



British Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Report from:

Anna Tschiltschke - Scholarship 2009



Report for BCCG Foundation

I have previously studied law at the university in Hamburg, successfully completing the first state exam in 2007. Since then I have been working for my doctoral adviser in the field of transport law and have started to write my PhD related to this topic. The opportunity to study in England for an LL.M. in Maritime Law completes my attempt to look at the different fields of transport law. Furthermore, it would have been impossible to get such a close look at the field of maritime law in Germany because it is not taught in such depth. I am therefore very grateful for the support offered by the BCCG and British Airways, enabling me to make this year possible. I would like to thank you again for your help and support!

Last October I began to study at the University of Southampton, which is without doubt one of the best known universities for Maritime Law in the world. The course programme consists of 4 courses which can be chosen individually. I chose International Trade Law, Admiralty Law, Marine Insurance and Carriage of Goods by Sea. Most of these courses are accompanied by a tutorial, looking at the diverse topics more closely in smaller groups. As the programme in former years incorporated just 3 courses and was known to be tough, it is easy to imagine how much work it is with another course on top. Right from the start there is a big workload and not much time for rest. However, as a very positive consequence, I have learned a lot up to now and I'm sure I will have learned a lot more by the time I finish my course in June. Furthermore, whenever a difficulty arises, the lecturers are easy to approach and offer help immediately. That is something I would consider as completely different from what I have previously experienced at home. Having studied at one of the biggest universities in Germany, I have never experienced such a commitment to support students.

What has really surprised me, in a positive way, is the atmosphere between the students on the masters course, as it is very cooperative and kind. With the pressure being high most of the time, this is even more astonishing for me, as law usually has the bad reputation that people are mostly competitive rather than cooperating.

Apart from the studies themselves, it is also a very interesting and valuable experience to get to know people from all over the world and from completely different cultures. Alongside me, study people from Brazil, Chile, South Africa, China, Korea, Russia and a lot of different European countries. To talk with them about their legal systems and/or their way of living is an experience I do not want to miss. It offers me a different perspective on both my law system being a civilian jurisdiction and my way of living in my home country.

Southampton, itself, is compared to Hamburg a rather small city with a population of around 230.000 people (estimated 2007). With having two universities in such a rather small city, it is self-explanatory that a rather large part of the population is formed by students. This results in many different but positive effects on life in Southampton. For example, most of the shops in town offer student reductions, as well as most of the cinemas. And of course the nightlife and the pub culture is vibrant and manifold.

At the university itself, the students union offers a lot of different activities for free or for a reasonable amount of money such as cinema, pub quizzes, a food market at the university and different sport activities. One of the activities I chose to undertake is to go to the gym, which is run by the university, and offers, besides the usual machines and work-out facilities, an indoor swimming bath. I also attend a dancing course which teaches standard dance as well as Latin dance.

The city is located in the South West of England. It is a good starting point to experience the country as it has an airport, from which Flybe flies to different cities in England, a direct train connection to London and various busses covering most of the destinations in England. As I would like to visit different places in England during my time here, it was a good choice to pick Southampton as a place to study. So far, I have made it despite the workload to Portsmouth, Winchester and London.

When I came to Southampton I decided not to live in halls but to stay in a private rented accommodation. That of course has advantages and disadvantages. One of the positive aspects is that the market in Southampton for affordable student accommodation is very good, as a lot of people try to rent their premises to students. The rents compared to London or even Hamburg are rather low. On the other hand I miss quite a few aspects of a year abroad with not living together with class fellows in halls.

However, I live with two other English Students in a little house close to the university. I have been very lucky with my landlord who is always willing to assist us with any problem related to the house or the garden. I'm still happy that I made the decision to live in a private rented accommodation as it is easier to work at home because it is quiet, it is also cheaper than any other kind of accommodation and living with English students gives me the opportunity to learn a lot about the English culture and of course to improve my language. Besides, I have found good friends in them as well.

As it is now January and the winter has a tight grip on Europe I had the chance to experience a peculiarity about English people that is apparently well known: their complete panic when it comes to snow. We had about 20-25 cm of snow at home when I left Germany to go back to England by car at the beginning of January. Although I have to admit that it was not the best weather to travel, I could not sense any serious obstacles on the way. Compared to that, we had about 1-2 cm of snow last week in Southampton, which led to a shut down of the major airports for a few hours, the trains and buses stopped their services, people were abandoning their cars because of the weather conditions and the shops were sold out on bread, eggs and milk. It is a source of constant wonder for us international students how afraid of snow British people are. To be fair, one of the main dangers is that in contrast to Germany the Council does not use road salt or grit on the pedestrian ways and from my experience not even on the streets. Hence, it was after a few days of low temperatures actually life threatening to walk somewhere!

Anna Tschiltschke