hall, along the river Cam, through Clare College and to WYNG Gardens, which is a residence built by the WYNG Foundation for second and third year undergraduates studying at Trinity Hall. I had been too tired from travelling the previous day to fully appreciate it, but during the tour I couldn’t help but bask in the beauty of the old buildings around me, which all have histories dating back to up to a thousand years ago. There was something surreal and awe-inspiring about the knowledge that the ground I was walking on had been walked on by countless scholars with incredible minds.
After the orientation tour, Ms Yip took us to the Fitzwilliam Museum, a museum founded 200 years ago which contains many historical collections from different cultures around the world. We spent around an hour there, then had lunch at a nearby cake shop.

The next part of the day was something I had been worrying about since before the trip: the first of two essay supervision sessions, which I had with Dr David Erdos, a law professor. I was concerned that I would not be able to contribute to the discussion much, because I did not know much about law. However, ultimately I was able to overcome my fear and take part in the discussion, and left the session realising that I learnt more from actively discussing the subject with the other girls and Dr Erdos than I would have learnt from just listening to a lecture.
That night, we had a formal dinner with several Hall Faculty members. I was seated next to Dr Nick Bampos, the Vice-Master Elect of Trinity Hall. I had initially expected the experience to be quite scary, but it turned out to be quite the opposite! Dr Bampos was very pleasant to talk to, and I spent the evening enjoying both the food and the conversation with him, which ranged from discussing gender inequality to motivational television stars.

*Pictured: me conversing with Dr Bampos over dessert, with Eunice, Kristen and Mr McGrath in the background. (Picture: Ms Yip)*
Day 3:

For two days every year, colleges and faculties of Cambridge University are open to the public. For the first Open Day, we were all given free time to explore the campus by ourselves, since we all had different interests in subjects we would like to study.

I ended up going to the Faculty of English, Mathematics, Music, and the Cavendish Laboratory for Physics, as well as exploring several colleges, including St Catharine’s College, Gonville & Caius College, and King’s College. While Mr McGrath had said the previous day that the Cavendish Laboratory was ten minutes away from Trinity Hall by bicycle, it took me a full fifty minutes to reach on foot, which made me rather tired by the end of the day; however, it was worth the exercise, as all the lectures I attended were exciting and thought-provoking.

Pictured: Left- the Faculty of Mathematics, which is half an hour’s distance from the Faculty of English… unluckily for me, as the English sample lecture I attended ended thirty-five minutes before the Mathematics sample lecture began, and I had to rush; Below- the inside of Gonville & Caius College.

We met up at 6pm, by which time all the colleges and faculties had closed, and entered King’s College Chapel to listen to the choirs of King’s and St John’s Colleges sing. Photography was not allowed in the chapel, which was unfortunate, as the inside of the chapel was quite beautiful- so was listening to the choirs sing. After that, we had dinner with Ms Pang Pik-shan, a freelance journalist who has studied at both Oxford and Cambridge University.
Day 4:

This day was still an Open Day at Cambridge, so we were given more free time in the morning to explore the colleges. Together with Ellery and Clarissa, my two fellow form fours, I visited Emmanuel College, Christ's College, and Pembroke College.

*Pictured: Upper left- me standing in front of King's College; upper right- a small pond in Pembroke College; bottom left- Pembroke College; bottom right- Christ's College.*
In the afternoon, we had our second essay supervision session, this time led by Dr Murray. This time, I felt more comfortable than the first time, largely because Dr Murray teaches biochemistry which is an interest of mine. After the session, we went punting along the river Cam, which was incredibly enjoyable and scenic.

*Pictured: Top- me having a great time; bottom- one of many photos I took during the punting ride.*
Day 5:

We packed and moved our luggage to the Porter’s lodge in the morning, then headed to the Cambridge University Botanic Garden, which is home to over 8,000 species of plants. It was so big, me and the girls I was exploring it with nearly couldn’t make it back to the entrance in time.

Pictured: Top left, top right, bottom right-examples of attractive plants in the Botanic Garden; bottom left- a feather shed by a bird which landed on the ground and made for a nice picture.

After having lunch at Nando’s, a fast food joint popular in England, we headed to the train station with our luggage and took the train to London, a trip which lasted only 50 minutes. Upon our arrival in London, we checked in at our hotel, then went to take the tube.
We were headed towards Embankment, where we planned to walk alongside the River Thames, but before doing so we passed by Leicester Square. During this, we noticed a large group of people moving through the streets- as it turned out, July 8th was the 50th anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality, and Londoners were celebrating with a massive pride parade. To see such an open celebration of the LGBT movement was pleasantly surprising to me, as treatment of the subject in Hong Kong is much more conservative and controversial.

We walked along and eventually crossed the Thames River as planned, which had cleaner and clearer water than I had expected. After having a quick early dinner at a restaurant facing the river, we finally reached our destination, Shakespeare’s Globe. There, we watched Twelfth Night, which was very amusing and enjoyable, having been given a refreshingly modern twist with 21st century props and costumes.
Pictured: Left- the view across the Thames River; upper right- the inside of Shakespeare’s Globe from where I was sitting; lower right- the stage for Twelfth Night during the intermission.
Day 6:

Upon leaving the hotel, we journeyed to the Science Museum, where we entered the current exhibit about robots. The exhibit was very informative, and held many models of robots invented worldwide over the centuries.

*Pictured: Left- a replica of a humanoid robot which could walk, invented a century ago; right- a Kodomoroid model, a Japanese robot with a plastic but incredibly lifelike face.*

After leaving the museum, we had lunch with Dr Lawrence Tse, an engineer from Imperial College. He took us on a brief tour of the university, and to Saatchi Gallery, which contains modern art and photographs.

*Pictured: The Queen’s Tower, the only remaining structure of the Imperial Institute which was built in the late 19th century.*

We then returned to Leicester Square, where we had dinner at Burger King, a fast food joint, before going to watch our musical-Thriller Live, a collection of the most popular songs of the late Michael Jackson, which I enjoyed more than I thought I would.
Day 7:

Once again, we packed our luggage and left them at the hotel after checking out. We then went to Sky Garden. It is a building which, just as the name implies, has a top floor which is a garden from which you can view the rest of London. The view from the top floor is spectacular, although I would not recommend it for anyone scared of heights.

_Pictured: Top- Sky Garden from afar; bottom left- the interior of Sky Garden; bottom right- the view from Sky Garden._
We then met with Ms Anna Beech of C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group in her office, who gave us a quick introduction to her organisation. C40 is an organisation which aims to combat climate change by advising mayors of various cities.

After that, we walked around London, passing by King’s College and University College London. We also passed by several noteworthy landmarks, such as the Royal Courts of Justice, Somerset House and Covent Garden. After this, we had dinner at a French bakery, then returned to our hotel to get our luggage before heading to the airport.

*Pictured: Left- the entrance to the Royal Courts of Justice; right- Somerset House.*

**Conclusion:**

On this trip, I experienced life as a Cambridge student, even if it was only for a few days; I also got to travel in London and see many sights I may not have gotten to see otherwise. I am very thankful for this trip, not only for the experiences but also for the new friends I made on the trip. I must thank the WYNG Foundation and Philomathia Foundation for providing me with this opportunity in the first place, and Dr Murray and Mr McGrath for their hospitality during our stay in Cambridge, and of course, Ms Yip and Ms Ho for taking care of and accompanying us on the trip.