

## **HORNBY SUMMER SCHOOLS 2002 GYULA, HUNGARY**

In July I participated as one of the non-native teacher trainers at one of the eight Hornby summer schools in Hungary. I was one of the course tutors at the Teaching English to Young Learners course in Gyula.

### **Why did I decide to participate in the project?**

I left my job as a basic school teacher about a year and half ago (after having spent more than twenty-five years teaching kids!) but I didn't leave my teacher training activities. So the main reason to apply was to get some more experience and, to tell the truth, to have a change for a while (my current job doesn't have anything in common with teaching or teacher training, by the way). I've had experience with directing summer schools for teachers of English in the Czech Republic, but this international event seemed to be a new challenge for me.

### **Preparation phase**

I was lucky to have been selected and was invited to come over to Budapest for the planning meeting in May. To my very pleasant surprise I met there several people who I had met before - some of them in Hungary about two years ago, and two of them nine years ago in Edinburgh at the very beginning of my teacher trainer's career. The atmosphere at the meeting was very friendly but also very professional. Draft programmes for all the summer schools were designed and the action plan for pre-course communication was decided upon. Thanks to the new communication technologies it was quite easy to discuss all the details via e-mail with the British Council Budapest, with local organisers and especially with Livia Farago, my colleague and director of our course. But it was at that time when I realized that one can't help enough with the practicalities being far away. It became quite clear that the main part lies inevitably upon our Hungarian colleagues.

### **The summer school itself**

There were about sixty people altogether in Gyula: four course tutors, two local organisers, three workshop tutors and about fifty participants from about twelve different countries. Really very international environment. Although I thought we had done a lot before the course it was necessary to adapt the programme according to participants' needs and expectations, so we spent a lot of time preparing and discussing programme for individual sessions. It was probably worth doing as the feedback from participants of our group was very positive which is encouraging for us to think about future co-operation. We spent a lot of time discussing not only professional issues but also chatting and learning about each other - not only with the other tutors but also with the participants. I think we managed to establish positive and friendly atmosphere in our group, all participants were ready to share their own teaching experience and open to think deeply about what we tried to present. I'm sure we all were hard working all the time but on the other hand enjoying the opportunity to learn from one another. The portfolio that everybody took back home was composed of participants' activities together with a cassette full of children songs that we learned during the two weeks. I'm sure they'll bring the nice memories whenever we'll hold them in our hands.

### **The lessons learned**

From my very personal point of view I'd like to mention some specific features - for others who might be in the same situation some day in the future to be aware of:

- It's very different to be a tutor at home and abroad, and very rewarding if everything ends up well!
- It's more difficult, in a way, to be a tutor abroad than at home - I missed all my materials that I couldn't bring along (though Livia brought a lot of different materials they were not mine)
- There are advantages and disadvantages of not being able to speak the mother tongue of the other tutors (I was the only non-Hungarian speaker in the team) - the advantage is you can switch off from time to time and enjoy the opportunity of not listening, the disadvantage is that you can't be involved in the conversation all the time
- It's definitely better if the course director is a home country person - I applied and was selected as a course director but because of the great deal of directing a course falls into the pre-course preparations I realized it would be much more fair if Livia, who was involved in all the practicalities, would be the course director, so we swapped our roles
- It's really worth experiencing - you can learn a lot (not only from your new colleagues but also from all participants who come from very different backgrounds)

I'd like to finish with a very personal comment. To my big surprise I haven't missed school teaching since I left my teaching job, but it was for the first time in Gyula when I had a strange feeling of missing it. It was when I read the following comment from the participants: „It's great to be a teacher, there's no better job that that!“

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