



Trip to Witney 04.02.2017



Sheep feeding

We arrived in Ramsden, a beautiful and quintessential Cotswold village just a few miles out of Witney. We were surrounded by rolling hills, greenery and quaint stone cottages – paradise! Toby Morris met us there and introduced the staff and students to his sheep, who were the famed Cotswold breed.

Toby taught us about the history of the sheep breed in the area; they were introduced by Romans and imported from Southern Africa, and took the name of the area in which they flourished (which in turn took its name from sheep-rearing, a 'cot' being a shepherds hut/sheep pen and 'wold' meaning rolling hills).

Students had a chance to feed the sheep, and even pet them. Most sheep were very timid and skittish, but one – Florence – was particularly friendly and posed for many photos (see below)!

Toby demonstrated the age-old shepherding technique of using a crook – and even Sayantani had a go!

Pengzhou got stuck in too; he helped hold one sheep still, while Toby treated it for chilblains between its hooves.



The famous Cotswold Sheep breed!



The Blanket Hall



Next, we headed to the Blanket Hall in Witney, the cornerstone of the Cotswold wool trade. Toby Morris gave us a tour of the building, which has had several purposes over the years (as a brewery, wool centre etc.) and contains magnificent rooms.

We saw the river by which Cotswold wool traders would ship their produce to London. We even learn that Witney wool was so esteemed that it reached the Americas back in the 1700s, as a luxury item for Native Americans.

Toby explained the creation of the chartered wool company that existed in Witney, by royal permission.

After a tour around the building, we went for tea, cake, coffee and pie in the adjoining Pie Shop – a delicious, mid-afternoon treat!



We then had a quick browse in the shop, where traditional woollen and sheep-skin products are still sold today. We then took a walk through Witney, a pretty Cotswold town with a lively Saturday market.

Witney Town Hall

After the Blanket Hall, we headed to the Town Hall, and met the mayor of Witney.

The mayor informed us further about the demography of Witney. He and Toby (a local councillor for the Conservative Party) explained to us the process and decorum of Town Council meetings, as well as the format of Town Council debates, in which each person is granted only one chance to speak – with some notable exceptions!

The students then held a debate, in which we split the room into two opposing halves. All students contributed well to the debate, with Lada, Fatima, Pengzhou and Chris making bold and well-thought through arguments for each side of the debate. Unfortunately, no conclusion was reached – but this is a sign of the strength of our students' argumentative powers!

Cherwell College would like to thank both the mayor of Witney, Cllr Chris Holliday, and Councillor Toby Morris, for hosting us and organising such a fun and informative day out.

